



**YEARBOOK  
OF SLOVAKIA'S  
FOREIGN POLICY  
2019**

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



BRATISLAVA 2020

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MINISTRY  
OF FOREIGN  
AND EUROPEAN AFFAIRS  
OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

GOOD  
IDEA  
SLOVAKIA

THE YEARBOOK IS PUBLISHED WITH THE  
KIND SUPPORT OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN  
AND EUROPEAN AFFAIRS OF THE SLOVAK  
REPUBLIC

THE OPINIONS, FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS OR RECOMMENDATIONS  
EXPRESSED HEREIN ARE THOSE OF AUTHORS AND DO NOT NECESSARILY  
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# **SLOVAKIA IN 2019 – A PREDICTABLE AND RELIABLE PARTNER**

MIROSLAV LAJČÁK

Thirty years ago, when the Iron Curtain came down and the region was swept up in euphoria, the Slovaks and Czechs, along with many in the free world, expected progress would be linear and positive, bringing enduring stability and prosperity. The events of recent years have proved us wrong and 2019 was no exception in this regard.

Political, economic and technological change led to tectonic shifts in foreign and security policy across the world. The global order is being transformed. We are still in the middle of this process and it is difficult to define its parameters. We cannot say with any certainty when and how it will end. We do not know what the human and material costs will ultimately be. But we know that it is happening. We know that we are in the middle of a geopolitical and geoeconomic transformation. And we all find navigating these shifts difficult.

Slovak foreign policy has stood up to these challenges by engaging, by being responsible and by having a clear strategy. As a result, we have no enemies and no significant unresolved issues with any country in the world. Slovak foreign policy has remained consistent and defended its principles. In an unpredictable world, Slovakia has remained a predictable and reliable partner.

## **SLOVAKIA AND MULTILATERALISM**

Today's global issues can only be resolved through the joint efforts of the international community, through inclusive dialogue and multilateral cooperation. Creating new

spheres of influence is not the answer. That is why Slovakia has endeavored to promote effective multilateralism through its international activities.

In 2019, Slovakia chaired the OECD Ministerial Council Meeting for the first time. The chairmanship was organized amid the accelerating industrial and technological revolution and we focused on harnessing the digital transition for sustainable development, concentrating on smart solutions for a better life now and in the future, through digital transformation and innovation.

In 2019, Slovakia continued to be an active member of the United Nations, lending its support to this global embodiment of multilateralism. Serving a three-year term (2018–20) on the UN Human Rights Council, Slovakia took up the post of HRC Vice-President for 2020 and grasped the opportunity to pursue further our support for religious freedom and to combat racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism, while strengthening children's rights.

But our main contribution to multilateral efforts in 2019 was made during our Chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Our priorities were threefold: preventing, mediating and mitigating conflicts, providing for a safer future and promoting effective multilateralism. Over the year we became fully acquainted with both the OSCE's possibilities and its limits. We learned to maneuver our way through the complex web of global and regional interests. However, our main focus was on helping people affected by conflict. We rejected the traditional logic of international relations and looked at the conflicts through the eyes of their victims, rather than geopolitical interests. We implemented a policy of small steps to help people in the conflict zones solve their everyday problems. I dare say that without our efforts, the Stanytsia Luhanska bridge, used by more than 10,000 people every day in Ukraine, would not have been repaired. This emphasis on the hopes, expectations and well-being of people was also reflected in the Bratislava Appeal, in which I called upon the OSCE Participating States to show greater flexibility and willingness to compromise so we can broaden and strengthen our interactive dialogue and thus promote the case for effective multilateralism.

## **SLOVAKIA AND EUROPE**

In European policy, too, this past year has brought several significant foreign policy challenges and changes which had a direct impact on Slovakia's interests.

The elections to the European Parliament led to institutional change in the EU. The process of reflection started in Bratislava in 2016 culminated in the adoption of a new Strategic Agenda for the EU in 2019. In parallel, negotiations on the new Multiannual Financial Framework were taking place.

European values were foremost in our minds in 2019 when we remembered the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the EU's "big-bang" enlargement. Paradoxically the anniversary of the EU's biggest enlargement was marked by the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the EU and an unfortunate development when the EU was unable to muster up the internal strength to send a positive signal to the Balkans on future enlargement.

Nevertheless, in the end the EU negotiated an agreement with the United Kingdom that is in all likelihood the most effective way of dealing with the reality of Brexit.

Likewise, despite its hesitation, the EU remains firm in its intention to enlarge and it has started the process of revising its enlargement methodology and perhaps even reforming itself so as to be better prepared. We see no reason why these processes cannot take place simultaneously. In another positive development, we were encouraged to see the ambitious program of the new European Commission, which has the potential to overcome a decade of crisis management in the EU. This is all the more important if Europe wishes to remain a global player and participate in the shaping of international rules, standards and values.

Slovakia, for its part, contributed through its European and regional policies. Our ambition, during our Presidency of the Visegrad Group, was to make the V4 part of European solutions. That is why we supported the Balkans in their integration efforts and the Eastern Partnership in reform efforts. We created the Visegrad Battlegroup for the EU and initiated a joint project with Germany in Morocco, which is providing genuine help whilst injecting a great amount of symbolism. Our approach to Central European policy was defined by our belief that it is not enough just to say no. We also have to be able to say what we should do next. Engagement has to go hand in hand with responsibility.

## **SLOVAKIA AND SECURITY**

Responsibility is especially important in security. Particularly at present, when international security is one of the areas being most directly hit by the global political turbulences.

The North Atlantic Alliance has been the cornerstone of our international security during our 15 years of membership. And we have demonstrated that we are a responsible ally. In 2019, we worked to achieve our pledge to invest 2 per cent of GDP in defense by 2024. Importantly, we have already met our pledge to invest 20 per cent of the defense budget in modernizing our armed forces. What's more, in 2019 we invested more than 41 per cent of our defense budget in modernization projects.

However, funding is not everything. We also fulfil our commitments by actively participating in NATO's enhanced forward presence in the Baltic States and in the NATO missions in Iraq and Afghanistan. In this way, we contribute to the security of our Allies and our Alliance.

Yet, NATO is about more than just fulfilling commitments. Recently, its internal strength and cohesion and its ability to respond to a growing number of external challenges have been tested. It is at times when the global order is undergoing systemic transformation, like the one we are currently experiencing, that it is necessary to have a well-calibrated strategic compass and to use it appropriately. That is why we have consistently advocated strengthening the transatlantic bond, the need to maintain NATO unity and support its "open door policy." Because we believe that a stronger and larger NATO is the best answer to the challenges of a turbulent global security environment.

At the same time, there should be no doubt that new powers are coming to the fore. We have new competitors and systemic rivals. We cannot ignore them. It is in our interests to work with them. We need to discuss global issues with them. We need to seize the

opportunities they are offering in trade, investment and transport. However, strategic orientation cannot be defined in trade volumes only. It is primarily about having a common understanding of values and the role of security. In this regard, there is no alternative to cooperation between the European Union, including Slovakia, and the United States.

We see no contradiction in having a strong transatlantic partnership and a stronger EU as part of that. On the contrary: improved European burden sharing capacities could lead to a more balanced transatlantic relationship. However, we think European strategic autonomy has yet to be clearly defined. Therefore, we urgently need to find a concept we can all agree on and put into practice. Both the Alliance and the EU are committed to maintaining internal unity and so these efforts must be both complementary and compatible. Finding the right balance will make the EU a global player, not just a playground for global interests.

## SLOVAKIA AND THE FOREIGN SERVICE

The Slovak foreign service plays a key role in implementing Slovak foreign policy. Just as foreign policy is shaped by doctrines, so too is the foreign service shaped by the people who work in it. I take pride in the fact our foreign service remained professional throughout the difficult and challenging year of 2019.

Integrating our consular services with crisis management was an important step to improve the foreign service, enabling us to ensure our citizens have access to better services. We continued to enhance the performance of our economic diplomacy, adjusting to the challenges of the technological transformation and the fourth industrial revolution. We improved our Official Development Cooperation, which now has a clear strategy and has received OECD recognition. It was recently awarded a Quality Management certificate, which means we can participate in joint EU projects. In an era of disinformation campaigns and hybrid threats, our ministry is the first and only ministry in Slovakia to have established a dedicated department for strategic communication. Finally, our *Good Idea Slovakia* branding has continued to rise up through the rankings, coming in at 35<sup>th</sup> in the global Future Brand Country Index.

These are just a few of the accomplishments of our small but determined foreign service. With the help of the foreign service and our engaged, responsible and strategic foreign policy, Slovakia is more influential, prosperous and safer than ever before in its history.

All this is taking place in a difficult environment in which the geopolitical and geo-economic changes are more than just short-term fluctuations. Global political volatility and instability, along with the impact of the technological transformation, the fourth industrial revolution and climate change dynamics are shaping a new global order and creating new economic and power centers. In addition, external turbulences are creating a climate for the revival of old “-isms” we thought had been buried in the ruins of the Berlin Wall and Iron Curtain 30 years ago.

We are again faced with a series of events shaped on one side by growing unilateralism and isolationism and on the other by a multipolar order and the undermining of the rules-based international order.

Under these circumstances, our foreign policy continues to be based on three pillars – the European, the North Atlantic and the multilateral. At this critical juncture, the foreign service has helped Slovakia to navigate the rough waters of global relations. In 2019 we presented Slovakia as a reliable and responsible partner. Through our global engagement, our small but determined foreign service has shown leadership in responding to the challenges facing Europe and the World.

Crises can be a source of strength. I believe that the current crisis in multilateralism will ultimately serve as a reminder to the international community of the irreplaceable role of international cooperation, to which there is no workable alternative in an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world.



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I.

THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC  
IN THE INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

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# EUROPEAN YEAR IN SLOVAK FOREIGN POLICY: MANY ISSUES, EVEN MORE QUESTIONS

JURAJ HAJKO

Slovakia celebrated its 15 years of European Union membership together with nine other member states in 2019. Even 15 years after the biggest expansion of the EU in 2004, also known as Eastern enlargement, the East–West divide persists. We can still hear the member states being referred to as “new” and “old” and see differences in attitudes towards the cohesion funds, history and socio-cultural issues.

Two major elections had a substantial effect on Slovak foreign policy in 2019. On one hand, Slovakia elected its new president. Although this was a domestic event, it had a major impact on Slovakia’s image abroad. On the other hand, the presidential race also preceded and paved the way to the elections to the European parliament (EP). Both were won by progressive political rookies. However, the positive reaction to the election of Zuzana Čaputová who has insisted on restoring democratic values in the Visegrad Group (V4) was balanced out by the EU top jobs debacle in which V4 lost ground to western Europe’s overall supremacy.

Throughout the year, the revolving and seemingly interminable Brexit saga paralyzed the debate on the future of Europe. The negative impact was balanced, to a certain extent, by the unparalleled unity of the 27 member states during the tough negotiations with the United Kingdom. This soothing image for fans of deeper EU integration was shattered by the stalemate in the debate on the upcoming Multiannual Financial Framework and migration.

Slovakia split away from the V4 over climate policy and had to explain serious concerns about its rule of law. The murder of journalist Ján Kuciak placed the country in an undesired spotlight and shattered its image as the “good boy” of the V4.

Despite the increasing overlap between domestic and foreign policy, especially in European affairs, this was not reflected in a substantially higher turnout among Slovak voters in the EP elections. The absence of resounding EU topics in the Slovak parliamentary election campaign shows that the political parties do not consider it to significantly influence voter behavior either. We can therefore argue that this policy area is still far from being as domesticated as in the older member states. Slovakia also lacks a comprehensive vision of its EU policy.

## EU COMMISSIONER ENTERS SLOVAKIA’S TAINTED POLITICAL ARENA

In 2018 Andrej Kiska decided not to run for a second term and signaled he might establish his own political party. To describe the importance of the presidential elections for Slovak foreign policy, we must first go back to 2014. The leader of Smer-SD, Robert Fico, then prime minister of a single-party government, had lost the presidential election to Andrej Kiska. The painful debacle turned the two into cardinal enemies.

Fico, the prime minister, decided to avoid another possible defeat and chose a different Smer-SD presidential candidate in 2018. His first choice was logical, the renowned diplomat and foreign minister Miroslav Lajčák who had been in charge of the Slovak EU presidency in 2016 and served as president of the 72nd session of the UN General Assembly in 2017 and 2018.

However, Lajčák repeatedly turned down the offer and so Fico suggested his diplomatic colleague, EU commissioner Maroš Šefčovič, run instead. The Slovak commissioner declined the offer in January 2019,<sup>1</sup> but then changed his mind.<sup>2</sup> Šefčovič started his EU career in 2004 when he became Slovakia’s permanent representative to the EU. He has served in the European Commission since 2009 and is one of its most senior members. He was also chief coordinator of the Party of European Socialists (PES)<sup>3</sup> resolutions for the 2018 summit in Lisbon which advocated progressive values, LGBT rights and gender equality.<sup>4</sup> He withdrew from the PES Spitzenkandidat race in November 2018, having gained the support of only nine PES parties from Central and

<sup>1</sup> “Šefčovič dostal ponuku od Fica. Chce, aby kandidoval za prezidenta,” [Šefčovič got an offer from Fico. He wants him to run for president] *HNonline*, January 8, 2019. Available online: <https://slovensko.hnonline.sk/1870427-sefcovic-dostal-ponuku-od-fica-chce-aby-kandidoval-za-prezidenta> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> S. Morgan, Z. Gabrižová, “Sefcovic confirms run at Slovak presidency,” *EURACTIV.com, EURACTIV.sk*, January 21, 2019. Available online: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/elections/news/sefcovic-confirms-run-at-slovak-presidency/> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

<sup>3</sup> “The Party of European Socialists set out ‘blueprint for better society’ ahead of European elections,” Party of European Socialists, December 10, 2018. Available online: <http://pr.euractiv.com/pr/party-european-socialists-set-out-blueprint-better-society-ahead-european-elections-178217> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

<sup>4</sup> “Fair, Free, Sustainable. The Progressive Europe we want,” Party of European Socialists, Lisbon, December 7–8, 2018. Available online: <https://www.pes.eu/export/sites/default/>.

Eastern Europe. His rival Frans Timmermans was supported by 12 parties including the German social democrats (SPD). Šefčovič gave up on his ambition to become European Commission president and called on the party to unite behind Timmermans.<sup>5</sup>

Šefčovič took unpaid leave from the Commission from February 2019 until the presidential elections in March. Suddenly, the highest Slovak official in Brussels (formally as independent as any other commissioner) entered the Slovak political arena after 15 years of service abroad. He moved from Brussels to Bratislava, and switched from a progressive to a rather conservative worldview. A former member of the Communist Party before the Velvet Revolution he suddenly began to talk about Christian and traditional values, stood against same-sex unions and labeled his foe Zuzana Čaputová as too liberal. This was despite having subscribed to a progressive worldview as a senior PES official. We can also see this contradiction in the conservative policies of Smer-SD and its formal membership of PES, which stands for more liberal values typical of the social democrat parties in western Europe.

He also had to withstand all the criticism and scandals associated with the ruling party Smer-SD since he was its official candidate. Note that the investigation into the murder of the investigative journalist Ján Kuciak was already showing the extent of corruption among state and judicial officials and their connections with the governing coalition. Zuzana Čaputová, by contrast, had founded her campaign on civil society, justice reforms and opposition to the governing parties.

Professional diplomat and politician Maroš Šefčovič managed to get through to the second round of the elections but was finally defeated by progressive political rookie Zuzana Čaputová.<sup>6</sup> Her triumph was greatly welcomed by top EU officials<sup>7</sup> who had noticed her strong pro-European and liberal enthusiasm. Moreover, she was promptly invited<sup>8</sup> to Paris by French President Emmanuel Macron.<sup>9</sup> With tense relations between the Visegrad Group and France (and Brussels), and controversial and nationalist governments in Warsaw and Budapest, the success of an openly liberal female president was a regional anomaly. Her election also improved the image of the Visegrad Group, which was facing intense criticism from both Brussels and Paris.

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galleries/Documents-gallery/Resolutions\_PES\_Congress\_2018.pdf\_2063069299.pdf?mc\_cid=130311ad01&mc\_eid=c6d4c28852 (accessed on March 15, 2020).

<sup>5</sup> F. Eder, "Maroš Šefčovič withdraws from Socialist race for Commission top job," *Politico*, November 5, 2018, updated on April 19, 2019. Available online: <https://www.politico.eu/article/maros-sefcovic-withdraws-from-socialist-race-for-commission-top-job/> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

<sup>6</sup> See "2019 Presidential Election results." Available online: <https://www.vysledkyvolieb.sk/prezidentske-volby/2019/vysledky/2-kolo> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

<sup>7</sup> "Lídri únie gratulovali Čaputovej k zvoleniu za prezidentku Slovenska," [EU leaders congratulated Čaputová on her election] *Pravda*, April 3, 2019. Available online: <https://spravy.pravda.sk/prezidentske-volby-2019/clanok/507715-lidri-unie-gratulovali-caputovej-k-zvoleniu-za-prezidentku-slovenska/> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

<sup>8</sup> She visited France just one month after taking office. "Macron: Čaputová is the symbol of united Europe," *The Slovak Spectator*, July 24, 2019. Available online: <https://spectator.sme.sk/c/22174988/president-caputova-visited-france-met-macron.html> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

<sup>9</sup> For more information about the development of Slovak-French relations (in Slovak) see: <https://zahranicnapolitika.sk/francuzsko-a-slovensko-vztahy-s-novym-potencialom/> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

At her first V4 summit in Prague, Zuzana Čaputová proposed that the V4 should become a more constructive actor and come up with a more positive agenda in the EU.<sup>10</sup> She made a political gesture and sent a clear message to Brussels when she stood up for liberal democracy and the rule of law during her visits to Budapest and Warsaw.<sup>11</sup>

As the presidential elections took place in March, they had a large or perhaps even a decisive impact on the EU elections in May.

## NEW SLOVAK MEPs AND PARTIES, OLD PROBLEMS

The Slovak elections to the European Parliament are paradoxical. Even though Slovaks express high support for EU membership,<sup>12</sup> we still have the lowest turnout in the Union.

Similarly to other member states, the proportion of young people voting increased.<sup>13</sup> Despite the increase in turnout, the 2019 elections continued the trend. Only 22.7 per cent of Slovak voters participated in the elections, while the average EU turnout was 50 per cent. The massive information and mobilization campaign had a positive, but limited impact. EU topics gained publicity but peaked quickly and a more structural approach to public awareness of the EU may be needed.

Still, these elections were distinctive. They copied the results of the presidential elections. In both elections, the new progressive candidates did better than the senior coalition party Smer-SD, which had to be content with second place. Third place went to anti-system or far right candidates. In the EU elections third place went to the far right ĽSNS candidate and in the first round of the presidential elections it went to anti-system Štefan Harabin, while ĽSNS candidate Marián Kotleba came fourth.<sup>14</sup>

For the very first time, Slovaks elected far right MEPs from Kotlebovci-ĽSNS, joining other member states with far right MEPs. The fear that the far right parties

<sup>10</sup> "Krajiny V4 by mali viac prichádzať s pozitívnymi témami, hovorí prezidentka Čaputová," [The V4 countries should come up with more positive topics, said President Čaputová] *webnoviny*, October 2, 2019. Available online: <https://www.webnoviny.sk/krajiny-v4-by-mali-viac-prichadzat-s-pozitivnymi-temami-hovori-prezidentka-caputova/> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

<sup>11</sup> T. Strážay, "O demonizácii Vyšehradu," [The demonization of Vysehrad] *zahranicnapolitika.sk*, July 15, 2019. Available online: <https://zahranicnapolitika.sk/o-demonizacii-vysehradu/> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

<sup>12</sup> According to Eurobarometer 2018, 51 per cent of Slovaks consider EU membership positive and 77 per cent Slovaks consider it beneficial. See Eurobarometer: Podpora členstva v EÚ dosahuje rekordnú úroveň, [Eurobarometer: Support for EU membership hits a record] *EuropskeNoviny.sk*, October 19, 2018. Available online: <https://europskenoviny.sk/2018/10/19/eurobarometer-podpora-clenstva-v-eu-dosahuje-rekordnu-uroven/> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

<sup>13</sup> "Slovensko a voľby do Európskeho parlamentu 2019: zaostrené na mladých," [Slovakia and the EP elections: spotlight on youth] EuroPolicy, 2019. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2019/11/EUROPOLICY-ANALYSIS-Slovensko-a-vo%C4%BEBE-do-EP-2019.pdf> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

<sup>14</sup> Z. Gabrižová, "Konečné výsledky eurovoľieb 2019 na Slovensku," [The final results of the 2019 EP elections in Slovakia] *EURACTIV.sk*, May 27, 2019. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/buducnost-eu/infographic/konecne-vysledky-eurovolieb-2019-na-slovensku/> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

would cooperate in the EP did not materialize in the end, so the ĽSNS has limited political outreach. Note that the ĽSNS, like other anti-EU or anti-system parties, has softened its stance and no longer calls for Slovakia to leave the EU, but it remains Eurosceptic.

To sum up, Slovaks elected a wider range of MEPs from modest Euro-optimists and Euroskeptics and strong EU integration advocates from PS/Spolu to the far right anti-EU MEPs from ĽSNS. We should also add that, like Zuzana Čaputová, PS/Spolu are strong advocates of combatting climate change and consider Emmanuel Macron's vision to be inspiring.

It is worth mentioning that PS/Spolu and ĽSNS are the exact opposite of each other and not just in their pro- and anti-EU attitudes. While PS/Spolu produced a detailed EU manifesto and vision based around strong environmental policies, the ĽSNS had no manifesto. In the EP the ĽSNS focus on a narrow range of topics, much as they do in the Slovak parliament – migration, racial topics and US foreign policy.<sup>15</sup>

Several Slovak MEPs were nominated to posts in the EP. Lucia Ďuriš Nicholsonová (SaS/ECR) chairs the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, and Vladimír Bilčík (Spolu/EPP), former academic and analyst, is the chair of the Delegation to the EU-Montenegro Stabilization and Association Parliamentary Committee. Monika Beňová (Smer-SD/S&D) was elected as one of the five EP quæstors who deal with the financial and administrative interests of MEPs.

Slovakia was also affected by the Brexit-related redistribution of the seats<sup>16</sup> belonging to the UK's MEPs, gaining an additional seat on top of its existing 13. However, the 14th seat could only be taken up after Brexit and therefore had to be assigned using a separate rule. The Slovak parliament amended and passed a law via an accelerated legislative procedure in a last-minute frenzy. But the botched appendix was not properly reviewed in the Slovak parliament and the 14th MEP, Miriam Lexmann, challenged it at the Constitutional Court.<sup>17</sup> She considered the new law unfair since her party, the KDH, got more votes than SaS, but received fewer mandates. Lexmann therefore argued the law did not accurately reflect the results of the EP elections. The Constitutional Court rejected Miriam Lexmann's appeal. I will elaborate on the Brexit saga later.

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<sup>15</sup> "Turci posielajú do Európy milióny našťvaných imigrantov! Europoslanec Uhrík vyzýva členov vlády, aby chránili Slovensko!" [Turks are sending millions of angry immigrants to Europe. MEP Uhrík calls upon the Slovak government to protect Slovakia] ĽS Naše Slovensko party, March 7, 2020. Available online: <http://www.naseslovensko.net/kategoria/europsky-parlament/> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

<sup>16</sup> "Redistribution of seats in the European Parliament after Brexit," *Press Release*, European Parliament, January 31, 2020. Available online: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20200130IPR71407/redistribution-of-seats-in-the-european-parliament-after-brexite> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

<sup>17</sup> D. Mikušovič, "KDH napadlo výsledky eurovoľieb na Ústavnom súde, na brexitový mandát má podľa nich čakať SaS," [KDH is challenging EP election results at the Constitutional Court. They think SaS should wait for the "Brexit mandate"] *DennikN*, June 4, 2019. Available online: <https://dennikn.sk/1488935/kdh-napadlo-vysledky-eurovolieb-na-ustavnom-sude-na-brexitovy-mandat-ma-podla-nich-cakat-sas/> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

## FROM TUSK AND ENERGY UNION TO MICHEL AND JUNIOR PORTFOLIO

To begin with, let's take a broader look at the EU elections. There are three main points. First, the forecasted success of the far right came to nothing. Second, the domination of the Christian democrats (EPP) and social democrats (S&D) ended as predicted. Third, the new progressive forces are the third biggest group in the EP.

As soon as the ballot boxes were emptied, the traditional haggling over the EU leading post began and the formal "Spitzenkandidaten" system<sup>18</sup> was to be followed in line with the elections results. The European People's Party had won the election, but its Spitzenkandidat Manfred Weber did not stand a chance. He did not have the necessary qualifications nor the political weight, but most importantly he had been rejected by French President Emmanuel Macron and Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán even before the European Council summit in June 2019.

Still, there were two other lead candidates – socialist Frans Timmermans and liberal Margrethe Vestager. Both were rejected by a block of countries including the V4. The latter was blamed for the stalemate and its reputation suffered a terrible blow abroad and in Slovakia as well. However, it was not only the V4 who had voted against Timmermans. Italy and other EPP prime ministers, for example from Ireland, Bulgaria and Croatia, did so too.<sup>19</sup> The problem was that the V4 and Viktor Orbán in particular were very vocal about their choice and proudly boasted of their blocking capacity.

The V4 did not come up with an electable candidate and missed the opportunity to prove it could be constructive. Their approach may have affected the way the EU top jobs were redistributed.

Slovakia signaled its ambition to get the post of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy for the longest serving commissioner at that time, Slovak Maroš Šefčovič. In the end, neither Slovakia, nor the V4 or the CEE region as a whole obtained any of the top EU posts<sup>20</sup> and the EU institutions are currently lead by Francophones from western Europe (and Spain).

More importantly, Donald Tusk, a Pole who had been in charge of EU summits for five years was replaced by Belgium's former prime minister Charles Michel, a friend of the French president. The V4 (notwithstanding the disagreements between Tusk and the Polish government) lost an important ally in Brussels.

Slovakia also had to accept a loss of power. Neither Slovakia nor the V4 obtained any of the EU top posts. Maroš Šefčovič, who was in charge of the Energy Union and

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<sup>18</sup> The system was designed to reflect the results of the EU elections and to nominate the lead candidate from the winning party as European Commission president. However, it is not a formal and legally binding procedure.

<sup>19</sup> "Vladimír Bilčík: O Timmermansovi nerozhodol hlas V4," [Vladimír Bilčík: it was not the V4 vote that decided Timmermans' future] *EURACTIV.sk*, July 9, 2019. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/buducnost-eu/interview/vladimir-bilcik-o-timmermansovi-nerozhodol-hlas-v4/> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

<sup>20</sup> For more see J. Hajko, "Lídri členských štátov nehlasovali podľa výsledku eurovoľieb," [EU member states' leaders did not vote according to the results of EP elections] *zahranicnapolitika.sk*, July 3, 2019. Available online: <https://zahranicnapolitika.sk/lidri-clenskych-statov-nehlasovali-podla-vysledku-eurovolieb/> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

negotiated with world leaders including Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin, ended up with a completely different portfolio. He is now Vice-President of the European Commission for Interinstitutional Relations and Foresight. Although he kept his vice-president status, his new post is a typical junior portfolio that he held during his second term in 2010–2014. His original intention of course was to lead the European Commission but he gave that up to Timmermans as described previously.

## THE OMNIPRESENT AND ENDLESS BREXIT SAGA

When discussing EU and foreign policy, one simply cannot avoid Brexit. The EU27 maintained unity throughout the Brexit negotiations in preparation for March 29th, the original official date on which the United Kingdom was supposed to withdraw from the European Union. As Theresa May was not able to get the Withdrawal Bill through parliament, the Brexit date was postponed.

The danger of a hard Brexit led the member states to take precautions, including Slovakia, which adopted its “Brexit bill” on March 27th.<sup>21</sup> The law was debated and passed via an accelerated legislative procedure and supported by all MPs in attendance. It maintains both the rights of British citizens living in Slovakia and the rights of Slovaks in the UK as well as the current state of bilateral relations.

Since there are roughly 100,000 Slovaks living in the UK<sup>22</sup> according to the government, this step was more than necessary. The Slovak embassy in London received numerous enquiries about practical matters regarding Brexit. The coalition government and opposition MPs took advantage of uncertainty around Brexit and record-low unemployment at home to invite the Slovak diaspora in Britain to return home.

The UK remains an important trade partner for Slovakia. Approximately 6 per cent of Slovak exports go to the UK, mainly cars and machinery. Slovakia is a very pro-export country and any non-tariff and tariff barriers would have an impact on the Slovak economy. According to economists, a hard Brexit would have lowered Slovak GDP by 0.3–1.9 per cent<sup>23</sup> depending on post-Brexit relations.

Slovakia took this into account during the negotiations and supported the EU negotiators and the Withdrawal Bill in order to avoid harsh economic consequences. It is no surprise that Slovakia also voted in favor of the several postponements to the Brexit date for the very same reasons. An orderly Brexit became reality in January 2020, and Slovakia's “Lex Brexit” did not have to be applied. Miriam Lexmann, the 14th Slovak “Brexit” MEP, could take up her seat.

<sup>21</sup> “Poslanci schválili návrh zákona pre tvrdý brexit,” [MPs approved the draft law on hard Brexit] *Sme*, March 27, 2019. Available online: <https://domov.sme.sk/c/22085524/poslanci-schvalili-navrh-zakona-pre-tvrdy-brexit.html> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

<sup>22</sup> “Rehák: Pre brexit chce z Británie odísť viac Slovákov, než tam prísť,” [Rehák: Brexit means more Slovaks want to leave Britain than go there] *teraz.sk*, February 8, 2019. Available online: <https://www.teraz.sk/brexit/rehak-pre-brexit-chce-z-britanie-odi/377326-clanok.html> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

<sup>23</sup> “Názory analytikov na dopad tvrdého brexitu na Slovensko sa rôznia,” [Analysts views differ on the impact of a hard Brexit on Slovakia] *Sme*, February 27, 2019. Available online: <https://ekonomika.sme.sk/c/22063029/nazory-analytikov-na-dopad-tvrdeho-brexitu-na-slovensko-sa-roznia.html> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

## RULE OF LAW AND EPPO

In 2018 and 2019, Slovakia found itself in the spotlight due to the murder of Ján Kuciak and his fiancée. Both the murder and Ján Kuciak's investigative findings prompted a European parliament mission.<sup>24</sup> The European parliament kept an eye on Slovakia and Malta, where journalist and anti-corruption activist Daphne Galizia was murdered.

In March MEPs passed a resolution on the allegation of corruption among the Slovak ruling elite and serious concerns about the rule of law.<sup>25</sup> We should also add that Europol played a crucial role in the initial stage of the investigation and helped to extract invaluable data from the telephone of the accused Marián Kočner. The data showed the depth and seriousness of the situation and proved vital during both the investigation and case into the murder of Kuciak and corruption in the judiciary.

Slovakia's substantial contribution to the establishment of the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) was one of the flagship achievements of Slovakia's EU presidency in 2016. Each of the 22 participating member states was required to nominate three candidates for prosecutor.

Slovakia lagged behind with its nomination because it was unable to find candidates fulfilling all the criteria. According to experts, the failure to meet the deadlines has hampered the setting up the EPPO, which is due to become operational in the second half of 2021. It also contributed to the deteriorating image of the Slovak judiciary owing to the allegations of corruption and the inability to nominate a suitable candidate to the EU Court of Justice.<sup>26</sup>

There was, however, a small victory for Central and Eastern Europe and the European parliament regarding the EPPO. Renowned Romanian anti-corruption prosecutor Laura Kövesi favored by the European Parliament won against the French candidate Jean-François Bohnert supported by the member states. Kövesi later visited Slovakia and met with Slovak president Zuzana Čaputová who conveyed her support to the new European prosecutor.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> "Murder of journalist Ján Kuciak: EP delegation to visit Slovakia Thursday-Friday," *Press Release European Parliament*, March 7, 2018. Available online: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20180307IPR99230/murder-of-journalist-jan-kuciak-ep-delegation-to-visit-slovakia-thursday-friday> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

<sup>25</sup> L. Bayer, "European Parliament warns Slovakia and Malta over rule of law," *Politico*, March 28, 2019. Available online: <https://www.politico.eu/article/slovakia-malta-rule-of-law-european-parliament/> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

<sup>26</sup> R. Geist, "Slovensko brzdí vznik Európskej prokuratúry," [Slovakia's slowing the creation of the European Prosecutor] *EURACTIV.sk*, September 18, 2019. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/spolocnost/news/slovensko-brzdi-vznik-europskej-prokuratury/> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

<sup>27</sup> "Čaputová prijala šéfku novej európskej prokuratúry, predstavila plány," [Čaputová received the European Prosecutor, presented her plans] *Sme*, February 18, 2020. Available online: <https://domov.sme.sk/c/22328830/caputova-prijala-sefku-europskej-prokuratury.html> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

## EUROPE'S EAST–WEST AND OLD–NEW DIVIDE CONTINUES

Whether we look at the migration crisis, enlargement, climate change or the long-term budget, there are still clear dividing lines. Let's take a more detailed look at these cleavages.

Slovakia and V4 did not come up with a big or brand new political agenda but continued the previous trend. Amid the stalemate over reforms to the EU migration system, Slovak MPs from across the political spectrum rejected the migration quota system and called for alternative tools to alleviate the crisis in southern member states and prevent migration flows from outside Europe. This approach followed the “flexible solidarity” concept that had originated during the Slovak EU presidency in 2016.<sup>28</sup> Five years after the migration crisis, old and new member states (including Austria) still have diverging views on the possible solution.

As usual, the V4 reiterated its support for Western Balkan integration in the EU by adopting a common statement of the foreign ministers.<sup>29</sup> Central European states continued to be most vocal in endorsing enlargement and expressed the hope that the accession talks with Northern Macedonia and Albania would begin soon. The V4 wanted the EU to be present in Western Balkans and stabilize the neighborhood where rival powers such as China, Russia and Turkey have been gaining more and more ground.

This move required unanimous approval but it was blocked by France and the Netherlands despite the European Commission and the majority of the members states led by Germany expressing the opposite opinion. France went even further, proposing to change the whole accession process. Paris provoked a stark reaction from the nine, mainly “old” member states.<sup>30</sup>

Climate policy has become another divisive issue. Although the V4 countries are united over enlargement, climate policy has divided the group.

At the June 2019 European Council summit, the 2050 EU climate strategy was blocked by the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary and Poland. France reportedly applied excessive pressure on the V4, making it impossible to reach a compromise deal.<sup>31</sup> Nuclear and coal plants were among the most pressing issues. While Germany and France are phasing out nuclear reactors and coal plants while focusing on renewables,

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<sup>28</sup> G. Gotec, “‘Flexible solidarity’ becomes new tool in response to refugee crisis,” *EURACTIV.com*, September 20, 2016. Available online: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/justice-home-affairs/news/flexible-solidarity-becomes-new-tool-in-response-to-refugee-crisis/> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

<sup>29</sup> “V4 Foreign Ministers’ Joint Statement on the Western Balkans, Bratislava, 28 May 2019,” Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, 2019. Available online: <https://www.mzv.sk/documents/10182/3574816/190528+V4+Foreign+Ministers%E2%80%99+Joint+Statement+on+the+Western+Balkans%2C+Bratislava> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

<sup>30</sup> J. Barigazzi, “9 EU countries push back on French enlargement revamp,” *Politico*, December 13, 2019, updated on December 16, 2019. Available online: <https://www.politico.eu/article/eu-enlargement-reform-pushback/> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

<sup>31</sup> S. Morgan, “EU climate deal falls at summit, four countries wield the axe,” *EURACTIV.com*, June 26, 2019. Available online: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/energy-environment/news/eu-climate-deal-falls-at-summit-four-countries-wield-the-axe/> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

the V4 countries are reliant on nuclear energy and Poland is still heavily dependent on fossil fuels.

Slovakia has nuclear and coal plants in its energy mix and the Prime Minister Peter Pellegrini did not support climate neutrality by 2050 before the summit. He changed his mind afterwards and explained that Slovakia wanted to be among the countries supporting the EU as leader in climate change awareness.<sup>32</sup> Slovakia again declared its willingness to be in the “EU core” even if that means detaching itself from its closest allies in the V4.

It took six more months to achieve a consensus on climate neutrality. In December all the member states except Poland agreed. Poland was granted an exception to join later due to its dependency on coal. The Czech Republic would only give its approval, criticized by Austria and Luxembourg, if nuclear energy was described as an admissible part of the energy mix in the summit conclusions.

The Multiannual Financial Framework became the biggest topic in EU affairs at the end of 2019. Together with its V4 partners, Slovakia rejected the Finnish EU presidency’s MFF proposal.<sup>33</sup> Slovakia is among the net receivers and is a member of the Friends of Cohesion, who oppose budget cuts regardless of Brexit, economic forecasts or the climate package.

Slovakia wanted to maintain the current allocation of EU cohesion funds for the 2014–2020 MFF of €15.3 billion and favored the status quo in Common Agricultural Policy funding to balance out the persisting differences between the less developed and more developed regions. It therefore opposed the European Commission’s proposal to reduce the budget allocation to €11.8 billion. Note the substantial drop in all V4 countries.<sup>34</sup> Slovakia proposed cutting defense, administration and Erasmus+ budgets instead of the cohesion funds.<sup>35</sup>

In order to maintain the current level of cohesion funding, the Slovak government proposed that member state contributions to the EU budget should be raised. That way current priorities such as climate policy could be tackled. The Slovak government also sought a more flexible budget allocation to achieve a better balance between the old and new budget chapters.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> “Pellegrini: Slovensko potvrdilo cieľ uhlíkovej neutrality do roku 2050,” [Pellegrini: Slovakia has confirmed its goal of carbon neutrality by 2050] *aktuality*, June 21, 2019. Available online: <https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/702947/pellegrini-slovensko-potvrdilo-ciel-uhlikovej-neutrality-do-roku-2050/> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

<sup>33</sup> A. Brzozowski, G. Gotev, “Visegrad countries slam Finnish presidency MFF paper,” *EURACTIV.com*, October 16, 2019 updated on October 17, 2019. Available online: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/future-eu/news/visegrad-countries-slam-finnish-presidency-mff-paper/> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

<sup>34</sup> “Money talks: EU budget negotiations widen east-west divide,” *Birn*, November 13, 2019. Available online: <https://balkaninsight.com/2019/11/13/money-talks-eu-budget-negotiations-widen-east-west-divide/> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

<sup>35</sup> M. Ehl, “Visegrad money song,” *Visegrad Insight*, February 14, 2020. Available online: <https://visegradinsight.eu/visegrad-money-song-new-eu-budget/> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

<sup>36</sup> M. Koreň, “Ružička: Ak chce byť Unia silná, nemôže mať slabý rozpočet,” [Ružička: A strong EU cannot have a weak budget] *EURACTIV.sk*, September 17, 2019. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/ekonomika-a-euro/news/ruzicka-ak-chce-byt-unia-silna-nemoze-mat-slaby-rozpocet/> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

Slovakia's position contrasts with that of the five biggest net payers into the EU: Germany, Austria, Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands. This group wants to keep the budget at 1 per cent of EU gross national income (GNI)<sup>37</sup> and proposes that the use of EU funds should be regulated by a new rule of law controlling mechanism. Although Slovakia is not as critical of this tool as Hungary and Poland are, it is still a member of the V4. To some extent, the V4 countries have a negative image as net receivers reluctant to adhere to EU values and unwilling to show solidarity on migration. Insisting on a high level of EU funds without showing willingness to contribute may deepen the East–West divide in the long run.

In 2018 Bratislava was among the last of the EU capitals to have no EU agency. Several of the agencies had to be relocated because of Brexit. Having previously been unsuccessful in securing the seats of the European Medicines Agency and European Banking Authority,<sup>38</sup> Slovakia finally won the new European Labor Agency (ELA). Its provisional office was opened in Brussels in October 2019.<sup>39</sup> The ELA headquarters in Bratislava should be fully operational by 2024 and the aim is to employ a staff of 140 with a budget of €50 million.

## CHALLENGES AHEAD

There are two challenges ahead – Brexit and the MFF. In 2020 the European Commission and the UK plan to sign an agreement on future bilateral relations. The tight schedule and antagonistic views of London and Brussels represent a substantial challenge. Slovakia has only limited means of influencing the final agreement, apart from the ratification process, and can therefore only hope a comprehensive agreement that is favorable to the EU27 will be negotiated.

The MFF negotiations offer much wider room for intensive diplomacy. The question is whether Slovakia has the weight and ambition to act or whether it will choose its (usual) bandwagoning strategy within the Friends of Cohesion group.

In May the Conference on the Future on Europe will begin. It represents an unparalleled opportunity to contribute to the debate on EU integration. More than ever, a clear politically widely respected and long-term EU strategy is necessary. Unfortunately, Slovakia has a rather reactive and passive strategy. That is clear from the annual report on Slovakia's membership of the EU for the year 2018, which assesses what has been

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<sup>37</sup> The European parliament goes even further and proposes to increase the budget to 1.3 of EU GNI and threatens to block any lower proposal. "European Parliament blusters over the EU budget," *Financial Times*. Available online: <https://www.ft.com/content/a3965502-4ee8-11ea-95a0-43d18ec715f5> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

<sup>38</sup> "Slovakia applies to be new seat of the European Medicines Agency," *The Slovak Spectator*, July 28, 2017. Available online: <https://spectator.sme.sk/c/20613609/slovakia-applies-to-be-new-seat-of-the-european-medicines-agency.html> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

<sup>39</sup> "Európsky orgán práce začína svoju činnosť: otázky a odpovede," [European Labour Authority begins operating: question and answers] *Press Corner*, European Commission, October 16, 2019. Available online: [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/sk/QANDA\\_19\\_6056](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/sk/QANDA_19_6056) (accessed on March 15, 2020).

done in EU affairs and the European Commission priorities.<sup>40</sup> The subsequent annual report highlights that 2019 is an important year because of the European elections and new European Commission. Slovakia simply states that it agrees entirely with the priorities of Ursula von der Leyen and considers the MFF to be the most important, albeit controversial, issue.<sup>41</sup>

Both these examples show that Slovakia lacks a conceptual government document setting out clear national priorities regardless of the electoral cycles in Slovakia and Brussels. The debate from 2018 about Slovakia being at the “core” of EU integration has not led to any structural assessments of its EU policy. The next Slovak government and especially the foreign ministry should raise this question so Slovakia can become a more predictable and reliable partner to other member states.

Last but not least, the new government may do well to consider taking the large and growing EU agenda away from the Foreign Ministry and giving it to the Government Office of the Slovak Republic. This was first discussed during the election campaign and a similar trend can be seen in several other member states. It is a logical move if we look at the amount of legislation the member states have to transpose and its overarching influence on the everyday lives of Slovak citizens.

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<sup>40</sup> “Výročná správa o členstve Slovenskej republiky v Európskej únii – hodnotenie a aktuálne priority vyplývajúce z Pracovného programu Európskej komisie,” [Annual report on Slovakia’s EU membership – assessment and priorities stemming from the EC Work Program] Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, 2019. Available online: <https://rokovania.gov.sk/download.dat?id=F524CAC924A84E4C9499CD0AF46B2BD1-2CD9CB9617FDD407B1523B01DDD97066> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

<sup>41</sup> “Slovensko sa bude riadiť prioritami Európskej komisie,” [Slovakia will follow EC priorities] Partner Agreement, Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic, February 27, 2020. Available online: <https://www.partnerskadohoda.gov.sk/slovensko-sa-bude-riadiť-prioritami-europskej-komisie/> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

# 2019: DRAGHI'S FAREWELL

MARTIN VLACHYNSKÝ

The year 2018 started with a dip and ended with a dip. While the first dip encouraged investors to buy, the second sowed fear. With fiscal problems in France and Italy, Brexit plans going round in circles and a headstrong US president, recession became the popular talking point of late 2018. The 2019 response to this was a turnaround in monetary policy in Europe and the United States. Central banks acted to keep the veil of prosperity firmly in place. However, as 2019 continued, problems could be glimpsed behind the veil.

Chair of the Federal Reserve Jerome Powell said<sup>1</sup> in a news conference on January 30, that the case for hiking rates had weakened, signaling the Fed's intention to stop its policy of interest rate hikes. Yet a mere two months previously he had said, "The US economy is the star economy these days."<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, right between these two events, Powell's informal boss, President Donald Trump, discussed firing Powell precisely because of the interest rate hikes.<sup>3</sup> Right after the January news conference, the Dow Jones index broke through the 25,000 limit and the President of the United States tweeted his satisfaction (Figure 1).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> F. Imbert, "Dow surges more than 400 points to above 25 000 after Fed signals patience with rate hikes," *CNBC*, January 30, 2019. Available online: <https://www.cnn.com/2019/01/30/stock-market-wall-street-focus-on-fed-rate-decision.html> (accessed on January 30, 2020).

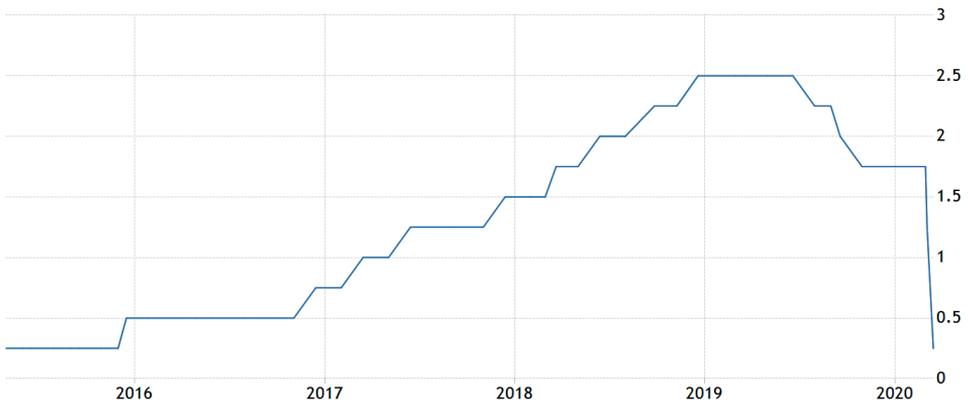
<sup>2</sup> L. Dunsmuir, "Fed's Jerome Powell: No 'booming' in US economy that threatens to go bust," *liveMINT*, November 14, 2019. Available online: <https://www.livemint.com/news/world/fed-s-jerome-powell-no-booming-in-us-economy-that-threatens-to-go-bust-11573754325390.html> (accessed on January 30, 2020).

<sup>3</sup> J. Jacobs, S. Moshin, M. Talev, "Trump discusses firing Fed's Powell after latest rate hike, sources say," *Bloomberg*, December 22, 2018. Available online: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-12-22/trump-said-to-discuss-firing-fed-s-powell-after-latest-rate-hike> (accessed on January 30, 2020).

<sup>4</sup> "Official account of Donald Trump," *Twitter.com*, January 30, 2019. Available online: <https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/1090729920760893441?lang=en> (accessed on January 30, 2020).

**Figure 1.** Donald Trump's tweet

Why this lengthy prelude? It nicely illustrates how pathologically addicted the global economies had become to asset price growth since the crisis. The biggest national economy in the world grew 3.4 per cent in 2018 and had an unemployment rate of less than 4 per cent, while domestic demand was growing and inflation was right on the 2 per cent target – ideal textbook economic conditions. And yet, even the 2.5 per cent fund rate seemed to be too high for businesses to accommodate. Not to mention the fiscal deficit, which (despite the “good economic times”) continued to soar towards the 1 trillion mark and GDP of 5 per cent.

**Figure 2.** United States Fed Funds Rate

SOURCE: TRADINGECONOMICS.COM | FEDERAL RESERVE

Source: “United States Fed Funds Rate,” *Trading Economics*. Available online: <https://tradingeconomics.com/united-states/interest-rate> (accessed on January 30, 2020).

The situation was not exclusive to the United States. China injected 570 billion yuan on a single day (January 15, 2019).<sup>5</sup> That is 74 billion euros, the amount the ECB injects into the eurozone in a whole month. The monetary spike reached 1,140 billion yuan. 2018 was the year China recorded its lowest GDP growth in 28 years<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> “China injects record \$84bn to boost economy and avoid cash squeeze,” *Financial Times*, January 16, 2019. Available online: <https://www.ft.com/content/7136dfa8-1944-11e9-9e64-d150b3105d21> (accessed on January 30, 2020).

<sup>6</sup> Huileng Tan, “China’s economy grew 6.6% in 2018, the slowest pace in 28 years,” *CNBC*, January 20, 2019. Available online: <https://www.cnbc.com/2019/01/21/china-2018-gdp-china-reports-economic-growth-for-fourth-quarter-year.html> (accessed on January 30, 2020).

– and those were the official numbers. There have been many signals<sup>7</sup> indicating the Chinese economy was experiencing a serious slowdown. Real estate prices stopped growing, Chinese businesses were recorded as going into default,<sup>8</sup> and international trade slowed down. This was not simply because of the US–China trade war, since trade with Germany (which was supposed to be profiting from the trade war!) and South Korea declined as well.<sup>9</sup>

And Europe did not begin 2019 as an island of prosperity either. Industrial production had been falling throughout 2018. Despite the ongoing monetary stimulus (with 2.6 trillion euros committed until the end of 2018<sup>10</sup>), Germany's economy grew 1.5 per cent last year, its smallest rate rise since 2013<sup>11</sup>. While industrial production had recovered somewhat in early 2019, another fall followed soon after.

**Figure 3.** Eurozone industrial production



SOURCE: TRADINGECONOMICS.COM | EUROSTAT

Source: “Euro area industrial production,” *Trading Economics*. Available online: <https://tradingeconomics.com/euro-area/industrial-production> (accessed on January 30, 2020).

<sup>7</sup> C. Balding, “Beijing dithers as the economy declines,” *Bloomberg*, January 1, 2019. Available online: <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2018-12-31/china-s-economic-slowdown-is-worsening-stop-dithering-beijing> (accessed on January 30, 2020).

<sup>8</sup> “Latest China bond default puts spotlight on financial reporting,” *Bloomberg News*, January 16, 2019. Available online: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-01-16/latest-china-bond-default-puts-spotlight-on-financial-reporting> (accessed on January 30, 2020).

<sup>9</sup> G. Wearden, “Recession fears grow as eurozone factories stumble and China’s exports fall – as it happened,” *The Guardian*, January 14, 2019. Available online: <https://www.theguardian.com/business/live/2019/jan/14/china-trade-slowdown-exports-us-surplus-eurozone-industrial-production-business-live> (accessed on January 30, 2020).

<sup>10</sup> R. Carvalho, D. Ranasinghe, T. Wilkes “The life and times of ECB quantitative easing, 2015-2018,” *Reuters*, December 12, 2018. Available online: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-eurozone-ecb-qe/the-life-and-times-of-ecb-quantitative-easing-2015-18-idUSKBN1OB1SM> (accessed on January 30, 2020).

<sup>11</sup> “German economic growth slowest for five years,” *BBC*, January 15, 2019. Available online: <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-46875113> (accessed on January 30, 2020).

In March, at a meeting of the Governing Council of the European Central Bank, it was announced (in addition to no change to the interest rate) that a new series of quarterly targeted longer-term refinancing operations (TLTRO-III) would be launched, starting in September 2019 and ending in March 2021.<sup>12</sup> TLTROs are targeted operations, as the amount that banks can borrow is linked to their loans to non-financial corporations and households – meaning the bank will get money from the ECB if it subsequently lends it to businesses.

Ironically, Dan Andrews and Filippos Petroulaki from the ECB published a paper at almost the same time (February 2019) in which they concluded “that firms that would typically exit or be forced to restructure in a competitive market – ‘zombie firms’ – seem to increasingly survive during the crisis, which may weigh on average productivity and crowd-out growth opportunities for more productive firms.”<sup>13</sup> In other words, keeping alive failed companies (and banks) stifles the growth of healthy businesses. Yet, TLTRO and other monetary stimulus programs are a life source for many zombie companies and zombie banks.

Maybe the same can be said about zombie public budgets? While some countries, like Germany, the Netherlands or Denmark, generated budget surpluses for many quarters in a row, other countries, like France or Belgium, continued to show red numbers in their budgets. Italy, a country with one of the biggest global public debts, notoriously turbulent changes of government (the Conte government reshuffle of September 2019 made it the sixth government since 2011) and long term growth problems, experienced record demand for its 30-year government bonds in February, with 41 billion euro of orders on an 8-billion euro issue.<sup>14</sup> In March, Greece sold ten-year debt for the first time since the crisis<sup>15</sup> and in October, it sold three-month treasuries with negative interest.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> “Monetary policy decisions,” European Central Bank, March 7, 2019. Available online: <https://www.ecb.europa.eu/press/pr/date/2019/html/ecb.mp1903077d8a9d2665.en.html> (accessed on January 30, 2020).

<sup>13</sup> D. Andrews, F. Petroulakis, “Breaking the shackles: Zombie firms, weak banks and depressed restructuring in Europe,” European Central Bank, *Working Paper Series* No. 2240, February 2019. Available online: <https://www.ecb.europa.eu/pub/pdf/scpwps/ecb.wp224061e2d9dfec.en.pdf> (accessed on January 30, 2020).

<sup>14</sup> “Financial Times,” *Twitter.com*, February 6, 2019. Available online: <https://twitter.com/FT/status/1093203915460493312> (accessed on January 30, 2020).

<sup>15</sup> “Greece sells 10-year debt for first time since financial crisis,” *The Irish Times*, March 5, 2019. Available online: <https://www.irishtimes.com/business/economy/greece-sells-10-year-debt-for-first-time-since-financial-crisis-1.3814946> (accessed on January 30, 2020).

<sup>16</sup> “Greece sells 3-month T-bills at negative yield,” *Ekathimerini.com*, October 9, 2019. Available online: <http://www.ekathimerini.com/245328/article/ekathimerini/business/greece-sells-3-month-t-bills-at-negative-yield> (accessed on January 30, 2020).

**Figure 4.** Eurozone GDP growth rate

Source: "GDP growth," *Trading Economics*. Available online: <https://tradingeconomics.com/euro-area/gdp-growth> (accessed on January 30, 2020).

However, GDP growth kept declining throughout 2019 in the eurozone, while inflation remained above 1 per cent, and a few pockets (including Slovakia) experienced inflation of over 2 per cent.<sup>17</sup> Unemployment kept falling and, in October 2019, eurozone unemployment fell to an 11-year low of 7.5 per cent.<sup>18</sup> Growing asset prices did not just generate positive sentiments – rising real estate prices in Berlin led local government to introduce a rent ceiling (which came into force in February 2020).<sup>19</sup> This was an unprecedented step for a free market economy, with long term negative consequences.

After eight years in office, ECB president Mario Draghi was replaced in December 2019 by the former managing director of the International Monetary Fund Christine Lagarde. Draghi spent his whole term governing ECB in crisis mode – and no great change is expected from C. Lagarde.<sup>20</sup> M. Draghi even left a small farewell package in September – a new round of quantitative easing, worth 20 billion per month and he reduced the deposit rate even further into negative territory, down to -0.5 per

<sup>17</sup> "Annual inflation up to 1.3% in the euro area. Up to 1.6% in the EU," *Eurostat*, December 2019. Available online: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/10159211/2-17012020-AP-EN.pdf/12e497ea-cf5e-c8ae-acf5-2b97b5076ba0> (accessed on January 30, 2020).

<sup>18</sup> "Eurozone inflation rebounds more than expected," *Financial Times*, November 29, 2019. Available online: <https://www.ft.com/content/b6403578-1294-11ea-a7e6-62bf4f9e548a> (accessed on January 30, 2020).

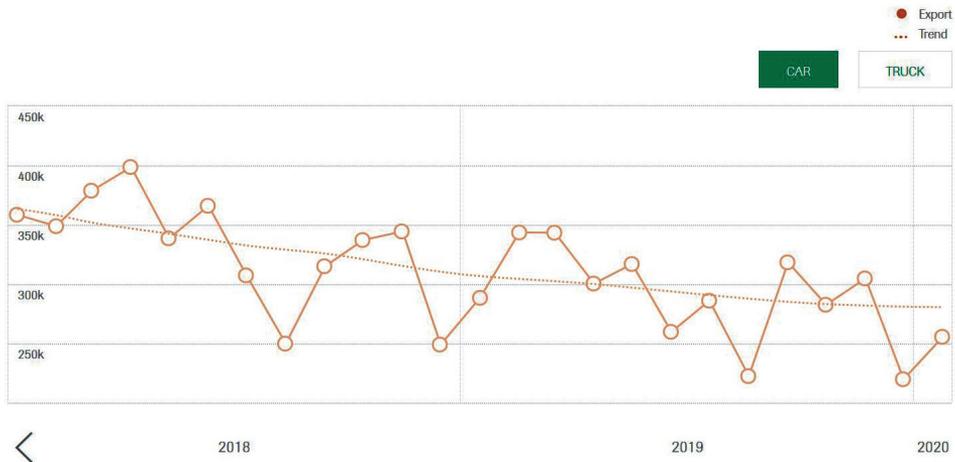
<sup>19</sup> "Berlin starts controversial rent freeze on 1.5 million homes," *Euronews*, February 23, 2020. Available online: <https://www.euronews.com/2020/02/23/berlin-starts-controversial-rent-freeze-on-1-5-million-homes> (accessed on February 23, 2020).

<sup>20</sup> J. Ewing, "Christine Lagarde begins to chart a course at the ECB," *The New York Times*, December 12, 2019. Available online: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/12/business/christine-lagarde-ecb.html> (accessed on January 30, 2020).

cent.<sup>21</sup> The eurozone was unable to go more than nine months without quantitative easing ... more than a decade after the crisis started! The decision was far from unanimous. Not only was the German member against it, but so were the French, Dutch, Austrian and Estonian members. They have only 7 out of the 25 votes in the governing council, but represent 56 per cent of the ECB paid-in capital and 60 per cent of the eurozone's GDP.<sup>22</sup> Germany's member Sabine Lautenschlaeger even stepped down,<sup>23</sup> making her the fourth German member to resign from the ECB owing to disagreement over basic monetary policy. A few years on, and there will be nobody who can remember how the ECB works in "normal" mode.

Even the strongest European economy showed serious signs of decline as the year went on. German car production went down, reaching a 12-month level of less than 4.8 million cars in mid-2019 – the lowest number since the 2009 crisis.

**Figure 5.** Passenger cars



Source: "Production: Passenger Cars," Verband der Automobilindustrie. Available online: <https://www.vda.de/en/services/facts-and-figures.html> (accessed on January 30, 2020).

<sup>21</sup> "Monetary policy decisions," European Central Bank, September 12, 2019. Available online: [https://www.ecb.europa.eu/press/pr/date/2019/html/ecb.mp190912~08de50b4d2.en.html?utm\\_campaign=Zl%C3%A9%20peniaze%2C%20dobr%C3%BD%20C5%BEivot&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=Revue%20newsletter](https://www.ecb.europa.eu/press/pr/date/2019/html/ecb.mp190912~08de50b4d2.en.html?utm_campaign=Zl%C3%A9%20peniaze%2C%20dobr%C3%BD%20C5%BEivot&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Revue%20newsletter) (accessed on January 30, 2020).

<sup>22</sup> H.-W. Sinn, "Strategie Evropské centrální banky ožebračuje souseda Trumpa," [European Central Bank strategy impoverishes neighbor Trump] *ihned.cz*, September 26, 2019. Available online: [https://ekonom.ihned.cz/c1-66647640-strategie-evropske-centralni-banky-ozebracuje-soused-a->trumpa?utm\\_campaign=Zl%C3%A9%20peniaze%2C%20dobr%C3%BD%20C5%BEivot&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=Revue%20newsletter](https://ekonom.ihned.cz/c1-66647640-strategie-evropske-centralni-banky-ozebracuje-soused-a->trumpa?utm_campaign=Zl%C3%A9%20peniaze%2C%20dobr%C3%BD%20C5%BEivot&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Revue%20newsletter) (accessed on January 30, 2020).

<sup>23</sup> "German ECB board member resigns in disagreement," *Euobserver*, September 26, 2019. Available online: [https://euobserver.com/tickers/146083?utm\\_campaign=Zl%C3%A9%20peniaze%2C%20dobr%C3%BD%20C5%BEivot&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=Revue%20newsletter](https://euobserver.com/tickers/146083?utm_campaign=Zl%C3%A9%20peniaze%2C%20dobr%C3%BD%20C5%BEivot&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Revue%20newsletter) (accessed on January 30, 2020).

Overheated pockets are appearing across the eurozone, while the main engine has been slowing down. The National Bank of Slovakia wrote in its bulletin in July that "the record low unemployment level and overheating economy with production above its potential are one of the sources of cyclical risks."<sup>24</sup>

A crisis is looming. But when monetary policy tricks consumers and businessmen into believing the economy is booming, the problem gets far worse. Wrong investment and consumer decisions could fuel the coming crisis, making it deeper and longer. Indeed, asset prices in some member states are showing worrying growth.<sup>25</sup> Mario Draghi, in his farewell news interview in late September 2019, stressed the important role of the ECB in fighting the crisis (and criticized the initial "monetary conservatism"), but stressed the importance of a common fiscal policy for the whole of the EU.<sup>26</sup> He used the word "fiscal" 20 times. Maybe he was actually trying to say "what we've done is not quite working, but with more concentrated power, things will finally be right!".

"Super Mario" was the architect behind the ECB's shift during the crisis. From its initial position as a Bundesbank-like hawkish institution supposed to make sure monetary policy is not misused by member countries seeking to solve their fiscal problems, it became a firefighter, shoveling liquidity wherever it deemed it was needed. Purchasing large amounts of public debt became the new standard of monetary policy conduct. Any efforts to ensure member states were in line fiscally proved unsuccessful. Instead, fiscal union became the main talking point. But its creation is proceeding in tiny steps, and the ECB is locked in the vicious loop it created. Considering that it brings German and Italian and French fiscal attitudes together under one roof, it may never get anywhere. While Germany was able to push the size of the total debt down in 2019 (not only in relative terms, but also absolute ones!), both Italy and France were racing to break the 2.4 trillion euro line.

Meanwhile, the Fed continued in its complete reversal of policy and lowered the interest rate in September 2019<sup>27</sup> by 0.25 per cent to 1.75–2 per cent. President Trump (and many investors) were expecting a more radical cut and accused the Fed of having "no guts."<sup>28</sup> The Fed also increased the intensity of its asset purchases, switching its QE policy back to a higher speed.<sup>29</sup> And the S&P raced up and up, pushing its historic record still further, rising 400 per cent since hitting its 2009 bottom.

<sup>24</sup> "Prečo sa opäť zvýšila úroveň protocyklického kapitálového vankúša," [Why did the level of counter-cyclical capital buffer increase again] National Bank of the Slovak Republic *Analytical Commentary*, No. 67, August 6, 2019. Available online: [http://www.nbs.sk/\\_img/Documents/\\_komentare/AnalytickeKomentare/2019/AK67\\_Proticyklicky\\_kapitalovy\\_vankus.pdf](http://www.nbs.sk/_img/Documents/_komentare/AnalytickeKomentare/2019/AK67_Proticyklicky_kapitalovy_vankus.pdf) (accessed on January 30, 2020).

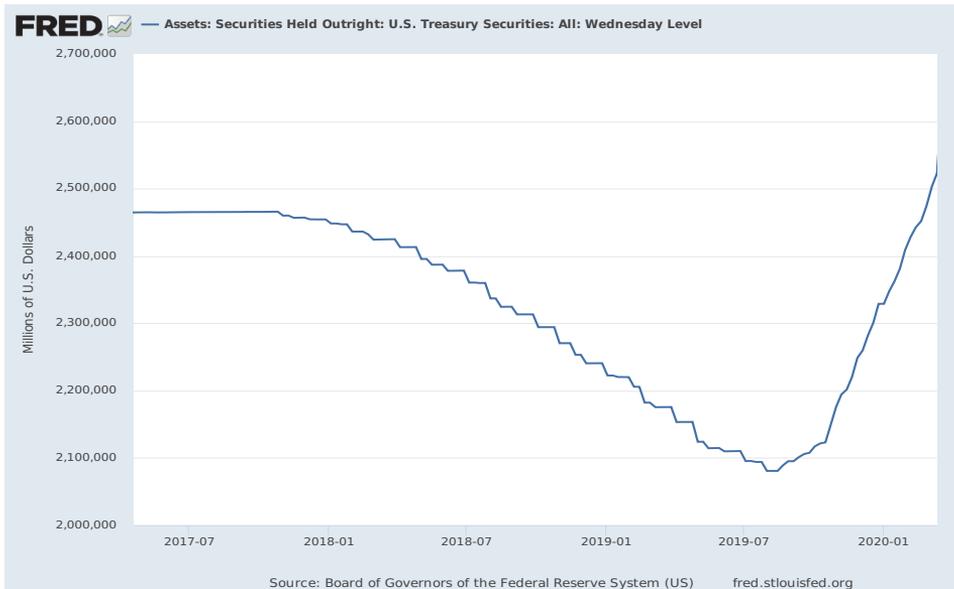
<sup>25</sup> "Mortgage rates below 1% put Europe on alert for housing bubble," *The New York Times*, December 17, 2019. Available online: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/17/business/europe-housing.html> (accessed on January 30, 2020).

<sup>26</sup> "Interview with Financial Times – Mario Draghi," European Central Bank, September 30, 2019. Available online: <https://www.ecb.europa.eu/press/inter/date/2019/html/ecb.in190930~d0a72d3141.en.html> (accessed on January 30, 2020).

<sup>27</sup> "Federal Reserve issue FOMC statement," Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, September 18, 2019. Available online: <https://www.federalreserve.gov/newsevents/pressreleases/monetary20190918a.htm> (accessed on January 30, 2020).

<sup>28</sup> "Official account of Donald Trump," *Twitter.com*, September 28, 2019. Available online: <https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/1174388901806362624?lang=en> (accessed on January 30, 2020).

<sup>29</sup> "Federal reserve bank of St. Louis. Assets: Securities Held outright: U.S. Treasury Securities: All: Wednesday level." Available online: <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/TREAST> (accessed on January 30, 2020).

**Figure 6.** Saint Louis FED

Source: "Federal reserve bank of St. Louis. Assets: Securities Held outright: U.S. Treasury Securities: All: Wednesday level." Available online: <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/TREAST> (accessed on January 30, 2020).

Monetary policy can maintain the illusion of prosperity for a long time. Many believe that slowly unwinding expansive policies can prevent a sudden economic crash. However, even the ECB's and Fed's smallest step back from expansive policies was short-lived. It seems impossible to unwind slowly. Politicians are too dependent on growth in the here and now, and the political pressure to keep the money flowing is too strong.

The other option is a sudden shock from outside. Since 2009, many have predicted collapse and yet the global economy has proved robust enough to withstand everything so far without going into a deadly spiral. The migrant crisis and civil unrest in the Middle East, Trump's victory, the repeated problems of Italy's banks (one, Banca Popolare di Bari, went into special administration in December 2019 just a few hours after Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte said the banking system was in good health and there would be no need for state bailouts<sup>30</sup>), but the troubling state of Deutsche Bank, the collapse of Venezuela and serious economic problems in a number of other South American countries, the crypto-crash and many other events have all been cast as the final triggers for economic collapse in the past few years. And yet it is a collapse that has not happened.

<sup>30</sup> "Italian lender Popolare di Bari put into special administration," *Reuters*, December 13, 2019. Available online: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-italy-banks-popolare-di-bari-idUSKBN1YH29V> (accessed on January 30, 2020).

However, if a car accelerates out of control and we see it passing tree after tree avoiding all the obstacles, it does not mean that the car will not eventually crash. The only question is when the brakes will finally start working, or when the driver will be able to find the right place to run it off the road to minimize the damage.

There were a number of potential crisis triggers in 2019 as well. The most notorious was probably Brexit. However, after the staggering Conservative victory brought Brexit day closer (finally arriving in January 2020), the markets were calmed – and there is no need to speculate if it was because of Boris Johnson's demonstrated swiftness in moving things forward, or because of the defeat of the very left-wing Jeremy Corbyn.

Another potential trigger loomed from across the Channel. President's Macron's efforts to put French public finances in some kind of basic order were not met with cheer. Quite the opposite, the Yellow Vest protests carried on all year, repeatedly paralyzing Paris and many other parts of the country. It may not be obvious at first, but this can also be traced back to ECB policies. Richer citizens profited more from the monetary expansion than the "ordinary man." When the richest Frenchman, Bernard Arnault, decided to buy Tiffany & Co with his company LVMH Moët Hennessy–Louis Vuitton SE, the ECB bought all the debt securities his company issued thereby de facto financing the deal.<sup>31</sup> It is very difficult to explain to 99 per cent of citizens how such operations are supposed to help the eurozone economy... The protests are a sure sign France will not be able to get its public finances and ballooning debt under control, but with the monetary machine running, the debt does not represent an immediate problem.

The situation in Germany remains more of a long-term rather than an acute problem. Unlike in France, its public finances are in good shape. However, the once dominant eurozone politician "Frau Merkel" has been slowly losing power at home and it was not entirely clear whether she would even finish her full term as chancellor.<sup>32</sup> Under Merkel, Germany was viewed as a bulwark of fiscal and monetary conservatism, holding whatever was left in the eurozone from the old hawkish positions. But then again what was left? German opposition to the monetary situation was always more vocal than real.

Italy's political somersaults are not worth mentioning beyond what was noted in the paragraphs above. The US–China trade war ran for a second year, had its ups and downs and investors seemed to be slowly adjusting to reality. Hostilities around the Strait of Hormuz occupied the front pages for a while, especially after the September attack on the Saudi refinery – but oil prices lazily moved a few dollars per barrel.

2019 was a year full of events and yet little changed in Europe's economy. Draghi's machine seemed to be set to work for some years more, despite having a new captain. The economy was slowing down noticeably, but it was nothing compared to what Europe had seen a few times in the previous decade. Brexit and the follow up talks

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<sup>31</sup> M. Ashworth, "France's richest man gets a free lunch from the ECB," *Bloomberg*, February 7, 2020. Available online: <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2020-02-07/louis-vuitton-gets-help-from-the-ecb-for-16-billion-tiffany-deal> (accessed on February 10, 2020).

<sup>32</sup> J. Cliffe, "It is no longer certain that Angela Merkel will complete her term as German Chancellor," *New Statesman*, February 13, 2020. Available online: <https://www.newstatesman.com/world/europe/2020/02/it-no-longer-certain-angela-merkel-will-complete-her-term-german-chancellor> (accessed on February 13, 2020).

were to have been the main political and economic topic for the EU in 2020. Only a handful of European businessmen and students had ever heard of the large, but un-newsworthy city of Wuhan in the Chinese province of Hubei. This would all change in a few weeks, with the onset of a new, unexpected and critical “crisis trigger” for the European economy (and others). It is a crisis that cannot be overcome by simply printing massive amounts of money and one that will test the backbone of national economies and the very fabric holding the European Union together.

# BEYOND ENERGY SECURITY? SLOVAKIA TEN YEARS AFTER THE GAS CRISIS

VERONIKA ORAVCOVÁ

The year 2019 was a turning point in energy policy. Slovakia, like other EU countries, drafted its long-term climate and energy strategy, an integrated National Energy and Climate Plan for 2021–2030 (NECP). The NECP comes under the Regulation on the Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action (EU/2018/1999)<sup>1</sup> and covers five of the Energy Union dimensions: energy security; internal energy market; energy efficiency; climate action and decarbonization; and research, innovation and competitiveness.<sup>2</sup> Primary responsibility for drafting the NECP lies with the Ministry of Economy. The NECP is an updated version of the 2014 Energy Policy of the Slovak Republic. Energy security is vital to Slovakia and a major issue since the natural gas crisis of January 2009.<sup>3</sup> The year 2019 represented the beginning of a new direction in energy and climate policy and the end of a decade of energy security concerns.

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<sup>1</sup> “National energy and climate plans (NECPs),” European Commission (2019). Available online: <https://ec.europa.eu/energy/en/topics/energy-strategy/national-energy-climate-plans> (accessed on March 2, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> “Energy Union,” European Commission (2017). Available online: <https://ec.europa.eu/energy/en/topics/energy-strategy/energy-union#content-heading-2> (accessed on March 2, 2020).

<sup>3</sup> M. Mišík, “The influence of perception on the preferences of the new member states of the European Union: the case of energy policy,” *Comparative European Politics* Vol. 13, No. 2, 2015, pp. 198–221.

## ENERGY SECURITY WAS A MAJOR ISSUE IN THE LAST DECADE

By 2019 a decade had passed since the natural gas crisis and since energy security had become the primary concern in discussions about the future of Slovakia's energy sector. Back in January 2009 Slovakia had been left with no natural gas supply for two weeks. It and Bulgaria were the two countries most affected by the crisis. In 2019 energy security reared its head again as the transit agreement between Ukraine's Naftogaz and Russia's Gazprom was due to expire. By the end of the year, concern was increasing and Minister of the Economy Peter Žiga admitted that another crisis was likely as the transit agreement would expire in December.<sup>4</sup> In fact, there was no repeat<sup>5</sup> of the 2009 crisis and a new five-year transit agreement was signed<sup>6</sup>. Maroš Šefčovič, the EU Vice President for the Energy Union under Jean Claude Juncker Commission, was actively involved in the gas transit negotiations with Russia and Ukraine.<sup>7</sup> It is clear from the NECP that gas transit is a key energy security concern and that the transit of natural gas from Ukraine is an "absolute priority" for both Central and Eastern Europe and the "security, economic and political stability in Ukraine."<sup>8</sup> There are still question marks over the future of gas as work is ongoing on Nord Stream 2. Eustream, the Slovak transmission system operator (TSO), is certain it will remain part of the strategic gas infrastructure and that gas transit will continue to be important to the EU's western and southern markets.<sup>9</sup>

In the past decade gas infrastructure has become the main focus in improving energy security. The necessary interconnections and sufficient storage capacity have been built. The construction of cross-border infrastructure in Slovakia and other Visegrad countries is largely funded by the EU, mainly out of the Connecting Europe Facility

<sup>4</sup> "Žiga: Plynová kríza po Novom roku je pravdepodobná," [Žiga: the gas crisis likely after the New Year] TASR, December 11, 2019. Available online: <https://www.etrend.sk/ekonomika/ziga-plynova-kriza-po-novom-roku-je-pravdepodobna.html> (accessed on March 1, 2020).

<sup>5</sup> K. Hirman, "Plynová kríza nebude. 3 dôvody, prečo sa Rusko a Ukrajina rozumne dohodli na tranzite plynu," [There will be no gas crisis. Three reasons why Russians and Ukrainians agreed on gas transit] *DennikN*, December 21, 2019. Available online: <https://e.dennikn.sk/1695022/plynova-kriza-nebude-3-dovody-preco-sa-rusko-a-ukrajina-rozumne-dohodli-na-tranzite-plynu/> (accessed on March 3, 2020).

<sup>6</sup> "Naftogaz, GTSOU and Gazprom signed a set of agreements to ensure Russian gas transit over the next five years," Naftogaz Group, December 31, 2019. Available online: <http://www.naftogaz.com/www/3/nakweben.nsf/0/24DE3C1B1D52B136C22584E00079DA9E?OpenDocument&year=2019&month=12&nt=News&> (accessed on March 2, 2020).

<sup>7</sup> "Remarks by Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič following trilateral talks on gas transit with Russia and Ukraine," European Commission, October 28, 2019. Available online: [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH\\_19\\_6178](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_19_6178) (accessed on March 1, 2020).

<sup>8</sup> "Integrovaný národný energetický a klimatický plán na roky 2021-2030," [Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan for years 2021-2030] Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic, 2019. Available online: <https://www.economy.gov.sk/energetika/navrh-integrovaneho-narodneho-energetickeho-a-klimatickeho-planu> (accessed on March 2, 2020).

<sup>9</sup> P. Szalai, "Šéf Eustreamu: Nord Stream 2 nie je pre Slovensko problém," [Head of Eustream: Nord Stream 2 is not a problem for Slovakia] *EURACTIV.sk*, November 26, 2019. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/energetika/news/sef-eustreamu-nord-stream-2-nie-je-pre-slovensko-problem/> (accessed on March 3, 2020).

(CEF).<sup>10</sup> Slovakia's main strategic infrastructure projects are included on the Projects of Common Interest (PCI) lists published every two years since 2013. The fourth list was published in 2019. These key European cross-border infrastructure projects are aimed at improving diversification, which enhances energy security, competitiveness and the natural gas, oil and electricity markets.<sup>11</sup> Support for financing and construction permits can be obtained through these projects. Most of the cross-border infrastructural projects have already been completed, such as the reverse flow with the Czech Republic and the interconnection with Hungary. The Slovak-Hungarian gas interconnection has been operational since 2015. This 111 km long gas pipeline interconnecting the high-pressure systems at Veľké Zlievce and Vecsés (92 km on the Hungarian side and 19 km on the Slovak side) was built using €30 million from the European Energy Program for Recovery.<sup>12</sup> In 2014 the bi-directional reverse flow with Ukraine was constructed, improving Ukraine's energy security and providing market opportunities.

There are several projects aimed at enhancing flexibility and the construction of the final interconnection – between Slovakia and Poland. This Eustream and Gaz-System project entails the construction of new interconnectors on either side of the border (59 km of pipeline on the Polish side and 106 km on the Slovak side) and modifications to the biggest compressor station at Veľké Kapušany.<sup>13</sup> The project should be finished by the end of 2021. The priority North–South Gas Corridor from the Polish LNG terminal in Świnoujście and the terminal on the Croatian Island Krk will enhance energy security and gas market competition. The LNG terminal at Świnoujście has been operating since 2016 and is being expanded. It is important for four reasons: it can transport gas from any part of the world; it enables diversification of gas supply; enhances energy security; and boosts the competitiveness of the natural gas market.<sup>14</sup> Slovakia will also be able to access new gas markets via the interconnection with Poland.

Another important development relating to energy security was the publication of the latest list of PCI projects in 2019. The infrastructure projects that are important to Slovakia include gas (development and enhancement of the transmission capacity of the Slovak-Hungarian interconnector), electricity (the interconnection between Gabčíkovo and Gönyű (in Hungary) and Veľký Ďur; the interconnection between Sajóvánka (in Hungary) and Rimavská Sobota), smart grid deployment (ACON – Again Connected Networks – to better integrate the Czech and Slovak electricity markets and Danube InGrid between Hungary and Slovakia to enhance the cross-border coordination of smart electricity network management) and oil (pipeline linking Schwechat (Austria)

<sup>10</sup> V. Oravcová, M. Mišík, "EU funds and limited cooperation: energy infrastructure development in the Visegrad Group," *International Issues & Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs* Vol. 27, No. 3–4, 2018, pp. 11–26.

<sup>11</sup> "Key cross border infrastructure projects," European Commission, 2019. Available online: <https://ec.europa.eu/energy/en/topics/infrastructure/projects-common-interest/key-cross-border-infrastructure-projects> (accessed on March 1, 2020).

<sup>12</sup> "Slovensko-Maďarské prepojenie," [Slovak–Hungarian interconnection] Eustream. Available online: [https://www.eustream.sk/sk\\_prepravna-siet/sk\\_prepojenie-sk-hu](https://www.eustream.sk/sk_prepravna-siet/sk_prepojenie-sk-hu) (accessed on March 1, 2020).

<sup>13</sup> "Prepojovací plynovod Poľsko – Slovensko," [Poland–Slovakia interconnections gas pipeline] Eustream. Available online: [https://www.eustream.sk/files/docs/sk/PLSK\\_prepoj/Infobroz\\_prepojovaci\\_plynovod\\_PolskoSlovensko\\_v03.pdf](https://www.eustream.sk/files/docs/sk/PLSK_prepoj/Infobroz_prepojovaci_plynovod_PolskoSlovensko_v03.pdf) (accessed on March 1, 2020).

<sup>14</sup> "LNG Terminal," Gaz-System. Available online: <http://en.gaz-system.pl/lng-terminal/> (accessed on March 1, 2020).

and Bratislava).<sup>15</sup> The new electricity interconnectors are designed to improve cross-border interconnectivity, as there is still a lack of available transmission capacity on the Slovak–Hungarian border. ACON and the Danube InGrid are important to increasing use of smart grids and renewable energy sources and meeting the increasing demand for flexible power systems.

Eastring’s natural gas project did not make the 2019 PCI list, although it has been listed previously and the feasibility study received CEF funding<sup>16</sup> and political support from Maroš Šefčovič, at that time Vice-President for the Energy Union<sup>17</sup>. The project is supposed to connect Slovakia and Bulgaria through Hungary and Romania and to provide access to the Black Sea and the Turkey region (Bulgarian–Turkish border). The proposed bi-directional gas interconnector is 1,208 km long and will have an annual capacity of 20 bcm in the first phase and 40 bcm in the second phase.<sup>18</sup> Although the project is not an EU cross-border energy infrastructure priority, it is still important to Slovakia and represents an alternative transit route once Nord Stream 2 from Russia to Germany has been completed.<sup>19</sup> MEP Martin Hojsík argues that the dropping of Eastring is “good news for the climate,” but it is supported by MEP Robert Hajšel, the Ministry of Economy and Eustream and it is expected to feature on the list in future.<sup>20</sup> The project to increase the transmission capacity of the gas connector between Slovakia and Hungary remains on the list.

There are still questions about natural gas’s role in the energy transition and beyond. Natural gas has proved crucial to Slovakia’s ability to reduce its emissions (especially in the 1990s) and Slovakia has an extensive gas pipeline network in residential areas. The Slovak Gas and Oil Association (SGOA) thinks gas has a crucial role to play in meeting climate goals, improving air quality and in transport. The SGOA will stop financing fossil fuel energy projects from the end of 2021 in response to the European Investment Bank’s strategy. But it also points out that infrastructure is essential for supplies.<sup>21</sup> Large

<sup>15</sup> “Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) of 31 October 2019 amending Regulation (EU) No 347/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the Union list of projects of common interest,” European Commission, 2019. Available online: [https://ec.europa.eu/energy/sites/ener/files/c\\_2019\\_7772\\_1\\_annex.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/energy/sites/ener/files/c_2019_7772_1_annex.pdf) (accessed on March 1, 2020).

<sup>16</sup> “Feasibility study for the Eastring project,” Connecting Europe Facility ENERGY, 2017. Available online: <https://ec.europa.eu/inea/sites/inea/files/6.25.1-0010-skhu-s-m-16.pdf> (accessed on March 01, 2020).

<sup>17</sup> “TB M. Šefčoviča, P. Žiga a Eustreamu o plynovode Eastring,” [Press conference of M. Šefčovič, P. Žiga and Eustream regarding the Eastring gas pipeline] *TA3*, September 20, 2018. Available online: <https://www.ta3.com/clanok/1136666/tb-m-sefcovica-p-ziga-a-eustreamu-o-plynovode-eastring.html> (accessed on March 1, 2020).

<sup>18</sup> “Capacity & construction,” Eastring. Available online: <https://www.eastring.eu/page.php?page=capacity-construction> (accessed on March 1, 2020).

<sup>19</sup> M. Mišík, A. Nosko, “Eastring gas pipeline in the context of Central and Eastern European gas supply challenge,” *Nature Energy* Vol. 2, No. 11, 2017, pp. 844–8.

<sup>20</sup> P. Szalai, “Nový slovenský plynovod vypadol zo zoznamu prioritných európskych projektov,” [The new Slovak gas pipeline is not on the list of the European project of common interest] *EURACTIV.sk*, October 22, 2019. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/energetika/news/novy-slovensky-plynovod-vypadol-zo-zoznamu-prioritnych-europskych-projektov/> (accessed on March 1, 2020).

<sup>21</sup> “Bez zemného plynu Slovensko podľa zväzu nedokáže splniť klimatické ciele,” [Without natural gas, according to association, Slovakia is unlikely to meet its climate targets] *TASR*, December 12, 2019. Available online: <https://ekonomika.sme.sk/c/22282487/bez-zemneho-plynu-slovensko-podla-zvazu-nedokaze-splnit-klimaticke-ciele.html> (accessed on March 10, 2020).

infrastructure projects have come in for criticism. Hojsík, a newly elected MEP, thinks natural gas has little to contribute to combatting climate change and has a questionable financial return. He points out that new types of gas, such as biomethane could be competitive without requiring subsidies.<sup>22</sup> In the NECP natural gas is considered to be particularly important in the heating sector, while there is potential for further decarbonization through energy efficiency measures and in transport.<sup>23</sup>

In Slovakia energy security has mainly been understood in terms of the diversification of energy sources and transport routes (the lack of alternative routes was thought to be why the 2009 gas crisis had such an impact on Slovakia). But improving nuclear safety and reliability, reducing dependency on imported fossil fuels, better energy efficiency (and thereby lower energy consumption) and developing renewable energy sources are also part of energy security. Renewables, especially biomass and hydro, are seen as another way of improving energy security.<sup>24</sup> The largest energy efficiency improvements have been achieved through home renovations (insulation).<sup>25</sup> Nuclear safety is considered a priority and to be crucial to the stability of the electricity grid. Another important aspect of the energy debate in 2019 was the completion of reactor 3 (and 4) of Mochovce nuclear power plant amid safety concerns regarding the construction work and opaque financing.<sup>26</sup> Mochovce 3 and 4 also represent a challenge to achieving greater penetration of renewable energy sources (above the proposed 2030 RES target for electricity sector – 27.3 per cent) and maintaining energy reliability. In order to improve the flexibility of the electricity grid, the NECP outlines plans to enable the aggregation of collection facilities, energy storage facilities and electricity generating facilities so ancillary services can be provided. The legislation will be transposed<sup>27</sup> by the end of 2020<sup>28</sup>.

<sup>22</sup> P. Szalai, "Europoslanec Hojsík odmieta investície do veľkých plynovodov, odporúča bioplyn," [MEP Hojsík rejects the big gas pipeline investments, recommends biogas] *EURACTIV.sk*, July 01, 2019. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/energetika/news/europoslanec-hojsik-odmieta-investicie-do-velkych-plynovodov-odporuca-bioplyn/> (accessed on March 10, 2020).

<sup>23</sup> "Integrovaný národný energetický a klimatický plán na roky 2021-2030," op. cit.

<sup>24</sup> "Energy policy of the Slovak Republic," Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic, 2014. Available online: <https://www.mhsr.sk/uploads/files/47NgRIPQ.pdf> (accessed on March 2, 2020).

<sup>25</sup> "Slovak Republic," International Energy Agency, 2018. Available online: <https://www.iea.org/reports/energy-policies-of-iea-countries-slovak-republic-2018-review> (accessed on March 10, 2020).

<sup>26</sup> "Mochovce: ďalšie meškanie, bezpečnostné otázky aj novela zákonov," [Mochovce: further delays, security issues and laws amendments] *Energoklub*, April 8, 2019 and "Mochovce neustále vyvolávajú bezpečnostné aj finančné otázky," [Mochovce keeps rising the security and financial questions] *Energoklub*, September 13, 2019. Available online: <https://energoklub.sk/sk/clanky/mochovce-dalsie-meskanie-bezpecnostne-otazniky-aj-novela-zakonov/> (accessed on March 10, 2020).

<sup>27</sup> "Directive (EU) 2019/944 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 June 2019 on common rules for the internal market for electricity and amending Directive 2012/27/EU," *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 158/125, June 14, 2019. Available online: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019L0944&from=EN> (accessed on March 2, 2020) and "Regulation (EU) 2019/943 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 June 2019 on the internal market for electricity," *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 158/54, June 14, 2019. Available online: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019R0943&from=EN> (accessed on March 2, 2020).

<sup>28</sup> "Integrovaný národný energetický a klimatický plán na roky 2021-2030," op. cit.

## THE NATIONAL ENERGY AND CLIMATE PLAN AND ENERGY SECURITY

Energy security is one of the five pillars of the Energy Union and therefore a crucial part of the integrated National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP).<sup>29</sup> Slovakia, like other EU countries submitted its NECP to the European Commission by the end of 2019. The NECP is based on a draft document (submitted in January 2019) and incorporates recommendations from the Commission received in June. It is also derived from the 2014 Energy Policy of the Slovak Republic and sets out the energy sector priorities for 2035, with a view to 2050, and covers energy security, energy efficiency, competitiveness and sustainable energy.<sup>30</sup> Both versions should have been subjected to public consultation but in fact only the final version of the NECP was. It will be revised and updated in 2023.

Slovakia's draft NECP was criticized for not being ambitious enough on reducing emissions and increasing renewable energy use<sup>31</sup> (in the final version the renewable percentage of gross final consumption was raised from the proposed 18 per cent to 19.2 per cent, and not the 24 per cent recommended by the Commission). Energy security remains a top priority in Slovak energy strategies, and this was noted by the Commission in its assessment of the NECP. Its comments on energy security targeted two areas: nuclear energy and gas and electricity infrastructure. The draft NECP lacked information on the life-time of nuclear reactors, supply of nuclear fuel (aiming to improve diversification) and potential deposits. It did not give sufficient detail on the impacts of climate change (besides the energy security risks), or on existing risk preparedness plans for electricity and gas, and nor did it provide a description of cybersecurity or import dependency measures.<sup>32</sup> However, the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) approved in 2017 does cover the impacts of climate change on various sectors: water management, forest ecosystems and transport, industry and energy sectors. The NAP identifies examples of best practice that Slovakia could use in its energy infrastructure protection, such as underground electrical infrastructure, decentralized energy systems, development and use of more efficient and smart technologies and more effective use of existing resources.<sup>33</sup>

The final version of the NECP focuses on two crucial aspects of energy security: the importance of nuclear energy during the energy transition and the fact that it is the main carbon-free source of electricity, and the future infrastructure for the PCI electricity, gas

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>30</sup> "Energy policy of the Slovak Republic," *op. cit.*

<sup>31</sup> J. Melichár, "Návrh slovenského energetického plánu nie je v súlade s Parížskou dohodou," [The draft of Slovakia's energy plan is not in line with Paris Agreement] *EURACTIV.sk*, June 5, 2019. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/klima/opinion/navrh-slovenskeho-energetickeho-planu-nie-je-v-sulade-s-parizskou-dohodou/> (accessed on March 2, 2020).

<sup>32</sup> "Assessment of the draft National Energy and Climate Plan of Slovakia," European Commission, June 18 2019. Available online: [https://ec.europa.eu/energy/sites/ener/files/documents/sk\\_swd\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/energy/sites/ener/files/documents/sk_swd_en.pdf) (accessed on March 2, 2020).

<sup>33</sup> "Stratégia adaptácie Slovenskej republiky na nepriaznivé dôsledky zmeny klímy," [Climate adaptation strategy of the Slovak Republic] Ministry of the Environment of the Slovak Republic, 2017. Available online: <https://www.minzp.sk/files/odbor-politiky-zmeny-klimy/strategia-adaptacie-sr-nepriaznive-dosledky-zmeny-klimy-aktualizacia.pdf> (accessed on March 2, 2020).

and oil projects aimed at achieving greater diversification of routes and sources. The gas sector remains a key part of discussions on energy security. Interestingly though, energy security is also emphasized in relation to research and innovation, and Slovakia plans to improve the security of its electricity grids.<sup>34</sup>

## CLIMATE FIRST?

Climate and energy issues have become increasingly interlinked across the EU since the launch of 2020 Climate and Energy package<sup>35</sup> and are likely to remain closely connected. However, that will require close cooperation between the ministries and across sectors. The use of renewable energy sources is progressing very slowly in Slovakia. By the end of 2019 the Ministry of Economy announced it was designing its first renewable energy auctions and that the first auction would be held in 2020.<sup>36</sup> Being a domestic source of energy, these could form an important part of Slovakia's climate commitments and energy security as well.

In 2019 climate change became a bigger issue for the general public and politicians alike. Slovakia had two elections (the presidential and European elections) and climate change was a key issue of debate among political elites, political parties, civil society and non-governmental actors.

President Zuzana Čaputová is the most visible figure in the climate debate. In the March 2019 presidential elections she defeated Maroš Šefčovič who was supported by the largest governing party Smer-SD. Zuzana Čaputová was backed by the non-parliamentary party Progresívne Slovensko (PS). She was a lawyer and an environmental activist in her hometown of Pezinok, and was awarded the Goldman Prize in 2016 for her activism. In the election she campaigned on justice and rule of law.<sup>37</sup> Since being elected president, she has promoted climate change. One of her political advisors is Juraj Rizman, former spokesperson and director of Greenpeace Slovakia.<sup>38</sup> She has spoken out about climate change and energy efficiency, launching an ecological and

<sup>34</sup> "Integrovaný národný energetický a klimatický plán na roky 2021-2030," op. cit.

<sup>35</sup> J. Vogler, "Changing conceptions of climate and energy security in Europe," *Environmental Politics*, Vol. 22, No. 4, 2013, pp. 627-45.

<sup>36</sup> "MH SR spúšťa historicky prvú aukciu na výrobu zelenej energie," [Economy Ministry launches first renewables auction] Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic, 2020. Available online: <https://www.mhsr.sk/top/mh-sr-spusta-historicky-prvu-aukcii-na-vyrobu-zelenej-energie> (accessed on March 2, 2020).

<sup>37</sup> D. Mikušovič, "Hlavne nič nepokaziť. Ako vyzerala Čaputovej kampaň pred druhým kolom," [Not to make any mistake. How the campaign of Z. Čaputová looks like before the second round] *DenníkN*, March 27, 2019. Available online: <https://dennikn.sk/1423776/hlavne-nic-nepokazit-ako-vyzerala-caputovej-kampan-pred-druhym-kolom/> (accessed on March 10, 2020).

<sup>38</sup> J. Koník, "Čaputovej poradca Rizman: Pamätám si časy, keď sa Zuzane vyhrážali pre skládku," [Advisor to Čaputová Rizman: I remember when they threatened Zuzana because of waste dump] *DenníkN*, May 29, 2019. Available online: <https://dennikn.sk/1483651/caputovej-poradca-rizman-pamatam-si-casy-ked-sa-zuzane-vyhrazali-pre-skladku/> (accessed on March 1, 2020).

energy audit in the presidential office.<sup>39</sup> In September 2019 she was among those speaking on the first day of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. She argued that climate change and climate change denial were among the biggest problems facing the world and spoke of the advantages of renewables and the need for leadership on the Paris Agreement commitments.<sup>40</sup>

Interestingly, in his presidential campaign, Maroš Šefčovič did not focus on climate change or energy, but talked about more general EU topics and tried to appeal to more conservative voters by highlighting value issues.<sup>41</sup> While Prime Minister Peter Pellegrini initially adopted a negative stance in June on achieving carbon neutrality by 2050,<sup>42</sup> he later stated that Slovakia was on the way to achieving that goal and meeting the Paris Agreement Commitments.<sup>43</sup> He changed his mind after meeting with President Čaputová and receiving a petition signed by eight MEPs.<sup>44</sup> After the new head of the Commission, Ursula von der Leyen presented an ambitious plan for tackling climate change in December known as the European Green Deal and emphasizing the commitment to become climate-neutral by 2050,<sup>45</sup> Pellegrini came out in favor. The European Council members endorsed the plan, with the exception of Poland, which is heavily reliant on coal.<sup>46</sup> The European Green Deal reflects the Paris Agreement and is a roadmap to achieving the EU's long-term strategy to become a climate-neutral economy. It contains seven policy areas to achieve this: clean energy, sustainable

<sup>39</sup> "Prezidentka chce ísť príkladom v téme ochrany životného prostredia," [President wants to set an example in the field of environment protection] TASR, July 26, 2019. Available online: <https://domov.sme.sk/c/22176298/prezidentka-caputova-ochrana-zivotne-prostredie-enviro-ekologia.html> (accessed on March 1, 2020).

<sup>40</sup> "Prezidentka v OSN: Je potrebné rešpektovať pravidlá," [President in the UN: we must respect the rules] Office of the President of the Slovak Republic. Available online: <https://www.prezident.sk/article/prezidentka-v-osn-je-potrebne-respektovat-pravidla/> (accessed on March 1, 2020).

<sup>41</sup> L. Praus, "Šefčovič sa v kampani hľadal, no nenašiel. Čo rozhodne voľby podľa Maďariča či Slosiarika," [Šefčovič was searching his place in campaign, but did not succeed. What will be decisive for the elections according to Maďarič or Slosiarik] *Sme*, March 27, 2019. Available online: <https://domov.sme.sk/c/22085257/prezidentske-volby-2019-aka-bola-volebna-kampan.html> (accessed on March 10, 2020).

<sup>42</sup> P. Szalai, "Uhlíková neutralita v roku 2050? Slovensko hovorí (zatiaľ) nie," [Carbon neutrality in 2050. Slovakia says (now) no] *EURACTIV.sk*, June 17, 2019. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/klima/news/uhlikova-neutralita-v-roku-2050-slovensko-hovori-zatial-nie/> (accessed on March 01, 2020).

<sup>43</sup> "Pellegrini potvrdil dohodu krajín EÚ na uhlíkovej neutralite," [Pellegrini confirmed the EU deal on carbon neutrality] Government Office of the Slovak Republic, December 13, 2019. Available online: <https://www.vlada.gov.sk//pellegrini-potvrdil-dohodu-krajin-eu-na-uhlikovej-neutralite/> (accessed on March 1, 2020).

<sup>44</sup> "Slovensko podporí cieľ EÚ dosiahnuť do roku 2050 uhlíkovú neutralitu," [Slovakia will support the carbon neutrality by 2050] SITA, June 18, 2019. Available online: <https://ekonomika.sme.sk/c/22148451/slovensko-podpori-ciel-eu-dosiahnut-do-roku-2050-uhlikovu-neutralitu.html> (accessed on March 10, 2020).

<sup>45</sup> F. Simon, "EU Commission unveils 'European Green Deal': The key points," *EURACTIV.com*, December 11, 2019. Available online: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/energy-environment/news/eu-commission-unveils-european-green-deal-the-key-points/> (accessed on March 01, 2020).

<sup>46</sup> "European Council meeting – Conclusions," European Council, December 12, 2019. Available online: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/41768/12-euco-final-conclusions-en.pdf> (accessed on March 10, 2020).

industry, construction sector, sustainable transport, biodiversity, food systems and pollution. Financial support and technical assistance will be provided through the Just Transition Mechanism (expected to be at least €100 billion) to the people and regions most vulnerable to the energy transition.<sup>47</sup>

Climate and energy issues were the main priorities in the manifestos of the Slovak parties that won the most seats in the May 2019 European elections (a coalition of *Progresívne Slovensko* and *Spolu – the non-parliamentary parties*) included within their main priorities.<sup>48</sup>

2019 was a turning point for Slovakia's coal (lignite) mining industry. In July the government approved an Action Plan for the Transformation of the Upper Nitra Coal Region.<sup>49</sup> Although Robert Fico, the chairman of governing party *Smer-SD* signed a petition calling for the region's coal mining to be retained,<sup>50</sup> there is a broad political consensus on the phase-out of lignite extraction. In 2018 the focus was on a fair and just transition, subsidies and the timing. But in May the Commission approved the Action Plan and further state subsidies for the Upper Nitra region up to 2023 (after that lignite extraction will cease to be a general economic interest<sup>51</sup>).<sup>52</sup>

In 2019 politicians and civil society began focusing on climate change. Inspired by the Swedish ecological activist Greta Thunberg, "Fridays for Future" has become an important movement all over the world. Slovak pupils and students began striking in March 2019 along with the students, teachers and professors in other countries, trying to influence politicians' decisions to reduce the impact of climate change. The first strikes were held in March in four Slovak towns Bratislava, Košice, Liptovský Mikuláš and Žilina, and the protesters campaigned to end the use of fossil fuels and coal mining in Slovakia.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>47</sup> "A European Green Deal," European Commission, 2019. Available online: <https://ec.europa.eu/info/node/123797> (accessed on March 10, 2020).

<sup>48</sup> L. Dudlák Sidorová, "Eurovolby vyhrali nové tváre a nové hodnoty. Hojsík: Potrebujeme zelený restart," [The new faces and the new values have won the EP elections. Hojsík: we need the green restart] SITA, May 27, 2019. Available online: <https://www.webnoviny.sk/eurovolby-vyhrali-nove-tvare-a-nove-hodnoty-hojsik-potrebujeme-zeleny-restart/> (accessed on March 1, 2020).

<sup>49</sup> "Akčný plán transformácie uhoľného regiónu horná Nitra," Government Office of the Slovak Republic, July 02, 2019. Available online: <https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Material/24029/1> (accessed on March 04, 2020).

<sup>50</sup> "Video: Ľudia musia mať svoju prácu, vyhlásil Fico a podpísal petíciu baníkov z Hornej Nitry," [Video: People must have their job, said Fico and signed the petition of miners from Horna Nitra region] SITA, May 10, 2018. Available online: <https://www.webnoviny.sk/video-ludia-musia-mat-svoju-pracu-vyhlasil-fico-podpisal-peticiu-banikov-z-hornej-nitry/> (accessed on March 4, 2020).

<sup>51</sup> "Hospodársky záujem pri ťažbe uhlia by mal skončiť v roku 2023," [The economic interest in coal mining should end in 2023] TASR, December 12, 2018. Available online: <https://www.teraz.sk/ekonomika/hospodarsky-zaujem-pri-tazbe-uhlia-b/366740-clanok.html> (accessed on March 4, 2020).

<sup>52</sup> "State aid: Commission approves Slovak support to HBP to alleviate social and environmental impact of mines closure," European Commission, November 28, 2019. Available online: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/news/state-aid-commission-approves-slovak-support-hbp-alleviate-social-and-environmental-impact-mines-closure-2019-nov-28\\_sk](https://ec.europa.eu/info/news/state-aid-commission-approves-slovak-support-hbp-alleviate-social-and-environmental-impact-mines-closure-2019-nov-28_sk) (accessed on March 4, 2020).

<sup>53</sup> O. Horák, "Organizátor štrajku za budúcnosť klímy: Ťažba uhlia a ťažba dreva v národných parkoch by sa mali zastaviť," [The organizer of the protest for the future of climate: coal mining and logging in national parks should stop] *DenníkN*, March 15, 2019. Available online: <https://dennikn.sk/1411298/organizator-strajku-za-buducnost-klimy-tazba-uhlia-na-slovensku-a-tazba-dreva-v-narodnych-parkoch-by-sa-mali-zastavit/>. (accessed on March 4, 2020).

Despite the rhetoric, only small steps are being taken to promote renewable energy, introduce more ambitious energy saving plans and find alternatives to imported fossil fuels. The shift away from oil will be especially challenging, as the proportion of cars has been rising in Slovakia. The solution could be electric cars (or even better, extending public transport to combat the negative preference for traveling by car instead of bus, tram or train). In March the government approved an Action Plan for electro-mobility up to 2030.<sup>54</sup> However, it envisages around only 30 thousand vehicles, a far lower figure than the number of new cars registered annually (over 100 thousand). The Action Plan was drafted by the Ministry of Economy in cooperation with the Automotive Industry Association of the Slovak Republic, the Slovak Electric Vehicle Association and SARIO (Slovak Investment and Trade Development Agency). In November the Ministry of Economy announced subsidies for electric cars (€8,000) and plug-in hybrids (€5,000). Within less than four minutes, the online system was overwhelmed and the €6 million set aside reserved. Of the over 4,000 registrations, only 668 were successful.<sup>55</sup> The Ministry plans to develop a charging infrastructure.

Natural gas has been and will probably continue to be a key energy source in Slovakia. The Ministry of Environment has begun subsidizing domestic boilers. In September 2019 they announced the first round of subsidies for gas-fired boilers.<sup>56</sup> The Ministry of Environment estimates that there are approximately 350 thousand homes with solid fuel boilers and 120 thousand households with boilers that are more than 30 years old. The program has been allocated €35 million (€30 million from the Quality of Environment Operational Program and €5 million in state co-finance). Assuming that a €3,000 subsidy is allocated for each boiler, around 10 thousand boilers could be replaced.<sup>57</sup> However, homes that have not been insulated against heat loss will also be eligible for the subsidies.

## FUTURE CHALLENGES

The past decade has been dominated by the energy security debate because of the natural gas crisis in 2009. Climate change, energy and decarbonization are gaining

<sup>54</sup> "Akčný plán rozvoja elektromobility," [Action plan on promoting electromobility] SARIO, 2019. Available online: <https://www.sario.sk/sites/default/files/files/Ak%C4%8Dn%C3%BD%20pl%C3%A1n%20rozvoja%20elektromobility%20v%20SR.pdf> (accessed on March 3, 2020).

<sup>55</sup> Z. Kullová, "Takmer 4 minúty a dotácia na elektromobil je fuč. Toto všetkých čaká," [Almost 4 minutes and subsidy for electromobility is gone. This is what follows] *Trend*, December 16, 2019. Available online: <https://www.etrend.sk/podnikanie/takmer-4-minuty-a-dotacia-na-elektromobil-je-fuc-toto-vsetkych-cka-2.html> (accessed on March 3, 2020).

<sup>56</sup> "55. výzva zameraná na náhradu zastaranejších spaľovacích zariadení v domácnostiach za nízkoemisné (s výnimkou OZE)," [55. call focused on replacement of outdated boilers] Operational programme: Quality of Environment, September 30, 2019. Available online: <https://www.op-kzp.sk/obsah-vyzvy/55-vyzva-zamerana-na-opkzp-po1-sc141-55/> (accessed on March 3, 2020).

<sup>57</sup> "Ministerstvo chce zlepšiť ovzdušie, domácnostiam rozdá na nové kotly 35 miliónov," [The ministry wants to improve the quality of air, provides 35 millions for boilers to households] *Sme*, October 1, 2019. Available online: <https://ekonomika.sme.sk/c/22225882/ministerstvo-chce-zlepsit-ovzdušie-domacnostiam-rozda-na-kotly-35-milionov.html> (accessed on March 3, 2020).

more attention among political leaders and society generally, and energy security is still an important aspect of Slovak energy policy. As the final version of the Slovak National Energy and Climate Plan for 2021–2030 indicates, the gas sector will continue to dominate future discussions on energy security. Energy security is mainly considered in relation to the diversification of natural gas, oil and electricity and developing storage capacities. Although Slovakia now has good interconnectivity with its neighbor countries, diversification of transport routes (emphasizing the importance of PCI lists) and the safety of nuclear energy still top the energy security agenda.<sup>58</sup>

But energy security is also understood more broadly, in terms of how energy efficiency and energy savings can help reduce energy demand and improve use of domestic resources, which leads to better integration of renewables. Concerns about the future and energy security tend to focus on electricity infrastructure, and the need to introduce flexibility to facilitate the integration of renewables and smart grid architecture. There are also plans to support research and innovation in this area within the next five years.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> "Integrovaný národný energetický a klimatický plán na roky 2021-2030," *op. cit.*

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 85



# SLOVAK SECURITY AND DEFENSE POLICY IN 2019

DUŠAN FISCHER

When 2019 started, there were several defense and security issues to be resolved. The EU was preparing for its parliamentary election and Brexit day was still in the pipeline. It had been almost three years since the referendum, so desperation on both sides had turned into a tiresome wait for the United Kingdom to finally leave the EU. There were a couple of related questions, such as what kind of relationship would the EU and UK agree in relation to Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). In addition, with the United Kingdom leaving the EU, the member states felt the urge to address third party participation in Permanent Structure Cooperation (PESCO). In NATO the leadership and members were starting to get along with the U.S. administration and were able to distinguish words from actions. After reassurance from some U.S. government representatives, although not its head, NATO continued going forward, expanding rapid deployment, securing the Eastern and Southern Flanks by military and non-military means and keeping the door open for possible accessions. The Eastern Flank of Europe, particularly the ongoing frozen conflict in Ukraine led Slovakia to follow NATO's policy of improving readiness through military exercises and by building security capacities, such as the NATO Force Integration Unit.

On the domestic front, the Slovak government, particularly the Ministry of Defense of the Slovak Republic spent 2019 defending its modernization projects and other defense and security initiatives. Overall, with the rise in the number of modernization projects and the increasing politicization of defense and security, 2019 was set to be a challenging year. Although Slovakia had an unstable neighborhood, particularly Ukraine, and was potential threatened by the migration crisis in the South-East of Europe it was not the target of either threats. Therefore, given the situation and Slova-

kia's security culture, the government focused more on contributing to NATO and EU initiatives. Nonetheless, Slovakia did provide troops to the Enhanced Forward Presence in Latvia and continued to engage in EU PESCO projects.

## BIG WORDS, SMALL ACTIONS

In the European Union, the parliamentary election and the appointment of the new European Commission were among the major events. The global role of EU foreign policy was not as strong as the EU Global Strategy 2016 had suggested. The fast pace adopted by the outgoing Commission vice-president and high representative for foreign affairs and security policy Federica Mogherini slowed, easing off even more shortly before the European parliament election. The intention was not to overlap with NATO, but to create something new. Some even suggested going as far as creating a European Army, while others remained skeptical.<sup>1</sup> However, there was not a lot of information about what the new thing should be. The Coordinated Annual Review on Defense (CARD) and Permanent Structure Cooperation (PESCO) met regularly, but remained silent. The year 2019 was supposed to be the first full cycle year for CARD. The Council met in November when its members discussed PESCO and deeper defense cooperation. Subsequently, the Council adopted a set of new 13 projects under PESCO. "Five of the new projects," the Council concluded, "focus on training, covering areas such as cyber, diving, tactical, medical as well as chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear defense (CBRND) training. Other projects focus on enhancing EU collaborative actions as well as on capability development on sea, air and space."<sup>2</sup>

The European parliament elections were certainly the most important event in 2019 simply because parliament selects the European Commission, which is Europe's "government." Mogherini was a strong promoter of both the NATO-EU relationship and PESCO. Mogherini and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg even seemed to have a good and balanced personal relationship.

In her role as VP/HR Mogherini discussed Brexit on only a few occasions. However, when she did so she was critical of the decision to leave the EU. For example, at a ceremony honoring the 100th anniversary of Helmut Schmidt, she jabbed at the UK, saying there are some countries "that have not realized they are small nations."<sup>3</sup> She apparently recognized that both the UK and the EU had lost out in terms of defense capabilities. When it comes to security, the British talking point has been "the UK is leaving the EU, not Europe." This statement should calm remaining members worried about the future of EU's security capabilities. However, analysts across the board

<sup>1</sup> "Germany won't enlist in Macron's European Army," *Bloomberg*, November 12, 2019. Available online: <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2019-11-12/merkel-s-germany-won-t-enlist-in-macron-s-european-army> (accessed on March 17, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> "Outcome of the Council Meeting 3726th Council meeting," 13976/19 (OR. en), Council of the European Union, November 11-12, 2019. Available online: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/42006/st13976-en19-fv.pdf> (accessed on March 17, 2020).

<sup>3</sup> "Brits angry at Dane's 'small nation' jibe," *Politico*, June 14, 2017. Available online: <https://www.politico.eu/article/kristian-jensen-brits-angry-at-danes-small-nation-jibe/> (accessed on March 17, 2020).

agreed that Brexit is a loss for both the UK and EU in defense terms. For example, RAND Europe concluded in their study that “Brexit could reduce the EU’s defense capabilities by a quarter.”<sup>4</sup> Both actors have shared security threats and although they often did not see eye to eye about further defense integration within the EU, they could help each other respond. Michael Leigh from the IISS offers the Skripal affair as a positive example of mutual cooperation between the UK and EU.<sup>5</sup> The hardest impact on the EU’s overall security and defense will be the loss of influence of British strategic thinking and institutions. While the real outcome of Brexit will be unknown for a long time, it will not pave the way to a positive solution of Europe’s security situation. Britain will be taking resources away with it, both financial and non-financial, that will be difficult to replace.

On December 1, 2019, Josep Borrell took over Mogherini’s position. In a personal blog he wrote on taking office, he called the EU “a global leader.” He later stated his three principles – realism, unity, and partnership.<sup>6</sup> While J. Borrell has only been in office for three months at the time of writing, it is safe to presume from the available materials that he will be more inclined towards diplomacy and maintaining the global role of the EU by helping to achieve sustainable development, fight climate change and provide more multilateral opportunities for other world powers. There is a possibility that the current leadership will dwarf initiatives like PESCO. Although the programs rely heavily on the actions of the EU member states, to avoid misconception or misinterpretation, the strong voice of EU unity is required for them to be successful.

Security and defense issues were not among the top priorities of the EU presidencies of Finland and Romania. The Council’s 18-month program included the most important abbreviations relating to EU security and defense, namely PESCO, CARD, DIDP (European Defense Industrial program) and EDF (European Defense Fund), but contained nothing beyond the claim of “enhancing NATO-EU relations.”<sup>7</sup> As Europe focused mostly on PESCO, CARD, and EDF, the ambitious goals stated in the EU Global Strategy from 2016 remain ambitious on paper. Despite many prognoses about a post-Trump America retreating from world affairs, there is still minimal room for European engagement. This is partly down to the lack of EU capabilities for achieving all the goals. In 2019 their inability to adapt to the security environment showed. Since it began

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<sup>4</sup> J. Black, A. Hall, K. Cox, M. Kepe, and E. Silfversten, *Defence and security after Brexit: Understanding the possible implications of the UK’s decision to leave the EU – Compendium report*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2017. Available online: [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR1786.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1786.html) (accessed on March 17, 2020).

<sup>5</sup> “The UK and European security after Brexit,” *International Institute for Security Studies*, May 30, 2019. Available online: <https://www.iiss.org/blogs/survival-blog/2019/05/european-security-brexit> (accessed on March 17, 2020).

<sup>6</sup> “A stronger European Union within a better, greener and safer world – key principles that will be guiding my mandate,” European External Action Service, December 1, 2019. Available online: [https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/71265/stronger-european-union-within-better-greener-and-safer-world-key-principles-will-be-guiding\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/71265/stronger-european-union-within-better-greener-and-safer-world-key-principles-will-be-guiding_en) (accessed on March 17, 2020).

<sup>7</sup> “Taking forward the Strategic Agenda 18-month Programme of the Council (1 January 2019 – 30 June 2020),” 14518/18, Council of the European Union, November 30, 2018. Available online: <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-14518-2018-INIT/en/pdf> (accessed on March 17, 2020).

implementing its Global Strategy, the EU has spent three years explaining that is not seeking to replace NATO or US influence in Europe, but to boost its own European capabilities. However, with the excuses made for every step towards closer cooperation, and with some European countries' independent thinking, we have a political hybrid with three dozen PESCO projects with limited or no results.<sup>8</sup>

As an EU member state and active PESCO participant, Slovakia is watching closely to see how security and defense debates develop in the EU. On March 12, 2019, the prime minister Peter Pellegrini visited the European Parliament. When taking the floor, he talked about the EU as "a global power." He said that we EU members "must take action to unify our forces and increase capacity building in defense."<sup>9</sup> Pellegrini also called for a more inclusive approach on PESCO and while he agreed with President Macron that debates should be stimulated on the national and regional level, he did not mention his European Intervention Initiative. Furthermore, in September, the foreign ministry stated that Slovakia was not planning to join EI2, as Macron's initiative is commonly known.<sup>10</sup> EI2 attracted a lot of media attention, but the results are yet to be seen. It is a joint military project, currently involving 14 European countries. Since it was declared in 2017, nothing has been done to follow up on the task set out at the beginning – "to develop a shared strategic culture, which will enhance our ability, as European states, to carry out military missions and operations under the framework of the EU, NATO, the UN and/or ad hoc coalition."<sup>11</sup>

Despite these setbacks, the EU has continued its involvement in international operations: EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia in the Mediterranean Sea, EUNAVFOR Operation Atalanta in the Indian Ocean and EUFOR Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In December 2019 it celebrated 15 years of EUFOR Althea in BiH. There are also three military training missions in Somalia, Mali and the Central African Republic. It is obvious from the list that the EU is not giving up on its military potential and still wants to play an important role in international security. As the debate continues, one way to characterize the ongoing struggle within the EU about its future international engagement is to talk about cooperation versus contribution. The EU's strong campaign continues to build reliability among member states and their citizens, increasing self-awareness and thus the more vocal promotion of their interests.

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<sup>8</sup> The latest batch was introduced on November 12, 2019. For more see: [https://www.eda.europa.eu/what-we-do/our-current-priorities/permanent-structured-cooperation-\(PESCO\)/current-list-of-pesco-projects](https://www.eda.europa.eu/what-we-do/our-current-priorities/permanent-structured-cooperation-(PESCO)/current-list-of-pesco-projects) (accessed on March 17, 2020).

<sup>9</sup> "Verbatim Report of Proceedings," 2014–2019, European Parliament, March 12, 2019. Available online: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2019-03-12\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2019-03-12_EN.pdf) (accessed on March 17, 2020).

<sup>10</sup> "Slovensko neplánuje účasť na Európskej intervenčnej iniciatíve," [Slovakia is not planning to join the European Intervention Initiative] *Sme*, September 23, 2019. Available online: <https://domov.sme.sk/c/22219085/slovensko-neplanuje-ucast-na-europskej-intervencnej-iniciative.html> (accessed on March 17, 2020).

<sup>11</sup> "Letter Of Intent between the Defence Ministers of Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom Concerning the Development of the European Intervention Initiative (EI2), Ministry of Defence of France, June 25, 2018." Available online: [https://www.defense.gouv.fr/content/download/535740/9215739/file/LOI\\_IEI%2025%20JUN%202018.pdf](https://www.defense.gouv.fr/content/download/535740/9215739/file/LOI_IEI%2025%20JUN%202018.pdf) (accessed on March 17, 2020).

## NATO

As was the case with the EU, France proved important for NATO. President Emanuel Macron caused a lot of controversy in his interview in November for *The Economist* in which he called NATO "brain-dead."<sup>12</sup> Macron demanded much greater involvement from EU members in the common military unit. Under Macron's leadership, France became more assertive about closer defense and security cooperation, suggesting that Europe should look towards France, not the US when seeking strong leadership. Granted, France has the potential to become a leader;<sup>13</sup> however, there is a lack of political will from other countries reluctant to choose France over the US, mainly Poland and the Baltic countries. *The Economist* analyzed E. Macron's words as meaning that EU values can be overcome by realpolitik, contrary to Europe's intentions in the past. NATO reacted to Macron's comments and its secretary general said that anyone undermining the power of NATO "is also risking dividing Europe itself."<sup>14</sup> He later continued by saying that the European Union cannot defend Europe on its own.<sup>15</sup> The relationship between France and NATO calmed down during a joint press conference between Stoltenberg and Macron.<sup>16</sup>

The debate between NATO and EU leaders continued. The NATO secretary general took every occasion to remind the audience that the Alliance still includes the United States and thus is currently the only alliance capable of defending the European continent in an attack. As proof, NATO continued its air policing mission that is building integrity and a closer partnership between protecting and protected nations. The three Baltic countries – Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia – along with Slovenia, Albania and Montenegro are among the nations seeking NATO assistance in protecting their air space. In Afghanistan, NATO is leading the Resolute Support Mission, a non-combat mission focused on providing training, advice and assistance to local Afghan security forces. Since 1999 NATO has maintained 3,500 allied and partner troops in Kosovo as part of KFOR. One mission discussed in 2019, almost to the point of NATO terminating it, was NTCB-I, NATO Training and Capacity Building Activity in Iraq, which is aimed at building, training and assisting capacities in Iraq.

NATO continued with its number one priority since 2014, which is to maintain a deterrence and defense position, namely the forward presence. The Alliance continued to focus its activities in two main areas, the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea. In the Baltics, NATO was involved in multinational combat-ready battlegroups in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. In 2019 NATO ships spent 100 days in the Black Sea. NATO

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<sup>12</sup> "Emmanuel Macron warns Europe: NATO is becoming brain-dead," *The Economist*, November 7, 2019. Available online: <https://www.economist.com/europe/2019/11/07/emmanuel-macron-warns-europe-nato-is-becoming-brain-dead> (accessed on March 17, 2020).

<sup>13</sup> France is the EU leader in terms of defense budget, size of armed forces and nuclear capabilities.

<sup>14</sup> "NATO at 70 – The bedrock of European and transatlantic security," NATO, November 8, 2019. Available online: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions\\_170606.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_170606.htm) (accessed on March 17, 2020).

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

<sup>16</sup> "Joint press point with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and the President of France Emmanuel Macron," NATO. November 28, 2019. Available online: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions\\_170790.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_170790.htm) (accessed on March 17, 2020).

increased and updated its NATO Response Force with its spearheaded Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF). Further, the NATO Readiness Initiative continued to achieve its “Four Thirties” targets (4x30) set for 2020. That initiative will eventually include 30 battalions, 30 combat ships and 30 squadrons ready for use within 30 days. In the light of closer cooperation with Europe, NATO established its Rapid Air Mobility mechanism that “allows Allied aircraft to move across Europe with priority handling by Air Traffic Control in Europe.”<sup>17</sup> NATO took steps to provide the allies with Alliance Ground Surveillance capabilities, with the first of five AGS aircrafts landing at the Italian air base of Sigonella.

At the 30th formal meeting of NATO heads of state and heads of government on December 4, 2019, members confirmed the capabilities building initiatives. They also reinvented the Defense Investment Pledge, claiming they would continue to allocate 2 per cent GDP to defense spending and 20 per cent of defense budget spending to modernization.<sup>18</sup> The Slovak Defense Minister Gajdoš took an important step by acknowledging all the pledges made by NATO heads of state and heads of government. “Collective defense depends not only on solidarity and unity, but also on each individual’s readiness for individual defense,” said the minister during the meeting.<sup>19</sup> Earlier in March, prime minister Pellegrini had stated that there was no alternatives for Slovakia other than being an EU and NATO member. “[I]t is our duty to strengthen the alliance within NATO, strengthen the transatlantic link and seek a common language in our negotiations with our neighbors,” Pellegrini said during the event commemorating the 20th anniversary of Poland’s accession to NATO.<sup>20</sup>

In 2019 NATO continued its Open Door Policy, indicating that the Alliance was still attractive to new members. In January the Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia (FYROM)<sup>21</sup> signed the Prespa Agreement on the border between Greece and North Macedonia, thereby officially changing its name to North Macedonia. The name change was the subject of a 2018 public referendum in which people voted with an overwhelming majority in favor of changing the name based on the possibility of it becoming a member state of EU and NATO. Voter turnout was 36.89 per cent.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>17</sup> “NATO: ready for the future: Adapting the Alliance (2018–2019),” NATO, November, 2019. Available online: [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2019\\_11/20191129\\_191129-adaptation\\_2018\\_2019\\_en.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2019_11/20191129_191129-adaptation_2018_2019_en.pdf) (accessed on March 17, 2020).

<sup>18</sup> “London Declaration issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in London 3–4 December 2019,” NATO, December 4, 2019. Available [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_171584.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_171584.htm) (accessed on March 17, 2020).

<sup>19</sup> “P. Gajdoš: Slovensko si stojí za svojimi záväzkami zo samitov,” [P. Gajdoš: Slovakia acknowledges the commitments made during summits] Ministry of Defense of the Slovak Republic, December 4, 2019. Available online: <https://www.mosr.sk/46348-sk/p-gajdos-slovensko-sistoji-za-svojimi-zavazkami-zo-samitov/> (accessed on March 17, 2020).

<sup>20</sup> “Pellegrini: EÚ a NATO sú významnými piliermi bezpečnosti a prosperity,” [Pellegrini: EU and NATO are the key pillars of security and prosperity] *Teraz.sk*, March 10, 2019. Available online: <https://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/pellegrini-eu-a-nato-su-vyznamnymi/382916-clanok.html> (accessed on March 17, 2020).

<sup>21</sup> Official name of Macedonia recognized by NATO and in accordance with Greece’s requirements

<sup>22</sup> The question put to voters was: Are you in favor of European Union and NATO membership by accepting the agreement between the Republic of Macedonia and Republic of Greece? 91.18 per cent voted in favor. Areas with a majority Albanian population, including the municipalities of Tetovo, Gostivar and Debar predominantly voted yes.

According to the leader of the Slovak delegation to NATO, this was the last obstacle preventing North Macedonia from joining NATO.<sup>23</sup> The ratification document is awaiting Spain's approval, but all the other member states (including Greece) have ratified it. The plan is for North Macedonia to formally join NATO before the country's parliamentary elections on April 12, 2020. With Montenegro joining NATO on June 5, 2017, and North Macedonia soon to become a member state, the number of potential member countries is shrinking. This may force NATO into looking inward and building capabilities and focusing on member states to improve its popularity.

To expand its reach and gain public approval for its activities, NATO continued its #WeAreNATO campaign as part of activities focused on NATO allies. While it is difficult to assess the success of such campaigns without the relevant public data, YouTube views range from 11 thousand (Czech Republic with 10.6 million people)<sup>24</sup> to 14 thousand (United States with 327.2 million people).<sup>25</sup> While at the beginning of the campaign the intention was mainly to target countries in Central and Eastern Europe, including the Baltics, once Donald Trump began raising questions about the US's NATO membership, NATO had to persuade Americans as well as Europeans. Donald Trump used a NATO meeting in London in November 2019 to again express his concerns regarding the defense spending of NATO allies. This was nothing new from the current US president. However, the reactions from heads of states and governments were lukewarm, considering all the steps the US government and military are taking in Europe despite the criticism.

## POLITICAL ASPECTS OF SLOVAK DEFENSE

In 2019 there were no security events requiring Slovakia's immediate reaction or threatening its territorial integrity. That is not to say that the situation in the area was calm. The war in Ukraine was still ongoing and despite the prisoner exchange between Ukraine and Russia in December, the final agreement with Russia is still far from being implemented. Russia continued to disrupt borders with Ukraine and Georgia to deny their neighbors their Euro Atlantic integration ambitions. The situation in the Middle East was calmer, but the war in Syria never stopped, so there is potential for the migration from the region to resume in the near future.

One of the main examples of the political side of the misunderstanding between the Defense Ministry and the public was over possible cooperation with the US government regarding support for Slovakia and financial aid for modernizing infrastructure at two military airfields – Kuchyňa and Sliač. On March 19, 2019, the Defense Minister,

<sup>23</sup> "R. Javorčík: NATO je pripravené na prijatie Macedónska do svojich radov," [R. Javorčík: NATO is ready for North Macedonia to join its ranks] *Teraz.sk*, January 30, 2019. Available online: <https://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/rjavorcik-nato-je-pripravene-na-pri/375555-clanok.html> (accessed on March 17, 2020).

<sup>24</sup> "The Czech Republic is NATO, We Are NATO - #WeAreNATO," *Youtube.com*, April 10, 2019. Available online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QenbrdqukWY> (accessed on March 17, 2020).

<sup>25</sup> "The US combat cameraman - #WeAreNATO," *Youtube.com*, October 10, 2019. Available online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vRiV7vsMRVI> (accessed on March 17, 2020).

Gajdoš, rejected the idea that Slovakia had declined an offer from the United States. He concluded after the defense and security parliamentary committee that the agreement must go through the legal process.<sup>26</sup> However, the ministry stopped all talks with the US side regarding any additional funds. Gajdoš argued that the proposed agreement did not reflect the requirements of the Slovak Armed Forces. The foreign ministry coordinating the negotiations blamed the Defense Ministry for not consulting with them on the statement prior to its release. The US side did not comment on whether the US government would be the sole user of the infrastructure once built.<sup>27</sup> Prime Minister Pellegrini said that the negative statement by the Defense Ministry on further cooperation with the United States would not have an impact on Slovakia's pro-European and pro-Transatlantic direction.<sup>28</sup> However, from March, he made no public proposals for deepening cooperation between Slovakia and the United States. Even his visit to the White House and his bilateral meeting with President Donald Trump were related more to economic questions than to security and defense. Slovakia was not planning to cooperate with the United States in the region in the way Poland does for example, despite the fear mongering from the nationalist politicians.<sup>29</sup> While the Speaker of Parliament Danko spoke of the permanent presence of foreign (US) troops on Slovak territory, the ministry declined the US offer on the grounds that it did not meet the operational requirements of the Slovak Armed Forces.<sup>30</sup> The United States government issued a statement through its ambassador in Bratislava downplaying the affair and sending a critical message.<sup>31</sup> In his video the ambassador Adam Sterling stated that the US was not seeking to build a permanent structure for a US military force. The consultations and negotiations ceased based on the "hard no" from the Defense Ministry.

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<sup>26</sup> "P. Gajdoš: Rezort obrany v súčasnosti neodmietol financie z USA," [P. Gajdoš: the defense ministry has not rejected the US money yet] *Teraz.sk*, March 14, 2019. Available online: <https://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/p-gajdos-rezort-v-sucasnosti-neodmi/383721-clanok.html> (accessed on March 17, 2020).

<sup>27</sup> "Minister SNS zabrzdil plán na čerpanie 105 miliónov dolárov, ktoré USA ponúkli Slovensku," [Slovak National Party minister stopped the plan to use 105 million USD offered to Slovakia by the USA] *DenníkN*, March 3, 2019. Available online: <https://e.dennikn.sk/1397004/minister-zo-sns-zabrzdil-pripravy-na-cerpanie-105-milionov-dolarov-ktore-usa-ponukli-slovensku/> (accessed on March 17, 2020).

<sup>28</sup> "P. Pellegrini: Odmietnutie financií z USA pre mňa nie je uzavreté," [P. Pellegrini: The matter of rejecting the US money is not closed] *Teraz.sk*, March 13, 2019. Available online: <https://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/p-pellegrini-odmietnutie-financii-z-u/383448-clanok.html> (accessed on March 17, 2020).

<sup>29</sup> The US is to deploy the Army's 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division for the new Headquarters in Poznan based on a bilateral declaration between American President Trump and his Polish counterpart Andrzej Duda.

<sup>30</sup> "Premiér: Nikto dnes o prítomnosti cudzích vojsk na Slovensku nerokuje," [Prime Minister: No one is negotiating a foreign military presence in Slovakia] *Teraz.sk*, March 11, 2019. Available online: <https://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/premier-nikto-dnes-o-pritomnosti-cudz/383098-clanok.html> (accessed on March 17, 2020).

<sup>31</sup> "Veľvyslanec Adam Sterling uvádza fakty o DCA," [Ambassador Adam Sterling on the DCA facts] *Facebook.com*, March 19, 2019. Available online: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2230222100370297> (accessed on March 17, 2020).

On the foreign policy level, Danko played an unprecedented role as speaker of parliament. His party personalized the dispute over the strategic documents. Danko refused to put the 2017 security strategy and defense strategy before a vote in parliament. The government had passed both strategies, and the Defense Ministry and Slovak Armed Forces considered them appropriate for their needs, but a public debate and vote would have given the public a better understanding of the modernization projects and the direction of Slovakia's security and defense policy. He additionally caused a lot of controversy among the domestic audience and allies by visiting Russia five times in 2019 and meeting Russians on the EU sanction list. During his speech at the Slovak-Russian Business Forum in July, Danko used his time to rally against the EU sanctions against Russia and praise cooperation with the Russian Federation.<sup>32</sup> Danko's remarks were the last straw and ended the foreign and security policy consensus among Slovakia's political leaders evident in the 2017 Declaration and re-declared in 2019 by the new president and prime minister. The foreign policy consensus among Slovak political leaders was strongest after the 1998 election and gained strength shortly before Slovakia joined the EU and NATO in 2004. It lasted for ten years. But today's political climate is different. It is built on the illusion that Slovakia can act as a bridge connecting nations and that it can have great relations with Western nations and Russia. But to accept this premise, we have to deny the facts of Russia's military interventions in Ukraine and Georgia. There are two possible reasons behind this. One, Mr. Danko and his party supporters may actually think that acting as a bridge between estranged countries will be a success for Slovakia diplomacy. The other reason may be that they actually believe that Slovakia would be better off with Russia rather than continuing as a NATO/US ally. Globsec Trends 2019 showed that 35 per cent of respondents from Slovakia thought they shared values with Russia compared to 23 per cent who thought American values were closer to theirs. Furthermore, 56 per cent would vote to stay in NATO in a referendum, by far the lowest number in the Visegrad Group. The most significant result of the poll was the 41:26 ratio on the question of whether it was the US or Russia that presented a danger to Slovakia.<sup>33</sup>

Slovak leaders made two other important visits in 2019, both to longer standing allies. The first was President Trump hosting prime minister Pellegrini at the White House in May. Unfortunately, the prime minister's visit was overshadowed by the crisis in Venezuela. Although it was not primarily focused on defense and security, it was a key moment in Slovak-US relations and for defense and security cooperation between the two armed forces. Had it been better timed, for example if it had taken place around the time of the F-16 Letter of Offer and Acceptance in December 2018, it could have had a deeper impact and a broader delegation. Ultimately, though, the visit concluded with no major decision on either side, which played into the low expectations. Newly elected president Zuzana Čaputová paid her second foreign visit

<sup>32</sup> "Danko prednášal v Moskve, vyzdvihol snahu o dialóg s Ruskom," [Danko spoke in Moscow, highlighting the attempt at dialogue with Russia] *TA3*, July 1, 2019. Available online: <https://www.ta3.com/clanok/1158840/danko-prednasal-v-moskve-vyzdvihol-snahu-o-dialogo-s-ruskom.html> (accessed on March 17, 2020).

<sup>33</sup> "GLOBSEC Trends 2019 Central & Eastern Europe 30 years after the fall of the Iron Curtain," GLOBSEC. Available online: <https://www.globsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/GLOBSEC-Trends2019.pdf> (accessed on March 17, 2020).

to NATO headquarters in Brussels. During the press conference, she stated that her priority was to “communicate quietly, substantially and based on facts” and to honor Slovak commitments.<sup>34</sup> Her speech, albeit short, was a good example of the continuation of the pro-Atlantic stance that has traditionally been adopted by the Slovak head of state and showed she can meet other heads of states as a reliable ally. From the moment she took up office, President Z. Čaputová has publicly argued for stronger transatlantic and European ties in defense and security: a continuation of the foreign and defense policies of the previous president Kiska based on her decision to keep some of his advisory staff.

Throughout the year, Slovakia presided over the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). This was a unique opportunity to lead an organization that includes Russia and the United States among the other 57 nations. The three priorities of Slovakia’s OSCE Presidency were preventing, mediating and mitigating conflict and focusing on the people it affects, providing for a safer future and effective multilateralism.<sup>35</sup> Unfortunately, media interest focused primarily on the fact of the presidency and seldom on the content. One event stands out from the presidency: the Normandy Four Summit in December 2019. While the OSCE Presidency does not enable the country to change the course of the OSCE – its role is mainly to maintain continuation in OSCE policies – the invisibility of the impact of Slovakia’s actions suggests that the presidency will not expand Slovakia’s role in the world.

By the end of 2019 and being so close to the parliamentary election,<sup>36</sup> defense and security issues were becoming increasingly politicized. The lack of consensus on foreign and security policy priorities between the speaker of parliament and the rest of the Slovak government continued and the Defense Ministry’s modernization projects kept attracting attention and criticism.

## MILITARY ASPECTS OF SLOVAK DEFENSE

The external situation meant there was more time to discuss national defense and security matters. As in previous years, the Slovak public debate about these was limited to political statements of an “us versus them” mentality. This had a very negative impact on projects that should be apolitical in nature. The ongoing and seemingly never-ending story of modernization continued in 2019. The Slovak Ministry of Defense, under the same minister since 2016, started a large number of modernization projects, which were unprecedented in some ways. With such a large number of projects ongoing, the ministry suffered from a lack of strategic communication. While it is difficult to disclose information that is sensitive or classified and when partners ask for it not to be disclosed, there is room for improvement in being open with the public.

<sup>34</sup> “Joint press point by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and the President of the Slovak Republic, Zuzana Čaputová,” NATO, June 25, 2019. Available online: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions\\_167125.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_167125.htm) (accessed on March 17, 2020).

<sup>35</sup> “Programme of the Slovak OSCE Chairmanship 2019,” OSCE. Available online: <https://www.osce.org/chairmanship/408353?download=true> (accessed on March 17, 2020).

<sup>36</sup> Scheduled for February 29, 2020.

The Armed Forces became a wedge issue in the Slovak political debate. In 2019 there was a debate about whether conscription should be reintroduced alongside the professional armed forces. This idea was promoted by the Slovak National Party overseeing the Defense Ministry. Most-Híd, the political party that had nominated Mr. Róbert Ondrejcsák as state secretary at the defense ministry, was against it.<sup>37</sup> One of the main issues was funding as military personnel have yet to be fully equipped. While the government approved the ministry's proposal to raise military pensions, the systemic problems with the recruitment and utilization of the armed forces continued. Slovakia fulfilled its international mandates to less than 50 per cent. Furthermore, the ministry vowed to continue voluntary military service for the third year despite the fall in numbers of those passing basic military training. The year after the voluntary service was introduced, 94 people signed up for basic training,<sup>38</sup> in 2018 the number was 87<sup>39</sup> and in 2019 only 44 recruits joined the voluntary service.<sup>40</sup>

On the international level, Slovakia continued its cooperation with NATO, especially over the NATO Force Integration Unit in Vajnory. This commitment, albeit one of few, is viewed as important by both the Allies and NATO leadership. In 2019 a new commander was appointed. The incoming commander, Colonel Peter Brauner, already had NATO experience as Slovakia's national liaison representative at the HQ Allied Command Transformation in Norfolk, Virginia. However, the change of command took place in the absence of a strong media presence and the unit is unknown to the majority of the public. Slovakia contributed to international crisis management by deploying 36 troops to the Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan, 38 to ALTHEA, 159 to the largest contingent in UNFICYP, two soldiers to UNTSO in Syria and Israel, one to EUMM in Georgia,<sup>41</sup> 7 to NTCB activity in Iraq and 152 to NATO's important

<sup>37</sup> "Bugár nepodporí povinnú vojenskú službu, konflikt v koalícii neočakáva," [Bugár will not support compulsory military service, he does not expect conflict in the coalition] *Teraz.sk*, January 4, 2019. Available online: <https://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/b-bugar-nepodpori-povinnu-vojsku/370417-clanok.html> (accessed on March 17, 2020).

<sup>38</sup> "Dobrovoľná vojenská príprava pokračuje za atraktívnejších podmienok, na výcvik nastúpilo 94 nových záujemcov," [Voluntarily military training continues under more attractive conditions. 94 new people join] Ministry of Defence of the Slovak Republic, August 4, 2017. Available online: <https://www.mod.gov.sk/40260-sk/dobrovolna-vojska-priprava-pokracuje-za-atraktivnejsich-podmienok-na-vycvik-nastupilo-94-novych-zaujemcov/> (accessed on March 17, 2020).

<sup>39</sup> "Príslušníci dobrovoľnej vojenskej prípravy majú za sebou prvé dni výcviku," [Voluntary military training participants have done their first days of training] Ministry of Defense of the Slovak Republic, July 6, 2018. Available online: <https://www.mosr.sk/42260-sk/prislusnici-dobrovolnej-vojskej-pripravy-maju-za-sebou-prve-dni-vycvik/> (accessed on March 17, 2020).

<sup>40</sup> "V Martine pokračuje výcvik účastníkov dobrovoľnej vojenskej prípravy," [Voluntarily military training continues in Martin] Ministry of Defence of the Slovak Republic, July 2, 2019. Available online: <https://www.mosr.sk/44972-sk/v-martine-pokracuje-vycvik-ucastnikov-dobrovolnej-vojskej-pripravy/> (accessed on March 17, 2020).

<sup>41</sup> "Počty príslušníkov OS SR v operáciách medzinárodného krízového manažmentu," [Number of Slovak Armed Forces members on international crisis management operations] Ministry of Defense of the Slovak Republic, October 16, 2019. Available online: <https://www.mosr.sk/pocty-prislusnikov-os-sr-v-operaciach-medzinarodneho-krizoveho-manazmentu/> (accessed on March 17, 2020).

enhanced Forward Presence in Latvia. EFP Latvia is the only mission where the Slovak Armed Forces fully meets its mandate.<sup>42</sup>

Out of the high number of large projects, it is clear that more were allocated to the Slovak Air Force than to other branches of the Slovak military. Minister Peter Gajdoš signed the contract for the 14 supersonic jets F-16 Block 70 in December 2018 and the project entered the implementation phase in 2019. The F-16 jets are to be delivered to Slovakia in 2023 to replace the ageing MiG-29s.<sup>43</sup> The Air Force received the last of its nine UH-60M Black Hawk helicopters in January 2020. These will eventually replace the multipurpose Mi-17 helicopters. Both the helicopters and jets are Foreign Military Cases (FSM), which means Slovakia is purchasing them from the US government with logistics support throughout the life cycle of the equipment. The ministry plans to upgrade them and equip them with self-protection and the necessary armaments. The Slovak government did not neglect the Land Forces but their modernization projects were not as successful. Two of the largest project proposals are awaiting governmental approval, 4x4 and 8x8 vehicles, and are currently being analyzed by the Public Procurement Office.<sup>44</sup>

Due to public pressure and political disagreements in the governing coalition, the prime minister, Peter Pellegrini decided to put a hold on all modernization projects in September.<sup>45</sup> After months of mixed signals between Pellegrini and Andrej Danko, whose party had responsibility for the defense minister, the process then became officially politicized and the gap between the ministry and the prime minister's office started to widen. The parties were unable to come to an agreement before the 2020 election so the modernization projects were on hold for more than six months. Taking into consideration the technological advances and rising cost of military equipment, six months can seem like eternity. Additionally, politicizing modernization could end in the Armed Forces not receiving the proper equipment to replace old equipment that is often past its life cycle. Ensuring transparency in public financing should always be the primary goal, but projects often fail because of miscommunication. The year 2019 shows there is a lot of room for improvement in modernization.

## CONCLUSION

In defense and security the year 2019 was one in which France questioned the relevance of NATO and took steps towards a stronger European defense solution, while the NATO leadership tried to selectively interpret the messages coming out of the White House

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<sup>42</sup> "Enhanced Forward Presence, Latvia," Ministry of Defense of the Slovak Republic. Available online: <https://www.mosr.sk/enhanced-forward-presence-latvia/> (accessed on March 17, 2020).

<sup>43</sup> One of the MiG-29s crashed near the city of Nitra on September 28, 2019. The investigation was still ongoing at the time of the writing.

<sup>44</sup> The Replacement of 3D radars project was prepared at governmental level, but never voted on.

<sup>45</sup> "Premiér Pellegrini zastavil nákupy SNS za takmer miliardu eur. Zatiaľ dočasne," [Prime Minister Pellegrini stopped the Slovak National Party's purchases of almost a billion. Temporarily so far] *Aktuality.sk*, September 29, 2019. Available online: <https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/726805/premier-pellegrini-zastavil-nakupy-sns-za-takmer-miliardu-eur-zatial-docasne/> (accessed on March 17, 2020).

and continued to take on new members. It was a year in which the modernization boom in the Slovak Armed Forces continued to attract criticism from the opposition, defense and security experts, and from the United States – a key NATO ally. As the year marched towards its end, the situation in the Middle East and Northern Africa was far from stable, Russia continued to annex parts of Ukraine and to pursue its goals in Central and Eastern Europe by spreading disinformation.

Overall, it was a turbulent year and nothing suggests that 2020 will be any more stable.



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# OSCE CHAIRMANSHIP 2019

SAMUEL GODA

The OSCE is an unconventional international intergovernmental organization providing dialogue to 57 participating states. We say unconventional because it lacks a constitutional document such as an international treaty or charter that is one of the essential elements of any regular, conventional organization. It has been called the OSCE since 1994 when it was agreed at the OSCE Budapest Summit that the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) should be renamed the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Within the organization, however, the term participating states continues to be used rather than member states. Practically, this has consequences, particularly in relation to OSCE field missions, budgets, logistics but also personnel issues. Of course, it is also a political issue and there is a working group composed of some participating countries that examines the advantages and disadvantages of this legal status.<sup>1</sup>

The OSCE is thus the successor to the CSCE, which was established in 1973 in Helsinki. The most famous and most important document that originated from within the Helsinki process is the Helsinki Final Act (CSCE Final Act), which includes the Decalogue of European Security (Declaration on Principles Guiding Relations between Participating States). It is a consensus based document adopted by the countries in the Warsaw Pact and the North Atlantic Alliance. From the outset, the CSCE/OSCE was established as a means of achieving détente and mediation between the two blocs, but at the same time it was perceived by individual participating states through the prism of their own divergent interests. Since at least since 2014, the OSCE has been seen as

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<sup>1</sup> More on the OSCE's status can be found in S. Brander, "Making a credible case for a legal personality for the OSCE," *OSCE Magazine*, March–April 2009. Available online: <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/36184?download=true> (accessed on March 10, 2020) and in M. Steinbrueck-Platise, A. Peters, "Transformation of the OSCE legal status," *Max Planck Institute for Comparative Public Law & International Law (MPIL) Research Paper No. 2018–23*, September 13, 2018. Available online: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3248991> (accessed on March 10, 2020).

a crisis manager, but there has also been a perception that it needs to go back to its roots. The deep internal conflict between the participating countries, high degree of mistrust and absence of a strategic approach to the functioning of the organization have all left their mark on its practices. This merely confirms the rule that international organizations are only as strong as its members allow it to be.

To obtain a better picture of the OSCE, we need to consider the theoretical, and largely normative, aspects of the organization. In theory, the OSCE is security-community building organization. But what does that mean? A security community can be understood as a community of people who refuse to settle disputes by force, and the community forms when its future members agree not to accept war as a legitimate means of resolving disputes. There have been several approaches to security communities, but two intellectual strands come to the fore. The first one is the thinking of K. Deutsch and the second is the thinking of E. Adler and M. Barnett who further developed the ideas of K. Deutsch. K. Deutsch's approach was an attempt to contribute to the debate and subsequently to find ways of practicing the idea that "one day one may reject war" and that common social problems can and must be addressed through "peaceful change." Peaceful change is a means of solving societal problems, usually through institutionalized procedures and without resorting to the broad-spectrum use of physical force.<sup>2</sup>

For many years, especially in the last two decades of the last century, the OSCE was seen as the pioneer of a new, innovative approach to regional security, based on the principles of association and a holistic approach to complex security. This approach was based on a comprehensive, indivisible (one country's security cannot be abstracted from another's) and cooperative perception of security.<sup>3</sup> Adler offers seven examples of how the OSCE helps create and shape the security community: 1. Assists in political consultation and bilateral as well as multilateral agreements between its participants; 2. Sets rather liberal standards applicable in individual countries and across the community. These standards are later used to evaluate the practice of democratic and human rights activities and in subsequent monitoring; 3. Seeks to prevent violent conflict before it occurs; 4. Helps to create peaceful dispute settlement practices in the OSCE area; 5. Helps to build mutual trust by giving priority to agreements on arms control, military transparency and cooperation; 6. It helps countries that have recently gained independence build democratic institutions and pursue market-oriented reforms. 7. It helps to rebuild legal institutions in post-conflict areas.<sup>4</sup>

We can see that there is a large gulf between what the OSCE should be and what it is in reality. If we look back to before the last decade of the twentieth century, however, we can see that this was not always the case. With the luxury of hindsight, we can say that much of the theory has informed the organization's practices: there was (more than) a minimum level of trust between countries and there were clear elements of cooperation in the field of security.<sup>5</sup> Of course, even that period was not trouble-free,

<sup>2</sup> K. W. Deutsch, et al., *Political Community and the North American Area*. Princeton University Press, 1957.

<sup>3</sup> E. Adler, M. Barnett, eds, *Security Communities* (Cambridge Studies in International Relations), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p. 135.

<sup>5</sup> S. Goda, K. Báňaiová, "Európska bezpečnosť z pohľadu OBSE," [European security from OSCE point of view] *Politické vedy* Vol. 21, No. 1, 2018, pp. 176–92.

but compared to today, the situation was easier to predict and states tried to respect mutual agreements, principles and standards. The role of the chairmanship is not only to ensure continuity in the functioning of the organization, but also to give it the political impetus to improve. How did Slovakia and the Slovak Foreign Ministry handle this task?

## PREPARATIONS

The Slovak Foreign Ministry had vague memories of 1992, when the OSCE was chaired by Czechoslovakia and J. Moravčík (the then Minister of Foreign Affairs of Czechoslovakia) was Chairperson-in-Office in the second half of the year. Of course, since then, the dynamics of international relations have changed dramatically. The decision to apply for the OSCE chairmanship came in 2016. At a meeting on November 23, 2016, minister M. Lajčák informed the other members of government of the ministry's intention to put forward Slovakia as candidate for the OSCE chairmanship. The reasoning behind the decision is unclear. It may have been based on the foreign policy priority of promoting Slovakia on the international stage, including within international institutions, and our efforts to be a more active player in international politics and security. Following our experience of the presidency of the EU Council, the OSCE presidency may have seemed feasible and certainly attractive. Only 16 days after the government meeting, on December 9, 2016, minister M. Lajčák, announced the decision, both to the public and to the OSCE Ministerial Council in Hamburg. Internationally, this was certainly a welcome decision. Ensuring the smooth functioning of the Troika mechanism (the changeover between past, present and future presidency countries) had been a problem for several years. As expected, there was no negative response and the participating countries and incumbent chairmanship country approved. The next step was to secure the financing for the chairmanship. The financial aspect cannot be underestimated as it is essential for setting priorities and goals related to staffing, logistics and organizational matters among other aspects of the chairmanship such as (co)funding the activities of the chairmanship country beyond its annual contributions to the organization for various projects, or extra budgetary spending.

On June 21, 2017, the government approved the budget for the preparations and organization of the OSCE chairmanship provisionally for 2017 and 2018. The 2019 budget would be set at a later stage. The 2017 and 2018 budgets were set because, although the chairmanship was to start on January 1, 2019, Slovakia was chairing the Forum for Security Cooperation from January 17, 2018, to March 14, 2018, and would be taking on the chairmanship of the OSCE Contact Group with the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation region on March 19, 2018, at the conference in Malaga, until October 26, 2018. Both these chairmanships were a means of sharing out the work under the Troika mechanism and were the first contact with the organizational and content side of the OSCE. Approximately €11.5 million was spent on Slovakia's OSCE chairmanship from 2017 to 2019, including expenditure of approximately €3.3 million on the OSCE Ministerial Council. The budget was rather modest compared to other presidencies.

Slovakia's first chairmanship activities officially started as early as 2018. Logically the preparations had to begin no later than 2017. As we saw above, the government

approved the chairmanship at the end of November 2016. It may seem that the presidency preparations were slightly late in beginning and that the reasons for Slovakia taking on this role were not clearly communicated (doubtless there would have been many reasons beyond visibility). However, viewed differently, one can argue we in fact started the preparations in good time and responsibly, as has often been echoed by administrative staff at the OSCE Secretariat. Italy, for instance, was the chairmanship country in 2018, and even by the beginning of its chairmanship, did not have clearly set priorities (mainly because of its domestic political crisis), so by comparison we started ahead of time.

Another factor that influenced our preparations was the fact that from September 2017 to September 2018 M. Lajčák, the upcoming OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, held the important post of President of the UN General Assembly. There is no doubt the UN agenda preparations for important meetings took up a lot of time.<sup>6</sup> To some extent, preparations for the chairmanship took place “in the shadow” of work for the UN General Assembly. Last but not least, the decision-making process and the hierarchical nature of the Foreign Ministry meant that approval was required from the top (and of course the foreign minister was the OSCE chairperson-in-office). Despite this and thanks to the enthusiasm of some individuals, with the arrival of minister M. Lajčák, preparations began at speed. Visiting all 15 OSCE field missions proved an excellent step, which added weight to their work while sending a clear political signal from the Chairperson-in-Office M. Lajčák that he was interested in the state of affairs and planned to be fully involved in the chairmanship. Combined with his reputation abroad as a respected diplomat, this was a good starting point.

Personnel are perhaps as important as the financial side. Here, Slovakia faced another challenge as only a few individuals – in both the Foreign Ministry and expert community – understood the role of the OSCE and its internal functioning. During informal talks, there was skepticism towards the OSCE and its role generally, no doubt a result of the lack of knowledge about the organization. It had never been in the spotlight. Logically, it is not easy to work in a context where one knows little about the issue and when even what is known is not positive. In other words, ownership of the chairmanship was not fully accepted at various levels. This could be seen in the limited involvement of other key ministries that were supposed to help the Foreign Ministry with various aspects, such as the ministries of defense, economy, justice, home affairs and the environment.

Another important aspect was ensuring smooth communication between the headquarters in Bratislava and the Permanent Mission in Vienna. The Section for the OSCE Chairmanship of the Slovak Republic, containing the OSCE task force, was established directly under the minister’s office. Of course, it was also necessary to increase staffing levels at the Permanent Mission of the Slovak Republic to the OSCE in Vienna. Inter-

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<sup>6</sup> During the past 12 months, as Chairperson-in-Office M. Lajčák chaired more than 70 General Assembly meetings, delivered nearly 300 speeches, held more than 120 meetings with UN officials and more than 440 meetings with representatives from member states (including 26 presidents, 16 prime ministers, 8 vice prime ministers and more than 90 ministers or state secretaries). Ten high-level meetings and events were organized and more than 80 meetings held with outside stakeholders, civil society and other regional and international organizations. He participated in more than 60 interviews and media engagements and took 20 trips to 36 destinations (visiting 28 countries).

national staff with direct experience of the Secretariat, OSCE mission or chairmanship countries were seconded to the mission in Vienna. Those mainly involved in the OSCE chairmanship were Lukáš Parížek – State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, Special Representative of the Minister for the Chairmanship of the Slovak Republic in the OSCE, Chairman of the informal working group on OSCE contribution scales; Oksana Tomová – Director General of the OSCE Chairmanship Section; Róbert Kirmág – Head of Task Force, Director of the Department for Political Security Issues; Ingrid Horvay – Director of Logistics, Communication and Budget; Radomír Boháč – Ambassador, Permanent Representative of the Slovak Republic to the OSCE; Katarína Žáková – Ambassador, Deputy Permanent Representative; Juraj Kubla – Head of Economic-Environmental Dimension Issues; and Marek Varga – Head of Politico-Military Dimension Issues. It should be noted that Marcel Peško, a Slovak diplomat, was appointed Director of the OSCE Conflict Prevention Center and his expertise and knowledge proved valuable to the chairmanship. At the height of the chairmanship, 26 people were working in Bratislava and 30 people in Vienna. Moreover, in both locations, students assisted as interns. But the figure is not large given the chairmanship needs, and one of the lessons learned is that we will need to increase our personnel capacities in the future.

It is worth noting that the SPPA team, which has a long-standing interest in OSCE issues, organized an expert seminar entitled “Considering Previous Experience, Discussing Slovak Priorities” on November 6, 2017. At the Brainstorming Meeting of the Slovak OSCE Chairmanship Task Force, Civil Society, OSCE and the Center for OSCE Research Representatives, one of the most experienced OSCE experts, Dr. Wolfgang Zellner (then director of the Center for the OSCE Research, University of Hamburg) stated that lessons learned from past chairmanships show that success depends on early preparations, qualified staff and sufficient financial reserves. Prior to the Brainstorming Meeting, the SPPA and FES organized a public event entitled “OSCE in view of the (old) new challenges” on March 7, 2017, where the priorities of the German and Austrian OSCE chairmanships were presented and discussed in detail.

## **READY... STEADY...**

Each chairmanship country presents its priorities for the general chairmanship and for the politico-military, economic and environmental, and human dimensions of the OSCE. These are mainly shaped by (apart from the aforementioned financial and personnel capacities) the OSCE's long-term agenda, the priorities of the chairmanship country's foreign (and partly domestic) policy, international relations and, in part, by consultations within the Troika.

Again, this presented a challenge for Slovakia. Our long-term foreign policy priorities did not include the frozen conflicts and field missions that form a large part of the OSCE agenda, nor did they include the military issues and elements of confidence and security building. Moreover, those issues that were relatively familiar are tackled slightly differently in the three OSCE dimensions. However, Slovak diplomacy tested the waters during the various consultations, including visits to the OSCE missions, and identified the needs on the ground. Similarly, enough experts were found within the

foreign and defense ministries and elsewhere who had the expertise or were able to adapt very quickly to the OSCE context. However, there was no wider more systematic expert discussion to identify the priorities of the chairmanship, partly owing to the lack of interest from the non-governmental and academic spheres. There was only one publication containing a proposal for the priorities of our chairmanship.<sup>7</sup> As is customary, the chairperson-in-office chose his personal and special representatives on the international level. Sixteen dealt with the various priority issues, including conflict prevention and management, high-level negotiations, youth and security and preventing discrimination and promoting tolerance. The Slovak ones were Lukáš Parížek (for Slovakia's OSCE Chairmanship), Rudolf Michalka (for the South Caucasus), Vladimír Minárik (for the OSCE High Level Planning Group (Nagorno-Karabakh)) and Samuel Goda (for Youth and Security). The last three were nominated by Slovakia within the Troika under the Italian chairmanship.

As mentioned above, Slovakia also chaired the Forum for Security Cooperation and the Contact Group with the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation in 2018. Here the priorities of the Slovak chairmanship were to support the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution no. 1540 regarding the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; light and small arms; conventional ammunition storage and measures to strengthen confidence and security; security sector governance and reform; regional defense cooperation; and armed conflict in eastern Ukraine. The Slovak Republic also devoted considerable attention to the Structured Dialogue on existing and future security challenges and threats in the politico-military field with the potential to develop further cooperation among all OSCE participating states. The Contact Group with the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation focused on energy security, sustainable water management, promoting economic development at national and regional level, cyber security, the impact of climate change, youth radicalization and education, and security sector reform and governance.

On 19 July 2018, at the meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council at the Hofburg, Vienna, the state secretary of the Foreign Ministry Lukáš Parížek presented a wider range of Slovak priorities which were later expanded on and published. This proved a good strategic step. The framework priorities remained unchanged and served as the compass of the chairmanship under the motto *Slovakia 2019: for people, dialogue and stability*. The specific priorities of the Slovak chairmanship of the OSCE were as follows:

1. Preventing, mediating and mitigating conflict and focusing on the people it affects: an active approach to conflict prevention and mitigation, Ukraine and Ukraine Special Monitoring Mission (SMM), frozen conflicts, structured dialogue and confidence-building and security-building measures, security sector governance and reform (SSG/R) cooperation in the Western Balkans

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<sup>7</sup> K. Báňaiová, S. Goda, "Slovenská republika a OBSE: Začiatok diskusie o prioritách predsedníctva Slovenskej republiky v OBSE a o význame OBSE pre európsku bezpečnosť," [Slovak Republic in OSCE. The beginning of the debate on Slovakia's OSCE Chairmanship and the importance of the OSCE to European security] Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association, 2016. Available online: <http://www.sfpa.sk/publication/slovenska-republika-a-obse-zaciatok-diskusie-o-prioritach-predsednictva-slovenskej-republiky-v-obse-a-o-vyzname-obse-pre-europsku-bezpecnost/> (accessed on March 10, 2020).

2. Providing for a safer future: preventing radicalization, promoting tolerance and non-discrimination, youth, cyber security, fourth industrial revolution
3. Effective multilateralism: cooperation of international organizations, strategic partnerships and implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), strategic approach to prioritizing OSCE activities, implementation of commitments.<sup>8</sup>

## AND ... GO!

Focusing on these priorities was the right step. Armed conflicts in the OSCE area are a continuing problem. The Russian–Ukrainian conflict in eastern Ukraine, or in OSCE jargon, the conflict in and around Ukraine, is not only the latest and most serious crisis for the European security architecture, but also the bloodiest since the break-up of Yugoslavia. There was a point at which the death toll and the fate of the people in the Donbas area were just statistics and a geopolitical military mentality prevailed over a humanitarian one. That is why it was and still is important to focus people's attention on it and the negative consequences of conflicts. At the same time, reflecting on the challenges of the future can lead to the identification of areas, so-called islands of cooperation, where countries could and should cooperate more. It is one of the ways of overcoming mutual distrust and concentrating on common steps within the positive options, but also on the not-so-distant challenges. Last but not least, a well-functioning multilateralism is the only way we can overcome the challenges of today and tomorrow. Can one country stop the negative effects of climate change? Or stop the viral pandemic all alone? Joint action is the only way. This is one of Slovakia's foreign policy findings from working in the UN through M. Lajčák – the problems of this world are greater than those of Slovakia or Europe.

The OSCE's most important agenda since 2014 has been Ukraine. During our chairmanship, we assisted the newly elected President of Ukraine, V. Zelensky, in relation to the occupied territories. However, we could not do more in the Donbas region, as elections were expected and it was unclear what Zelensky's plan would be post-elections. This contributed to the stagnation that lasted at least four to five months. When undertaking the preparations, the Foreign Ministry was able to identify Nine Points for Ukraine, focused mainly on the humanitarian situation and improving passage through the several contact line points, demining, prisoner exchanges and improving the environment and health. Certain tangible results were achieved – the budget for the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission, disengagement of armed formations and equipment on both sides in the Stanitsya Luhanska, Petrivske and Zolote areas, reconstruction of one of the symbols of the conflict – the bridge at Stanitsya Luhanska (entry and exit point for pedestrians on the contact line between the areas controlled by Kyiv and those not), and ensuring continuity in human resources with the Head of OSCE SMM changing (E. Apakan replaced by Y.H. Cevik) and the Special Representative

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<sup>8</sup> "Program a priority," [Program and priorities] Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, 2018. Available online: <https://www.mzv.sk/zahranicna-politika/predsednictvo-slovenska-v-obse/program-a-priority> (accessed on March 10, 2020).

of the Chairperson-in-Office in Ukraine and Trilateral Contact Group (M. Sajdik replaced by H. Grau). The recently reconstructed bridge in Stanitsya Luhanska is a reminder of the conditions local people live under in the areas not controlled by Kyiv.

Similarly, negotiations continued in Moldova within the “5+2” format (set up in Bratislava in 2002) and the implementation status of the “Berlin plus package.” Unlike in previous years, internal political developments in the Republic of Moldova made it impossible to achieve more tangible results. This also shows that the role of the OSCE and the chair is not to settle the conflict, but to provide scope for negotiations, advice, expertise, information flows and good offices. The conflict can only be settled by the parties involved.

Regarding other regional priorities, such as Central Asia, the South Caucasus or the Western Balkans, the work of the chairmanship could be seen in the cooperation with the Slovak embassies in the countries concerned. The Central Asian region is of great importance because of its complicated present and past and because it is located at the crossroads of several civilizations. During his visits, M. Lajčák paid attention to the divergent needs of each country – from arms control, trade and water cooperation to human trafficking, good governance and environmental protection. In Georgia, Slovakia faced numerous challenges related to the closure of crossing points, the installation of obstacles and increased tensions along the administrative boundary lines in 2019. The Armenian Prime Minister and Azerbaijani President met face to face for the first time through the related Minsk Group, which deals with the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. In the Western Balkans, the chairmanship focused on assistance for building democratic institutions, youth regional connectivity and reconciliation across society. The challenges of human trafficking and violent extremism and radicalization that might lead to terrorism (VERLT) were a repeated theme. During all visits to the region, the Slovak chair encouraged the authorities to accelerate efforts to advance and implement reforms, particularly those related to the judiciary, corruption and the rule of law, organized crime, and electoral processes, and to make full use of the OSCE’s expert support and technical assistance.

In addition to regional priorities, we also worked proactively on sectoral priorities across all three dimensions – politico-military, economic and environmental, and human. Naturally, the regional and sectoral priorities were closely related. In addition to the field missions, high-level events, expert conferences, seminars and workshops are a proven means whereby the chairmanship can promote a priority or important topic. Throughout 2019, we focused on issues such as anti-Semitism, the fight against terrorism, cyber security, security sector reform, engagement of young people, the distribution of the contribution scales, freedom of assembly, the promotion of tolerance and non-discrimination, and mediation. Slovakia resolved various problems relating to the third dimension and supervised the Implementation Meeting on the Human Dimension in Warsaw, the ODIHR’s flagship project, which is a platform for direct contact with civil society organizations.

The Economic and Environmental Forum in Prague was one of the successes in the second dimension. The OSCE-wide Youth Forum was held in Bratislava, attended by more than 130 delegates. Discussions focused on the #perspectives2030 flagship project, which calls for more cooperation in specific areas and presents young experts’ views on the future of cooperation and security in Europe. The Annual Security Review Conference was an important first dimension event. Thus, over the chairmanship year, Slovakia, with

the assistance of the OSCE Secretariat and other OSCE institutions (HCNM, ODIHR and RFOM), organized approximately 70 events – including visits, conferences and seminars relating to all three dimensions. Of course, for each event the content, diplomatic, logistics and communications had to be prepared as well. This of course throws new light on the number of people working in the Foreign Ministry section and the Vienna mission...

A particularly good outcome of the chairmanship was the negotiation of the contribution scales (percentage contributed financially by each country), thereby securing the OSCE budget and finances for the whole year. The ratio agreed in 2005 expired at the end of 2017 and the Italian chairmanship had failed to renegotiate it. That could have led to the OSCE finding itself unable to operate by the summer of 2019. The scales may seem more of an administrative problem – which is largely true – but the main problem behind the stalemate was primarily political for many countries. This outcome could be the springboard for negotiating the long-term scaling.

The chairmanship year culminated in the Ministerial Council, held in Bratislava on December 5–6th, at the Incheba Exhibition Center and attended by more than 1,600 delegates, executives, media and civil society organizations. The main outcome was the adoption of six final documents out of the approximately 20 submitted: Decision on the OSCE Chairmanship in the Years 2021 and 2022; Decision on Renaming the Contact Group with the Asian Partners for Co-operation and the Contact Group with the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation; Decision on Time and Place of the Next Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council; Commemorative Declaration on the Occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security; Ministerial Statement on the Negotiations on the Transdniestrian Settlement Process in the “5+2” Format; and Document No. 2, Commemorative Declaration on the Occasion of the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the OSCE Principles Governing Non-Proliferation and Fifteenth Anniversary of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540.<sup>9</sup>

Another output was the Bratislava Appeal, presented by M. Lajčák, joined by 40 participating countries. It recalls that the fundamental role of the OSCE is to provide a platform for dialogue, and highlights the fundamental principles contained in the Helsinki Final Act. In particular, the challenge lies in respecting these principles, making better practical use of the OSCE instruments, having the willingness to compromise and, in particular, overcome mistrust and political problems for the welfare not only of the organization but, in particular, of the people living in the OSCE region. Last but not least, the challenge calls for more effective multilateralism as the best tool to overcome current and future security challenges. There were also 14 accompanying events on the margins of the Ministerial Council on various topics reflecting Slovakia's priorities – the situation in Ukraine, ensuring women are involved in peace processes, humanitarian aid and youth and security. A Parallel Civil Society Conference was also held, which makes recommendations to the Ministerial Council every year.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> S. Liechtenstein, “The 26th OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Bratislava: A breakdown in cooperative security?” Security and Human Rights Monitor, December 17, 2019. Available online: <https://www.shrmonitor.org/the-26th-osce-ministerial-council-meeting-in-bratislava-a-breakdown-in-cooperative-security/> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

<sup>10</sup> “OSCE receives recommendations from Parallel Civil Society Conference ahead of Ministerial Council in Milan,” OSCE, December 5, 2018. Available online: <https://www.osce.org/chairmanship/405410> (accessed on March 10, 2020).

The coverage of the chairmanship by the Slovak media and communications team should not be overlooked. The social networks team regularly reported on the work of the chairperson-in-office, the chairmanship and other work ongoing within the OSCE. A Slovak media contingent traveled with M. Lajčák to cover his speeches abroad and conveyed interesting information to Slovak readers and viewers who would not have found out by other means. However, they did not attend many important domestic events and, with a few exceptions, there was little coverage that reflected more deeply on the OSCE, the general concept of security and cooperation. The OSCE is not the most appealing organization for the media to cover, but some aspects would certainly have ensured sufficient “clicks.”

## IN PLACE OF A CONCLUSION

For one year, the Slovak Republic became the leader of the largest regional security organization in the world. Slovakia was at the very center of a 57-state organization operating in stormy unpredictable conditions. Despite the modest finances and staffing, however, much high-quality music and new tones were heard. Where the contribution scales and other smaller questions were concerned, we managed to show that where there is a will there is a way. We found that differences of opinion do not only occur along the divisions of the old Cold War blocs, but on many issues there is no consensus even within the so-called West. Many countries still pursue domestic policy goals at the multilateral level, often absurdly and nonsensically, at the expense of the compromise and spirit of the Helsinki Decalogue.

Compromise is perceived as a weakness, geopolitics and militant thinking play a key role, intellectual appeals and the voices of experts are not being heard, multilateralism is being captured by national politics and there is not enough political will to overcome mutual hostility. The OSCE is a mirror of international relations. But it was not always so. The OSCE was also a co-creator of regional security. And it can be again – it has the tools, experience and enthusiasm for it. But it needs a “greenlight”. What is the lesson here for the Slovak Republic? That even a small country can set an international agenda. The OSCE chairmanship took us deeper into the issues of frozen conflicts, arms control and non-proliferation, cooperative security and other aspects of the economic, environmental and human dimensions. The worst thing we could do would be to stop now. For the time, money and human resources invested in the chairmanship should bear interest through our systematic and proactive involvement in the OSCE. By financing and building up our own Slovak expert capacities both in the public and state sectors, and in the non-governmental and academic spheres. The main goal of these efforts should be to approximate as best we can the true spirit of a security community from Vladivostok to Vancouver, through the OSCE, which is the most well-constructed instrument for creating such a community.

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**II.**

**PRIORITIES OF SLOVAKIA'S  
FOREIGN POLICY**

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# VISEGRAD MENU IN A SLOVAK RESTAURANT

TOMÁŠ STRÁŽAY

## ENTRÉE – THE STATE OF PLAY

2019 was an electoral year with both the Slovak presidential and European elections taking place and campaigning for the February 2020 parliamentary election beginning at the end of the year. In fact, for most of the year election rallies were held at which stakeholders instrumentalized foreign policy issues to increase their chances in the election. Regional cooperation, especially in the V4, but also with neighbors served as a reference point in some of them.

Zuzana Čaputová's election as president was considered a key moment in the history of the presidential palace and elsewhere. The president, from a progressive, liberal party, has brought new energy to the office. Although foreign policy was a new issue for Zuzana Čaputová, an experienced team of foreign policy advisors was already in place. Foreign policy quickly became an integral part of her agenda.

President Zuzana Čaputová visited all three Visegrad partners in short succession after taking office, signaling that our immediate neighbors are important both to Slovakia and to Slovak interests. In a speech given to the Slovak ambassadors at the beginning of July, she talked extensively about the region using a consensual tone.<sup>1</sup> Slovakia differs structurally and takes different positions on some issues and this is

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<sup>1</sup> "Čaputová prijala veľvyslancov. Chce aj naďalej kvalitnú a rešpektovanú diplomaciu," [Čaputová receives the ambassadors. She hopes the capable and respected diplomacy will continue] *Sme*, July 3, 2019. Available online: <https://domov.sme.sk/c/22160426/caputova-prijala-velvyslancov-chce-aby-diplomacia-bola-kvalitna-a-respektovana.html> (accessed on February 10, 2020).

respected by its regional partners. Each of the three president's visits to a V4 country demonstrate this, although each differed in its own way.

President Zuzana Čaputová had previously worked in the non-governmental sector, and the Czech Republic and Slovakia are very close countries, so her informal words of empathy regarding the demonstrators in Prague (against the Czech prime minister) were not seen as confrontational even by the Czech Republic's leaders. Her emphasis in Budapest on the values of liberal democracy and the rule of law was also appropriate. And despite the generally positive tone she adopted when visiting Poland, she was also critical. The President stressed the importance of Slovakia's northern neighbor in several spheres (especially NATO cooperation) and acknowledged its role in supporting Ukraine. In this context her critical message about Visegrad having moved away from the values of its "founding fathers" and tending to favor pragmatic interests was not taken in offense.

Critics claiming that Slovakia should leave the V4 and look for other coalition partners in the EU became louder during the European election campaign. The *Progresívne Slovensko/Spolu* coalition led by Michal Šimečka, now an MEP, wanted Slovakia to distance itself from its "problematic" Visegrad neighbors, namely Hungary and Poland, who have been criticized by the EU institutions for deficiencies in the rule of law. They were also critical of the coordinated position of the V4 countries, which had contributed to Frans Timmermans being rejected as EC president. The fact that party politics rather than regional cohesion has a greater influence on who gets the EU's top positions tended to be overlooked – the European People's Party (EPP) won the elections so the post of European Commission president logically belonged to it. Even today it is questionable whether the V4 countries could do better in obtaining important European Commission posts: Slovakia's Maroš Šefčovič is a European Commission Vice President, as is Věra Jourová from the Czech Republic, while the Polish commissioner Janusz Wojciechowski is in charge of an important portfolio – agriculture – and Hungarian Oliver Várhelyi is Commissioner for neighborhood and enlargement.

Although foreign policy does not usually play an important role in parliamentary elections – and the 2020 elections were no exception – it did feature in the party manifestos. The party programs and some of the parties' foreign experts referred to the V4 – although in different ways and degrees. The *PS/Spolu* coalition, which did not make it into the parliament in the February 2020 elections, considered V4 an important instrument for regional and cross-border cooperation. It also assigned the V4 a role in coordinating EU policies, especially cohesion policy and Eastern partnership policy. However, *PS/Spolu* also intended to

review practice to date where the V4 forms the basic policy framework for achieving our interests in the EU Council. On strategic issues relating to the future of the EU, Slovakia is closer to other member states than to the remaining V4 members. We must also reflect on this in our efforts to build new partnerships and coalitions.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *Bod zlomu. Zlomový program pre zlomové voľby.* PS/Spolu. [Turning Point. A game-changing program for game-changing elections] Available online: <https://progresivnespolu.sk/bod-zlomu> (accessed on February 10, 2020).

This idea was supported by experts in *Za ľudí*, who drew attention to the unacceptability of one V4 prime minister (Viktor Orbán) declaring in Brussels that he spoke on behalf of the V4, despite not having a mandate for it.<sup>3</sup> According to the *Za ľudí* party manifesto,

so long as there are undemocratic tendencies in the V4 countries, we will openly talk about our value differences with the other V4 countries. The rule of law is essential to a functioning EU. It is not acceptable that the European institutions fight more actively for it than the member states do.<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, OĽANO underlined the importance of a value-oriented foreign policy, but considered the V4 countries key political and economic partners.<sup>5</sup> Deepening good neighborly relations with V4 countries was also an important priority for SAS. Its party manifesto encouraged Slovak diplomats to form more intensive contacts with other countries, including more distant ones.<sup>6</sup>

## MAIN COURSE – THE ESSENCE OF VISEGRAD COOPERATION

The V4 is a multilayered type of regional cooperation, and this applies to the spheres, government representation and experts. The main pillar of Visegrad cooperation is its practical dimension, including the cooperation taking place at ministry middle management level and contacts between experts from the governmental and non-governmental spheres. "Political Visegrad," the regular meetings between V4 country leaders, is also important because it creates the framework for work at the lower level. Any kind of "politicization" of the V4 is unwelcome since it has a negative effect on the practical dimension.

At the political level, one of the most remarkable events during Slovakia's 2018/2019 V4 Presidency was the fact that the 30th anniversary of the democratic revolutions were celebrated with the German chancellor Angela Merkel. The V4 + Germany format was favored under the Slovak Presidency, partly because Slovakia sought to present the V4 as an important stakeholder in the EU and to challenge its widespread image as a "blocking coalition." Since two out of the four V4 countries have been criticized for issues relating to the rule of law, the celebration of the events

<sup>3</sup> "Európska politika povolebného Slovenska," [European policy of post-election Slovakia] *euractiv.sk*, February 19, 2020. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/buducnost-eu/news/euractiv-podcast-diskusia-europska-politika-povolebneho-slovenska/> (accessed on February 10, 2020).

<sup>4</sup> *Mapa dobrých riešení. Program strany Za ľudí*. [Map of good solutions. *Za ľudí* political program] *Za ľudí*. Available online: <https://za-ludi.sk/program/> (accessed on February 10, 2020).

<sup>5</sup> *2020 úprimne odvážne pre ľudí*. [2020 courageous and sincere for the people] OĽANO. Available online: [https://www.obycajniludia.sk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/OLANO\\_program\\_2020\\_FINAL\\_online.pdf](https://www.obycajniludia.sk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/OLANO_program_2020_FINAL_online.pdf) (accessed on February 10, 2020).

<sup>6</sup> *Návod na lepšie Slovensko. 1144 konkrétnych riešení, aby sa tu oplátilo pracovať, podnikáť a žiť*. [Guide to a better Slovakia. 1,144 solutions to make it worth working, doing business and living in Slovakia] SaS. Available online: <https://www.flipgorilla.com/p/26183111565907491/show> (accessed on February 10, 2020).

of 1989 was also a good opportunity to show that Hungary and Poland were the first countries in the Soviet bloc to embark on democratic change. The declaration adopted underlined the willingness of the V4 countries and Germany to reject any kind of new dividing lines in Europe, be they “North–South, East–West or Old–New divides.”<sup>7</sup>

Another opportunity to present V4 as a constructive regional stakeholder in the EU came during the V4+ ministerial with the French Minister of Foreign Affairs Jean-Yves Le Drian. The agenda included the upcoming presidential elections in Ukraine and their impact on developments in the country, the future of the EU – taking into the consideration different views within the EU – and EU enlargement (the decision to start the negotiation process with Albania and North Macedonia was first supposed to be announced in summer 2019).<sup>8</sup>

Slovakia had a different view on climate policy from its V4 partners and was the only V4 country to declare willingness to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050.<sup>9</sup>

On the other hand, the V4 can be considered the core of the informal group of friends of cohesion policy, and its role has increased significantly in the talks on the EU’s future finances. Slovakia, and the other V4 countries, will remain “net beneficiaries” for the next seven years so the future of cohesion policy and allocation of adequate financial resources was considered a high priority.<sup>10</sup> Opportunities for future V4 cooperation in the EU budget negotiations were also discussed at the V4 expert meeting, held under the Slovak V4 Presidency.<sup>11</sup>

The Western Balkan countries usually participate in meetings in the V4+ formula. The 10th meeting of Visegrad and Western Balkan foreign ministers took place in May, the day before the official publication of the new EU enlargement package. The rule that the ministerial is attended by a representative from the presidency of the Council of the EU and European external action service was adhered to. Besides displaying unanimous support for the continuation of the enlargement process, the V4 ministers asked their Western Balkan counterparts to continue the reform

<sup>7</sup> “Declaration of the Visegrad Group and the Federal Republic of Germany on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of historic changes in Central Europe,” Bratislava, February 7, 2019. Available online: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/documents/official-statements/declaration-of-the-190208> (accessed on February 10, 2020).

<sup>8</sup> “V4 + France meeting of the foreign ministers, Bratislava, April 18, 2019,” *Visegrad Bulletin* Vol. 10, No. 1, 2019. Available online: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/article-title-190201> (accessed on February 10, 2020).

<sup>9</sup> “Slovensko nakoniec podporí cieľ EÚ dosiahnuť do roku 2050 uhlíkovú neutralitu [Slovakia will support the EU goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2050],” *EURACTIV.sk*, June 19, 2019. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/klima/news/slovensko-nakoniec-podpori-ciel-eu-dosiahnut-do-roku-2050-uhlikovu-neutralitu/> (accessed on February 10, 2020).

<sup>10</sup> “Friends of cohesion: Joint declaration on the multiannual financial framework 2021–2027,” November 5, 2019. Available online: <https://www.vlada.cz/en/media-centrum/aktualne/friends-of-cohesion-joint-declaration-on-the-multiannual-financial-framework-2021-2027-177497/> (accessed on February 10, 2020).

<sup>11</sup> “V4 expert meeting on MFF 2021–2027, Bratislava, May 31, 2019,” *Visegrad Bulletin* Vol. 10, No. 1, 2019. Available online: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/article-title-190201> (accessed on February 10, 2020).

processes in their countries.<sup>12</sup> The ministers also confirmed the readiness of the V4 countries to continue sharing their experience and know-how from the transition and integration processes and expressed their support for opening accession talks with Albania and North Macedonia in June.<sup>13</sup> For the first time in the history of the summits the ministerial was held in coordination with a think tank conference organized by Think Visegrad, attended by think tank representatives from both V4 and Western Balkan countries.<sup>14</sup>

Another summit focusing on the Western Balkans and with the participation of the Western Balkan countries – this time at prime minister level – was held under the umbrella of the Czech V4 Presidency. Besides supporting the region's European prospects and opening of accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia in October (already postponed once), the declaration adopted underlined the importance of the Western Balkans in energy, and mentioned the Southern Gas Corridor. It also highlighted the role of the International Visegrad Fund (IVF) in supporting projects with partners from the Western Balkans as part of the Visegrad+ program and in providing technical assistance for the Western Balkans Fund, modeled on the IVF.<sup>15</sup> In relation to the V4 + prime ministers summit, it is worth noting a letter from the V4 prime ministers to the president of the European Council expressing disappointment at the decision not to open accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia. The V4 prime ministers also called on the president to take action to unblock the situation which – they argued – did not reflect the priorities of the newly elected commission.<sup>16</sup> We should not forget that the V4 consider the Western Balkan countries to be important partners in relation to migration and border protection, which was also underlined at the meeting of the V4 interior ministers. In the declaration adopted the ministers confirmed that assistance provided to the Western Balkans in the fields mentioned above would continue and they welcomed the overall efforts of the European Commission in “concluding status agreements with Western Balkan

<sup>12</sup> “Support for integration ambitions as a core topic of the talks between the Visegrad Four and Western Balkan countries,” Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, May 28, 2019. Available online: [https://www.mzv.sk/web/praha-en/news/-/asset\\_publisher/olsKsldtEfpB/content/podpora-integracnych-ambicii-bola-hlavnou-temou-rokovani-krajin-vysehradskej-stvorky-a-zapadneho-balkanu/10182?\\_101\\_INSTANCE\\_olsKsldtEfpB\\_redirect=%2Fweb%2Fpraha-en%2Fnews%3Fstrana%3D1](https://www.mzv.sk/web/praha-en/news/-/asset_publisher/olsKsldtEfpB/content/podpora-integracnych-ambicii-bola-hlavnou-temou-rokovani-krajin-vysehradskej-stvorky-a-zapadneho-balkanu/10182?_101_INSTANCE_olsKsldtEfpB_redirect=%2Fweb%2Fpraha-en%2Fnews%3Fstrana%3D1) (accessed on February 10, 2020).

<sup>13</sup> See also “V4 foreign ministers’ joint statement on the Western Balkans,” Bratislava, May 28, 2019. Available online: <http://www.mzv.sk/documents/10182/3711288/190528+V4+a+Z%C3%A1padn%C3%BD+Balk%C3%A1n/3b242b46-49e9-4f0d-8b4f-87c2254b3fb3> (accessed on February 10, 2020).

<sup>14</sup> For more information about the Think Visegrad platform see <https://think.visegradfund.org/> (accessed on February 10, 2020).

<sup>15</sup> “V4 statement on the Western Balkans,” September 12, 2019. Available online: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/documents/official-statements/v4-statement-on-the-190912> (accessed on February 10, 2020).

<sup>16</sup> “Premiéri krajín V4 poslali Tuskovi list, znepokojilo ich posunutie otvorenia prístupových rokovaní,” [V4 prime ministers sent Tusk a letter, they are concerned about the postponement of the opening of the accession negotiations] *Webnoviny.sk*, October 16, 2019. Available online: <https://www.webnoviny.sk/premieri-krajin-v4-poslali-tuskovi-list-znepokojilo-ich-posunutie-otvorenia-pristupovych-rokovani/> (accessed on February 10, 2020).

countries that will enable Frontex to conduct common operations in the Western Balkan countries as mandated.”<sup>17</sup>

Another regular summit of V4 foreign ministers is devoted to the EU’s eastern neighbors. The 2019 V4 + EaP ministerial was organized on the 10th anniversary of the EU’s Eastern Partnership project. The participating parties acknowledged past achievements and generally considered the Eastern Partnership to be an effective EU policy. However, the main focus was on the EaP’s future goals and shape.<sup>18</sup> The presence of the Romanian foreign minister and EU commissioner for enlargement could be considered a sign the EU perceives the EaP – and the role of V4 countries within it – as an important contribution to developing ties with countries in its Eastern Neighborhood. Nevertheless, joint activities between V4 and EaP countries have been negatively influenced by the ongoing dispute between Hungary and the biggest EaP country – Ukraine – on Ukraine’s language law.

The V4 also consider Turkey to be an important partner. The meeting of foreign ministers in the V4 + Turkey format was primarily taken as an opportunity to underline Turkey’s role in stabilizing the Middle East and in tackling the migration crisis. The ministers even expressed support for Turkey’s EU accession (and supported Turkey’s commitment to meet “the relevant criteria”).<sup>19</sup>

Benelux is another V4 partner. At the meeting marking the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the fall of the iron curtain, the V4 and Benelux foreign ministers agreed on the most pressing challenges for the EU – one is to prevent any dividing lines emerging in the EU – but the adopted declaration made no reference to specific projects or joint steps, so was only of declarative value.<sup>20</sup>

The complex nature of V4 cooperation can be seen in the number of sectors involved and activities performed under the auspices of various ministries, either in V4 or V4+ format.<sup>21</sup> The joint activities resulted in some new initiatives. For instance, in the transport sector the idea is to create a high-speed railway connecting the V4 capitals. Although this idea was initiated under the previous Hungarian V4 Presidency, the meeting between the ministers responsible for transport, development and EU funds held under the Slovak Presidency showed that the idea not only “lives on” but that the participating countries are also looking at how it can be linked to EU priorities

<sup>17</sup> “Joint declaration of the ministers of the interior,” Bratislava, June 21, 2019. Available online: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/documents/official-statements> (accessed on February 10, 2020).

<sup>18</sup> “V4 + Eastern Partnership meeting of ministers of foreign affairs in the frame of the Slovak Presidency of the V4, Bratislava, May 6, 2019,” *Visegrad Bulletin* Vol. 10, No. 1, 2019. Available online: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/article-title-190201> (accessed on February 10, 2020). See also “The Visegrad Group joint statement on 10th anniversary of the Eastern Partnership.” Available online: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/documents/official-statements> (accessed on February 10, 2020).

<sup>19</sup> “V4 + Turkey meeting of the foreign ministers, Bratislava, April 30, 2019,” *Visegrad Bulletin* Vol. 10, No. 1, 2019. Available online: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/article-title-190201> (accessed on February 10, 2020).

<sup>20</sup> “Joint statement of the ministers of the Benelux Union and the Visegrad Group,” Brussels, December 8, 2019. Available online: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/the-meeting-of-the> (accessed on February 10, 2020).

<sup>21</sup> See *Visegrad Bulletin* Vol. 10, No. 1, 2019. Available online: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/article-title-190201> (accessed on February 10, 2020).

and funds.<sup>22</sup> Given that the V4 railway corridors are generally only suitable for trains travelling at 160 km/h or less, the goal to create a high-speed railway network still seems quite ambitious.

In the defense sector, medical services and the creation of working groups are a promising new area of cooperation. The flagship project – the V4 EU Battlegroup – continues unchanged – with the Battlegroup on standby in the second half of 2019 (and included Croatia), and subsequent deployment planned for the first half of 2023.<sup>23</sup>

The parliamentary dimension is an increasingly important part of Visegrad cooperation. At a meeting in Bratislava the foreign affairs committees discussed Brexit and future EU–UK relations. The context of the meeting was the negotiated Withdrawal Agreement, and the participants highlighted that the preferred scenario was to have good relations with the UK, and “no deal” was considered the least plausible option.<sup>24</sup>

The role played by the IVF should also be highlighted. The people-to-people or expert-to-expert dimension is very important for maintaining existing ties and creating new ones among the various sections of V4 societies. The role of the IVF is essential in developing cooperation with entities in the neighboring Western Balkan and Eastern European regions. The V4 parliaments called for all four countries to increase their annual contributions to the IVF, thereby paving the way for the future development of the V4's only institution.

## DESSERT – WHAT NEXT?

We should not overlook the fact that, for a number of reasons, Slovakia finds itself in a different situation from its Visegrad neighbors. It is the most integrated in the EU of all the V4 countries, partly because it is a eurozone member. Structural differences also mean that Slovakia has to sensitively balance its interests in both the EU and the eurozone against its natural interests in the (V4) region. It is likely that Slovakia will continue to find itself in this position in the long term and so it needs to be properly prepared.

No one can deny that the Visegrad Group remains the most important regional initiative in Central Europe. Nonetheless, it is an informal coalition of countries interested in cooperating in selected areas, rather than a coherent bloc. The present differences in opinion over deepening European integration are not exceptional in V4 history – despite the conflicting views, it has always been possible to continue beneficial cooperation and so it remains. The importance of the Visegrad countries is

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<sup>22</sup> “Joint declaration of the ministers of the Czech Republic, Hungary, the Republic of Poland and the Slovak Republic responsible for transport, development and EU funds concerning the project of high-speed train network in Central Europe and its financing,” Bratislava, May 21, 2019. Available online: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/documents/official-statements> (accessed on February 10, 2020).

<sup>23</sup> “Joint communiqué of the V4 defence ministers,” Piešťany, June 10, 2019. Available online: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/documents/official-statements> (accessed on February 10, 2020).

<sup>24</sup> “Conclusions of the meeting of the foreign affairs committees of the parliaments of the Visegrad Group countries,” February 25–26, 2019. Available online: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/documents/official-statements> (accessed on February 10, 2020).

underlined by the economic dimension of cooperation: together with Germany, the V4 countries are Slovakia's largest trading partners.

The benefits especially concern sectoral cooperation, where V4 partners are considered to be the first choice for experts at different ministries. Political cooperation in the V4 format has proved to be more of a problem recently – not because of a lack of cooperation spirit among V4 country leaders, but because of the worsening reputation of the V4 in the EU. This negative element has not overshadowed the benefits of Visegrad cooperation, but has certainly brought some bitterness into the overall cooperation mood. Another relatively new issue is one of the V4 country leaders acting in the name of all four. Here the V4 partners should be clear – any political attempts to exploit the V4 brand to achieve particular objectives should be called out and rejected.

The mode of cooperation in the Visegrad Group and especially the loose institutionalization allows the V4 countries to participate simultaneously in various regional initiatives. There is no need to maintain group coherence at all costs; the weak institutionalization of the V4 means that, in addition to the potential for asymmetric V4 cooperation formats, parallel operations of the Visegrad countries can take place under several regional initiatives. In any case, compatibility with other formats of regional cooperation with V4 should be preserved.

It would be a mistake to maintain an ostentatious distance from the countries closest to us, and one that would be difficult to correct. So far, none of the leaders of the other Visegrad countries have expressed an ambition to leave the EU or transform the V4 into an alternative to the European Union. In other words, the V4 remains a regional cluster within the EU. The advantage for Slovakia is that it is able to conduct high level dialogue with other V4 countries, for which the V4 format is a suitable platform. By choosing an appropriately proactive approach, Slovakia can even come up with solutions for the whole region.

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# SLOVAKIA'S EASTERN POLICY IN 2019: THE RULING COALITION IN CACOPHONY

ALEXANDER DULEBA

The year 2019 was the last full calendar year in which the coalition formed of Smer-Social Democracy (Smer-SD), Most-Híd (Most) and the Slovak National Party (SNS) was in government following the parliamentary elections in 2016. Yet by the end of 2019 it was clear that the coalition would no longer be able to govern after the February 2020 parliamentary elections. The foreign policy consensus among the Slovak political elite began collapsing back in 2014–2015, following the onset of the Russian-Ukrainian crisis,<sup>1</sup> and broke down completely in 2019. The main reason for this was Slovakia's eastern policy, and the contradictory messaging over Slovakia's interests vis-à-vis Rus-

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<sup>1</sup> For more see A. Duleba, "Východná politika SR v roku 2014 v znamení rusko-ukrajinskej krízy," [Slovakia's Eastern Policy in light of the 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 Slovakia's eastern policy in 2015] in P. Brezáni, ed. *Ročenka zahraničnej politiky Slovenskej republiky 2015*. Bratislava: Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association, 2016, pp. 85–100; J. Marušiak, "Bilateral and multilateral context of Slovakia's eastern policy in 2016," in P. Brezáni, ed. *Yearbook of Slovakia's Foreign Policy 2016*. Bratislava: Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association, 2017, pp. 99–118; A. Duleba, "The Janus-face of Slovakia's eastern policy in 2017," in P. Brezáni, ed. *Yearbook of Slovakia's Foreign Policy 2017*. Bratislava: Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association, 2018, pp. 71–86; and J. Marušiak, "Contradictory messages of Slovakia's eastern policy in 2018," in P. Brezáni, ed. *Yearbook of Slovakia's Foreign Policy 2018*. Bratislava: Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association, 2019, pp. 89–104.

sia and Ukraine, also evident in the ruling parties' attitudes towards the EU and NATO. The cacophony around Slovakia's eastern policy reached a height in 2019. Each of the three governmental parties pursued their own eastern policy. Moreover, two of them – Smer-SD and Most – allowed the third coalition partner SNS to continually delay the adoption of the new security strategy, allegedly because it was “anti-Russian.”<sup>2</sup> The government coalition failed to meet one of the objectives of its own program agreed at the beginning of the government's term.

## DISAPPROVAL OVER THE SECURITY STRATEGY

In its 2016–2020 program, the ruling coalition stated it would respond to the long-term, complex changes in the security environment, including the “worrying instability east of the Slovak Republic.”<sup>3</sup> The government promised it would implement the necessary strategic and operational foreign and security policy measures, initiate appropriate legislative amendments, and help shape and implement related NATO, EU and wider international community decisions. It also declared that its updated security strategy and defense strategy would contain the basic security and defense policy objectives and parameters required to maintain citizen and state security in the present and future security environment. The program stressed that it was in Slovakia's national and state interests to continue its pro-European and pro-Atlantic orientation based on a wide political consensus. The government promised that the security and defense strategies would be drafted in a participatory manner to ensure cross-party approval and long-term support. The manifesto also stated that the government would keep the public adequately informed about the challenges and decisions made in relation to maintaining Slovakia's security, and that it would work with non-governmental security experts and the media.<sup>4</sup> Looking back from the perspective of 2020, we can see that no government since 1998 has broken its declared foreign and security policy commitments to such a fundamental extent as the three-party coalition government of 2016–2020 led by prime ministers Robert Fico and Peter Pellegrini (the latter from March 2018).

In 2016 and 2017 the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs under Miroslav Lajčák (nominated by Smer-SD) in cooperation with the Ministry of Defense represented by Deputy Minister Róbert Ondrejcsák (Most) drafted the new security and defense strategies. In August 2017 the inter-ministerial consultation process for the draft security strategy was launched, and in September 2017 consultations were opened on the draft defense strategy. In October 2017, the government discussed and approved both documents. However, in the remaining two years the ruling coalition was in power,

<sup>2</sup> “SNS má výhrady, bezpečnostná stratégia by mala byť vyvážená,” [SNS has reservations, the security strategy should be balanced] *Sme*, July 18, 2019. Available online: <https://domov.sme.sk/c/22170740/sns-ma-stale-vyhrady-voci-bezpecnostnej-strategii.html> (accessed on February 22, 2020).

<sup>3</sup> “Programové vyhlásenie vlády SR na roky 2016 – 2020,” [Slovak Government Program for 2016–2020] Government Office of the Slovak Republic, 2016, p. 4. Available online: <https://www.vlada.gov.sk/programove-vyhlasenie-vlady-sr-na-roky-2016-2020/> (accessed on February 15, 2020).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4, 7–8.

neither draft was brought before parliament for the necessary official approval required for it to become the strategic framework for policy-making and legislative decisions on foreign and security policy.<sup>5</sup>

The section of the draft security strategy containing an analysis of the international system notes that, in terms of Slovakia's national interests, the Russian Federation's occupation of part of Ukrainian territory through military force and based on the illegitimate and illegal referendum in Crimea and Sevastopol are a particularly worrying violation of the basic principles and standards of international law.<sup>6</sup> It also points out that developments in the eastern neighborhood of NATO and the EU have a major impact on Slovakia's security environment. In particular, the situation in the eastern regions of Ukraine is leading towards a long-term conflict that will create potential sources of tensions and affect the security of Ukraine, the Black Sea region, as well as Central and Eastern Europe. Instability in Ukraine, coupled with the potential further escalation of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, represents a security threat to the Slovak Republic. The draft strategy also says that NATO had to accelerate its adaptation after 2014 in order to be able to address the increasing assertiveness of the Russian Federation, including its growing military potential.<sup>7</sup> It further points out that Slovakia should support the eastward enlargement of NATO and the EU as that will improve the national security of Slovakia and Central and Eastern Europe. And finally, the draft strategy identifies priority measures for strengthening Slovakia's capacities to deal with both military and hybrid threats, and Slovakia's contribution to the collective defense of NATO.<sup>8</sup>

However, the adoption of the new security strategy was blocked by the SNS – a member of the coalition government – and its leader Andrej Danko, Speaker of Parliament. Responding to journalists asking if he would allow parliament to debate the adoption of the draft security and defense strategies, he said:

I will not allow myself to be maneuvered into the murky political waters of escalation against the United States or the Russian Federation. Slovakia does not need heroic voices; it needs balance so it has good relations with everyone, the United States, Israel or Russia.<sup>9</sup>

Later on he commented that the wording of the draft strategy on the threat posed by the Russian Federation was unfortunate, so his party was calling for it to be changed. He also added that the strategy adopted by the government in 2017 would not be

<sup>5</sup> "Aktualizácia bezpečnostnej stratégie SR a obrannej stratégie SR" [Updated Slovak security strategy and Slovak defense strategy] *Sme*, 2020. Available online: <https://sluby.sme.sk/slub/326/bezpecnostna-a-obranna-strategia> (accessed on January 20, 2020)

<sup>6</sup> "LP/2017/627 Návrh Bezpečnostná stratégia Slovenskej republiky" [LP/2017/627 Draft Security Strategy of the Slovak Republic] *Slov-lex. Právny a informačný portál*, p. 6. Available online: <https://www.slov-lex.sk/legislativne-procesy/-/SK/LP/2017/627> (accessed on February 25, 2029).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 2, 7–8.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 12–23.

<sup>9</sup> V. Šnidl, "SNS blokuje prijatie dokumentov, ktoré označujú Putinovo Rusko za hrozbu," [SNS is blocking adoption of documents that identify Putin's Russia as a threat] *DenníkN*, June 30, 2018. Available online: <https://dennikn.sk/1166628/sns-blokuje-prijatie-dokumentov-ktore-oznacuju-putinovo-rusko-za-hrozbu/> (accessed on February 27, 2020).

revised nor brought before parliament before the next parliamentary elections (subsequently held in February 2020).<sup>10</sup>

Paradoxically, it was the opposition MPs who made several attempts at ensuring the approval of the new security and defense strategies made it onto the parliamentary agenda, thereby pressing the government to fulfil its own program. Despite this, Andrej Danko resisted all their efforts. But he could not have done so without the support of Smer-SD, the largest coalition party. In November 2019 Robert Fico, former Prime Minister and Chairman of Smer-SD, referred to the failure of the coalition government, still led by his party, to adopt the new security strategy as “not a big political issue.” His opinion was that Slovakia’s foreign policy orientation had not changed:

Slovakia has to live in the EU; it is Slovakia’s living space. It has to have the best relationship with the EU’s drivers. We are a NATO member country. But we are also a country that is interested in good relations with countries outside NATO and the EU.

He added that if anything were to change (in the security strategy), it would just be “playing around with words.”<sup>11</sup> After having to step down as prime minister in March 2018, but remaining chairman of the largest coalition party, Robert Fico continued to defend his double-track policy towards the Russian-Ukrainian crisis of maintaining good relations with both Russia and Ukraine.<sup>12</sup> However, in 2019 his pursuit of a neutral Eastern policy was nothing less and nothing more than an attempt to frustrate Slovakia’s interests in Eastern Europe being clearly defined and at questioning Slovakia’s loyalty to NATO and EU policy on the Russian-Ukrainian crisis.

The most vocal critic of the draft security strategy from Smer-SD was Fico’s fellow party member and protégée Ľuboš Blaha, MP and Chairman of the Parliamentary European Affairs Committee. Blaha was clear about what Fico’s neutrality towards Eastern Europe meant. In an interview with the Russian agency Sputnik he said that “Slovakia should fight for friendly relations with Russia.” If, however, the security strategy was “miraculously” brought before parliament, he would vote against the Russo-phobic document. Blaha was not just concerned with its “Russo-phobic character,” however. The draft strategy stated that extremists point out “social injustice and how detached political and economic elites are from the problems of ordinary citizens.” Blaha thought the security strategy defined extremism as drawing attention to social injustice and elite detachment, and therefore clearly impinged upon the democratic right of leftists and anti-globalists to critique. “This is one of the reasons why I wanted this paragraph removed from the strategy during the inter-ministerial consultation on the draft,” he said in an interview to Russian agency *Sputnik*.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> “SNS má výhrady, bezpečnostná stratégia by mala byť vyvážená,” op. cit.

<sup>11</sup> “Fico nepovažuje prijatie novej bezpečnostnej stratégie za silnú tému,” [Fico does not consider adoption of new security strategy a big issue] *DenníkN*, November 11, 2019. Available online: <https://dennikn.sk/minuta/1648290/> (accessed on February 23, 2020). Robert Fico indicated that he felt the “old” security strategy, approved in 2005, was sufficient for Slovakia’s security policy needs.

<sup>12</sup> For more see A. Duleba, “The Janus-face of Slovakia’s eastern policy in 2017,” op. cit.; and J. Marušiak, “Contradictory messages of Slovakia’s eastern policy in 2018,” op. cit.

<sup>13</sup> “Blaha: Musíme bojovať za priateľské vzťahy s Ruskom a za sebavedomé postoje voči Západu,” [Blaha: We have to fight for friendly relations with Russia and self-confident attitudes

The SNS, led by Andrej Danko, and with support from influential figures in the largest coalition party Smer-SD and party chairman Robert Fico, backed Blaha, and so the passage of the strategy was blocked, triggering a serious dispute between the two strongest government parties and the Foreign Ministry and its minister, Miroslav Lajčák, who had paradoxically been nominated by Smer-SD. Although, ostensibly, Minister Lajčák resigned in November 2018 in a dispute over parliament's refusal to allow Slovakia to sign the UN Global Pact on Migration, there is little doubt the stalemate over the draft security strategy played a key role in his decision. Although the Prime Minister, Peter Pellegrini (Smer-SD), argued that Lajčák should stay and, along with President Andrej Kiska, tried to persuade him to withdraw his resignation,<sup>14</sup> the conflict on key foreign policy issues within the coalition signaled the extent to which Slovakia's foreign policy had deteriorated under the three-party coalition by the end of its electoral term. It seems that those who opposed the approval of the new security strategy were "Russia's greatest friends" in Slovakia and the greatest ignoramuses on Ukraine.

## "FRIENDS OF RUSSIA (AND BELARUS)"

In 2019 leader of the SNS and Speaker of Parliament Andrej Danko visited Russia five times, paying more visits and attention to Russia than to any other country – excluding Slovakia of course.<sup>15</sup> In addition to blocking the adoption of the new security strategy, he and his party lobbied for the voting rights of the Russian delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to be restored in June 2019, which had been suspended after Russia's occupation of Crimea.<sup>16</sup>

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towards the West] *Sputnik*, January 20, 2019. Available online: <https://cz.sputniknews.com/slovensko/201901208988725-Lubos-Blaha-musime-bojovat-za-priatelске-vztahy-s-Ruskom-a-za-sebavedome-postoje-voci-Zapadu/> (accessed on February 27, 2020).

<sup>14</sup> See "Lajčák definitívne končí, demisiu už podal Kiskovi," [Lajčák is finished, he has already submitted his resignation to Kiska] *Trend*, November 29, 2018. Available online: <https://www.etrend.sk/ekonomika/lajcak-podal-demisiu.html> (accessed on February 20, 2020); "Lajčák zostane. Kiska a Pellegrini hľadajú spôsob ako to urobiť," [Lajčák's staying. Kiska and Pellegrini will find a way] *Pravda*, December 5, 2018. Available online: <https://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/494091-rokovaniu-vlady-bude-dominovat-lajcakova-demisia/> (accessed on February 20, 2020).

<sup>15</sup> See D. Mikušovič, "Ruský rok Andreja Danka: v Moskve bol častejšie ako v Prahe, dovezol si aj doktorát," [Andrej Danko's Russian year: he visited Moscow more times than Prague, and brought back a doctorate] *DenníkN*, December 27, 2019. Available online: <https://dennikn.sk/1698131/rusky-rok-andreja-danka-v-moskve-bol-častejšie-ako-v-prahe-doviezol-si-aj-doktorat/> (accessed on February 22, 2020).

<sup>16</sup> See "Poliačik odmieta odstúpiť, Blahu a Danko označil za ruských agentov," [Poliačik refuses to resign. He calls Blaha and Danko Russian agents] *Sme*, June 27, 2019. Available online: <https://domov.sme.sk/c/22155561/poliacik-odmieta-odstupit-blahua-a-danka-oznaci-za-ruskych-agentov.html> (accessed on June 27, 2019); see also A. Danko's interview for the Russian agency *Sputnik* "Danko: Slovensko má radosť, že sa Rusko môže opäť plne zapojiť do akcií Rady Evropy," [Danko: Slovakia is happy Russia can again fully participate in the activities of the Council of Europe] *Sputnik*, July 1, 2019. Available online: <https://cz.sputniknews.com/slovensko/2019070110254959-danko-slovensko-ma-radost-ze-se-rusko-muze-opet-plne-zapojit-do-akci-rady-evropy/> (accessed on February 26, 2020).

Russia praised Danko's activities and Moscow's MGIMO University awarded him an honorary doctorate. The ceremony took place at MGIMO University on November 7, 2019. The doctorate was awarded for his contribution to Slovak-Russian relations and to improving peace, international cooperation and friendly relations between nations. MGIMO's rector, Anatolij Torkunov, said the decision by the Scientific Council of the MGIMO to grant the Speaker of Parliament an honorary doctorate was unanimous. The ceremony was attended by Chairman of the State Duma of the Russian Federation Vyacheslav Volodin, Chairman of the Foreign Committee of the Russian Duma Leonid Slutskiy, Head of the Friendship Group of the State Duma of the Russian Federation and National Council of the Slovak Republic Alexander Petrov and other distinguished guests. Andrej Danko became the first speaker to receive such an award. MGIMO honorary doctorates have previously been awarded to figures such as Albert II, Prince of Monaco; former Israeli President Shimon Peres; former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan; and former French President Jacques Chirac.<sup>17</sup> Receiving an honorary doctorate from a prestigious Russian university at least helped Danko forget the criticism he was facing at home in Slovakia, where he was accused of having plagiarized his rigorous thesis from the University of Matej Bel in Banská Bystrica in 2000.<sup>18</sup>

In addition to his visits to Moscow, Andrej Danko was the first Slovak speaker to make an official visit to Belarus in June 2019. There he met with President Aleksandar Lukashenko, Chairman of Parliament Mikail Miasinkovich and other Belarusian senior officials. Commenting on his visit he said:

I was very pleased to meet President Lukashenko. Also in terms of exports, it is important to have good relations with both East and West... Everything has to have its limits. We have learned here that anyone can say anything. I don't think that parliamentary democracy is a universal solution for all countries. If people didn't like him, they wouldn't have voted for him.<sup>19</sup>

Danko has repeatedly and publicly expressed admiration for authoritarian leaders who rule with a strong hand and has not hide his desire to rule that way in Slovakia.<sup>20</sup> However, it seems voters in Slovakia did not share Danko's desires. In the February 2020 parliamentary elections voters gave their verdict on his four-year tenure as speaker.

<sup>17</sup> "Danko bol vyznamenaný čestným doktorátom na moskovskej univerzite MGIMO," [Danko has been awarded an honorary doctorate from MGIMO University in Moscow] *Pravda*, November 7, 2019. Available online: <https://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/531910-danko-bol-vyznamenaný-cestnym-doktoratom-na-moskovskej-univerzite-mgimo/> (accessed on February 27, 2020).

<sup>18</sup> See M. Benedikovičová, D. Vražda, "Danko vykradol päť učebníc, jeho rigorózna práca je plagiat," [Danko lifted work from five textbooks, his rigorous thesis is plagiarized] *DenníkN*, November 15, 2018. Available online: <https://dennikn.sk/1294382/danko-vykradol-pat-ucebnic-jeho-rigorozna-praca-je-plagiat/> (accessed on March 1, 2020).

<sup>19</sup> "Musíme prestať útočiť na Rusko, tvrdí Danko, ktorý skritizoval Globsec a obhajuje Lukašenka," [We must stop attacking Russia, says Danko, criticizing Globsec and defending Lukashenko] *Webnoviny*, June 9, 2019. Available online: <https://www.webnoviny.sk/musime-prestat-utocit-na-rusko-tvrdi-danko-ktory-skritizoval-globsec-a-obhajuje-lukasenka/> (accessed on March 1, 2020).

<sup>20</sup> See e.g. T. Kysel: "Aká demokracia? Treba pevnú ruku. Danko mal Orbána za diktátora, už ho obdivuje," [What democracy? You need a strong hand. Danko once thought Orbán was a dictator, now he admires him]. *Aktuality.sk*, January 29, 2019. Available online: <https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/661932/aka-demokracia-treba-pevnu-ruku-danko-mal-orbana-za-diktatora-uz-ho-obdivuje/> (accessed on March 2, 2020).

The SNS received only 3.16 per cent of the vote and so failed to be re-elected to the 2020–2024 parliament.<sup>21</sup>

The need to develop pragmatic cooperation with Russia, despite its aggression against Ukraine, was also underlined by Peter Pellegrini, the Prime Minister, on a visit to Russia in June 2019. Peter Pellegrini had been prime minister since March 2018 and his eastern policy followed the double-track approach of his predecessor Robert Fico. Together with the Foreign Minister, Miroslav Lajčák, and the economy minister, Peter Žiga, he visited the Russian Federation on June 4–7, 2019. He had talks with President Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev, the then Prime Minister. They discussed a range of bilateral issues including economic cooperation and energy. At the end of the visit, Pellegrini appeared at the main plenary session of the St. Petersburg Economic Forum 2019 on 7 June, “Building a Sustainable Development Agenda,” along with President Vladimir Putin, President of China Xi Jinping, President of Bulgaria Rumen Radev, Prime Minister of Armenia Nikola Pashinyan and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.<sup>22</sup>

The problem with Pellegrini's June visit to Russia was that he chose to travel to Russia rather than accept an official invitation to the Second World War Allied Landing celebrations in Normandy, along with the heads of state from the NATO nations. Slovakia was represented by Deputy Prime Minister, Richard Raši. Karel Hirman, an expert on Slovak-Russian relations, commented on the situation:

While in Moscow and St. Petersburg Prime Minister Peter Pellegrini did not negotiate or agree anything new on energy. However, his absence at the Normandy Landing celebrations offended the memory of the soldiers and allies who fought for our freedom on the Western Front in the Second World War. All the main issues – the purchase of nuclear fuel, the transit of Russian natural gas and storage in Slovakia – had been agreed and closed long before his trip to Russia.<sup>23</sup>

It is noteworthy that advocates of Slovakia's so-called double-track or neutral eastern policy such as the Smer-SD prime ministers, have generally favored Russia over the West when forced to choose. Their neutral eastern policy was not in fact as pragmatic and neutral as promoted to Slovakia's Western allies and the Slovak public.

<sup>21</sup> See “Volby do Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky 2020, 29. Február,” [Elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic 2020, February 29] Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic. Available online: <https://volbysr.sk/sk/data02.html> (accessed on March 2, 2020).

<sup>22</sup> “Pracovná návšteva predsedu vlády Slovenskej republiky Petra Pellegriniho v Ruskej federácii,” [Working visit of Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic Peter Pellegrini to the Russian Federation] Embassy of the Slovak Republic in Moscow, June 18, 2019. Available online: [https://www.mzv.sk/web/moskva/detail/-/asset\\_publisher/bZtjMy3iNwbo/content/pracovna-navsteva-predsedu-vlady-slovenskej-republiky-petra-pellegriniho-v-ruskej-federacii/10182?p\\_p\\_auth=GkZHbwJn&\\_101\\_INSTANCE\\_bZtjMy3iNwbo\\_redirect=%2Fweb%2Fmoskva%2Fobchod\\_a\\_investicie](https://www.mzv.sk/web/moskva/detail/-/asset_publisher/bZtjMy3iNwbo/content/pracovna-navsteva-predsedu-vlady-slovenskej-republiky-petra-pellegriniho-v-ruskej-federacii/10182?p_p_auth=GkZHbwJn&_101_INSTANCE_bZtjMy3iNwbo_redirect=%2Fweb%2Fmoskva%2Fobchod_a_investicie) (accessed on March 2, 2020).

<sup>23</sup> K. Hirman, “Pellegrini v Rusku nič nedohodol. A urazil pamiatku našich hrdinov a spojencov z 2 svetovej vojny” [Pellegrini didn't agree anything in Russia. And he offended the memory of our Second World War heroes and allies] *DenníkN* (Blog), June 7, 2019. Available online: <https://dennikn.sk/blog/1492547/pellegrini-v-rusku-nic-nedohodol-a-urazil-pamiatku-nasich-hrdinov-a-spojencov-z-2-svetovej-vojny/> (accessed on February 28, 2020).

Moreover, Peter Pellegrini's last visit as Slovak prime minister took him to Moscow again, just three days before the parliamentary elections on February 29, 2020. Smer's electoral advisers believed his trip would improve Smer-SD's electoral chances.<sup>24</sup> But, these were to be the first parliamentary elections Smer-SD had lost since 2006. After 12 years in government Smer-SD is now in opposition in the 2020–2024 Slovak parliament. The cacophony over Slovak foreign policy in 2019 did little to help the leaders of Smer-SD and the SNS win strong support from Slovak voters in the February 2020 parliamentary elections.

## “FRIENDS OF UKRAINE (AND EURO-ATLANTIC INTEGRATION)”

The only coalition party to adhere to the government's program on foreign and security policy in the 2016–2019 government was Most, the smallest party in the three-party coalition. Róbert Ondrejcsák, nominated by Most as State Secretary of the Ministry of Defense, and the Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák were the main authors of the new security and defense strategies, blocked by Smer-SD and the SNS. In all probability, this is why Róbert Ondrejcsák became the target of an attack by the Russian embassy in Bratislava.

On February 26, 2019, the daily newspaper *Sme* published an article by Róbert Ondrejcsák entitled “Five years after Crimea: war in Europe is not a taboo.”<sup>25</sup> In the article he stressed that in occupying Crimea five years ago Russia had undermined the basic principles and security architecture of Europe. There are three important points here that should be thoroughly considered in relation to Slovakia's security policy. First, in Russia's strategy documents, the West, NATO and the EU are all identified as enemies. Secondly, in Russian political statements Slovakia is described as an enemy. Third, in Russia's military exercises, we are the main enemies and their offensive operations are targeted at us. Whether we want it to or not, Russia sees us and treats us as enemies, as Ondrejcsák pointed out in his article.<sup>26</sup>

The Russian embassy in Bratislava responded to the article in a way that breaks with traditional diplomacy. It posted an open letter on the embassy's Facebook page. The letter says:

It is either out of abject incompetence, or the deliberate distortion of facts, that the Secretary of State, using his own imagination and suppositions, claims Russia and Europe are “enemies” and thereby seeks to damage

<sup>24</sup> See M. Tóda, “Pellegriniho prijal v Moskve nový premier, cieľom bola pomoc pred voľbami, hovorí analytik Hirman,” [Pellegrini was received in Moscow by the new prime minister, he was seeking support before the elections, says analyst Hirman] *Denník N*, February 26, 2020. Available online: <https://dennikn.sk/1774583/pellegriniho-prijal-v-moskve-novy-premier-ciel-bola-pomoc-pred-voľbami-hovori-analytik-hirman/> (access on March 2, 2020).

<sup>25</sup> R. Ondrejcsák, “Päť rokov od Krymu: vojna v Európe nie je tabu,” [Five years after Crimea: war in Europe is not a taboo] *Sme*, February 26, 2019. Available online: <https://komentare.sme.sk/c/22062239/pat-rokov-od-krymu-vojna-v-europe-nie-je-tabu.html> (accessed on March 2, 2020).

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*

the traditionally friendly relations between the people of our countries. And that is truly dangerous. We believe that while this official is in charge of the defense sector, Slovak citizens cannot feel safe.<sup>27</sup>

R. Ondrejcsák responded:

Fortunately, we are not living before 1989 when the Russian/Soviet Embassy dictated who can say or write what in Slovakia. We live in a free and democratic country that is a self-confident member state of the European Union and NATO.<sup>28</sup>

The Russian embassy's breach of the usual diplomacy in its response to the article by Ondrejcsák triggered a serious political debate and diplomatic rupture between Moscow and Bratislava. However, Ondrejcsák received no support from his coalition partners in Smer-SD and the SNS over his exchange of views with the Russian embassy. That came from the opposition parties. Ľuboš Blaha of Smer-SD said he understood that the Russian embassy had responded to a provocative article by Ondrejcsák. Martin Klus an opposition MP from Sloboda a solidarita (Freedom and Solidarity) said that Russia cannot be considered a friend if they are checking up on the secretary of state and behaving like they did in 1968.<sup>29</sup> The only coalition partner who took a clear position and supported Ondrejcsák – apart from his own party Most – was the Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák, who said: "The Embassy [of Russia] has gone well beyond what is considered good conduct. It is absolutely not for them to comment on who holds senior positions in our country."<sup>30</sup>

Consequently, the Foreign Ministry summoned the Russian ambassador Alexey Fedotov to a meeting. The ministry's political director Marián Jakubóczy noted that Russia had violated the fundamental principles of international law by annexing part of Ukraine's territory on the basis of an illegitimate and illegal referendum in Crimea and Sevastopol and that was very worrying in terms of Slovakia's national security interests.

<sup>27</sup> "Otvorený list v súvislosti s článkom štátneho tajomníka Ministerstva obrany SR R. Ondrejcsáka v denníku Sme," [Open letter concerning an article by State Secretary of Slovak Ministry of Defense R. Ondrejcsák in the daily Sme] Embassy of Russia to Slovakia, March 5, 2019. Available online: <https://www.facebook.com/notes/ve%C4%BEvyslanectvo-ruska-na-slovensku-%D0%BF%D0%BE%D1%81%D0%BE%D0%BB%D1%8C%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B2%D0%BE-%D1%80%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%81%D0%B8%D0%B8-%D0%B2-%D1%81%D0%BB%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%B0%D0%BA%D0%B8%D0%B8/otvoren%C3%BD-list-v-s%C3%BAvislosti-s-%C4%8D1%C3%A1nkom-%C5%A1t%C3%A1tneho-tajomn%C3%ADka-ministerstva-obrany-sr-r/1073033092884685/> (accessed on March 2, 2020).

<sup>28</sup> "Reakcia štátneho tajomníka na otvorený list ruského veľvyslanectva," [State secretary's response to the open letter from the Russian embassy] *O médiách*, March 6, 2019. Available online: <https://www.omediach.com/internet/15163-reakcia-statneho-tajomnika-na-otvoreny-list-ruskeho-velvyslanectva> (accessed on March 3, 2020).

<sup>29</sup> "Blaha postoj ruskej ambasády chápe, Klus ho vníma ako prejav hrozby," [Blaha understands the Russian embassy's attitude, Klus sees it as a threat] *Glob.sk*, March 10, 2019. Available online: <https://glob.zoznam.sk/blaha-postoj-ruskej-ambasady-chape-klus-ho-vnima-ako-prejav-hrozby/> (accessed on March 3, 2020).

<sup>30</sup> "Neprišľuší im komentovať, reagoval Lajčák po ruskej kritike," [It is not for them to comment, Lajčák responded after Russian criticism] *TA3, SITA*, March 6, 2019. Available online: <https://www.ta3.com/clanok/1149740/nepriyslusi-im-komentovat-reagoval-lajcak-po-ruskej-kritike.html> (accessed on March 4, 2020).

He reiterated that the Slovak Republic fully and consistently respected the principle of immutable state borders and international law and so supports Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity as indicated by internationally recognized borders. At the end of the meeting he handed the Russian ambassador a diplomatic note, highlighting the need to respect the standards of good diplomatic conduct.<sup>31</sup> But the Russian ambassador will have known full well that what he was hearing from the political director did not correspond to that emanating from the speaker of parliament and senior officials from Smer-SD.

The emphasis on the Euro-Atlantic side of Slovak foreign policy was strengthened in 2019 following the presidential elections in March 2019. Zuzana Čaputová became the fifth president since the founding of the Slovak Republic in 1993. Čaputová is following the same foreign policy line adopted by her predecessor Andrej Kiska (2014–2019), including his approach to eastern policy. Like Kiska she clearly condemns Russian aggression against Ukraine and considers Maidan to be the Revolution of the Dignity of Ukrainian citizens, who have the sovereign right to live in a democratic and free country. She is supportive of Ukraine's European aspirations and the anti-Russian sanctions adopted by the West, and has called for defense spending to be increased. She also thinks Slovakia's resilience and capacity to protect itself require strengthening in the face of the 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.<sup>32</sup>

Shortly after her inauguration on June 15, 2019, Zuzana Čaputová initiated a meeting between Slovakia's leaders (president, prime minister and speaker), aimed at signing a declaration stating that the cornerstone of Slovak foreign policy was NATO and EU membership. On June 27, 2019, President Zuzana Čaputová, the Prime Minister Peter Pellegrini and Speaker of parliament Andrej Danko signed a foreign policy declaration confirming their commitment to promoting a responsible and coherent foreign policy based on Slovakia's membership of Euro-Atlantic structures. After signing the declaration, Čaputová said she thought the uncertainty in society had disappeared with the re-establishment of a consensus and united front on foreign policy issues. By signing the declaration the country's leaders had shown that they agreed Slovakia's foreign policy should be based on EU and NATO membership. But the declaration was worth little unless followed through. The president stated that actions will show whether the commitment stands and that she would personally follow through on it and believed that the prime minister and speaker would too.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, the Speaker, Andrej

<sup>31</sup> "Ministerstvo zahraničných vecí si po neobyvklom staturse predvolalo ruského veľvyslanca," [The Foreign Ministry summons the Russian ambassador over its unusual Facebook status] *O médiách*, March 8, 2019. Available online: <https://www.omeiach.com/internet/15167-ministerstvo-zahranicnych-veci-si-po-neobyvklom-staturse-predvolalo-ruskeho-velvyslanca> (accessed on March 3, 2020).

<sup>32</sup> For an analysis of president Kiska's Eastern policy see A. Duleba, "The Janus-face of Slovakia's eastern policy in 2017," *op. cit.*; and J. Marušiak, "Contradictory messages of Slovakia's eastern policy in 2018," *op. cit.*

<sup>33</sup> P. Petrus, "Čaputová, Danko a Pellegrini sa prihlásili k zodpovednej a jednotnej zahraničnej politike SR," [Čaputová, Danko and Pellegrini put their names to a responsible, coherent Slovak foreign policy] *Noviny.sk*, June 27, 2019. Available online: <https://www.noviny.sk/politika/451771-caputova-danko-a-pellegrini-sa-prihlasili-k-zodpovednej-a-jednotnej-zahranicnej-politike-sr> (accessed on March 3, 2020).

Danko, quickly showed that he took the foreign policy commitments he had signed up to in the joint declaration with the president and prime minister as seriously as he took the foreign policy commitments in the coalition government's program.

In her first months as president, Zuzana Čaputová paid official visits to each neighboring country, including Ukraine. She met with President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky in Kyiv on September 16, 2019. At the joint press conference following the bilateral talks she said:

This visit to your country is one of my first foreign visits as President of Slovakia. Having good and close relations between our two countries is something I truly care about. Because Ukraine is not just our biggest neighbor, but also a close friend and partner. In Slovakia, we see Ukraine as a country of educated, hardworking and clever people. I would like to assure you, Mr. President, and all Ukrainian citizens, that Slovakia will continue supporting your country in its reform efforts and on its European and Euro-Atlantic pathway, and we will speak out in defense of your sovereignty and territorial integrity.<sup>34</sup>

She outlined the main foreign policy parameters in Kyiv and in Warsaw where she had talks with President of Poland Andrzej Duda on July 15, 2019. In Warsaw she stressed that the North Atlantic Alliance must remain united given the state of relations with Russia, which are not improving.<sup>35</sup> In her role as president, Zuzana Čaputová boosted the Euro-Atlantic notes in the cacophony around Slovak foreign and eastern policy emanating from the government's orchestra in 2019.

Despite the continuing disagreements over major foreign policy issues, including with the main coalition party Smer-SD which had appointed him, Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák, withdraw his resignation at the beginning of December 2018. As he later commented he did so after considering the challenges facing Slovakia and the Foreign Ministry in 2019 as the OSCE Chairmanship country.<sup>36</sup> With the onset of the Russian-Ukrainian crisis in 2014, he found himself in a difficult position because he had to find a balance between Robert Fico's and Andrej Danko's attitudes to eastern policy on the one hand, and President Andrej Kiska's on the other, which was then taken up by Zuzana Čaputová in June 2019. He was therefore forced into an in-between position, trying to bring the two conflicting eastern policy lines closer together. However, he

<sup>34</sup> "Prezidentka na Ukrajine: sme za obhajobu Vašej suverenity," [President in Ukraine: we defend your sovereignty] Kancelária Prezidentky SR, Aktuálny, September 16, 2019. Available online: <https://www.prezident.sk/article/prezidentka-na-ukrajine-sme-za-obhajobu-vasej-suverenity/> (accessed on March 3, 2020). [translation by author]

<sup>35</sup> "Na strane Ruska nevidím rešpekt a úctu k pravidlám, kritizovala Čaputová" [I see no regard for the rules on Russia's side, said Čaputová] *Hospodárske noviny*, July 15, 2019. Available online: <https://hnonline.sk/svet/1974878-na-strane-ruska-nevidim-respekt-a-uctu-k-pravidlam-kritizovala-caputova> (accessed on March 2, 2020).

<sup>36</sup> "Obdobie podania a stiahnutia demisie bolo profesionálne najťažším obdobím, tvrdí Lajčák," [The period in which I submitted and withdrew my resignation was the most difficult period for me professionally, says Lajčák] *Pravda*, December 27, 2019. Available online: <https://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/496416-obdobie-podania-a-stiahnutia-demisie-bolo-profesionalne-najtazsim-obdobim/> (accessed on March 4, 2020).

always insisted that Slovakia should strictly follow the common EU and NATO policies on the crisis in Eastern Europe.<sup>37</sup>

It is also important to note that Slovakia's 2019 OSCE Chairmanship under Lajčák's leadership took place in a parallel universe to Slovakia's foreign policy under the governing coalition. As OSCE Chairperson-in-Office he visited all the regional conflict zones in which the OSCE had a role in 2019, including the post-Soviet area, travelling most frequently to Ukraine and the Donbas region. Ukraine was declared the priority of Slovakia's OSCE Chairmanship. At the end of the Chairmanship when Bratislava hosted the annual OSCE Review Conference at the beginning of December 2019, he summarized the main achievements of the OSCE Chairmanship, concluding:<sup>38</sup>

Ukraine has been the most important political objective of our activities as the OSCE Chairmanship country and we had a number of successes. The exchange of prisoners, mine clearance, withdrawal of heavy military equipment from the line of contact and, most visibly, the reconstruction of the bridge at Stanytsia Luhanska, the only civilian crossing point in the Luhansk region,

Slovakia's performance as OSCE Chairmanship country in 2019 was assessed positively by the international security expert community. In an article analyzing the first nine months of Slovakia's Chairmanship, Stephanie Liechtenstein, wrote favorably about Slovakia having achieved consensus over the annual OSCE budget, the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting agenda and on extending the mandate of the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine. She also praised the progress in resolving the conflict in Eastern Ukraine, in part owing to Slovakia's diplomatic work, as well as in enhancing the OSCE's visibility as an international organization. In addition, she noted that the Slovak Chairmanship had tried hard to overcome some of the negative dynamics among states by creating a more positive spirit and by convening an informal OSCE Ministerial gathering in a remote location in the High Tatras in Slovakia on July 8–9th. The idea was to bring together ministers from the 57 OSCE participating states and to discuss the OSCE's role in securing peace in an informal atmosphere.<sup>39</sup>

However, we might assume that if there had been a clear foreign policy consensus in the government coalition in 2019, Slovakia could have achieved more during its OSCE Chairmanship under the Foreign Ministry, especially in addressing the challenges in and around Ukraine. Unfortunately, Lajčák was "a soldier alone in the field" with no real support from either of the two key parties in the ruling coalition.

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<sup>37</sup> For more see A. Duleba, "The Janus-face of Slovakia's eastern policy in 2017," op. cit.; and J. Marušíak, "Contradictory messages of Slovakia's eastern policy in 2018," op. cit.

<sup>38</sup> "Prioritou slovenského predsedníctva v rade OBSE je Ukrajina, tvrdí Lajčák," [Ukraine is the priority of Slovakia's OSCE Chairmanship, says Lajčák] *Sme*, December 3, 2019. Available online: <https://domov.sme.sk/c/22274598/lajcak-prioritou-slovenska-v-rade-obse-je-ukrajina.html> (accessed on March 4, 2019).

<sup>39</sup> S. Liechtenstein, "Slovakia's OSCE Chairmanship: amid dire straits for multilateralism," in *Security and Human Rights Monitor*, September 26, 2019. Available online: <https://www.shrmonitor.org/slovakias-osce-chairmanship-amid-dire-straits-for-multilateralism/> (accessed on January 14, 2020).

## CONCLUSION

The three-party coalition government (2016–2019) led by prime ministers Robert Fico and Peter Pellegrini, failed to meet, and worst of all, did not even want to meet its own foreign and security policy goals set out in the government program at the beginning of the parliamentary term. Its foreign policy performance is comparable only to that of Vladimír Mečiar's 1994–1998 government. Its stated aim, set out in the government program of 1994 was for Slovakia to become a member of NATO and the EU. In practice, however, Mečiar's government did everything possible to prevent that from happening. The 2016–2019 Smer-SD, SNS and Most coalition government did the same, as is most evident in its failure to adopt the new security and defense strategies to improve Slovakia's capacity to defend its interests.

The main reason for the collapse of the ruling coalition's foreign policy consensus was its eastern policy and the fact its leaders were projecting different interests, especially over the Russian-Ukrainian crisis. The cacophony over the Smer-SD-led government's eastern policy reached its height in 2019, the last year of the government. Parallel foreign policies were pursued by the coalition partners and by the president and foreign minister. This did little to make Slovakia a more transparent and reliable partner in the eyes of its strategic partners, the EU and NATO member states.

If the leaders of the ruling coalition were hoping that their "pro-Russian" attitudes would help them to win more votes in the parliamentary elections of February 29, 2020, they could not have been more wrong. However, it would be a mistake to ignore the enduring problem of schizophrenia in Slovak foreign policy, which both paralyzes it and weakens the country's ability to defend its long-term international interests.



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# WESTERN BALKANS – FROM DEPRESSION TO HOPE

JÚLIUS LŐRINCZ

A year ago when reviewing the year 2018 in Slovak foreign policy on the Western Balkans I raised the question of whether it had been a lost year or a useful year. The answer was that while it had not been a breakthrough year, it should not be condemned either. Indeed, the European Commission had drafted a policy paper, “A credible enlargement perspective and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans,”<sup>1</sup> in which it stressed that EU membership was a “geostrategic investment in a stable, strong and united Europe based on common values.”

The problem was that the follow-up summit of the European Union and the Western Balkan countries in May 2018 in Sofia, at which the European Commission was to develop a more fleshed-out strategy, did not achieve this goal. It was supposed to be similar to the summit meeting of the EU–Western Balkans Summit in 2003 in Thessaloniki, which signaled the beginning of the EU enlargement process in southeast Europe. However, during the preparations for the Sofia meeting, various procedural issues began to overshadow the substance of the problems. In the end the negotiations did not bring the expected progress but foreshadowed developments that would lead to a slowdown and then stagnation in the enlargement process in 2019.

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<sup>1</sup> “Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans,” COM(2018) 65 final, European Commission, Strasbourg, February 6, 2018. Available online: [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/communication-credible-enlargement-perspective-western-balkans\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/communication-credible-enlargement-perspective-western-balkans_en.pdf) (accessed on January 15, 2020).

## AGAINST POSTPONING THE ACCESSION NEGOTIATIONS

This is reflected in the postponement of Albania and North Macedonia's accession negotiations back in autumn 2018, contrary to expectations and despite the level of preparedness achieved. At that time there was still hope it would be given the green light during the June EU summit. However, by May 2018 French President Emmanuel Macron was center stage, declaring in Sofia that the Union's problems had to be tackled first, with reforms coming before expansion.

Slovakia's diplomats, together with those from other member states, took up the issue, arguing against Macron's ideas. They pointed to the need to continue EU enlargement in southeast Europe, given the state of affairs in the Western Balkans.

Slovakia engaged bilaterally and multilaterally. At the beginning of June 2013, the month in which enlargement was repeatedly discussed at the EU summit, it was one of the 13 EU member states to argue that the accession negotiations should be opened as soon as possible. Foreign minister Miroslav Lajčák and his counterparts from the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Estonia, Croatia, Lithuania, Latvia, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Austria, Slovenia and Italy issued a joint statement stressing the urgency of opening EU accessions negotiations with North Macedonia and Albania.<sup>2</sup>

According to some observers, the disagreement in the European Union is partly down to the fact that the signatories of the declaration were all newer member states apart from two older ones, Austria and Italy, and only Italy is one of the original founders of the Union. This, they argue, simply highlights the fact that western European countries – the more developed countries – do not have understand EU enlargement.

In the first half of 2019, Slovakia used its OSCE Chairmanship to encourage OSCE participating states in the Western Balkans to engage more actively in the EU accession process. Minister Miroslav Lajčák's working visit to the Western Balkans (Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Albania, North Macedonia and Kosovo) in his role as OSCE Chairman-in-Office is an example of this. The talks took as their starting point the European Commission's May progress assessment on the preparedness of the accession states, which had been welcomed by the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> "Joint Statement on the EU commitment to the Western Balkans' European integration," Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, June 6, 2019. Available online: [https://www.mzv.sk/aktuality/detail/-/asset\\_publisher/Iw1ppvnScIPx/content/spolocnevyhlasenie-k-otvoreniu-pristupovych-rokovani-eu-so-severnym-macedonskom-a-albanskom?p\\_auth=d86kfNk1&\\_101\\_INSTANCE\\_Iw1ppvnScIPx\\_redirect=%2Faktuality%2Fvsetky\\_spravy%3Frok%3D2019%26mesiac%3D5%26strana%3D2](https://www.mzv.sk/aktuality/detail/-/asset_publisher/Iw1ppvnScIPx/content/spolocnevyhlasenie-k-otvoreniu-pristupovych-rokovani-eu-so-severnym-macedonskom-a-albanskom?p_auth=d86kfNk1&_101_INSTANCE_Iw1ppvnScIPx_redirect=%2Faktuality%2Fvsetky_spravy%3Frok%3D2019%26mesiac%3D5%26strana%3D2) (accessed on June 6, 2019).

<sup>3</sup> In the statement the ministry stated, "The Ministry remains convinced that the enlargement of the Union based on the fulfilment of the given criteria is a strategic investment in a secure, stable and united European Union, based on common values. Respect for the principles of democracy, human rights, progress in the area of the rule of law, freedom of the media, and regional cooperation remain the key criteria on the way to full membership in the EU. We especially welcome the repeated recommendation to open accession negotiations with North Macedonia and Albania on their EU membership." See "Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic on the publication of the European Commission's enlargement package," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, May 30, 2019. Available

In the second half of 2018 and in the first half of 2019, Slovakia chaired the Visegrad Group (V4). Slovak diplomacy used this important Central European platform to stimulate discussion on the EU enlargement process in southeast Europe. In May 2019 a ministerial conference of the V4 and Western Balkan countries, and with the European Commission, took place in Bratislava. There it was emphasized that the European orientation of the Western Balkan countries was important as their interests corresponded to those of other European states wanting to see stability in the region, and that stability was dependent on development. This is the view of the V4 countries and the Western Balkans.<sup>4</sup>

## STRATEGIC MISTAKE

Slovakia, together with other states, called on the ministers and then the European Council to make the right decision and open accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia in their June 2019 meetings.

Unfortunately, this did not happen. The decision to give Albania and North Macedonia the greenlight was postponed until October 2019. However, the next – long awaited – decision by the EU Council and the European Council (i.e. the EU summit) on October 17–18 came as a “shock.” Even a week after the summit decision, the European Parliament adopted, by a large majority (412 in favor, 136 against and 30 abstentions), a resolution underlining that Albania and North Macedonia had met the requirements for starting accession negotiations and that the failure to open accession talks with Albania and North Macedonia was a strategic mistake.

Parliament expressed its deep disappointment over the failure to agree to open EU accession talks with Albania and North Macedonia at the EU summit on October 17–18.<sup>5</sup>

MEPs criticized the leaders of France, Denmark and the Netherlands for blocking the decision to open talks. According to most MEPs, both Western Balkan countries had made considerable efforts and met the requirements to start EU accession negotiations. In its resolution, for example, parliament welcomed the steps taken by North Macedonia to settle bilateral issues with neighboring countries. MEPs also spoke positively of the recent judiciary reforms in Albania.

The European parliament stressed that the refusal to open accession negotiations with the two Western Balkan states was a strategic mistake that damaged the credibility

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online: [https://www.mzv.sk/web/en/news/detail/-/asset\\_publisher/oLViwP07vPxv/content/vyhlasenie-mzv-aez-sr-k-zverejneniu-rozsirovacieho-balicka-europskej-komis-1/10182?p\\_p\\_auth=gAlfaRCX&\\_101\\_INSTANCE\\_oLViwP07vPxv\\_redirect=%2Fweb%2Fen](https://www.mzv.sk/web/en/news/detail/-/asset_publisher/oLViwP07vPxv/content/vyhlasenie-mzv-aez-sr-k-zverejneniu-rozsirovacieho-balicka-europskej-komis-1/10182?p_p_auth=gAlfaRCX&_101_INSTANCE_oLViwP07vPxv_redirect=%2Fweb%2Fen) (accessed on May 30, 2019).

<sup>4</sup> “Lajčák prijal ministrov z Balkánu,” [Lajčák received ministers from the Balkans] *TA3*, May 28, 2019. Available online: <http://www.news.sk/rss/link/2019/05/983726/lajcak-prijal-ministrov-z-balkanu-temou-boj-aj-spor-srbska-a-kosova/> (accessed on May 28, 2019).

<sup>5</sup> “Failure to open accession talks with Albania and North Macedonia is a mistake,” *Press Release*, European Parliament, October 24, 2019. Available online: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20191021IPR64717/failure-to-open-accession-talks-with-albania-and-north-macedonia-is-a-mistake> (accessed on October 24, 2019).

of the European Union and sent a negative signal to other potential EU candidates. At the same time, MEPs warned that other foreign actors, working against the values and interests of the EU, might engage in closer cooperation with Albania and North Macedonia.

The failure of the European Commission in October 2019 to signal the opening of accession talks with Albania and North Macedonia triggered immediate condemnation, even among EU leaders. “This is a grave historic mistake, and I hope it is only temporary and that it will not deepen itself into a collective memory as a historical mistake,” said the outgoing European Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker.

“Personally, I think it was a mistake. Not a failure but an explicit mistake,” said European Council President Donald Tusk.

“I am very disappointed,” Prime Minister Peter Pellegrini said after several hours of unsuccessful negotiations with the European Commission. “We have wasted time and a chance to give prospect to the people of the Western Balkans for the EU to have a greater influence in the region, and we may continue to look with amazement at how Russia, Arab countries or Turkey will operate there,” he stressed.

EU Enlargement and Neighborhood Commissioner Johannes Hahn, who had urged both countries to reform to comply with EU standards, said it undermined the credibility of the Union “not only in the Western Balkans, but also beyond.”

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said that EU leaders should address the issue again before the summit with the Western Balkan leaders in Zagreb in May 2020.<sup>6</sup>

## CRITICAL ATTITUDES AMONG SLOVAK DIPLOMATS

The Slovak Foreign Ministry acted promptly – before the European Parliament – and took a critical stance on the position of the leading EU countries, namely France, Denmark and the Netherlands. Their votes had made it impossible to reach the required consensus.

On the Monday (October 21, 2019) State Secretary František Ružička had talks with his partner, Federal Minister of State for Europe Michael Roth, during his visit to Germany, in which he stated “we perceive the failure to open accession talks with North Macedonia and Albania as a lost opportunity. The European Union must confirm the European prospect of these states. I’m pleased that Germany also holds a similar view in this regard.” Both sides pointed out that the opening of negotiations did not mean either country would automatically join the European Union but represented the beginning of a long European journey.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> The quotes are from “EÚ urobila ‘historickú chybu’so Severným Macedónskom a Albánskom,” [EU made a historical mistake with North Macedonia and Albania] *Konzervatívny web*, October 19, 2109. Available online: <https://www.konzervativnyweb.sk/c/22239960/juncker-eu-urobila-historicku-chybu-so-severnym-macedonskom-a-albanskom.html> (accessed on October 19, 2019).

<sup>7</sup> “Ružička on a working visit to Berlin,” Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, October 21, 2019. Available online: [https://www.mzv.sk/web/en/news/slovak\\_republic\\_and\\_eu/-/asset\\_publisher/69SSsvqFCd2a/content/f-ruzicka-absolvoval-pracovnu-navstevu-berlina/10182](https://www.mzv.sk/web/en/news/slovak_republic_and_eu/-/asset_publisher/69SSsvqFCd2a/content/f-ruzicka-absolvoval-pracovnu-navstevu-berlina/10182) (accessed on October 25, 2019).

A few days later, F. Ružička met with Aleš Chmelař, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs for European Issues of the Czech Republic. They agreed the outcome of the October General Affairs Council, which had failed to decide whether to open accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia, was disappointing. Ružička said,

It is about the trustworthiness of the EU in the region. On this issue we would like to be active towards our partners in the Western Balkans region, as well as in the EU. We are ready to discuss with our EU partners who are concerned about the further process. That is why we support the intention of the Czech V4 Presidency to continue in the organization of the V4 ministerial meetings with the Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries.<sup>8</sup>

Prior to that the Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák had had talks in Washington (October 22, 2019) with his US counterpart Mike Pompeo. Among the many multilateral and bilateral issues discussed, they indicated their interest in seeing further progress in the Western Balkan countries in the integration process. "I feel deeply disappointed at the EU's failure to open accession talks with North Macedonia and Albania," Lajčák said, stressing that the Euro-Atlantic integration of the Western Balkan countries was key to strengthening security and stability on the European continent.<sup>9</sup>

Slovakia's diplomats were also active in the multilateral environment, for example as part of the V4. The V4 prime ministers sent a joint letter to the president of the European Council Donald Tusk. They expressed concern at the fact the European Union had again failed to respect its commitments to V4 partners on the Western Balkans. "The General Affairs Council should have agreed to start the accession process with North Macedonia and Albania. It did not happen to our great disappointment. Despite the important progress that we have made together, some member states continue to block the start of accession talks, although this is only the first step in lengthy and demanding accession negotiations," the V4 prime ministers said in the letter.

The V4 prime ministers felt that the European Commission's assessment showed that North Macedonia and Albania had made significant progress in achieving complex domestic reforms and improving relations with their neighbors. But despite that,

The EU was unable to give these states a clear signal on their European prospects. We agree with the president-elect of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen [yet to take up office], that the EU must act more geopolitically and more vigorously to pursue its interests worldwide. Further delays in taking a positive decision will seriously deteriorate sta-

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<sup>8</sup> "Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister of the Czech Republic Chmelař visits Bratislava," Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, October 25, 2019. Available online: [http://www.hague.mfa.sk/web/en/news/current\\_issues/-/asset\\_publisher/lrJ2tDuQdEKp/content/namestnik-ministra-zahranicnych-veci-cr-a-chmelar-navstivil-bratislavu/10182?p\\_p\\_auth=TGainbhI&\\_101\\_INSTANCE\\_lrJ2tDuQdEKp\\_redirect=%2Fweb%2Fen%2Fhome](http://www.hague.mfa.sk/web/en/news/current_issues/-/asset_publisher/lrJ2tDuQdEKp/content/namestnik-ministra-zahranicnych-veci-cr-a-chmelar-navstivil-bratislavu/10182?p_p_auth=TGainbhI&_101_INSTANCE_lrJ2tDuQdEKp_redirect=%2Fweb%2Fen%2Fhome) (accessed on October 25, 2019).

<sup>9</sup> "Miroslav Lajčák talks with Pompeo," Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, October 22, 2019. Available online: [https://www.mzv.sk/web/en/news/current\\_issues/-/asset\\_publisher/lrJ2tDuQdEKp/content/miroslav-lajcak-rokoval-s-mikeom-pompeom/10182](https://www.mzv.sk/web/en/news/current_issues/-/asset_publisher/lrJ2tDuQdEKp/content/miroslav-lajcak-rokoval-s-mikeom-pompeom/10182) (accessed on October 22, 2019).

bility in the region and will greatly limit our ability to play an active role in our own neighborhood.<sup>10</sup>

## THE EU AS A GLOBAL PLAYER ONLY WITH THE WESTERN BALKANS

EU enlargement in the Western Balkans was also discussed at the next strategic forum held at Château Belá near Štúrovo (December 7, 2019). The participants, respected international relations analysts from several countries, warned that the lack of a strategic compass on EU membership could ultimately lead to “an increase in nationalism in the Western Balkan countries and a rise in third-party influence and destabilization.” Unfortunately, many things – the ongoing tensions and stagnation in the Belgrade–Pristina dialogue, the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the unbalanced relations between Serbia and Croatia, the internal political tensions in Montenegro – prove them right.<sup>11</sup>

The opening of accession talks with Albania and North Macedonia was the main topic of discussion at a working meeting in Brussels on December 9, 2019, between the EU member state foreign ministers and their partners from Albania and North Macedonia – Gent Cakaj and Nikola Dimitrov. The ministers discussed the continued transformation in the Western Balkans in light of the forthcoming debate on adjustments to the EU enlargement process. The EU foreign ministers welcomed the rational response from Albania and North Macedonia regarding the failure to open accession negotiations in October 2019 and stressed the importance of implementing the reform measures adopted. Miroslav Lajčák stressed,

We support the strengthening of the credibility of the enlargement process in the Union and also in the Western Balkans, which should be assisted by the transparent fulfilment of clear and fair criteria. We wish to set an ambitious agenda for the upcoming months in such a manner that the May EU-Western Balkans Summit in Zagreb will be successful.<sup>12</sup>

The Slovak foreign minister paid a brief visit to Berlin to speak at the international Strategic Challenges of the European Union in the Western Balkans Region in 2020, organized by the independent NGO Deutsche Gesellschaft für Aussenpolitik and the international think-tank, the European Council on Foreign Relations. He stressed that,

<sup>10</sup> “Premiéři krajín V4 poslali Tuskovi list,” [V4 prime ministers sent Tusk a letter] *SITA*, October 16, 2019. Available online: <https://www.webnoviny.sk/premieri-krajin-v4-poslali-tuskovi-list-znepokojilo-ich-posunutie-otvorenia-pristupovych-rokovani/> (accessed on October 16, 2019).

<sup>11</sup> “Stredoeurópske strategické fórum Château Béla,” [Château Béla Central European Strategic Forum] Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, December 7, 2019. Available online: [https://www.mzv.sk/aktuality/detail/-/asset\\_publisher/lw1ppvnScIPx/content/m-lajcak-vystupil-na-stredoeuropskom-strategickom-fore-chateau-bela?p\\_p\\_auth=3uVfbAWa&\\_101\\_IN-STANCE\\_lw1ppvnScIPx\\_redirect=%2F](https://www.mzv.sk/aktuality/detail/-/asset_publisher/lw1ppvnScIPx/content/m-lajcak-vystupil-na-stredoeuropskom-strategickom-fore-chateau-bela?p_p_auth=3uVfbAWa&_101_IN-STANCE_lw1ppvnScIPx_redirect=%2F) (accessed on December 7, 2019).

<sup>12</sup> “Miroslav Lajčák hopes for a successful EU summit in Zagreb,” Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, December 9, 2019. Available online: [https://www.mzv.sk/web/en/news/detail/-/asset\\_publisher/oLViwP07vPxv/content/m-lajcak-si-zela-uspesny-summit-eu-v-zahrebe/10182?p\\_p\\_auth=GIIdk73sp](https://www.mzv.sk/web/en/news/detail/-/asset_publisher/oLViwP07vPxv/content/m-lajcak-si-zela-uspesny-summit-eu-v-zahrebe/10182?p_p_auth=GIIdk73sp) (accessed on December 9, 2019).

The upcoming months will be key for the relations between the EU and the countries of the Western Balkans. We should be seeking to find a new consensus on the opening of accession negotiations with Albania and Macedonia, improve the enlargement policy, and prepare the May summit of the EU with the countries of this region.

Minister Lajčák also pointed out the risks the EU could face if it did not send a clear signal to the Western Balkan countries. He thought the Western Balkans was a region in which the EU had to demonstrate its clout. "If not in the Western Balkans, then where?" Lajčák asked.<sup>13</sup>

## SLOVAK ACTIVITY ON THE SCENE

In 2019 the Slovak MEP Vladimír Bilčík (Spolu, European People's Party) was elected Chairman of the European Parliament Delegation for relations with Montenegro. In practical terms, he will be chairing parliamentary meetings in Brussels, Strasbourg and Podgorica, concerning relations with the Montenegrin parliament, a country aspiring to EU membership. He was also appointed EP rapporteur for Serbia.<sup>14</sup>

In discussions on the prospects of EU enlargement in the Western Balkans, Bilčík said that proposals to change the rules of accession to the European Union are dangerous. He was responding to media reports that new rules for the association negotiations could be presented at the next EU–Western Balkans Summit in Zagreb in May 2020, which would offer the candidate countries some kind of privileged partnership with the Union or economic integration without formal membership. Bilčík said in an interview for the Montenegrin *Pobjeda* daily, "I do not see an alternative to full EU membership for our partners in the Western Balkans. I think all other suggestions are dangerous ..."

Vladimír Bilčík's role as the European parliament's rapporteur for Serbia is equally important. In this capacity he has negotiated with other representatives of the European institutions with Serbia's leaders, including President Aleksander Vučić. Bilčík said he considered that his role as rapporteur was to obtain a consensus among European Union countries on EU enlargement. He is now working with Serbian partners on setting out the conditions under which the parliamentary elections will be held in spring, which part of the opposition wants to boycott. After the elections, Bilčík wants to turn

<sup>13</sup> "Miroslav Lajčák in Berlin on the importance of EU enlargement," Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, January 16, 2020. Available online: [https://www.mzv.sk/web/en/ministry/minister/activities/-/asset\\_publisher/nNnVuDsSsgB1/content/m-lajcak-v-berline-o-dolezitosti-rozsirovania-eu/10182](https://www.mzv.sk/web/en/ministry/minister/activities/-/asset_publisher/nNnVuDsSsgB1/content/m-lajcak-v-berline-o-dolezitosti-rozsirovania-eu/10182) (accessed on January 16, 2020).

<sup>14</sup> "I am very pleased as a political newcomer to have done well in the heads of delegation competition. There is a reform process in Montenegro and it is important that the European Union supports it. I also consider this job as part of one of the most important goals of Slovak foreign policy, which is to support the integration processes in the Western Balkans," said Vladimír Bilčík. More see "Vladimír Bilčík sa stal predsedom delegácie EP pre vzťahy s Čiernou Horou," [Vladimír Bilčík is chairman of the EP Delegation for relations with Montenegro] *EURACTIV.sk*, September 26, 2019. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/buducnost-eu/news/vladimir-bilcik-sa-stal-predsedom-delegacie-ep-pre-vztahy-s-ciernou-horou/> (accessed on January 16, 2020).

his attention to changes in Serbia regarding the rule of law and improving trust in institutions, both important tasks as part of Serbia's EU accession process.

Slovak support for the integration processes in the Balkans has been provided by the Slovak Foreign Policy Association (SFPA), which organizes the National Conventions on the European Union in the Western Balkan countries. It is currently organizing them in Albania and North Macedonia.<sup>15</sup> Financial support is provided by SlovakAid (and USAID in North Macedonia). The aim of the National Conventions is to involve the professional public from all segments of society in formulating national policies and positions on the European integration agenda. They are an important example of sharing know-how from Slovakia's political, economic and social transition. They also create a long-term reliable, interactive and permanent EU resource for all sections of society.

In 2019 the Civil Servants Mobility Program (CSMP) run by the SFPA focused on Albania and North Macedonia, providing short-term internships in the V4 countries for government officials. The International Visegrad Fund (IVF) has supported the project for many years.<sup>16</sup>

Both Albania and North Macedonia responded very negatively to the October EU summit decision not to open negotiations and to postpone them indefinitely again. However, by the end of 2019 and early 2020, Tirana and Skopje were once again showing more enthusiasm, and the prevailing narrative was that they should do their utmost to ensure they were ready for the moment the EU member states change their minds and open the accession negotiations.

## BACKGROUND TO MACRON'S POSITION

However, let us return to the French veto on the further enlargement of the Union. Denmark and the Netherlands were also opposed to starting accession talks with Albania and North Macedonia at the summit in October 2019, but their opposition was not as staunch as that of France. Their concerns were with technical issues relating to whether the two Balkan states were handling the various association tasks satisfactorily. While French President Macron has talked of halting EU enlargement until the necessary structural reforms within the European Union have been implemented. He has also spoken of the need to change the concept and methodological approach to incorporating new states.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> More details on the projects in the two countries are available at <https://nkeu.mk/> (Macedonia) and <http://eurokonventa.al/sq/> (Albania) (both accessed on January 16, 2020).

<sup>16</sup> For more information regarding the Civil Servants Mobility Program, see <https://think.visegrad-fund.org/civil-servants-mobility-programme/> (accessed on January 2020).

<sup>17</sup> Frédéric Mondoloni is a senior French diplomat, who was ambassador to Serbia for several years, and now heads the directorate of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs for Continental Europe. In October 2019 he visited Belgrade to explain directly to President of Serbia Aleksandar Vučić that France will consider EU membership for the Balkan countries once the EU's internal reforms are complete and once the candidate countries meet the membership conditions. He confirmed that this applies not just to the new candidates – North Macedonia and Albania – but also to Serbia and Montenegro, with whom the EU had been negotiating for a year. Mondoloni also told Vučić that President Emmanuel Macron was interested in the Belgrade–Pristina dialogue, and wanted

For analysts, however, the October 2019 summit could not have come as a surprise. Developments in the previous months led to this critical point. In late April the leaders of all the Western Balkan countries, including those who do not like being labeled Balkan countries – Croatian Prime Minister Plenković and his Slovenian counterpart Marijan Šarec (both NATO and EU members) – met in Berlin at the behest of German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron. They talked about relations between all the Balkan countries, including the 100 per cent duty Kosovo imposes on goods from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina and speculation about a possible exchange of territory between Serbia and Kosovo which could lead to new ethnic tensions. They left with the intention of meeting again in the same format or a similar one. But as far as EU enlargement is concerned, there was nothing in the Berlin talks except for vague promises. An analysis by the *Financial Times* considered it a cold shower for all supporters of the region's accession to the EU.<sup>18</sup>

It is clear that Merkel and Macron have different approaches to the Western Balkans – Merkel is critical, but undoubtedly more accommodating, and while Macron is sympathetic (especially in relation to Serbia), there is a clear distance. Analysts have been trying to identify why Macron is adopting that particular line, and suspect that it is actually opening up a route for Russia into the Balkans (as if Russia needs the help of the French president for that). Russia is already doing this on its own, stumbling from time to time, as in the failed coup d'état in Montenegro in 2016 and when the Serbian security forces exposed several Russian spies in 2019. At that time, Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić was able to ask the summoned Russian ambassador just one brief desperate question, "Why?"

Experienced French diplomat and politician Pierre Mirel, who spent 23 years in Brussels dealing with the enlargement process (including when Slovakia joined), noted in an interview in November 2019 that France had had reservations about EU enlargement for decades. It thinks the EU should be "deeper than broader," that is, better integrated rather than having a large number of members. Mirel also argued against Macron's "first the reforms, then the enlargement" approach, "You can start accession negotiations that last for years, while continuing the reforms that are really needed, in the banking system, in migration, in the asylum regime, and everyone certainly supports that. But you can have the two processes at the same time."<sup>19</sup>

Another expert (from the younger generation), Jasmin Mujanović, originally from the Western Balkans but now lecturing at Elon University in the US state of North Carolina, had similar reservations about Macron's idea, "... it is unclear why little North Macedonia or Albania should wait for 10, 15 or even 20 years for structural changes to

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to organize meetings with German Chancellor Angela Merkel on that. For more see "Mondoloni s Vučićem: Članstvo Z. Balkana po završetku reformi EU," [Mondoloni and Vučić: Western Balkan membership after the EU reforms] *Radio Free Europe*, October 17, 2019. Available online: <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/30221954.html> (accessed on October 17, 2019).

<sup>18</sup> D. Vukadinović, "Summit in Berlin concludes without tangible solutions, next round of talks in Paris," *European Western Balkans*, April 30, 2019. Available online: <https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2019/04/30/summit-berlin-concludes-without-tangible-solutions-next-round-talks-paris/> (accessed on April 30, 2019).

<sup>19</sup> "Mirel za RSE: Sada treba razgovarati o tome šta Makron hoće," [Mirel for RSE: now we have to speak about what Macron wants] *Radio Free Europe*, November 15, 2019. Available online: <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/30221954.html> (accessed on November 15, 2019).

take place in the EU. It is unclear why these cannot be parallel processes, as they were in the past ... This is not just a crisis in the Western Balkans, but in the European project itself, because I do not understand how the European Union as a political community and project can turn its back on this region."<sup>20</sup>

## IN SEARCH OF A NEW METHODOLOGY

After the October veto shock (France, Denmark, the Netherlands), an intense debate began on opening accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia and on France's arguments separating internal reforms from the enlargement process. Most EU countries were attempting to rescue enlargement while meeting France's demands for EU reforms, including methodological changes to the accession process.

Discussions, polemics, and more concrete ideas on the way out of the marasmus and uncertainty over the future of enlargement and reform have gradually led to a convergence between France's position and that of the "other side," made up of most EU member states.

Nine EU members – the Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Malta, Poland, Austria, Slovenia and Italy – drafted and signed a non-paper in December 2019 responding to a similar document from French politicians and diplomats that was circling around the EU. The "Nine" explained their motivation as follows: "The European Union's ability to integrate new members must be maintained without weakening internal coherence. At the same time, EU internal reform cannot be a precondition for enlargement. Our door remains open."<sup>21</sup>

These countries have adopted the French idea of having a new methodology for the accession process – and in the first quarter of 2020 the European Commission's proposal as well. The idea is to group the Accession Agreement articles into the main thematic areas and then negotiate the steps as a whole and not individually as is the case with the current chapters. The French idea, on which the European Commission's position is partly based, was that this would also make the intergovernmental conferences between the Union and the candidate countries "politically more relevant and interactive." In other words, it should speed up the accession process.

This methodology would apply to the negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia. Serbia and Montenegro should be able to follow the existing system, while using the new one to negotiate the assessments of the thematic areas containing several of the original articles of the Accession Agreement. It is up to them to decide. Their initial reactions suggest they are leaning toward the new system. This should be decided at the Zagreb EU–Western Balkans Summit in May 2020.

<sup>20</sup> "Mujanović: Zapadni Balkan u EU najranije 2030," [Mujanović: Western Balkans in the EU in 2030 at the earliest] *Radio Free Europe*, October 23, 2019. Available online: <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/intervju-jasmin-mujanovic/30232346.html> (accessed in October 23, 2019).

<sup>21</sup> "Nine EU members release a new proposal for the reform of enlargement process," *European Western Balkans*, December 11, 2019. Available online: <https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2019/12/11/nine-eu-members-release-a-new-proposal-for-the-reform-of-enlargement-process/> (accessed on December 11, 2019).

The key French proposal, which the European Commission seems to have adopted, is the principle of reversibility, that is, being able to return to already concluded chapters of the Accession Agreement. According to the authors of the proposal, that would ensure the accession process is both credible and incentivizing. Paris thinks it should be applied in situations where a candidate country does not fully or only partially fulfills certain membership criteria or ceases to fulfill its obligations. In this case, the Union's response would be proportional to the gravity and magnitude of the candidate's mistake or deficit, ranging from the suspension of aid to the overall suspension of the accession negotiations where core EU values are violated. This would also apply to closed chapters, which could be reopened if necessary.

The hitherto agreed principles of the new accession methodology would also allow additional financial and investment assistance to be provided to membership candidates during the negotiations, which would require more rigorous use of pre-accession instruments but also enable the use of structural funds, which are currently only available to member states.

At the Prague ministerial meeting of the Visegrad Four with Croatia, Austria, Slovenia and the Western Balkans European at the end of February 2020, Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighborhood Olivér Várhelyi confirmed that the integration progress was dependent on the rule of law. This means that chapters 23 and 24 of the accession agreement would remain open from start to finish and be part of any topic under the new methodology. This, according to experts, is the "sine qua non" of EU integration, and applies even if the item under discussion is not directly linked to the rule of law.<sup>22</sup>

There seems to be renewed hope that efforts to go beyond the shock of the EU summit in October 2019, which was met with depression and the feeling that the Union enlargement process had been locked for a long time, may nevertheless produce real results. At the end of the General Affairs Council (GAC) meeting on February 25, 2020, Vice-President of the European Commission Maroš Šefčovič said that all EU member states welcomed the new enlargement process methodology and had agreed to open accession negotiations with North Macedonia and Albania. However, Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighborhood Várhelyi was a bit more cautious, reminding member states to make official comments (in March) on the European Commission's progress reports about the readiness of the two Balkan states to negotiate with the Union. France has signaled that it would give them the greenlight if the reports were positive.

## SLOVAKIA'S PROACTIVE APPROACH

The Slovak Foreign Ministry welcomed the European Commission's proposal to modify the accession process procedures:

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<sup>22</sup> "In Prague Lajčák supports the ambitions of the Western Balkans for EU integration," Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, February 27, 2020. Available online: [https://www.mzv.sk/web/en/news/detail/-/asset\\_publisher/oLViWp07vPxv/content/m-lajcak-v-prahe-podporil-eurointegracne-ambicie-zapadneho-balkanu/10182?p\\_p\\_auth=YAKa48wC&\\_101\\_IN-STANCE\\_oLViWp07vPxv\\_redirect=%2Fweb%2Fen%3Frok%3D2017%26mesiac%3D1%26strana%3D2](https://www.mzv.sk/web/en/news/detail/-/asset_publisher/oLViWp07vPxv/content/m-lajcak-v-prahe-podporil-eurointegracne-ambicie-zapadneho-balkanu/10182?p_p_auth=YAKa48wC&_101_IN-STANCE_oLViWp07vPxv_redirect=%2Fweb%2Fen%3Frok%3D2017%26mesiac%3D1%26strana%3D2) (accessed on February 27, 2020).

We perceive this to be a good basis for the discussion and appreciate the efforts to increase the trustworthiness, dynamics and foreseeability of the enlargement policy. We especially support the intention to increase even more the emphasis on the implementation of reforms in reinforcing the rule of law. The Slovak Republic is ready to constructively contribute to the discussion with the objective of adopting such amendments that would result in a more effective accession process. Then we will actively participate in their application.

In the talks on the proposal, the Slovak Republic will continue to further promote especially three key elements: the confirmation of the European perspective and full-fledged EU membership as a final objective of the integration process, the clarity of criteria and their evaluation, and the restoration of the trustworthiness of the process both in the eyes of inhabitants of the region, as well as the EU.<sup>23</sup>

In this context, it should be underlined that one of the strategic areas and priorities of Slovak foreign policy is the Western Balkans – territorially, historically, socially, culturally and economically (although compared to other nations in practice the economic side appears less of an interest). Slovakia's considerable political experience of what is happening in the southeast of the European continent enables it to make a qualified statement about the integration ambitions of the Western Balkans. Over the past two years, these ambitions have come to a crossroads. We are now at a stage in the accession processes of North Macedonia and Albania, but also Serbia and Montenegro, already participating in the negotiations, where the decision is whether to spur on the whole region or to pull out and leave the region to feel the effects of other actors.

Where is the proverbial ball and on whose side? There is no doubt that the Union is responsible for altering the enlargement process (at least most of it), but the process itself is actually a two-way process, and the ball has to be visible from the other side, the Western Balkans. On their part, they have to implement the reforms properly and not just pretend to do so. Whether they can fix the difficult relationship between nation and state by moving towards the difficult but inevitable reconciliation is important to

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<sup>23</sup> "Statement of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic on the Proposal of the European Commission to Revise the EU Accession Process," Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, February 5, 2020. Available online: [https://www.mzv.sk/web/en/news/slovak\\_republic\\_and\\_eu/-/asset\\_publisher/69SSsvqFCd2a/content/vyhlasenie-mzvez-sr-k-navrhu-europskej-komisie-na-upravy-pristupoveho-procesu-do-eu/10182?\\_101\\_INSTANCE\\_69SSsvqFCd2a\\_redirect=%2Fweb%2Fen%2Fnews%2Fslovak\\_republic\\_and\\_eu](https://www.mzv.sk/web/en/news/slovak_republic_and_eu/-/asset_publisher/69SSsvqFCd2a/content/vyhlasenie-mzvez-sr-k-navrhu-europskej-komisie-na-upravy-pristupoveho-procesu-do-eu/10182?_101_INSTANCE_69SSsvqFCd2a_redirect=%2Fweb%2Fen%2Fnews%2Fslovak_republic_and_eu) (accessed on February 27, 2020). In a statement, the foreign ministry stressed, "We perceive the amendment of the accession process currently under preparation as a way to increase the justice and balance of the entire process that should be strict but also fair and just. It should be more political than it has been up to now; however, the changes should not serve as instruments for introducing bilateral issues of member states into the relations between the EU and the membership applicants. The Ministry believes that the progress in the discussions on the enlargement process amendments will lead to the opening of accession talks with Albania and North Macedonia in March.

them. The Union cannot do this for them. The role of the European Union, and Slovakia, in all this is to help them overcome the problems.

The new methodology is what the EU can do at this stage for the common cause of integration. It is true that at the moment it is merely a summary of the rules and a description of the technical aspects of the negotiation process. The crucial question is whether local political elites can succeed in creating genuine interest in integration. So it is not just enlargement, which is a political decision, that is crucial but integration as well. The problem is how to integrate the Western Balkan countries into the European Union so there is no doubt their values are compatible with the values of the Union.

In this demanding and complex process that affects the fate, existence and future of the Western Balkans, the Slovak Republic and its foreign service play a significant role. The nomination of Miroslav Lajčák, the prominent long-serving foreign minister, to the post of EU Special Representatives for Serbia and Kosovo Dialogue and the Western Balkans by European Union High Representative for Security and Foreign Policy Josep Borell is evidence of this. He could be formally appointed by the European Commission in March, following discussions in the EU bodies.<sup>24</sup>

There has long been talk of creating such a position in European diplomacy, especially since 2018 and 2019 when the EU felt it needed to consolidate its presence in the Western Balkans. Lajčák has always been one of the main potential candidates for the post. He understands the environment, speaks languages of the region and has experience of local issues. He was ambassador to Serbia and Montenegro when it was one state, the EU envoy responsible for supervising Montenegro's referendum on leaving the union with Serbia in 2006 and EU special representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2007–2009.

According to some diplomatic sources, Germany and France, while acknowledging Lajčák's undisputed knowledge of the Western Balkans and his capacity to cope with the problems there, had some doubt as to whether he was prepared to operate in the region. Lajčák is from Slovakia, which is one of the EU member states, along with Spain, Romania, Cyprus and Greece, that have not recognized Kosovo. In the end both Germany and France put their doubts aside and expressed their full confidence in Lajčák. Meanwhile, the European Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighborhood, Hungarian diplomat Olivér Várhelyi said that Lajčák was a good choice for attempts to revive and advance the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina: "I know Mr. Lajčák and his achievements. I think we'll be a good team. He will not be representing Slovakia in this position but working for the European Union, as you know."<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> "Lajčák predložen za specijalnog predstavnika EU za Srbiju i Kosovo," [Lajčák candidate for the EU envoy for Serbia and Kosovo] *Radio Free Europe* February 22, 2020. Available online: <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/lajcak-zapadni-balkan-kosovo-srbija/30448588.html> (accessed on February 22, 2020).

<sup>25</sup> "Varheli: Izveštaj za Skoplje i Tiranu dobar, nadam se zelenom svjetlu Pariza i ostalih," [Good news for Skopje and Tirana, I hope for a greenlight from Paris and others] *Radio Free Europe* February 27, 2020. Available online: <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/30457944.html> (accessed on February 27, 2020).

But he was representing Slovakia as a Slovak government minister at his last multilateral enlarged ministerial meeting of the leaders of the Visegrad Four and Western Balkans in Prague on February 27, 2020. Later he said pointedly, not just symbolically, “At the meeting I confirmed our country’s support for the Euro-Atlantic ambitions of the Western Balkan countries.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> “In Prague Lajčák supports the ambitions of the Western Balkans for EU integration,” *op. cit.*

# SLOVAK RELATIONS WITH EAST ASIA: A LOST DECADE?

MATEJ ŠIMALČÍK

In recent years, the international system has seen a gradual shifting of the geopolitical and geo-economic centers of gravity. China's growing power and rising assertiveness under the rule of Xi Jinping, the US trade war with China, and the ever-present threat of North Korea's nuclear program suggest that the geopolitical shift has been following an eastward vector. This means the most important global processes, which will shape the world in the upcoming decades, are taking place in the Indo-Pacific region.

East Asia has been notably absent from Slovakia's foreign policy thinking, and barely mentioned in its strategic documents beyond the perceived economic opportunities for Slovak economic diplomacy.

However, as the countries located in the region are playing an increasingly important role in the shaping of global affairs (partly due to US isolationism under President Donald Trump and internal incoherence within the EU), the region warrants more attention within Slovakia's overall approach to foreign policy.

The lack of strategic thinking on East Asia means that most policymakers (be they politicians, diplomats or officials from other ministries) tend to see East Asia solely in economic terms, typically as a cornucopia of trade and investment opportunities. Nowhere is this more evident than in the case of China.<sup>1</sup>

Bearing this in mind, this chapter attempts to comprehensively assess the general trends of Slovakia's engagement with Northeast and Southeast Asia.

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<sup>1</sup> For the sake of clarity, here China refers to the People's Republic of China. When the Republic of China is meant, Taiwan is used.

## CHINA: A SILK ROAD TO NOWHERE?

Modern relations between Slovakia and China can be divided into four distinct periods. Following the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949, Sino-Slovak relations were largely determined by Slovakia being a puppet state of the Soviet Union. Relations were largely cordial reflecting relations between China and the Soviet Union. This historic relationship serves, even today, as an important point of reference for China when discussing its current-day engagement with Slovakia and other countries in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE).<sup>2</sup> This period of cordiality lasted until the Sino-Soviet split, after which Slovakia (along with other CEE countries) followed the Soviet example and did not interact with China. Since the fall of communism in 1989 and the establishment of the independent Slovak Republic in 1993, Slovak foreign policy has focused on integration into the structures of the global West. As a result, China (and even the East Asia region) was notably low on the radar of Slovak policymakers. This began to change after the 2009 financial crisis, when Slovakia started looking around for alternative markets to offset the overall dependency of the Slovak economy on the EU market.

A significant turning point in Slovakia's engagement with China came in 2012, when Slovakia joined the China-initiated China-CEEC Cooperation platform, a grouping of China and CEE countries.<sup>3</sup> The following year, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) was announced, and in 2015 Slovakia signed a BRI Memorandum of Understanding.

On a discursive level, China has been gaining increasing importance in public debate. According to ChinfluencE, media coverage of China and China-related topics almost doubled between 2010 and 2016.<sup>4</sup> Most attention has been paid to economics-related issues with political and security-related aspects representing only a marginal share of the overall volume. This has ramifications for Slovak security policy as it distorts public opinion on China in that it does not sufficiently consider major contentious issues like human rights or territorial conflicts. As a result, the Slovak public and elites are not sensitive to the security risks posed by China, and this in turn feeds into Slovak government attitudes towards China.<sup>5</sup> This may change in light of the COVID-19 pandemic as more analysts and politicians are becoming aware of China's impact on global affairs beyond economic relations.

Partly because of the low level of awareness about the security risks, engagement with China has predominantly focused on improving economic relations. Slovakia has

<sup>2</sup> R. Q. Turcsányi, R. Qiaoan, "Friends or foes? How diverging views of communist past undermine the China-CEE '17+1 platform,'" *Asia Europe Journal*, May 27, 2019. Available online: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs10308-019-00550-6> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

<sup>3</sup> The grouping, also known as "16+1" at the time of its inception, originally included 16 CEE countries. In 2019, membership was extended to Greece. Since then, the grouping has been known as "17+1".

<sup>4</sup> I. Karásková, T. Matura, R. Q. Turcsányi, M. Šimalčík, *Central Europe for Sale: The Politics of China's Influence*. Prague: Association for International Affairs, 2018. Available online: <https://www.chinfluence.eu/central-europe-for-sale-the-politics-of-chinas-influence-2/> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

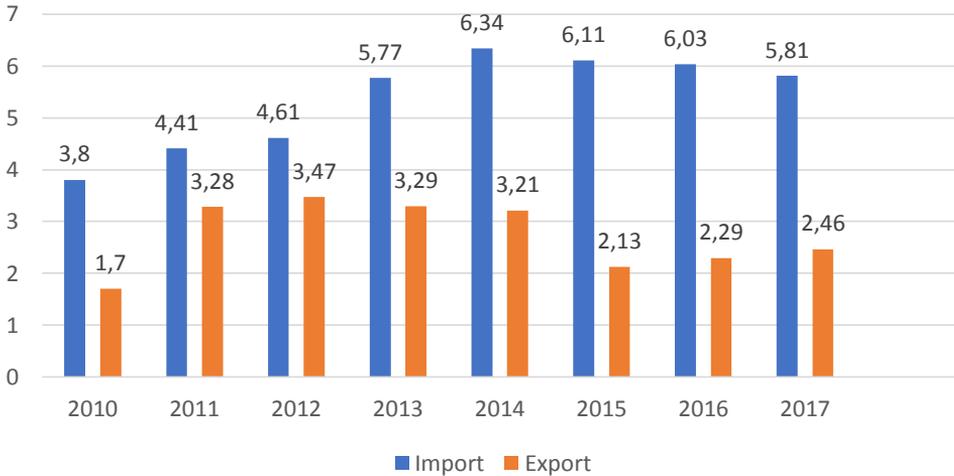
<sup>5</sup> M. Šimalčík, "Stories about Middle Kingdom: Case study of the Slovak perception of China and its implications for the security policy," in R. Ondrejcsák et al., eds., *Panorama of Global Security Environment 2017–2018: The Central European Perspective*, Bratislava: Stratpol, 2018, pp. 343–60.

run a long-term negative trade balance with China, which it is aiming to improve. Another goal has been to attract high-quality investment, preferably greenfield investment.

As a result, Slovakia is only now starting to realize its own security vulnerabilities, which could be targeted by China through a *prima facie* economic engagement. Because China uses economic tools like investments to achieve its political goals, Slovakia has to kickstart its own security debate on China. An investment screening mechanism, the Chinese presence in 5G networks, and attempts to influence media and discourse are key areas where Slovakia has to carefully consider the potential economic benefits *vis-à-vis* the security risks.<sup>6</sup>

Despite engaging with China in the BRI and 17+1 platforms, China has not become one of Slovakia's major economic partners. Slovakia's trade deficit with China has been increasing in recent years. This is not only because Slovakia's imports almost doubled between 2010 and 2016 (China is Slovakia's third-largest import partner), but also because of falling Slovak exports. Paradoxically after increasing for several years, Slovak exports shrunk noticeably after it joined the 17+1 platform. While in 2012 exports amounted to \$3.47 billion, in 2017 they were only \$2.46 billion, which represents a mere 2.9 per cent of total exports.<sup>7</sup> As a result, the trade deficit with China deepened from – \$2.1 billion to \$3.74 billion. At the same time, it should be noted that the negative trade balance with China is largely logical, as it is predominantly caused by the structure of global value chains.

**Figure 1.** Slovak trade with China (billions of USD)



Source: Atlas of Economic Complexity

<sup>6</sup> See e.g. M. Šimalčík, “When investments are not in state interest,” CEIAS, December 15, 2018. Available online: <https://ceias.eu/when-investments-are-not-in-state-interest/> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

<sup>7</sup> “The Atlas of Economic Complexity,” Center for International Development at Harvard University. Available online: <http://atlas.cid.harvard.edu> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

Nevertheless, some success was achieved in the agricultural sector. In 2019, Slovakia concluded a veterinary agreement with China on dairy exports. After certification by the Chinese authorities, the first dairy farmers began exporting their products to China in early 2020. While this is certainly beneficial from the microeconomic perspective of individual farmers, from a macroeconomic perspective, it is only a minor achievement as agriculture represents only 1.5 per cent of overall Slovak exports (with dairy representing an even smaller share) and employs less than 3 per cent of the Slovak workforce.<sup>8</sup> Despite the low economic impact of dairy exports, they have been disproportionately presented by some politicians as a major success of Slovakia's China policy.

Looking at investment, the stock of China's foreign direct investment did not increase significantly either. Chinese investors in Slovakia were mostly interested in investing in the ICT, logistics, automotive, or banking sectors. These investments mostly took on the form of mergers and acquisitions (i.e. brownfield investment). Greenfield investments are mostly an exception. According to the Slovak National Bank, the total stock of Chinese FDI reached €30.1 million in 2017 and €30.8 million in 2018 (provisional data). Of the V4 countries, Slovakia has received by far the lowest amount of Chinese FDI. Moreover, Chinese FDI stock is lower even than Japanese, Korean, or Taiwanese investment.

However, it must be noted that measuring FDI stock is a notoriously imprecise activity. The volumes reported by the Slovak National Bank tend to be deflated, as it follows the OECD guidelines, which dictate that inter-company transfers from the local subsidiary to its parent should be subtracted from the total volume of FDI (which can sometimes lead to paradoxical reporting of negative FDI stock).<sup>9</sup> To compare, data from the Chinese Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) indicate an FDI stock of \$99.3 million. Nevertheless, even according to Chinese MOFCOM data, Slovakia is the least successful FDI recipient among the V4. At the same time, a former Chinese ambassador to Slovakia recently stated that China invested at least €400 million in Slovakia (however, it is not clear whether that data included Hong Kong and Taiwan).<sup>10</sup>

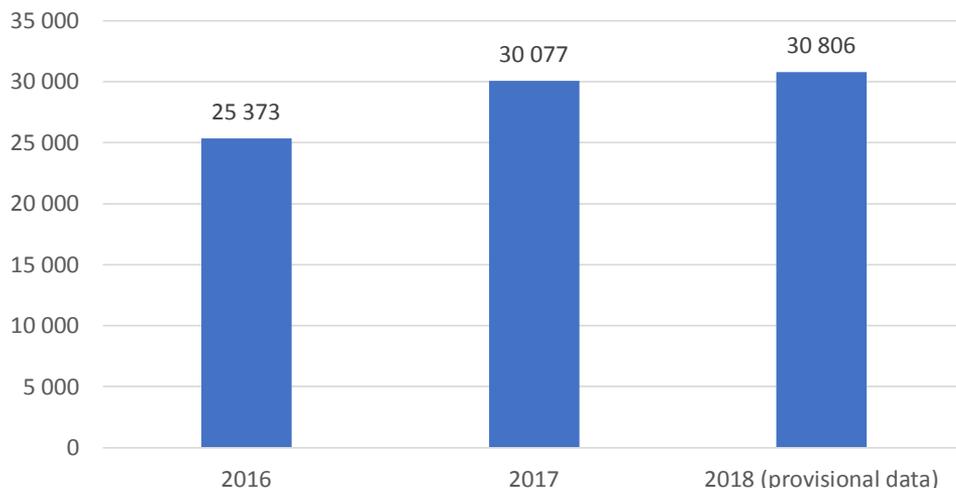
Slovak investment relations with China thus exist mostly on the "wishful thinking" level. Several noteworthy investments were planned in the past but fell through. An illustrative case was the planned purchase of US Steel by Hesteel worth approximately \$1.6 billion, with an estimated \$1.1 billion in further investment to be made by Hesteel after the acquisition.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> M. Šimalčík, "Na čom stojí Pellegriniho čínský sen," [What is Pellegrini's Chinese dream based on?] *Sme*, November 28, 2018. Available online: <https://komentare.sme.sk/c/20970356/na-com-stoji-pellegriniho-cinsky-sen.html> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

<sup>9</sup> See "Foreign direct investment statistics: Explanatory notes," OECD. Available online: <https://www.oecd.org/daf/inv/FDI-statistics-explanatory-notes.pdf> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

<sup>10</sup> L. Yar, "Čínsky veľvyslanec: Snažíme sa nájsť najlepší spôsob, ako využiť centrálnu polohu Slovenska," [Chinese ambassador: we're trying to find the best way to use Slovakia's central location] *EURACTIV.sk*, 6 September, 2019, Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/vonkajsie-vztahy/interview/cinsky-velvyslanec-snazime-sa-najst-najlepsi-sposob-ako-vyuzit-centralnu-polohu-slovenska> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

<sup>11</sup> L. Husenicová, K. Kironská, F. Šebok, M. Šimalčík, R. Q. Turcsányi, *Potenciál Novej hodvábnej cesty pre Slovensko*, [Potential of the New Silk Road for Slovakia] Bratislava: CEIAS, 2019. Available online: <https://ceias.eu/potencial-novej-hodvabnej-cesty-pre-slovensko/> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

**Figure 2.** Chinese FDI stock in Slovakia (thousands of EUR)

Source: National Bank of the Slovak Republic

Despite the proclaimed interest in promoting economic cooperation with China and formal participation in the BRI and 17+1, the Slovak government did not go out of its way to engage in pro-Chinese diplomacy. In the history of modern Sino-Slovak relations, several events stand out which show that China has not been particularly high on the government's foreign policy agenda. The first such event was the acceptance of Uighur detainees from the Guantanamo base despite China's objections,<sup>12</sup> and thus directly challenging China's core interests.<sup>13</sup> The second such event occurred when the then Prime Minister Robert Fico was visibly absent from the 17+1 summit of prime ministers in Suzhou. The official reason given was his health. However, that is doubtful for Fico continued his program in Bratislava, seemingly as prepared. Moreover, at the previous summit, Fico had stated publicly that he would not go to China on a tourist trip if there was to be no meaningful progress.<sup>14</sup> The third such event was in 2016, when the then President Andrej Kiska met with the Dalai Lama. Lastly in 2019 newly elected President Zuzana Čaputová raised China's violation of human rights at a meeting with Wang Yi (Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs).

<sup>12</sup> S. Ackerman, "Uighur men held for 12 years leave Guantanamo for Slovakia," *The Guardian*, December 31, 2013. Available online: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/31/uighur-men-leave-guantanamo-bay-slovakia> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

<sup>13</sup> For a detailed discussion of China's core interests see: B. Kelemen, K. Kironská, F. Šebok, M. Šimalčík, R. Q. Turcsányi, *Slovakia and China: Challenges to the future of the relationship*, Bratislava: CEIAS, 2020. Available online: <https://ceias.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Slovakia-and-China-Challenges-to-the-Future-of-the-Relationship.pdf> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

<sup>14</sup> R. Turcsányi, "Fico pre rozvoj vzťahov s Čínou neurobil prakticky nič," [Fico did practically nothing to expand relations with China] *Denník N*, November 7, 2016. Available online: <https://dennikn.sk/602336/fico-pre-rozvoj-vztahov-s-cinou-neurobil-prakticky-nic/> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

Čaputová and Kiska drew criticism over purportedly endangering Slovak economic relations with China. Paradoxically though, following Kiska's meeting with the Dalai Lama exports to China did not diminish but improved.<sup>15</sup>

Interestingly, in the last few years China has increasingly become a domestic political tool. This was particularly true after President Kiska met with Dalai Lama and President Čaputová criticized China's human rights violations. In both instances, the two events resulted in narrative clashes between the proponents of a value-based foreign policy anchored in the principles of liberal democracy on one hand, and supporters of engagement with China (be it for pragmatic or ideological reasons) on the other.

## TAIWAN: A NEGLECTED PARTNER?

Thinking about relations between Slovakia and China is tricky. On one hand, Slovakia pursues the "One China Policy" and so does not maintain diplomatic relations with Taiwan. On the other hand, Taiwan is an important economic partner.

On an institutional level, Taiwan handles its relations with Slovakia through a local Taipei Representative Office, which opened in 2003. Slovakia was the last country from the V4 region in which such an institution was opened.<sup>16</sup> Despite being a regional latecomer, Slovakia has achieved a substantial level of economic interaction with Taiwan over the years, especially in investments.

Notable cases of Taiwanese investment in Slovakia include Foxconn in Nitra, AU Optronics in Trenčín, Delta Electronics in Dubnica nad Váhom, ELTEK in Liptovský Hrádok, and Darwin Precisions in Trenčín. Altogether, these companies accounted for an FDI stock of approximately €404 million.<sup>17</sup>

The successful development of economic relations was partly the result of avoiding highly politicized public debates on Taiwan in Slovakia. Compared to neighboring Czech Republic, Taiwan has not so far become a hot topic in Slovak foreign policy or domestic politics. Nevertheless, Slovak policymakers should recognize the proximity of Slovak and Taiwanese political values, as both countries are currently liberal democracies with experience of autocratic rule.

As the events of the past few years indicate, China-related developments will prove to be even more contentious issues in global affairs. Thus, it is prudent for Slovakia, a member of the liberal democratic global community of nations, to build partnerships with like-minded nations beyond the traditional domains of Slovak foreign policy,

<sup>15</sup> M. Šimalčík, "Čínske omyly súdruha Blahu," [Comrade Blaha's Chinese misconceptions] CEIAS, July 18, 2019. Available online: <https://ceias.eu/sk/cinske-omyly-sudruha-blahu/> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

<sup>16</sup> C. Tubilewicz, *Taiwan and Post-Communist Europe: Shopping for Allies*, London: Routledge, 2007.

<sup>17</sup> Data provided by Taipei Representative Office in Bratislava. At the same time, the Slovak National Bank (SNB) recorded FDI stock of €75.5 million in 2016, €15 million in 2017, and €-5.5 million in 2018 (provisional data). The sharp decrease is explained by the SNB following OECD guidelines, discussed in the section on China. Negative FDI stock may be logical from an accounting perspective, but does not represent the reality on the ground, thus this section does not focus on the SNB data.

including with East Asian countries. As political relations with Taiwan have so far been neglected for pragmatic reasons, it is a prime candidate in this regard.

However, since Slovakia subscribes to the "One China Policy," opening official political channels will have ramifications for the relations with China, which views Taiwan as its "core interest." To mitigate the risk of a Chinese backlash, paradiplomacy and track 1.5 diplomacy are suitable options on how to engage with Taiwan more intensely. However, as Prague's recent experience indicates, improperly guided paradiplomatic engagement can create diplomatic conundrums.<sup>18</sup> Thus, it is imperative to have a clear set of guidelines on engagement with Taiwan and mainland China for paradiplomatic actors (cities, self-governing regions) so that national interests are not damaged when pursuing a sub-national, regional interest.

Slovak businesses have also proved to be a viable vehicle for advancing a positive image of Slovakia in Taiwan in recent years. Several Slovak companies regularly cooperate with Taiwanese counterparts on cutting-edge technologies like blockchain. A Slovak pioneer in this regard is Decent, which even opened a local branch in Taipei in 2019.<sup>19</sup>

## **SOUTH KOREA & JAPAN: ORIENTALISM OVERSHADOWS IMPORTANT BUSINESS PARTNERS?**

As mentioned above, both Japan and South Korea have invested substantially in Slovakia, in both cases more than China (according to Slovak National Bank data).

South Korea is an economic powerhouse in Slovakia, with investment worth almost €3 billion. This makes South Korea the largest non-European investor in Slovakia by a wide margin and the sixth-largest investor overall. The investment wave was led by KIA Motors and Samsung, which set up manufacturing plants in Slovakia. Altogether, over 100 Korean companies have a presence in Slovakia. Both KIA and Samsung are responsible for the bulk of Slovak exports (€3.8 billion and €3.6 billion respectively), thus contributing significantly to Slovak GDP.<sup>20</sup>

According to Slovak National Bank data, Japan is the second-largest Asian investor in Slovakia. Altogether, 67 Japanese companies operate in Slovakia, employing some 13,000 workers. Important investments in the manufacturing sector have been made

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<sup>18</sup> M. Šimalčík, A. Kalivoda, "Sister-city relations and identity politics: the case of Prague, Beijing, Taipei, and Shanghai," *The Diplomat*, February 25, 2020. Available online: <https://thediplomat.com/2020/02/sister-city-relations-and-identity-politics-the-case-of-prague-beijing-taipei-and-shanghai/> (accessed on March 15, 2020); M. Eckert, R. Q. Turcsányi, "Prague vs. Beijing: estranged sister cities," *The Diplomat*, October 8, 2019. Available online: <https://thediplomat.com/2019/10/prague-vs-beijing-estranged-sister-cities/> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

<sup>19</sup> "O možnostiach spolupráce s magistrátom hlavného mesta Taipei," [On the potential for cooperation with the City Council of Taipei] Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, October 29, 2019. Available online: [https://www.mzv.sk/aktuality/vsetky\\_spravy/-/asset\\_publisher/Rp2fPY0svzsu/content/o-moznostiach-spoluprace-s-magistratom-hlavneho-mesta-taipei?p\\_auth=B0SuxTol](https://www.mzv.sk/aktuality/vsetky_spravy/-/asset_publisher/Rp2fPY0svzsu/content/o-moznostiach-spoluprace-s-magistratom-hlavneho-mesta-taipei?p_auth=B0SuxTol) (accessed on March 15, 2020).

<sup>20</sup> R. Q. Turcsányi, T. Boshkoska, "Asian Investment in Slovakia," unpublished manuscript.

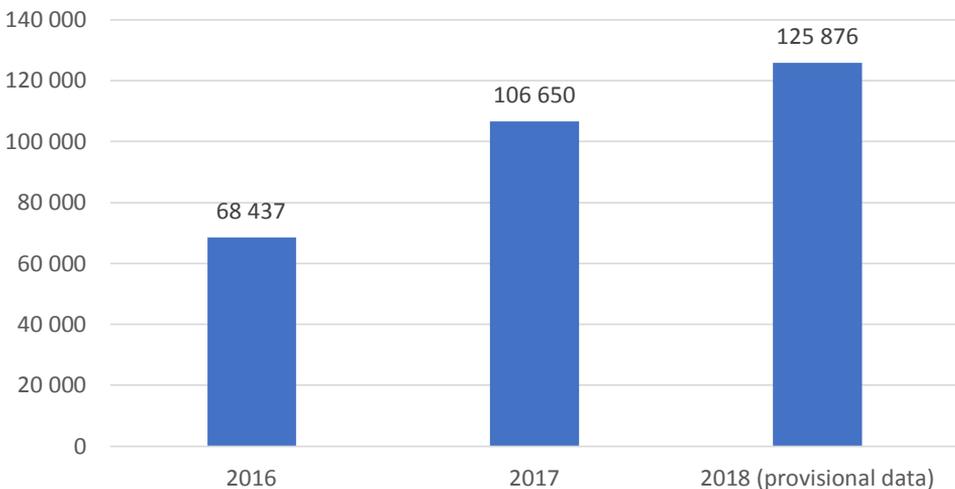
by Nidec, Panasonic Industrial Devices Slovakia, Yazaki Wiring Technologies Slovakia, U-Shin Slovakia, and Marelli Kechnec Slovakia.<sup>21</sup>

These companies were attracted to Slovakia mainly because of its low labor costs and open economy. However, with rising wages and increasing bureaucratic burdens, Slovakia now faces the danger of some companies relocating elsewhere. If any of the big players (like KIA or Samsung) were to abandon their operations in Slovakia, the move would create a substantial ripple effect, as many subcontractors are tied to these operations. For instance, Samsung has already started moving a portion of its production to Hungary, which has resulted in several Japanese and Korean subcontractors stopping their production as well.

Despite being important economic actors in Slovakia, both countries suffer from low visibility. In the case of Japan, this is mostly due to the Slovak public perceiving the country through its culture and history, rather than its current presence in the country. This was illustrated during President Čaputová's visit to Japan in 2019 to attend the enthronement ceremony of Emperor Naruhito. While most of the media coverage in Slovakia focused on the traditional ceremony and aspects of Japanese culture such as the emperor's divine substance, there was no substantial coverage of President Čaputová's contribution to economic diplomacy, when she met with Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo, and discussed cooperation in innovations and environmental protection, and visited several Japanese companies.

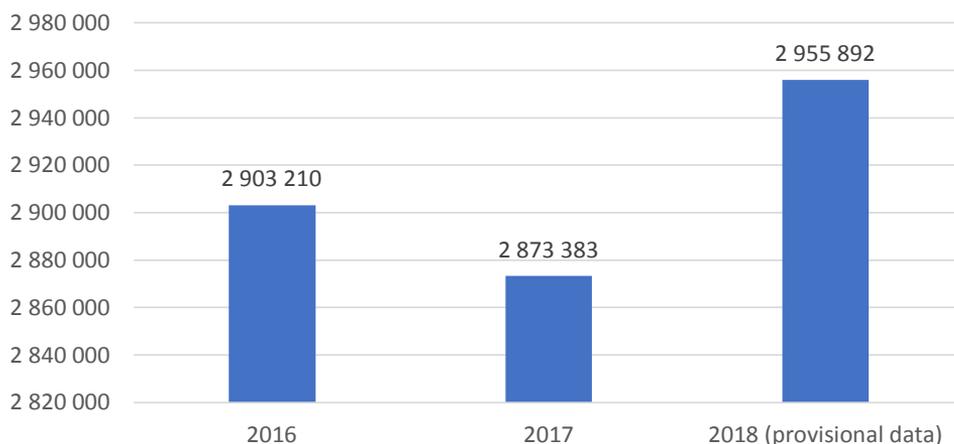
Like Taiwan, Slovakia also shares values with Japan and South Korea, which makes them natural partners for developing a Slovak presence in East Asia. Moreover, Slovakia has no unresolved contentious issues which could hamper cooperation. As already mentioned in the previous section on Taiwan, this value-affinity will be an important factor in the future for maintaining partnerships which will offset the impact of China on global affairs.

**Figure 3.** Japanese FDI stocks in Slovakia (thousands of EUR)



Source: National Bank of the Slovak Republic

<sup>21</sup> Ibid

**Figure 4.** South Korean FDI stocks in Slovakia (thousands of EUR)

Source: National Bank of the Slovak Republic

Engagement within the V4+ platform was an important means of developing Slovak relations with Japan and South Korea.

The V4+Japan partnership, formed in 2004, has over the years become one of the most mature V4+ partnerships. It was the framework within which three prime ministerial summits took place (in 2013, 2018, and 2019), the last of which was in Bratislava. The 2018 summit in Brussels serves as a reminder of how the rise in Chinese influence in the V4 region can impact relations with other Asian countries. No common statement was issued at the end of the summit. It was reported that the reason behind this was Hungary's refusal to sign a document that contained references to controversial China-related topics – one concerning South China Sea disputes and another discussing the safety of sea travel. Japan allegedly declined to issue a statement without the references and so no statement was adopted. The Hungarian government refuted these claims but all indications point to the veracity of the reports about Budapest's role.<sup>22</sup> Within the V4+ platform, Slovakia successfully partnered with Japan on development projects in Eastern Partnership countries, the Western Balkans, and even Afghanistan and Central Asia. Should Slovakia's development aid policy refocus on Southeast Asia in the future (see below), Japan could be a natural partner for Slovak assistance in the region, as in many cases it is a far more important development partner than China.

The V4 partnership with South Korea was formed later, in 2014. Similarly to V4+Japan, the V4+Korea partnership has focused on cooperation in the fields of development aid, science and technology, good governance, and innovation of small and medium enterprises. Moreover, South Korea supported the activities of the International Visegrad Fund with a donation of €336,000.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> K. Dubravčíková, F. Šebok, M. Šebeňa, M. Šimalčík, R. Q. Turcsányi, *Prospects for developing the V4+China cooperation platform*, Bratislava: CEIAS, 2019. Available online: [https://ceias.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/V4-China-cooperation\\_FINAL.pdf](https://ceias.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/V4-China-cooperation_FINAL.pdf) (accessed on March 15, 2020).

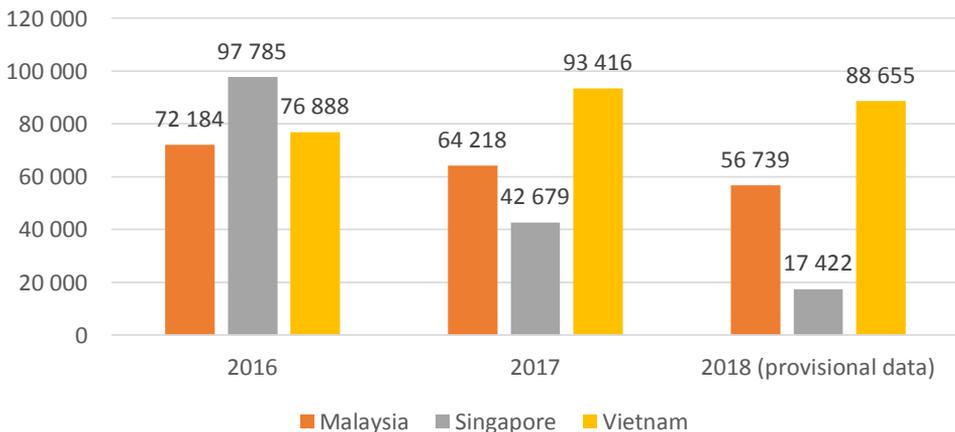
<sup>23</sup> Dubravčíková et al., 2019, op. cit.

As both countries have set up connectivity platforms, Slovakia should in the future explore the possibilities for cooperating in this area to offset the negative political impacts of China's BRI, possibly by looking at sources of co-financing for future infrastructure projects to avoid dependency on a single financing source.

## ASEAN COUNTRIES: OVERLOOKED OPPORTUNITIES

When discussing Slovak relations with East Asia, most of the discussion is focused on Northeast Asian countries, while the countries of Southeast Asia tend to be overlooked. However, three countries in the region stand out in terms of their financial presence in Slovakia. According to the Slovak National Bank data, Malaysia, Singapore, and Vietnam have invested substantially in Slovakia, in some instances even on a par with the Northeast Asian economies.

**Figure 5.** FDI stocks of select ASEAN economies in Slovakia (thousands of EUR)



Source: National Bank of the Slovak Republic

From among the three countries, Vietnam receives the most attention in Slovak discourse, mainly due to the large Vietnamese diaspora living in the country. The remaining two countries are largely overlooked, despite being important financial centers. Slovakia currently does not have diplomatic representation in either Malaysia or Singapore and the relationships are handled by the embassy in Jakarta.

Vietnam has occupied the Slovak headlines on several occasions in recent years, due to an international scandal which involved the kidnapping of a Vietnamese asylum seeker from Germany who was transported through Czechia and Slovakia to Vietnam to face trial on corruption charges.

While the kidnapping occurred in the summer of 2017, it did not come to public attention in Slovakia until the summer of 2018. The events that transpired a year earlier resulted in a diplomatic freezing of relations with Vietnam and the status of the diplo-

matic mission in Hanoi was downgraded from a delegation headed by an ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary to a delegation headed by a chargé d'affaires en pied. Since then, relations have barely improved nor seen any positive developments. This is largely due to Slovakia's own inability to seize the moment and press Vietnam into offering concessions in areas of Slovak interest.

The kidnapping happened during the final phase of negotiations between the EU and Vietnam on a free trade agreement and investment protection agreement. This presented Slovakia with the chance to use the treaty as leverage over Vietnam, as the treaties required the consent of member states (in Council in the case of the FTA, and full national ratification for the investment protection treaty).<sup>24</sup> Another such opportunity presented itself in mid-2019, when Vietnam was pursuing a seat on the UN Security Council. Slovakia could have conditioned its potential support for Vietnam's bid by resolving the kidnapping issue and offering meaningful progress on the economic agenda. However, these opportunities were not seized and a Vietnamese diplomat was expelled from Slovakia in February 2020.<sup>25</sup>

In comparison, Germany, where the kidnapping happened, suspended its strategic partnership with Vietnam.<sup>26</sup> The relationship was reset in February 2019,<sup>27</sup> reportedly after Vietnam made several concessions to Germany.

As for the specific opportunities Slovakia could pursue in Vietnam, the natural candidates are in the ICT and automotive sectors. As with Japan, cooperation on various "green" industries would also be of potential benefit to Slovakia. Vietnam has a long term waste management problem. Slovak companies could be ideal candidates to offer waste management solutions to Vietnamese entities.

Besides Vietnam, other ASEAN countries, especially the less developed ones, provide ample opportunities for Slovak businesses to export their products. The less developed economies of ASEAN (e.g. Indonesia, the Philippines, Laos, Cambodia, or Myanmar) represent markets that have so far been much less saturated by Western companies compared to the Northeast Asian economies on which Slovak economic diplomacy tends to focus.

Activities of Slovak businesses in ASEAN could also be connected to activities under the purview of the Slovak official development aid (ODA). However, Southeast Asia has been notably absent from the priorities of Slovak ODA. Southeast Asian countries offer opportunities for engaging in ODA projects in areas like waste management or river regulation. Ample opportunities exist for NGO sectors as well. With a largely

<sup>24</sup> "EU-Viet Nam free trade agreement – Joint press statement by Commissioner Malmström and Minister Tran Tuan Anh," European Commission, June 30, 2019. Available online: [http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/press/index.cfm?id=2041&utm\\_source=dlvr.it&utm\\_medium=facebook](http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/press/index.cfm?id=2041&utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=facebook) (accessed on March 15, 2020).

<sup>25</sup> "Slovakia expels a Vietnamese diplomat in relation to abduction case," *The Spectator*, February 5, 2020. Available online: <https://spectator.sme.sk/c/22319321/slovakia-expels-a-vietnamese-diplomat-in-relation-to-abduction-case.html> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

<sup>26</sup> R. Ebbighausen, "'Cold-War-style kidnapping' – Berlin waits in vain for signal from Hanoi," *Deutsche Welle*, December 27, 2017. Available online: <https://www.dw.com/en/cold-war-style-kidnapping-berlin-waits-in-vain-for-signal-from-hanoi/a-41888734> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

<sup>27</sup> "Germany aims to reset ties with Vietnam after kidnapping case," *Reuters*, February 20, 2019. Available online: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-germany-vietnam/germany-aims-to-reset-ties-with-vietnam-after-kidnapping-case-idUSKCN1Q92V8> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

successful transition experience of its own, Slovakia could serve as a role model to ASEAN countries struggling with economic and political transition who could train local officials and NGO members in best practices on governance, transparency, anti-corruption, or market economy reforms.

In this regard, Slovakia could learn from neighboring Czech Republic, where NGOs have been engaged in transition-related ODA projects in ASEAN, with funding from the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs. To illustrate, the Czech branch of Transparency International (a global anti-corruption watchdog) has been carrying out workshops in Myanmar intending to educate future societal leaders in good governance best practices, with the aim of improving the efficiency of Myanmar government.<sup>28</sup>

In Slovakia's case, the priorities of Slovak ODA would have to be redefined to include Southeast Asian countries on the list of countries eligible to receive project funding. A recent reform of the legislation on Slovak Eximbanka seems to be a good first step in encouraging ODA engagement beyond the regions where Slovakia has traditionally been active.

## **IN PLACE OF A CONCLUSION: ORGANIZATIONAL SHORTCOMINGS OF THE SLOVAK APPROACH TO EAST ASIA**

Owing to a lack of resources, Slovakia has been unable to maintain close relations with every partner in the East-Asian region, even though many countries in the region besides those explicitly mentioned in this chapter offer plenty of opportunities for Slovak businesses to export or invest abroad.

In dealing with East Asia, Slovak diplomacy has to overcome two shortcomings of a structural and organizational nature. First, there are the limits of the current consular map. Second, there are the limits related to the capacity of the ministry's human resources.

Perhaps the most effective game-changer for a more active approach towards East Asia on the Slovak side would be to increase the presence of Slovak diplomatic representatives in China. These steps, however, should be taken with an already defined strategy towards the region in mind and after a cost-benefit analysis, thus avoiding the pitfalls of increasing capacities without having a clear agenda and objectives in the first place.

Potential additions to the consular map should be considered, especially in the ASEAN countries where Slovakia currently has only three diplomatic missions (embassies in Hanoi, Jakarta, and Bangkok). Singapore and Malaysia, both sources of substantial FDI stock in Slovakia and major economic and financial centers, are currently covered from Jakarta. Thus, at the very least, it is worth considering creating a separate

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<sup>28</sup> See e.g. O. Cakl, "Blog Ondřeje Cakla – 'Myanmar: Jevištní demokracie jako metoda, state capture jako účel,'" [Ondřej Cakl's blog – Myanmar: stage democracy as a method, state capture as a purpose] Transparency International Česká republika, January 9, 2019. Available online: <https://www.transparency.cz/blog-ondreje-cakla-myanmar-jevistni-demokracie-jako-metoda-state-capture-jako-ucel/> (accessed on March 15, 2020).

posting covering those two countries (due to the relative proximity of Singapore and Kuala Lumpur, the two countries could be covered by a single embassy or consulate).

At home, Slovakia suffers from a lack of expertise on China and East Asian affairs in general. Most diplomats therefore gain Asia-related expertise on the job. This issue is further exacerbated by the fact that, under the current diplomatic rotation system, many diplomats who have Asian experience are rotated to non-Asian countries.

As China is becoming an ever more important actor in international affairs, it will be more and more crucial for the state to have sufficient access to domestic experts on economic, political, security and international affairs with specific knowledge of China and East Asia. To this end, the government should bolster training of experts at universities and support the nascent domestic community of think tanks that specialize in China and that can provide policymakers with tailored analyses.

To pick up the pace in places where Slovakia has lagged behind, it should also increasingly rely on its structural power stemming especially from its EU membership and to some extent NATO membership. EU relations with China provide the most important framework for Slovakia to achieve its interests there, not the least due to the fact economic exposure to China is mediated by EU partners. To this end, Slovakia should be a more constructive and responsible actor that participates in forming and adhering to EU-wide policies. This applies not only to policy on China, but also other countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

As Slovak interests in East Asia are predominantly economic, and since trade policy is an exclusive competence of the EU, Slovakia is destined to participate in EU-wide policy cooperation. Concluding EU-wide free trade agreements with East Asian economies (e.g. Japan, Vietnam, or Singapore) is especially important for an open economy like Slovakia's. Its EU membership could therefore be an important factor in offsetting the negative impact of the organizational shortcomings of the Slovak presence in Asia.



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# III.

## SLOVAKIA'S FOREIGN POLICY TOOLS

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# SLOVAK DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION IN 2019

DANIEL KABA

2019 brought with it a number of new strategies, instruments and policies. Nevertheless, the old demons returned and our foreign policy and values continued to be undermined.

Two main topics dominated – migration and private sector involvement in development cooperation. While migration framed both the beginning and end of the year, caused heated debates, was the reason minister Miroslav Lajčák submitted his resignation to the president (he later withdrew it) and was a politicized in the parliamentary election campaigns at the end of the year, private sector involvement has attracted less public and social media attention and been less prone to open misuse by politicians. Nonetheless both are equally important for development cooperation.

A special Eurobarometer from June 2019 shows that Slovaks are less likely than average to agree that it is important to help people in developing countries. (74 per cent, EU average 86 per cent). This represented a decline of 10 percentage points on the previous survey.

But we experienced good moments as well. Two of the main interactions between NGOs represented by Ambrela (formerly the NGDO Platform) and the Foreign Ministry proved that dialogue and communication are skill key to any change. The debates and consultations resulted in the adoption of a new ODA instrument – strategic partnerships (or “block grants”) to be piloted in 2020, and an increase of €1.5 million in the overall Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation (SAIDC) budget for grants.

The new Medium-term Strategy for Development Cooperation for 2019–2023<sup>1</sup> entered into force and the Foreign Ministry deployed another (its third) development diplomat to Georgia.

For the first time since its adoption in 2015, the Act on Development Cooperation<sup>2</sup> was amended and Eximbanka's status as a development actor was strengthened.

The Slovak OSCE Chairmanship attempted to take small (yet practical) steps toward settling the conflict in Ukraine. Development cooperation also featured in Slovakia's other two 2019 presidencies (of the OECD and especially the V4).

2019 was the first year in which the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was assessed. The OECD development cooperation report<sup>3</sup> noted that we need a new narrative and to change the way we "do" development cooperation. The question is, do we know how to do this and who will be the changemaker?

## WALKING IN A CIRCLE: FRAGMENTATION OR A REGIONAL APPROACH?

A year has passed since the 2019–2023 medium-term strategy (Strategy) entered into force, so it is time to look at what it contains and how it is put into practice.

In 2003 Slovakia stopped being a recipient country and became a donor country. In January 2019 the Strategy came into force, marking the fourth five-year cycle of ODA.<sup>4</sup>

In the previous 2014–2018 strategy the focus was on ten recipient countries. With the so-called "migration crises," the list was expanded to include Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Jordan. The funding for humanitarian aid was substantially increased and humanitarian projects became an inherent part of the SAIDC portfolio. This enables Slovak NGOs that are the Foreign Ministry's key partners to implement humanitarian projects on a more systematic base.

Looking back there was always a certain geographical flexibility that enabled Slovakia, a reliable international partner, to contribute to solutions to large regional

<sup>1</sup> "Medium-term strategy for development cooperation of the Slovak Republic for 2019–2023," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, 2019. Available online: [https://www.slovakaid.sk/sites/default/files/strednodoba\\_strategia\\_rozvojovej\\_spoluprace\\_eng\\_2019-2023\\_644\\_stran\\_final.pdf](https://www.slovakaid.sk/sites/default/files/strednodoba_strategia_rozvojovej_spoluprace_eng_2019-2023_644_stran_final.pdf) (accessed on January 30, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> "Zákon z 18. novembra 2015 o rozvojovej spolupráci a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov," [Act on Development Cooperation and amending and supplementing certain acts] *Laws of the Slovak Republic*, No. 392/2015. Available online: [https://slovakaid.sk/sites/default/files/zakon\\_392\\_2015\\_o\\_rozvojovej\\_spolupraci.pdf](https://slovakaid.sk/sites/default/files/zakon_392_2015_o_rozvojovej_spolupraci.pdf) (accessed on January 30, 2020).

<sup>3</sup> *OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews: Slovak Republic 2019*. OECD's Development Assistance Committee, 2019. Available online: <https://www.oecd.org/dac/oecd-development-co-operation-peer-reviews-slovak-republic-2019-9789264312326-en.htm> (accessed on January 30, 2020).

<sup>4</sup> See also "Medium-term strategy for development cooperation of the Slovak Republic for 2003–2008," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, 2004. "Medium-term strategy for development cooperation of the Slovak Republic for 2009–2013," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, 2009; Medium-term strategy for development cooperation of the Slovak Republic for 2014 – 2018. Available online: [https://issuu.com/slovakaid/docs/strednodoba\\_strategia\\_oda\\_sr\\_2014-2\\_83963017c1b288](https://issuu.com/slovakaid/docs/strednodoba_strategia_oda_sr_2014-2_83963017c1b288) (accessed on January 30, 2020).

crises. Whether this was done out of instrumental or more altruistic reasons is a matter for debate.

In the second ODA cycle, this flexibility could be seen in the inclusion of Tunisia and Egypt as new ODA recipient countries, which was a response to the Arab Spring. In the subsequent cycle (2009–2013) the conflict in Syria and the worsening situation of refugees in the Middle East was the incentive for including Syria and its neighbors.

The Foreign Ministry presented its “Assessment of the priorities of Slovak foreign and European policy in 2019 and focus for 2020,” at a governmental meeting on February 12, 2020. It states that “the dialogue on migration and counter-terrorism issues should be strengthened, particularly with Egypt, Libya and Morocco.”<sup>5</sup> Although some of the reasons for doing this may be the same<sup>6</sup>, that is, to curb migration to Europe, this would further stretch the already limited capacities of the Slovak ODA system to beyond what is desirable.

Thus the inevitable question we face is, where does the flexibility or regional approach end and where does fragmentation start?

Certainly, flexibility is necessary but it needs to be built around an ODA that is focused, predictable and reflects Slovakia's ODA vision, identity, values and long term goals. Too much flexibility would erode and destabilize the core of ODA. But what is that core? For instance, is it the focus on curbing migration to Europe through development and humanitarian projects or is that a peripheral concern? To what extent should ODA serve foreign trade and private sector purposes?

Of course things are never black and white. But besides thinking of the model as consisting of a center<sup>7</sup> and periphery we can also think of it as a continuum where one end represents instrumentalism and the other altruism. There are other elements that can be considered in strategic thinking about the overall picture. For instance, plan versus reality (or number of strategies on paper but yet to be operationalized or implemented) and systematic versus non-systematic approaches are yet other elements that can be used to stimulate strategic thinking on the overall picture.

The Strategy covers 27 countries rather than the previous 14 countries (including Syria and neighbors), but the SAIDC budget has not been increased.

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<sup>5</sup> “Hodnotenie priorít zahraničnej a európskej politiky Slovenskej republiky v roku 2019 a ich zameranie na rok 2020,” [Assessment of the priorities of Slovakia's foreign and European policy in 2019 and focus for 2020] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, 2020, p. 5. Available online: <https://www.mzv.sk/documents/10182/2686701/2020+Hodnotenie+prior%C3%ADt+zahranic%C4%8Dnej+a+eur%C3%B3pskej+politiky+Slovenskej+republiky+v+roku+2019+a+ich+zameranie+na+rok+2020> (accessed on February 20, 2020). The project in Morocco is a joint initiative between the V4 and Germany worth around €30 million aimed at building the capacities of the Moroccan coast guard and border protection, improving socio-economic conditions for young people, building economic infrastructure and promoting entrepreneurship.

<sup>6</sup> The other main ones could be to counterbalance the Turkish appetite for becoming a stronger regional power and the economic interests of some EU member states in oil-rich Libyan waters. Needless to say that, in North Africa, the humanitarian situation is worst in Libya.

<sup>7</sup> Usually migration related projects are in the core. Development intervention in Afghanistan is probably on the periphery and non-systematic. Kenya plus or the sub-Saharan region are peripheral, non-systematic and more altruistic. Kenya is more systemic, central and altruistic. These categories are somewhat simplistic but can be used to stimulate thinking on strategy and to positively disrupt or challenge the status quo.

The larger number of countries is partly due to the so-called Kenya regional approach that has led to the addition of seven East African countries. Although this territorial flexibility may lead to a positive spillover effect from existing Kenyan projects, it could overstretch Slovak capacities. Slovakia has only two embassies in this region (in Addis Ababa and Nairobi) and it is not clear how the development diplomat in Kenya will be able to work effectively in this vast and diverse East African region, whether in geographic, cultural, economic or security terms. Although it is true that several Slovak NGOs have projects in countries like Uganda or Ethiopia. To think strategically would mean considering how the very slim SlovakAid funding can be used effectively for existing and new initiatives by Slovak actors outside Kenya while simultaneously trying to avoid inefficient single shot and ad hoc support for projects without further plans. There are several options. The small amount of funding (€200,000) could be allocated to a single project or it could be sliced up as seed funding. A model could be designed for testing different approaches, but that would have to be backed up by a solid monitoring and evaluation system and more robust funding would be required for the most successful small projects to grow.

The Strategy<sup>8</sup> states that the principle of leaving no one behind is behind the enlargement (all seven newly added East African countries on the list are in the Least Developed Country (LDC) category). In 2018 no LDC country featured among the top ten ODA recipient countries. In 2019, the total planned allocation for these seven countries was €200,000, representing 0.7 per cent of total bilateral aid in 2018 (total bilateral aid in 2019 is expected to be the same or higher).

But the principle of leaving no one behind should be understood more as a multi-layered approach and as applying to structural poverty that is region and community based and multifaceted. In other words, it is “denationalized” and “degeographized.” It can refer to a marginalized group based on gender, ethnicity, religion and so on.

And then there are countries like Ethiopia and Serbia<sup>9</sup> which were put on hold for five years in the previous cycle and are now back in the game.

Afghanistan received a dwindling amount of Slovak aid (approximately €100,000 annually) but has been replaced by Georgia, a new program country. Here the reasoning behind the regional approach does not explain the 2019 allocation of €300,000 for the whole Eastern Partnership region, including Georgia.

However, the top two recipient countries, Libya and Turkey, barely feature in the strategic documents. In 2018 these two countries received five times more funding (€10.5 million) than all three program/high priority countries together (Kenya, Moldova, Afghanistan; €2 million).

There is no use of an exit strategy generally, nor for Afghanistan or Serbia. Although flexible for political decisions, this complicates the work of Slovak implementers on the ground and makes funding and sustainability less predictable and pushes long term planning into annual cycles. In 2011 the SAIDC allocation for Kenya was €1.4 million. In 2019 that dropped by 50 per cent to €700,000. However, the ministry also attempted to take part in EU joint programming in Kenya and contributed to the EU Trust Fund for Africa as well. Nevertheless the decrease was not strategically planned nor justified.

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<sup>8</sup> “Medium-term strategy for development cooperation of the Slovak Republic for 2019–2023,” op. cit., p. 22

<sup>9</sup> Development projects under the Finance Ministry were also implemented in Serbia in this period.

Needless to say that throughout this whole period Kenya has consistently featured among the top three program countries.

The new strategy kept blurring the line between program and project countries.

If we zoom out to take a bird's eye perspective, there are four to five priority regions, namely the Western Balkans, the Eastern Partnership countries, East Africa and the Middle East, while significant funding also goes to countries such as Libya, Turkey, Afghanistan and Morocco.<sup>10</sup> I leave it to the reader to assess whether this geographic scope reflects Slovak capacities.

## GOALS AND SECTORS

Despite the DAC OECD peer review recommendation that a sectoral and geographic focus should be adopted, the Strategy has broader goals. On paper at least the previous strategy (2014–2018) had two main goals: human development in partner countries, primarily through supporting education and employment; and democracy, good governance and dialogue between civil society and state institutions. The second goal was aligned with something that can be seen as Slovakia's comparative advantage, its transition experience: building the institutions of an independent state, developing a market economy and adhering to the principles of democracy, as well as successful integration into international organizations and associations.

The Strategy contains a number of additional goals, like conflict prevention, dealing with the causes of migration through job creation, promoting food safety, eradicating poverty, mitigating climate change, promoting sustainable use of natural resources, encouraging effective water and forest management, securing access to water and sanitation and improving the economic and social resilience of communities. The relationship between the goals and the sectors is unclear.

The Strategy regroups the previous seven sectoral priorities into six without any major changes.

In the first year SAIDC supported eight renewable energy and WASH projects; seven projects related to building the institutions of an independent state, developing a market economy, and following the principles of democracy; six in education; five in health; four in food security and agriculture; and three in market, business sector and innovations.

In terms of the number of projects supported, the sectors are quite similar, with the biggest gap between renewable energy and water, where eight projects are supported, and market, business sector and innovations which has three.

However, it is difficult to predict trends given the low number of projects generally and the diverse categories, such as humanitarian aid and public private partnerships.

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<sup>10</sup> The Strategy also includes Central Asia as a new potential region for Slovak ODA. The complete list of Slovak ODA recipient countries is longer as the finance and interior ministries also have a list of recipient countries.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: A PANACEA?

Economic development is undoubtedly an important part of each and every society.

Likewise, there is a growing emphasis on involving the private sector in development assistance so the SDGs can be met.

In autumn 2019 both the Act on Eximbanka (Slovak Export Import bank) and Act on Development Cooperation were amended, with the result that Eximbanka's activities were expanded to include the implementation of the European Union's financial instruments for development cooperation, and it is now allowed to directly finance and co-finance concessional credits.

Eximbanka will therefore become the first Slovak institution to use "blending," where part of the development project is irreversibly financed out of EU budget resources and part reversibly out of private or public sector resources. Before it can do this, it has to complete a pillar assessment in 2020.

Eximbanka's concessional loans scheme has come under ODA law since 2015, but thus far no project has been approved. This is partly because Eximbanka was unable to directly finance or co-finance projects. It could have done so through commercial banks but these did not always offer long-term payment schedules due to the higher risk associated with development projects or could provide insurance only, not loans. On top of that, the foreign banks which own Slovak banks are keener on supporting national companies in the country of origin rather than Slovak businesses. The new legislation allows Eximbanka to directly finance and co-finance projects. Furthermore the terms and conditions that were stricter on recipients than EU legislation were adjusted to favor potential credit receivers in developing countries.

Since September 2019 there have been several discussions between NGOs and Eximbanka, the Finance Ministry and Foreign Ministry. Not all the NGO suggestions were considered and there might still be a tendency to see this instrument in foreign trade terms rather than as development cooperation. Nevertheless, several layers of control mechanisms were adopted to safeguard the development aspect of such interventions. The first batch of projects is expected to show whether the standards and rules are adequate or not. A budget of €1 million is planned for 2019, €1 million for 2020 and €1.5 million for 2021.

The system of public private partnerships under SAIDC takes its inspiration from the model used in the Czech Republic. Small or "first phase" projects for feasibility studies or business plans can receive up to €10,000, and "second phase" implementation projects can receive up to €200,000.

The good news is that here the traditional idea that development cooperation should serve foreign trade purposes is slowly changing, and there are more social innovation projects of added value. Similarly, in 2018 businesses could respond to calls for development project proposals, NGOs were not eligible for public private partnership grants. This was corrected in 2019.

SAIDC supported 11 projects totaling €500,000. The public private partnerships program differs from the other SAIDC programs in that the list of recipient countries is much longer. They also have a simplified financial manual and feasibility studies are eligible which is not the case with needs assessment done by NGOs for example. The co-financing element is 20 per cent, which is significantly more achievable for the majority of businesses, unlike the 10 per cent co-financing element that applies

to not-for-profit entities. On the other hand, the system for refundation payments can cause cash flow problems for small and starting enterprises.

## MIGRATION

Large projects aimed at stemming migration to Europe and fostering security and border management have been playing an increasingly important role. The fact that development cooperation tends to be seen through the lenses of migration and security can be seen in the following figures.

In 2018 total bilateral assistance was €28 million and around €14 million of that was spent on “migration” projects. This mainly consisted of contributions to the EU Trust Fund for Africa, the Facility for Refugees in Turkey, humanitarian projects in Middle East and in-donor refugee costs.

Slovakia spends a lot on “migration” projects, indeed the major part of its bilateral aid goes on migration. Even the projects in Kenya focus on employment, vocational training and labor market access in an attempt to reduce migration from East Africa.

There is less focus on expertise and on the content of discussions on migration, including on what the role of Slovak ODA should be. This contrast is even greater when we take into account the way migration is often misused and misrepresented by politicians and the alternative media. Given how much funding Slovakia earmarked for “stemming migration” projects, not much has been done to counterbalance the disinformation and hoaxes (e.g. through a public awareness strategy and activities).

## MULTILATERAL AID: COMMITMENTS AND HOW MUCH CAN WE AFFORD TO OUTSOURCE?

In October 2018 the general secretary of the OECD, A. Gurría, officially presented prime minister P. Pellegrini with Slovakia's first OECD/DAC Peer Review report since the country became an OECD/DAC member in 2013. The report was then officially unveiled at the *Quo Vadis* conference on April 24, 2019.

In July minister M. Lajčák presented the ministry report on the results and recommendations of the OECD/DAC peer review<sup>11</sup>, informing the Slovak government of the progress and results of the peer review and Slovakia's fulfilment of its international OECD commitments. The Foreign Ministry confirmed that there was no plan to meet the objective of 0.33 per cent ODA/GNI by 2030 and that the structure of the ODA budget limits the ministry's scope as national coordinator to ensure that all Slovakia's development activities fall within the ODA (ODA-eligible) framework to raise the level of untied aid and to ensure ODA volumes grow fast enough.

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<sup>11</sup> “Správa o výsledkoch a odporúčaníach vyplývajúcich z partnerského hodnotenia Výboru OECD pre rozvojovú pomoc,” [Report on the results and recommendations of the OECD/DAC peer review] Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, 2019. Available online: <https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Resolution/17812> (accessed on February 20, 2020).

The ministry rightly pointed out that the plan to ensure ODA reaches 0.33 per cent of GNI by 2030 would require an annual 13.8 per cent increase in ODA from 2019. It would mean an annual increase of approximately €20 million by 2022 and more in the coming years, if the estimates of faster GNI growth prove accurate.

The 2020 SAIDC budget was reduced and, unless multilateral aid is significantly increased, it is unrealistic to expect such a steady increase of almost 14 per cent.

The argument that one reasons Slovakia cannot increase its ODA budget is because of the low absorption capacity of Slovak implementers seems to have been rejected finally. In a consultation process with the ministry, other ministries confirmed their shared capacities can handle at least 10 per cent of the annual increase in ODA.

The sectoral and other priorities outlined and budgeted in the peer review on pages 14–16 (see the table below) do not fully reflect the long term strategy, aid effectiveness or Slovakia's international commitments.

Ministries	Priorities	Budget increase in € thousands		
		2020	2021	2022
Foreign Ministry	Private sector	1,000	1,000	1,000
	Migration	1,000	1,000	1,000
	Capacity building	650	650	650
Interior Ministry	material aid	150	150	200
Defense Ministry		20	22	24
Finance Ministry	Public and private finances	600	600	800
	Concessional loans Eximbanka	2,500	2,500	2,500
Health Ministry	Capacity building in crisis intervention	625	300	300
	Medical teams deployment	1,342	1,342	1,342
	Material aid	1,400	1,400	1,400
Environment Ministry	Global environmental fund	1,300	1,300	1,300
	Climate and adaptation fund	2,000		
	Biodiversity, climate change, water management	500	600	800
Transport and Construction Ministry		30	30	30
Education Ministry	Stipends	207.8	207.8	207.8
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>13,325</b>	<b>11,102</b>	<b>11,554</b>

Ambrela, a development organization platform, issued a public statement<sup>12</sup> and open letter<sup>13</sup> to minister Miroslav Lajčák stressing these six main points:

<sup>12</sup> Several large Slovak newspapers published articles on this. See the example in *Sme*: “Mimovládky kritizujú správu ministerstva o rozvojevej pomoci,” [NGOs criticize the MFA report on ODA] *Sme*, July 8, 2019. Available online: <https://domov.sme.sk/c/22163275/mimovladky-kritizuju-spravu-ministerstva-o-rozvojevej-pomoci.html> (accessed on January 15, 2020).

<sup>13</sup> The public statement and open letter to the minister can be found on the Ambrela website: <https://ambrela.org/spravy/rozvojeve-mimovladky-vlada-sr-oficialne-priznava-neplnenie-svojich-zavazkov-v-oblasti-rozvojevej-spoluprace%EF%BB%BF/> (accessed on January 15, 2020).

1. we consider the commitment to increase ODA to 0.22 per cent by 2030 to be insufficient in terms of Slovakia's international commitments.
2. ODA increases to Slovak entities are minimal and most (up to about 90 per cent) of all ODA is inaccessible to Slovak NGOs and businesses (in contrast to other OECD/DAC member ODA budgets).
3. The report indicates ODA has been further privatized and its purpose is misunderstood. ODA should not serve Slovak foreign trade purposes (there are other tools for this).
4. The security and defense budget should not cut into the ODA budget. This, however, is increasingly taking place, mainly through misuse of the issue of migration. Migration should be seen through the lens of development cooperation, rather than development cooperation being viewed through migration.
5. There were no consultations in the lead up to the report with the non-governmental sector, which is one of the Foreign Ministry's key partners. And, for example, two areas are unreasonably and significantly favored – health care and business involvement – at the expense of other areas.
6. The Framework Agreements are not even mentioned in the indicative budget for 2020–2022 although the new instrument requires a budget of approximately €1 million/year.

The Framework Agreements, now known as Strategic Partnerships, were ultimately adopted and budgeted for in the 2020 National Program. It is somehow symptomatic that three ministries asked for a larger budget than the Foreign Ministry did as national ODA coordinator.

However, at the end of the year everything had changed and the Foreign Ministry's total ODA budget was reduced even compared to its 2019 one, from €7,226,162 to €7,047,043.

There are three key aspects to bear in mind here. First, the total amount of ODA and Slovakia's commitment to reach 0.33 per cent ODA/GNI by 2030. Second, the ratio between the multilateral and bilateral aid, and third the prioritization of institutional capacity building within bilateral aid.

In 2018 total ODA amounted to €117.56 million. At 0.13 per cent of GNI Slovakia's ODA came last on the OECD DAC donor ranking. Concord Aidwatch placed Slovakia 22nd out of the 28 EU member states.<sup>14</sup>

Total ODA has almost doubled from €60 million to close to €120 million over the past ten years. One would think that if total ODA increased, bilateral ODA under the SAIDC would too. But that was not the case. The SAIDC allocation for all grants during the same period stagnated to around €4 million, and 2019 was no exception. This results in a situation where applicants can in practice apply for less than 5 per cent of total ODA.

Preliminary data shows the Foreign Ministry spent approximately €5.3 million on multilateral and bilateral assistance, including contributions to FRIT 1 and FRIT 2.

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<sup>14</sup> "Concord AIDWATCH 2019. Leaving no one behind: time for implementation," Concord, 2019, p. 65. Available online: [https://concordeurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/CONCORD\\_AidWatch\\_Report\\_2019\\_web.pdf](https://concordeurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/CONCORD_AidWatch_Report_2019_web.pdf) (accessed on January 20, 2020).

The preliminary figures from the Finance Ministry for 2019 reveal that multilateral aid of €56.07 million went to the EU, while €17.18 million went to the European Development Fund (EDF) and €2 million to the IBRD.

The bilateral component was €28 million (24 per cent) in 2018. The long term ratio of multilateral/bilateral aid is 80:20, and it has not changed, making it very difficult to introduce any systemic improvements and further capacity building of Slovak ODA and its actors, namely the Foreign Ministry (HQ) and embassies, SAIDC, Interior Ministry, NGOs, private sector and a few other stakeholders.

Again we face the question of boundaries and limits. How much ODA can and should Slovakia outsource while still being able not only to maintain but to grow its own system, capacities, expertise and so on? There is no doubt multilateralism is essential, particularly given the implications for international commitments and financial contributions to international organizations and programs. But Slovakia is outsourcing around 90 per cent of its ODA.

To put it simply, if we want to make our ODA system meaningful we need to alter the ratio. But do we want to? Do we have a vision for Slovak development cooperation, and what is its place in our foreign policy strategy?

The initial and easier step might be to consolidate the bilateral part, make it more focused and strategic with the underlying goal of building institutional capacities, such as the system of development diplomats or monitoring and evaluation unit, knowledge management, research and development.

## **BILATERAL COOPERATION**

Three major improvements occurred in 2019. First, in an open letter to minister Lajčák and at a meeting<sup>15</sup> on October 29, 2019, Ambrela made the key point that without increasing the bilateral component of the ODA budget – the one Slovak organizations (NGOs, companies, etc.) can apply for – the development cooperation system cannot be made more effective and nor can the necessary system changes be implemented. It was pointed out that the current Slovak ODA system has exacerbated the declining competitiveness of Slovak organizations applying for financial resources from the EU and other international organizations. It also reduces the visibility of the SlovakAid brand in the field and makes it more difficult to measure the effectiveness of aid. It divides resources into multiple geographic and sectoral priorities and shrinks jobs and expert capacities in both the Slovak system and in international organizations.

With the re-prioritizing in the planning of bilateral allocations, minister Lajčák was able to approve an increase of €1.5 million in the SAIDC budget for grants.

Second, and connected to the first, a new tool or modality that the NGOs had been advocating for many years – Framework Agreements or Strategic Partnerships

<sup>15</sup> The report on the meeting and letter to the minister are available on the Ambrela website: “Ambrela na stretnutí s ministrom zahraničných vecí a európskych záležitostí SR,” [Ambrela at a meeting with the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic] Ambrela, October 30, 2019. Available online: <https://ambrela.org/spravy/ambrela-na-stretnuti-s-ministrom-zahranicnych-veci/> (accessed on January 20, 2020).

– was adopted and included in the 2020 National Program. These are to be piloted in education and employment in Kenya with a budget of €1 million over five years.

This new tool will make it easier to address the two leaving no one behind challenges listed in the OECD findings<sup>16</sup>:

- managing potentially higher costs and risks of reaching the furthest behind first and providing the long-term support required to achieve results;
- identifying and reaching the people/groups who are left behind, which requires better and more disaggregated data

The third piece of good news is that the SAIDC passed its pillar assessment, enabling it to obtain delegated authority and manage EU funds.

There have been no further changes to the balance of financial contributions versus projects in bilateral aid. Less than 30 per cent is implemented through Slovak contractors (NGOs, private companies, universities, research institutions) on a project basis.

Most of it consists of earmarked contributions to international organizations, funds and programs. In recent years the top two recipients have been FRIT (Facility for Refugees in Turkey) and EU Trust Funds (EU Trust Fund for Africa). While the former is more or less mandatory, the latter could create space to maneuver and for funding to be allocated more strategically, focusing on Slovak capacity building.

In total FRIT 1 (2016–2019) received €10.5 million. Slovakia contributed €1.2 million to FRIT 2 in 2019

Under EU joint programming in Kenya, Slovakia contributed €625,000 to AgriFi, a program aimed at raising productivity, adaptation and integration of small farmers into the labor market. Overall the SAIDC will contribute €2.5 million to the implementation of this program in 2018–2022.

In 2019 the SAIDC had a total budget of €7,226,162. A total of €4.3 million was allocated to grants. There were 13 calls for proposals for a total of €4.3 million. That is €300,000 per call. Of the 85 projects submitted 38 were approved (27 of 58 non-business projects and 11 of 27 business projects).

The SAIDC now publishes its indicative timeline of calls for proposals well in advance, which is another improvement.

## VOLUNTEERS PROGRAM

This sweetheart program of Slovak ODA is administratively less burdensome and financially less risky than other modalities. No significant changes were made to it.

In 2019 there were 58 volunteer applications for a total of €252,701, of which 24 were approved. Three years ago most of the applications were approved. This change

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<sup>16</sup> B. Di Francesco, I. McDonnell, "Leave no one behind: how are Development Assistance Committee members answering the pledge of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development? Findings from a survey of DAC members," *OECD development co-operation working paper 47*, November 2018, p. 8. Available online: <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/eadd2f8d-en.pdf?expires=1585247109&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=8EB98BB2035D2D7F19ACF66B23325848> (accessed on January 20, 2020).

is partly due to the increase in average amount per volunteer, although the number of applications submitted has decreased annually. In 2018 civil society organizations submitted 74 applications for volunteer postings and SAIDC approved 32 of these. Thirty-one volunteers received financial support totaling €239,861. In 2017, 36 applications were approved. A total of €254,283.42 was approved for volunteers. In 2016, 31 out of 39 applications were approved, for a total of €226,602.18.

In 2019 applicants were given more time to submit their proposals and the minister was quicker at publishing the results than in 2018. Budget allocations for the monthly costs of volunteers and expert volunteers increased to €1,500 and €1,900 respectively, and coordination and administration costs increased from 5 per cent to 7 per cent.

Ambrela thinks the total number of volunteer projects received and number of approved applications needs to be significantly increased to ensure the long-term development of the ODA sector in Slovakia. At the same time, volunteers and experts could help develop future projects and analyze local needs and feasibility, as is the case in the modality for the preparatory phase of PPP projects.

The synergies between this program and others, such as humanitarian aid, could still be improved.

Diversity could prove a challenge to the program, especially given its limited funding. Below I outline three diversity components: goals, timeframe and countries. Practically each and every volunteer program differs to some extent, with goals such as labor mobility, improving job skills, shaping the values and life vision of young university students, building human resources in the sector, helping local communities or substituting/supplementing expat staff on projects. Needless to say, other key factors such as short (three months) and long (12 months) deployments and priority countries versus other countries come into play as well.

An idea that may be worth further exploring is the use of a framework agreement system under which implementers could be given a lump sum and the discretion to decide the number of volunteers, where they are sent and for how long. Such a system of flexibility might bring additional value.

## GLOBAL EDUCATION

The total allocation for development education was €50,000. One project was supported and one project was conditionally supported. Three projects were not approved.

The allocation for development education decreased significantly from €100,000 in 2018 to €50,000 in 2019. Five projects were approved last year for a total of €152,327.30.

At the moment, the funding, institutional capacity and strategic approach all seem to be stuck somewhere in between the Foreign Ministry and the Education Ministry.

## HUMANITARIAN AID

At the third conference on Syria in Brussels, the Commission and EU member states (including Slovakia) jointly pledged €6.75 billion for the years 2019–2020. The funds

are to address the ongoing humanitarian challenges in the regions that host Syrian refugees. It is mainly through its contributions to the Facility for Refugees in Turkey (€1.69 million in 2019) and SAIDC humanitarian projects that the Slovak Republic fulfils its commitments arising from the humanitarian summit in Istanbul in 2016 among other things.

Financial and material humanitarian aid was delivered to Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Greece, Iran, Mozambique, Venezuela and Afghanistan and other countries. Financial humanitarian aid of €375,000 was implemented.

The material aid went to Ukraine, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Lebanon, Iran, Albania and Greece. In total the Slovak Republic provided assistance worth €623,547.00 with movable humanitarian material of more than 69,400.00 kg.

The territorial and sectoral focus of Slovakia's humanitarian system is rooted in the 2015 migration crises. Following two calls for proposals SAIDC allocated €1 million for the Middle East and South Sudan and €300,000 for Ukraine. Seven projects submitted by Slovak NGOs for €1.2 million were approved. But projects for a total of €1.7 million were not approved, showing that the absorption capacity is greater than the funding.

The SAIDC system provides support for post-humanitarian (reconstruction and rehabilitation phase) and complex protracted crises projects (deploying medical teams) rather than rapid onset and natural disaster projects. The main sectors are health and education.

In the second half of 2019 the 2016–2018 Slovak humanitarian system was assessed. The assessment was designed to generate input and recommendations for the creation of a humanitarian strategy in 2020.

## **POLICY COHERENCE FOR DEVELOPMENT: COAL, WEAPONS AND MIGRANTS**

“Countries are increasingly recognizing the need to break out of institutional and policy silos to fully realize the benefits of synergistic actions and effectively manage unavoidable trade-offs across SDGs.”<sup>17</sup>

At its meeting in December 2019, the Coordination Committee for Development Cooperation amended its statute to improve its coordination and coherence mechanisms as recommended in the DAC OECD peer review. The committee serves as a link between the national and international dimension of Agenda 2030. The following new members were welcomed onto the committee: the Transport Ministry, Health Ministry, Culture Ministry, DPMO and export-import bank (Eximbanka).

To improve its institutional effectiveness and flexibility, the committee adopted a policy that allows the meetings to be presided over by the head of section and to be convened more than once a year. Furthermore a model of cross ministerial work-

<sup>17</sup> “Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development 2018: Towards sustainable and resilient societies,” OECD, May 28, 2018, p. 111. Available online: <http://www.oecd.org/about/sge/policy-coherence-for-sustainable-development-2018-9789264301061-en.htm> (accessed on January 20, 2020). In Slovakia the Deputy Prime Minister's Office for Investments and Informatization (DPMO) is responsible for PCSD at the national level. The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs is responsible for the external dimension.

ing groups was agreed, and four thematic working groups were created for climate change, equal opportunities, implementation of DAC OECD recommendations and concessional loans (Eximbanka).

These changes can be seen as a good step forward if combined with a realistic agenda and staff capacities. To grasp the idea of coherence, the agenda could be structured according to the eight elements of the OECD's PCSD Framework.<sup>18</sup>

In the increasingly complex world, more coordination and policy coherence is required among different stakeholders, along with robust planning and quality data at hand, otherwise things can get complicated or off track.

The three examples below illustrate, rather than give clear answers, as to why it is important to start taking policy coherence more seriously in development and what can be at stake. They all belong to the category of negative spillover effects.<sup>19</sup>

The Slovak humanitarian projects in Ukraine help save the lives of civilians in Donbas and/or help them pursue dignified lives. The provision of shelter, access to basic medical health care and psychosocial support are but a few examples. However, Slovakia, Poland and other EU member states allowed in coal imports from Donbas which may have been used to help finance the conflict in the east of Ukraine.<sup>20</sup>

Another example is Libya, a failed state that has not ratified the Convention on Refugees.

In 2018 Slovakia contributed €8 million to a project implemented by Italy on border management and capacity building of the local authorities in Libya.<sup>21</sup> There are several issues with this. First should the project be reported as ODA? Second, although the project may not be directly associated with human rights abuses, it could contribute to the hostile environment. The true nature of the search and rescue operations run by the Libyan coast guard in the Mediterranean is very dubious and human rights abuses may be being committed.<sup>22</sup> There is a case pending before the European Court of Hu-

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p. 82–4. Political commitment and leadership, policy integration, long-term planning horizons, analysis and assessments of potential policy effects, policy and institutional coordination, subnational and local involvement, stakeholder engagement, monitoring and reporting.

<sup>19</sup> The other two categories of the main objectives of PCSD are fostering synergies across different policy areas and identifying trade-offs and reconciling domestic and international policies.

<sup>20</sup> T. Forró, M. Potocki, K. Baca-Pogorzelska, "Odhali, ako sa uhlie z Donbasu dostáva do EÚ a zarába na zbrane pre povstalcov," [They discovered how coal from Donbas enters the EU and generates money for weapons for insurgents] *DenníkN*, September 10, 2019. Available online: <https://dennikn.sk/1578413/uhlie-a-krv-biznis-v-casoch-vojny-ako-donbas-zaraba-na-zbrane-a-majetok-svojich-vladcov-i-cast/> (accessed on January 20, 2020) and T. Forró, M. Potocki, K. Baca-Pogorzelska, "Uhlie z Donbasu s falšnými papiermi kúpval aj český a slovenský priemysel (II. časť reportáže)," [Coal from Donbas with false papers was bought by Slovak and Czech companies (part II)] *DenníkN*, September 19, 2019. Available online: <https://dennikn.sk/1589515/uhlie-z-donbasu-s-falosnymi-papiermi-kupoval-aj-cesky-a-slovensky-priemysel-ii-cast-reportaze/> (accessed on January 20, 2020).

<sup>21</sup> "Support to Integrated border and migration management in Libya – Second phase," EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, December 13, 2018. Available online: [https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/region/north-africa/libya/support-integrated-border-and-migration-management-libya-second-phase\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/region/north-africa/libya/support-integrated-border-and-migration-management-libya-second-phase_en) (accessed on January 20, 2020).

<sup>22</sup> C. Heller, L. Pezzani, I. Mann, V. Moreno-Lax and E. Weizman, "It's an act of murder: how Europe outsources suffering as migrants drown," *The New York Times*, December 26, 2018. Available online: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/12/26/opinion/europe-migrant-crisis-mediterranean-libya.html> (accessed on January 20, 2020).

man Rights<sup>23</sup> and the ICC (International Criminal Court).<sup>24</sup> Third, refugees and migrants sent back to Libya face gross human rights violations in detention centers and many of these cases have been documented.<sup>25</sup>

Recently, on February 13, 2020, the Commissioner of the Council of Europe, Dunja Mijatović, “called on Italy to acknowledge the realities currently prevailing on the ground in Libya and to suspend cooperation activities with the Libyan Coast Guard that result in the return of persons intercepted at sea to Libya.”<sup>26</sup>

Another story comes from Azerbaijan. Investigative journalists from [www.investigace.cz](http://www.investigace.cz)<sup>27</sup> and others published a series of articles in 2019 documenting the export of weapons and military systems from Slovakia and the Czech Republic through Israel to Azerbaijan, where the UN, EU and OSCE recommend weapons should not be exported because of the latent conflict in Upper Karabakh.

## MINOTAUR'S LABYRINTH: STILL FINDING THE WAY OUT

### INTERCONNECTEDNESS

In 2019 many strategies came into force or were created. Many other tasks are still in the queue, like the strategies for policy coherence in development, multilateral devel-

<sup>23</sup> The case relates to the interception and rescue of a migrant dinghy in distress in the Mediterranean Sea, carrying a group of around 150 persons, including the 17 applicants, who had left Libya, and the alleged human rights violations resulting from this operation. Third party intervention by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights see: “Third party intervention by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights under Article 36, paragraph 3, of the European Convention on Human Rights Application No. 21660/18S.S. and others v. Italy,” CommDH(2019)29, Strasbourg, November 15, 2019. Available online: <https://rm.coe.int/third-party-intervention-before-the-european-court-of-human-rights-app/168098dd4d> (accessed on January 20, 2020).

<sup>24</sup> “Communication to the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court Pursuant to the Article 15 of the Rome Statute.” Available online: <https://www.statewatch.org/news/2019/jun/eu-icc-case-EU-Migration-Policies.pdf> (accessed on January 20, 2020).

<sup>25</sup> S. Hayden, “The U.N. is leaving migrants to die in Libya,” *Foreign Policy*, October 10, 2019. Available online: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/10/10/libya-migrants-un-iom-refugees-die-detention-center-civil-war/> (accessed on October 10, 2019) and “No escape from hell. EU Policies Contribute to Abuse of Migrants in Libya,” Human Rights Watch, January 21, 2019. Available online: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2019/01/21/no-escape-hell/eu-policies-contribute-abuse-migrants-libya> (accessed on January 20, 2020).

<sup>26</sup> “Commissioner urges Italy to suspend co-operation activities with Libyan Coast Guard and introduce human rights safeguards in future migration co-operation,” Council of Europe, February 21, 2020. Available online: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/commissioner-urges-italy-to-suspend-co-operation-activities-with-libyan-coast-guard-and-introduce-human-rights-safeguards-in-future-migration-co-opera> (accessed on February 25, 2020).

<sup>27</sup> “České zbraně v Ázerbájdžánu I: Jak se z podvozku stalo dělo,” *investigace.cz*, September 17, 2019. Available online: <https://www.investigace.cz/ceske-zbrane-v-azerbajdzanu-i-jak-se-z-podvozku-stalo-delo/> (accessed on January 20, 2020); “České zbraně v Ázerbájdžánu II: Ministerská mlha,” *investigace.cz*, September 18, 2019. Available online: <https://www.investigace.cz/ceske-zbrane-v-azerbajdzanu-ii-ministerska-mlha/> (accessed on January 20, 2020)

opment cooperation and humanitarian aid. Country Strategy Papers for Moldova and Georgia are to be drafted as well.

Despite the number of strategic documents it might prove difficult to come up with a unifying vision. What is the relation between development cooperation and the pivotal Foreign Ministry document – its *non-existent strategy* on Slovak foreign policy? What do we want to achieve and what should we base our decisions on?

For instance, the OECD/ DAC report stated that, given Slovakia's ODA limited capacity, aid should be more sector and geographically focused and results-based. Evidence-based decisions are crucial if we are to move a step forward in this matter. For that to happen requires more analytical annual reports on Slovak ODA and other topics but also the staff to interpret the data and trends and able to work with models and scenarios. Assessments are still rarely undertaken and a proper system of monitoring and evaluation ought to be put in place. The Foreign Ministry has committed itself to assessing the effectiveness of cooperation with its program countries in 2020. Delegating or more decision-making sharing between officials, politicians and experts at all institutional stages might be another factor worth considering.

### **ARE WE ON THE GROUND?**

Two other data sources that should be tapped are firstly the development diplomats and secondly the SlovakAid implementers and third parties.

The first step in improving the system of ODA diplomacy might be to open up the selection process to the general public and strive to get the very best on board – experienced personnel with development cooperation background. It is not clear what exactly the job description is and to what extent it differs from the reality or how much of the non-related ODA agenda is placed on the shoulders of development diplomats. Development diplomats should have a say in the decision-making. It remains unclear what the system of appraisals and results-based management is. Proactive communication with the EU delegations, networking and linking Slovak implementers with potential new partners must be among the cornerstones of the job profile. The rotational system for this category of staff could be more sensitive to ODA needs.

Another essential question is where the development diplomats should be deployed. Slovakia contributed heavily to the Syrian crisis response, a number of Slovak NGOs operate in the field, and the embassy in Beirut has Syria, Iraq and Jordan in its portfolio. Another mega crisis is lurking around the corner in Yemen. Yet, when it comes development diplomats, other countries have been prioritized over Lebanon.

*Intermezzo:*

*Well I guess you would say something like: “but we need money for all this.” And you are right. The foreign ministry openly admits that “the mobilization of public and private sources of development finance remains a long-term task.”<sup>28</sup>*

<sup>28</sup> “Hodnotenie priorít zahraničnej a európskej politiky Slovenskej republiky v roku 2019 a ich zameralenie na rok 2020,” op. cit., p. 28

*But the trick is here. If we cannot increase the total ODA budget perhaps because of a severe economic crisis, we can certainly redistribute the highly disproportionate allocation of bilateral and multilateral aid, and instead of sending multiple voluntary financial contributions to international organizations, redirect them into the building up the Slovak ODA system, including all its partners and institutions. For this we need the vision and the will.*

### **GOOD THINGS WE CAN BUILD UPON**

There are several positives in all this. The adoption of the strategic partnership modality could open up new horizons and provide capacities for all ODA stakeholders to move away from the surface and dig deeper, beyond the general geography and nation state level, and to start thinking more about particular regions, communities, minorities, local peculiarities, specific challenges and tailor made solutions. Its main value should lie not in quantity – in prolonging projects or increasing the budget – but in a different philosophy. In other words, the strategic partnership could include – alongside its core elements – knowledge management and capacity building and provide the space to test innovative solutions and develop prototypes.

This should prevail over any attempt to spend the large budget on infrastructural and construction works. Certainly, many practical questions need to be addressed along the road, such as how to secure the funding in the long run and should it be for Kenya only or rotate annually among other countries.

The best outcomes of the strategic partnerships in the form of a prototype can be scaled up in partnership with a larger national or international donor and within the EU Joint Programing.

Likewise, the delegated authority of the SAIDC to manage EU funds could bring about new partnerships and learning opportunities for the Slovak sector.

We need to step out of our comfort zone, be more confident and try new things. In 2019 we saw that it was possible to make changes.



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# IV.

ANNEXES

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## A CHRONOLOGY OF IMPORTANT EVENTS IN SLOVAK FOREIGN POLICY IN 2019

*January 1* Slovakia assumes the 2019 Chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Slovakia sets the tone of the world's largest regional security organization, containing 57 participating states and 11 cooperation partners on three continents. As the chairing country, Slovakia will be representing the OSCE externally throughout 2019.

*January 10* OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Minister M. Lajčák presents the priorities of Slovakia's OSCE Chairmanship at the OSCE Permanent Council meeting. The motto of the Slovak presidency is "Slovakia 2019: For People, Dialogue and Stability."

*January 11* Minister M. Lajčák is the main speaker at the Snow Meeting security conference in Lithuania, on NATO's 70th anniversary.

*January 15–16* OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Minister M. Lajčák makes an official visit to Ukraine, the first in a series of foreign visits to conflict zones in his role as OSCE Chairperson-in-Office. Minister Lajčák holds talks with senior officials in Ukraine, including Defense Minister Stepan Poltorak, Prime Minister Volodymyr Groysman and Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin, in an effort to help restore political dialogue between Russia and Ukraine. Minister M. Lajčák visits the line of contact in Luhansk Oblast to learn about the security and humanitarian situation and the activities undertaken by the mission.

*January 17* Minister M. Lajčák talks with his counterpart Aurelia Frick, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Justice and Culture of the Principality of Liechtenstein in Vaduz. Bilateral cooperation, European issues and international cooperation are the main topics of discussion.

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*Prepared by Lucia Hanusinová 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 Defence of the Slovak Republic.*

*January 18–19* OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Minister M. Lajčák visits Moldova, meeting his counterpart Tudor Ulianoschi and Prime Minister Pavel Filip in Chisinau. He also holds talks in the 5+2 format with local leader of Transnistria Vadim Krasnoselski and Vitaly Ignatiev, Transnistria's main negotiator and representative.

*January 23–24* Prime Minister P. Pellegrini and Minister M. Lajčák attend the World Economic Forum in Davos. The theme of the forum is shaping the global architecture in the age of the fourth industrial revolution.

*January 29* Minister M. Lajčák holds talks with Milorad Dodik, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Hercegovina, during a visit to Brussels. They discuss developments in the country following the October general election, focusing on the reform and integration processes and Bosnia and Hercegovina's interest in becoming an EU candidate country.

*January 30* OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Minister M. Lajčák meets with Adam Lupel, Vice President of the International Peace Institute (IPI). Minister Lajčák updates his partner on the priorities of Slovakia's OSCE Chairmanship.

*January 31–February 1* Minister M. Lajčák attends an informal meeting of EU foreign affairs ministers (Gymnich) in Bucharest. The main topics of discussion are the Eastern Partnership, the 10th anniversary celebrations and developments in Venezuela.

*February 5* Prime Minister P. Pellegrini and Minister M. Lajčák receive José Ángel Gurría, OECD Secretary General, on the occasion of the official launch of the OECD's *2019 Economic Survey of the Slovak Republic*.

*February 5* OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Minister M. Lajčák opens the International Conference on Combating Anti-Semitism in the OSCE Region in Bratislava. It is the first of a series of conferences to be held in Slovakia as part of its OSCE chairmanship. OSCE Secretary-General Thomas Greminger attends. On the sidelines, Minister M. Lajčák meets with Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).

*February 6* State Secretary and Special Representative of the Minister for Slovakia's OSCE Chairmanship L. Parížek represents Slovakia at the Plenary Session of the 79-member Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS/Daesh in Iraq and Syria in Washington D.C.

*February 7* German Chancellor Angela Merkel attends a V4 Group session at the invitation of Prime Minister P. Pellegrini. Chancellor Merkel meets with Pellegrini to discuss Slovak–German relations and the situation in the EU. The V4 Group meeting ends with the signing of the Declaration of the Visegrad Group and the Federal Republic of Germany on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of historic changes in Central Europe. Chancellor Merkel meets with President Kiska, who presents her with Slovakia's highest state decoration, the First Class Order of the White Double Cross, for her extraordinary contribution to relations between Slovakia and Germany.

*February 10–11* OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Minister M. Lajčák pays an official two-day visit to Georgia. Minister Lajčák holds talks with Georgian Foreign Affairs Minister David Zalkaliani and the country's leaders – Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze, Parliamentary Speaker Irakli Kobakhidze and President Salome Zourabichvili. Minister M. Lajčák learns about the situation on the administrative boundary line near Odzisi, the border with the separatist South Ossetia region, and about the work of the EU monitoring mission. He presents a humanitarian gift to the Screening Center for Cancer Prevention.

*February 12* US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo pays an official visit to Slovakia. Pompeo meets President Kiska, Prime Minister P. Pellegrini and Minister M. Lajčák. They discuss economic and defense cooperation, international diplomacy, foreign policy issues and the threat presented by Russia and China. They also cover themes related to Slovakia's OSCE Chairmanship and touch upon the situation in Ukraine, Russia, China and Venezuela.

*February 13* Speaker of Parliament A. Danko meets with Russia's Chairman of the State Duma Viacheslav Volodin. They discuss bilateral relations and economic and parliamentary cooperation. Volodin is on the EU sanctions list because of the role he played in the 2014 Crimean crisis.

*February 16–17* Minister M. Lajčák attends the 55th Munich Security Conference (MSC) and four discussion forums and four bilateral meetings with Fiona Hill, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for European and Russian Affairs on the President's National Security Council staff; Kyrgyz Foreign Affairs Minister Chingiz Aidarbekov; Armenian Foreign Affairs Minister Zohrab Mnacakanian; and Melanne Verveer, Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in Office for Gender Issues.

*February 17* OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Minister M. Lajčák meets with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin ahead of discussions on Ukraine at the EU Foreign Affairs Council.

*February 18–19* Prime Minister P. Pellegrini pays a two-day working visit to Israel. He meets with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and attends the V4 + Israel Summit.

*February 21* OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Minister M. Lajčák speaks at the Winter Meeting of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. The minister reiterates the priorities of Slovakia's OSCE Chairmanship, which include conflict prevention, a safer future and effective multilateralism.

*February 24–25* A Slovak delegation led by Prime Minister P. Pellegrini attends the leaders meeting at the EU–Arab League summit in Egypt. The main topics are cooperation, strengthening Arab–European relations on the economy, migration, security and the fight against terrorism.

*February 25* Minister M. Lajčák pays a working visit to Budapest and is a keynote speaker at the annual world meeting of Hungarian ambassadors at the invitation of Péter Szijjártó, Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

*February 26* Minister M. Lajčák attends a series of events and talks in Geneva as part of the High-Level Segment of the 40th Regular Session of the Human Rights Council. Minister Lajčák expresses his support for a multilateral approach to solving global issues, and met with Michele Bachelet, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

*February 28* President A. Kiska hosts a meeting of the presidents of the Bucharest Nine (B9) countries and Secretary General of NATO Jens Stoltenberg in Košice. They discuss the security situation in Europe and the neighborhood, disinformation and defense against cyber threats and propaganda. Stoltenberg meets with Minister M. Lajčák. They stress that the main role of the Alliance is in defense and conflict prevention.

*March 4* President A. Kiska addresses journalists at the Press Freedom Conference in Bratislava to mark one year after the murder of journalist Ján Kuciak and his fiancée Martina Kušnírová.

*March 5* OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Minister M. Lajčák undertakes an official two-day visit of Armenia. Minister M. Lajčák and his Azerbaijani partners discuss the peaceful resolution of the conflict in the Nagorno-Karabakh region. Minister Lajčák also meets with representatives of

the Azerbaijani Community in the Nagorno Karabakh region and its Chairman, Tural Ganjaliyev, who describes the living conditions of internally displaced Azerbaijan citizens.

*March 8* OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Minister M. Lajčák addresses the United Nations Security Council in New York. He focuses on the priorities of Slovakia's OSCE Chairmanship, which include conflict prevention, alleviating the impact of conflict on civilians, effective multilateralism and a safer future, especially for young people.

*March 10–12* Prime Minister P. Pellegrini pays an official working visit to Poland and France. In Poland, he attends the 20th anniversary celebrations of Poland's accession to NATO. He meets with OECD Secretary-General, José Angel Gurría, and delivers a speech at the OECD Going Digital summit in France.

*March 13* Minister M. Lajčák makes an official visit to Armenia and meets senior officials to learn how the conflicts in the region can be solved. M. Lajčák also meets with the leaders of the Nagorno-Karabakh community in a neutral setting.

*March 14* A session of the Inter-Ministerial Coordination Group on Brexit is held at state secretary level at the foreign ministry. State Secretary F. Ružička outlines the legislative process for all the legislative amendments required in case there is a no-deal Brexit and to minimize the consequences thereof.

*March 14* State Secretary L. Parížek leads the Slovak delegation at the third Brussels Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region organized by the European Union and the UN.

*March 15* Minister M. Lajčák receives his Dutch counterpart Stef Blok. They discuss European policy, such as the negotiations over the Multiannual Financial Framework, migration, climate change, the future of the EU and the upcoming summit in Sibiu. Brexit is also mentioned.

*March 19* President A. Kiska pays a working visit to Brussels and meets with Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, and Donald Tusk, President of the European Council.

*March 21–22* Speaker of Parliament Danko pays an official visit to Rome and the Vatican. He and his Czech counterpart Radko Vondráček are received by Pope Francis. The visit is organized at the initiative of Slovakia on the occasion of the 1150th anniversary of St. Cyril's death.

*March 23* President A. Kiska meets Austrian President Alexander Van der Bellen in Weiden am See near Lake Neusiedl. They exchange the highest state honors in appreciation of the close friendly relations between Slovakia and Austria.

*March 25–26* The International Conference on Combating Terrorism is held in Bratislava and opened by State Secretary and Special Representative of the Minister for Slovakia's OSCE Chairmanship L. Parížek. The conference brings together political representatives, national counter-terrorism coordinators, senior experts and practitioners from across the OSCE's participating states and Partners for Co-operation. It is held to take stock of preventive work to counter terrorism and Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism (VERLT) in the OSCE region.

*April 3–4* Minister M. Lajčák begins a two-day working visit to the United States. He meets with Kurt Volker, US Special Representative for Ukraine Negotiations, and assures him of Slovakia's long-term support for Ukraine's reform efforts and integration ambitions.

*April 5* Prime Minister P. Pellegrini receives Prime Minister of Romania Viorica Dăncila on the occasion of the 74th anniversary of the liberation of Banská Bystrica.

*April 6* Minister M. Lajčák attends the 10th World Economic Forum (WEF) on the Middle East and North Africa in Jordan. He gives a talk on the challenges, potential and strategic position of regions in a rapidly changing globalized world.

*April 8* OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Minister M. Lajčák pays an official visit to Kazakhstan, meeting with acting President Tokayev, Foreign Affairs Minister Beibut Atankulov and Senate Chair Dariga Nazarbayeva. Lajčák stresses that the OSCE does not consider Kazakhstan a crisis region and offers reform assistance.

*April 9* Minister M. Lajčák continues his series of trips, visiting Kyrgyzstan to meet with his counterpart Chingiz Aidarbekov and to give a keynote speech at a conference on two decades of OSCE work in Kyrgyzstan.

*April 15* The 19th Annual Review Conference on Slovak Foreign and European Policy is held, organized by the Slovak Foreign Policy Association in cooperation with the foreign ministry. President A. Kiska, Prime Minister P. Pellegrini and Minister M. Lajčák give speeches. The panel discusses key issues in European policy, global challenges and restoring the consensus in Slovak foreign policy.

*April 24* Minister M. Lajčák pays an official visit to the People's Republic of China at the invitation of State Councilor and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China Wang Yi. He meets with his Chinese counterpart and addresses the 2nd Belt and Road Forum.

*May 3* Minister M. Lajčák speaks with Philip Reeker, US Assistant Secretary of State for Europe in Washington. They talk about the future of bilateral relations and Prime Minister P. Pellegrini's upcoming White House visit.

*May 5* US President Donald Trump receives Prime Minister P. Pellegrini. They discuss a broad range of issues, focusing on economic and defense cooperation and fulfilling NATO obligations. The White House visit takes place on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Velvet Revolution and the 15th anniversary of Slovakia's accession to NATO.

*May 6* Minister M. Lajčák welcomes a delegation of foreign affairs ministers from the V4 and Eastern Partnership countries under the aegis of Slovakia's Presidency of the Visegrad Four. The ministers negotiate the future objectives of the Eastern Partnership, covering interpersonal contacts, economic development, connectivity, building infrastructure, energy and regional security.

*May 6–9* Speaker of Parliament A. Danko pays an official visit to Moscow at the invitation of Viacheslav Volodin and attends the Victory Parade on May 9 as an honorary guest. A. Danko meets leading Russian officials, including President Vladimir Putin, Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, Chair of the Federation Council Valentina Matviyenko and Foreign Affairs Minister Sergey Lavrov.

*May 7–8* OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Minister M. Lajčák begins a series of trips to the Western Balkans, starting with a two-day visit to Montenegro to meet with his counterpart Srdjan Darmanović and President Milo Đukanović. They discuss the overall situation in the Western Balkans and its prognosis.

*May 9* Minister M. Lajčák receives Albania's Acting Minister Gent Cakaj. They discuss the EU accession talks and current developments in the Western Balkans and the priorities of Slovakia's OSCE Chairmanship. Albania takes over from Slovakia in 2020.

May 13 Minister M. Lajčák attends talks by EU foreign affairs ministers and heads of diplomacy from Eastern Partnership countries, and the regular session of the EU Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) in Brussels.

May 17 Minister M. Lajčák attends the Meeting of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in Helsinki. Topics include political issues to do with security and democracy, the key role of democracy, human rights and rule of law in relation to conflict resolution.

May 17 State Secretary F. Ružička pays a working visit to Budapest, where he meets with Advisor to the Hungarian Prime Minister for European Policy Péter Gottfried to discuss the institutional cycle and financial issues, including the Multiannual Financial Framework.

May 20 Minister M. Lajčák undertakes an official four-day visit of Uzbekistan. He meets with various officials, such as his counterpart Abdulaziz Kamilov and Sodiq Safoyev, First Deputy-Chairperson of the Senate of Uzbekistan's Parliament (*Oliy Majlis*). They discuss ways of enhancing Slovak-Uzbek bilateral relations in the political, economic and trade spheres.

May 22 Prime Minister P. Pellegrini attends an OECD Ministerial Council Meeting in Paris which Slovakia presides over. The core theme of Slovakia's presidency is harnessing the digital transformation and sustainable development. Artificial intelligence is also discussed.

May 22 Minister M. Lajčák completes his second round of trips to Central Asia with a visit to Tajikistan. He is received by President Emomali Rahmon and meets with Chairman of the Upper Chamber of Parliament (*Majlisi Milli*) Mahmadsaid Ubajdullojev and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Muzaffar Mahmurod Huseynzoda.

May 23 OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Minister M. Lajčák meets with the First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Vladimír Titov. The main topics of discussion are the items on the agenda of Slovakia's OSCE Chairmanship and efforts to strengthen the OSCE's role in conflict resolution.

May 25 Slovakia holds its European Parliament election.

May 28 Prime Minister P. Pellegrini leads the Slovak delegation at the European Council session in Brussels. The main purpose of the session is to discuss the results of the European Parliament election and nominations to key EU posts.

May 29 Prime Minister P. Pellegrini pays an official visit to Serbia. He and his Serbian counterpart Ana Brnabić sign an international agreement on settling Serbia's debt to Slovakia.

May 30 An international conference on building partnerships to implement Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development takes place as part of the Slovak Presidency of the V4 Group and under the aegis of Minister M. Lajčák and the Deputy Prime Minister of the Government for Investments and Informatization R. Raši.

May 31-June 3 State Secretaries L. Parížek and F. Ružička address the Spring Session of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly in Bratislava. The assembly is attended by President A. Kiska who delivers a speech on the last day.

June 3 OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Minister M. Lajčák pays an official visit to Albania. Lajčák attends a meeting with President Ilir Meta, Chairman of the Parliament Gramoz Ruçi, Prime Minister Edi Rama, Foreign Affairs Minister Gent Cakaj and representatives from non-governmental organizations.

*June 4* OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Minister M. Lajčák makes an official visit to Serbia. Lajčák meets with President Aleksandar Vučić, National Assembly President Maja Gojković, Prime Minister Ana Brnabić and Foreign Affairs Minister Ivica Dačić. The discussion topics are co-operation with the OSCE, EU membership and Kosovo.

*June 3–4* Speaker of Parliament A. Danko meets with Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko and Speaker Vladimir Andreychenko. They discuss the possibility of cooperating in education, recognizing higher education qualifications, the potential for economic cooperation and threats in the digital age. Danko invited a Belarusian delegation to the 75th anniversary celebrations of the Slovak National Uprising during the Second World War.

*June 4–7* Prime Minister P. Pellegrini visits the Russian Federation. He meets with his counterpart Dmitry Medvedev in Moscow to discuss bilateral relations and energy security. He gives a speech at the economic forum in Saint Petersburg, following a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin. OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Minister M. Lajčák accompanies Pellegrini and has talks with Russian Foreign Affairs Minister Sergey Lavrov. The ministers discuss a wide range of topics, focusing on Slovakia's OSCE Chairmanship and the priority of resolving conflicts in some OSCE participating states. Special attention was paid to the situation in eastern Ukraine, and on improving living conditions there.

*June 5* The Inter-ministerial Coordination Group on Brexit meets at the Slovak Foreign Affairs Ministry and is led by State Secretary F. Ružička. The focus is on information exchange between the ministries responsible for adopting and implementing legislative and non-legislative measures at national and European level.

*June 6* Minister M. Lajčák talks with President of Montenegro Milo Djukanović and highlights the progress made by Montenegro on EU integration.

*June 7* Minister M. Lajčák has talks with Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates Anwar Mohammed Gargash, focusing on developments in the Persian Gulf and issues in the Middle East. He then meets with his Bulgarian counterpart Ekaterina Zaharieva to discuss the recent elections to the European Parliament and EU enlargement.

*June 7* Minister M. Lajčák holds a meeting with Michel Barnier, EU Chief Negotiator for Brexit, to discuss the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union, cooperation following the European Parliament elections and ideas about the future direction of the EU.

*June 8* Minister M. Lajčák receives his Latvian counterpart Edgars Rinkēvičs. The ministers discuss the EU, especially the EU elections, and Minister Rinkēvičs acknowledges the role played by the Slovak Armed Forces in Latvia.

*June 13* Bratislava is selected as the location for the new European Labor Authority (ELA) being launched in October 2019. The ELA will help EU member states enforce EU laws on labor mobility and social security coordination and provide information to individuals and employers engaged in cross-border labor mobility.

*June 13* Minister M. Lajčák undertakes his second official visit to Ukraine as OSCE Chairperson-in-Office. He is to meet the newly-elected President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky, and discuss how the crisis in the east of Ukraine can be resolved and the role the OSCE can play in that.

*June 18–21* OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Minister M. Lajčák begins his four-day tour of the Western Balkans, starting in North Macedonia, followed by Sarajevo in Bosnia and Herzegovina

and then Pristina in Kosovo. M. Lajčák meets senior officials in each country. In addition to the bilateral meetings, M. Lajčák presents checks symbolizing Slovak Development Aid for two environmental projects in North Macedonia. Bosnia and Herzegovina receives humanitarian aid from M. Lajčák earmarked for migrant families with children.

*June 19* Zuzana Čaputová becomes the fifth president of the Slovak Republic. She replaces A. Kiska, who has held the post since 2014.

*June 20* President Z. Čaputová undertakes her first official foreign visit, and following tradition her first port of call is the Czech Republic. She meets with President Miloš Zeman, Senate Chairman Jaroslav Kuber and the Chairman of the Chamber of Deputies, Radek Vondráček.

*June 21* The Slovak Republic hands over the Visegrad Group presidency to the Czech Republic.

*June 26* President Z. Čaputová makes her first official visit to Brussels and meets with Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission.

*June 26* Minister M. Lajčák attends a meeting of the Transatlantic Contact Group of the European Council on Foreign Relations in Lisbon to discuss the role and direction of transatlantic relations.

*June 28* OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Minister M. Lajčák receives the two Minsk Group Co-Chairs Igor Popov and Andrew Schofer, OSCE Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office on the conflict dealt with by the Minsk Conference (Nagorno Karabakh) Andrzej Kasprzyk, and Head of the OSCE High-Level Planning Group Col. Vladimír Minárik.

*June 30–July 3* Speaker of Parliament A. Danko attends the Development of Parliamentarism International Forum in Moscow and visits the Republic of Tatarstan. A. Danko meets with his Armenian counterpart Ararat Mirzoyan, Russian Federal Council chair Valentina Matviyenko and President of Tatarstan Rustam Minnikhanov. The Slovak delegation includes around 20 entrepreneurs who will attend a Slovak-Russian business forum to establish ties with Russian counterparts.

*July 2* Minister M. Lajčák receives the Chairman of the NATO Military Committee, Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart William Peach. They discuss the security situation in Europe and NATO plans to strengthen readiness for cyber and hybrid threats. The Chairman of the NATO Military Committee spoke appreciatively of the Slovak Republic's efforts to increase defense expenditure and of the ongoing modernization of the Slovak Armed Forces.

*July 1–4* A Meeting of Heads of Diplomatic Missions is held at the Foreign Ministry to discuss key issues in Slovak foreign policy and to perform a detailed analysis of the outcomes. President Z. Čaputová receives the ambassadors at the presidential palace. Deputy Prime Minister for Investments and Informatization R. Raši, Minister of Economy P. Žiga, Minister of Finance L. Kamenický, and Governor of the Slovak National Bank P. Kažimír address the heads of the diplomatic missions.

*July 3* The European Parliament elects Italian MEP David Sassoli as President of the European Parliament.

*July 7* Minister M. Lajčák delivers a speech at the annual meeting of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in Luxembourg.

*July 8–9* The Informal OSCE Ministerial Gathering of foreign affairs ministers and heads of delegations takes place in the High Tatras. Organized under Slovakia's OSCE Chairmanship, the aim is to bring decision-makers together in a relaxed informal setting to discuss issues of OSCE relevance in a manner that is conducive to genuine dialogue and exchange.

*July 10* President Z. Čaputová welcomes Wang Yi, the State Advisor and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Peoples Republic of China. Z. Čaputová expresses concern about the deterioration in human rights in China. Later OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Minister M. Lajčák receives Wang Yi at the foreign ministry.

*July 11* President Z. Čaputová pays an official visit to Hungary and meets her counterpart János Áder. They discuss the current mission of the V4 Group and climate crisis. She is critical of V. Orbán's politics and defends the values of liberal democracy.

*July 15* President Z. Čaputová pays an official visit to Poland and meets with President Andrzej Duda and Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki. They discuss the challenges facing the EU, security, relations with Russia and regional matters.

*July 17* The European Parliament elects Ursula von der Leyen as the first female Commission President of the European Commission.

*July 17* Minister M. Lajčák holds talks with María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, President of the 73rd session of the UN General Assembly in New York. The main topics are reforming UN development, the session of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and upcoming high-level events during the ministerial week of the 74th UN General Assembly in September.

*July 24* President Z. Čaputová pays an official two-day visit to France and meets with French President Emmanuel Macron. They discuss the European Union, the V4, bilateral relations and opportunities for further co-operation.

*August 22* President Z. Čaputová pays an official two-day visit to Germany on the anniversary of the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia. She meets with her counterpart Frank-Walter Steinmeier and Chancellor Angela Merkel. They discuss Brexit, social stability, the fight for freedom and the independent investigation of the murdered investigative journalist Ján Kuciak and his fiancée.

*August 30* President Z. Čaputová pays an official visit to Austria and meets with her Austrian counterpart Alexander Van der Bellen. They discuss strengthening the fight against climate change.

*August 30* Minister M. Lajčák attends an informal meeting of EU Foreign Affairs Ministers (Gymnich format) held in Helsinki.

*September 1* President Z. Čaputová commemorates the 80th anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War in Poland.

*September 6* OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Minister M. Lajčák has a working breakfast with Igor Crnadak, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in Bratislava. The main topic of discussion is current developments in the region.

*September 9* OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Minister M. Lajčák receives his Serbian counterpart, Ivica Dačić. They discuss the possibility of unlocking the dialogue between Belgrade and

Pristina following the Kosovo parliamentary elections in October, cooperation in the Western Balkans and Slovakia's OSCE Chairmanship.

*September 11* OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Minister M. Lajčák makes some opening remarks at the 27th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum (EEF) in Prague.

*September 16* President Z. Čaputová pays an official visit to Ukraine. She meets with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to discuss expanding bilateral relations and the reforms. She meets with Prime Minister Oleksiy Honcharuk to discuss the fight against corruption and cross-border smuggling.

*September 16* OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Minister M. Lajčák addresses the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw.

*September 20–26* A Slovak delegation led by President Z. Čaputová attends the UN Climate Summit. The President delivers a speech at the General Debate of the 74th UN General Assembly in New York. She meets with António Guterres, the UN Secretary-General, and holds a series of meetings with several world partners. Minister of Environment L. Sólymos accompanies the president to the summit and related events. Minister M. Lajčák joins the delegation and attends the Summit opening and bilateral meetings with ministers of foreign affairs Sergey Lavrov of the Russian Federation, Zohrab Mnatsakanyan of Armenia, Prak Sokhonn of Cambodia, and with Philip Reeker, US Acting Assistant Secretary of State, and Miroslav Jenča, UN Assistant Secretary-General.

*September 22–23* A Slovak delegation led by Speaker of Parliament A. Danko represents Slovakia in Kazakhstan at the European and Asian parliamentary speakers' summit. He also meets with Kazakh Prime Minister Askar Mamin and senior public officials.

*September 25* Minister M. Lajčák addresses the UN Sustainable Development Summit and then meets with the Minsk Group co-chairs – Igor Popov of the Russian Federation, Stéphane Visconti of France and Andrew Schofer of the United States – and Andrzej Kasprzyk, Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office for the conflict dealt with by the Minsk Conference.

*September 27* Minister M. Lajčák meets with Serbia's former Foreign Minister and President of the 67th General Assembly of the United Nations Vuk Jeremić on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly. They discuss the domestic political situation in Serbia in the context of the parliamentary elections in spring 2020.

*October 3* President Z. Čaputová leaves for a two-day summit of the V4 Group presidents. On the second day, the presidents of Slovenia and Serbia, Borut Pahor and Aleksandar Vučić, join the talks to discuss the EU's relationship with the Western Balkans.

*October 3* Minister M. Lajčák meets with Josep Borrell, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Spain, who has been appointed High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. They discuss EU common foreign and security policy and the challenges facing it in the next parliament.

*October 4* State Secretary F. Ružička pays a working visit to Riga and meets with Zanda Kalniņa-Lukaševica, Parliamentary Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, and Jānis Mažeiks, the Foreign Ministry's Political Director. They discuss bilateral issues and developments in Europe and the wider region.

*October 8* State Secretary L. Parížek meets with Jeffrey Schlagenhauf, OECD Deputy Secretary-General responsible for public sector governance, the fight against corruption and sustainable development goals.

*October 9* Minister M. Lajčák receives Swedish Minister for EU Affairs Hans Dahlgren. They talk about the role of the newly formed European Commission, bilateral relations and opportunities to enhance cooperation.

*October 9* OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Minister M. Lajčák opens the session of the OSCE Permanent Conference for Political Questions in the Framework of the Negotiating Process on the Transdnestrian Settlement in Bratislava.

*October 11* President of the European Council Donald Tusk meets with Prime Minister P. Pellegrini in Prešov. The two leaders discuss European Union issues.

*October 14* Minister M. Lajčák attends the Meeting of the EU Foreign Affairs Council in Luxembourg and meets with Vadym Prystaiko, Ukrainian Minister of Foreign Affairs, to discuss recent positive developments regarding the conflict in Donbas.

*October 17* Minister M. Lajčák meets with Aleksandar Vučić, President of the Republic of Serbia. They discuss the internal political situation in Serbia in relation to the upcoming parliamentary elections and Slovakia's support for Serbia's European integration.

*October 17* State Secretary L. Parížek opens the 2019 ApmUN Model UN Conference in Bratislava.

*October 20–23* President Z. Čaputová pays an official visit to Japan and attends the enthronement ceremony of Emperor Naruhito of Japan. She also meets Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to discuss bilateral relations, economic cooperation and environmental challenges.

*October 22* Minister M. Lajčák has a meeting in Washington with his US counterpart Mike Pompeo. They discuss ways of strengthening bilateral military cooperation and countering growing cyber threats, and transatlantic cooperation.

*October 22* State Secretary L. Parížek opens a two-day meeting of National Anti-Trafficking Coordinators and Rapporteurs from across the OSCE on joint activities to combat human trafficking to support the OSCE in meeting its commitments in this area.

*October 24–25* Speaker of Parliament A. Danko represents Slovakia at the European Summit of Presidents of Parliament from the Council of Europe member states.

*October 24–25* Minister M. Lajčák makes an official visit to Bulgaria and meets with his counterpart Ekaterina Zakhareva. The talks are testimony of the excellent bilateral relations between the two countries and of Slovakia's support for Bulgaria's ambitions to join the euro zone, the Schengen area, and the OECD.

*October 28–29* The OSCE Youth Forum on Perspectives for a Safer Future takes place in Bratislava.

*October 30* A session of the Inter-ministerial Coordination Group on Brexit is held at the foreign ministry and led by Minister M. Lajčák. Prime Minister P. Pellegrini, Minister of Finance L. Kamenický, State Secretary F. Ružička, and other state secretaries are all in attendance. Together

with social partners, representatives from specialist and professional organizations, they discuss the outcome of the Brexit talks, the changes to the wording of the withdrawal agreement and update one another on Brexit preparations.

*November 3–4* Minister M. Lajčák attends the Annual Session of the Global Future Council in the United Arab Emirates. The key issues of discussion are democratic governance amid changing global and regional economic development.

*November 6* Minister M. Lajčák receives the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs and the Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office on the conflict dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference in Bratislava.

*November 7* State Secretary L. Parížek meets with the Vice Minister of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, Qin Gang.

*November 9* President Z. Čaputová attends the official ceremony for the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall together with the presidents of the other V4 countries at the invitation of German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier.

*November 9* Minister M. Lajčák attends the celebrations for the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall in Germany.

*November 11* The 7th Joint Session of the Governments of the Slovak Republic and the Czech Republic takes place in Valtice, Czech Republic, and the 30th anniversary of the Velvet Revolution is celebrated. The governments discuss economic cooperation, cross-border cooperation projects, energy security, transport infrastructure, internal security, defense cooperation and foreign policy.

*November 12* Minister M. Lajčák receives the First Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Titov. They discuss Slovakia's OSCE Chairmanship and preparations for the December session of the OSCE Ministerial Council in Bratislava.

*November 12–14* Prime Minister P. Pellegrini visits the Slovak soldiers on the UNFICYP peace-keeping mission in Cyprus and meets President of the House of Representatives Demetris Sylouris and Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades. There are 242 soldiers from the Slovak Armed Forces on active duty there.

*November 18–19* The Slovak Foreign Policy Association holds its 13th annual Central European Energy Conference (CEEC) in Bratislava. This year the conference is about changes in natural gas consumption and supply in Europe, the capacity of the V4 countries to meet the 2020 targets, especially share of renewables in energy consumption, the EU's clean planet vision, energy market trends, cleaner mobility, new technologies and smart energy. The conference is attended by Minister M. Lajčák, Minister of Economy P. Žiga, Vice-President of the European Commission M. Šefčovič, State Secretary L. Parížek and other important guests from EU and neighboring countries.

*November 18* Minister M. Lajčák meets with Josep Borrell, Vice-President Designate of the European Commission and the next High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Policy and Security Policy to discuss EU foreign policy challenges.

*November 20* Minister M. Lajčák participates in a Brussels meeting of the NATO foreign ministers. The ministers approve a decision to recognize space as an additional operational domain of the Alliance, strictly in terms of defense and deterrence.

*November 22* State Secretary L. Parížek undertakes a working visit to India and meets with Vallamvelly Mulareedharan, Minister of State for External Affairs. They discuss enhancing co-operation, trade and investments.

*November 25* Minister M. Lajčák receives a parliamentary delegation from Montenegro led by Andrija Nikolić, Chairperson of the Committee for International Relations and Emigrants of the Parliament of Montenegro. The main discussion theme is Montenegrin foreign policy in the context of developments in the Western Balkans and EU integration.

*November 25* State Secretary F. Ružička chairs a Strategic European Affairs Commission on Climate Change. The theme of the meeting is highly relevant – reducing green-house gas emissions by 2050.

*November 26* Minister M. Lajčák delivers a speech on the security situation in the OSCE region at the Berlin Security Conference.

*November 27* The hearings come to an end and the European Parliament approves the new European Commission.

*November 28* OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Minister M. Lajčák officially opens the Embassy of the Slovak Republic in Azerbaijan. As part of his working visit, M. Lajčák meets with President Ilham Alijev, Prime Minister Ali Asadov and Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadjarov. He explains the priorities and progress made by Slovakia's OSCE Chairmanship to Azerbaijan's leaders.

*November 28–29* Minister M. Lajčák ends his series of visits in his capacity as OSCE Chairperson-in-Office with a visit to Ukraine, where he views the reconstructed bridge in the town of Stanytsia Luhanska. M. Lajčák expresses Slovakia's full support for Ukrainian independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within internationally recognized borders.

*November 29* A Slovak delegation led by Prime Minister P. Pellegrini and accompanied by Minister of Defense P. Gajdoš and State Secretary F. Ružička pays a working visit to Latvia. Pellegrini meets with his counterpart Krišjānis Kariņš to discuss bilateral relations, the European Union's agenda and security policy. The two ministers then visit the Adaži Military Base, where 152 Slovak soldiers are based in Latvia, under NATO.

*December 2* Prime Minister P. Pellegrini attends the UN climate conference (COP25) in Madrid.

*December 2* Minister M. Lajčák attends a meeting of the ministers of foreign affairs of the Visegrad Group in Prague.

*December 3–4* President Z. Čaputová and Minister M. Lajčák attend the NATO summit in London to commemorate the 70th year of its existence. The leaders discuss the new threats facing the Alliance, especially in the telecommunications sector. Z. Čaputová notes that the climate crisis will become an increasingly important part of any discussions on security.

*December 5–6* Slovakia's OSCE Chairmanship, assumed on January 1, 2019, culminates with the annual meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council in Bratislava. It is the largest event Slovakia has organized in recent history. It is attended by representatives of the 57 participating and 11 partner states, international and non-governmental organizations and hundreds of delegates. It is a unique opportunity to gauge whether Slovakia fulfilled its chairmanship priorities and a chance to set out the direction the OSCE will take next year. The summit is attended by OSCE Secretary-General Thomas Greminger, the heads of the organization's three independent in-

stitutions – Head of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights Ingibjorg Solrun Gissladottir, High Commissioner for National Minorities Lamberto Zannier, OSCE Representative for Freedom of the Media Harlem Desir – Slovak Prime Minister Pellegrini and other important guests from around the globe. Slovak Foreign Affairs Minister and outgoing OSCE Chairperson-in-Office M. Lajčák presides over the Ministerial Council talks. The meeting closes with Slovakia symbolically handing over the chair to Albania, commencing in January 2020.

*December 9* Pope Francis receives Prime Minister P. Pellegrini and his delegation on an official visit to the Vatican.

*December 9* Minister M. Lajčák attends a working meeting of the foreign ministers of the V4 countries. Vice-President of the European Commission and High representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell is also in attendance. The meeting was initiated by the High Representative interested in the views of the V4 on their priorities for EU Common Foreign and Security Policy.

*December 10* Prime Minister P. Pellegrini arrives in New York for a meeting with Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. They discuss world politics and climate change. They are joined by Minister M. Lajčák for the official opening of the new premises of the Consulate General of the Slovak Republic in New York.

*December 10* Austrian President Alexander van der Bellen unveils a plaque in Hainburg commemorating the 1989 Freedom March from Bratislava to Hainburg and the 30th anniversary of the tearing down of the Iron Curtain.

*December 12* Minister M. Lajčák receives civil society representatives at the foreign ministry. He holds a discussion with representatives from the non-governmental sector and the academic community at a round table to exchanges views on the future of Slovak foreign and European policy. M. Lajčák thanks them for their high level of cooperation and contribution.

*December 12–13* A Slovak delegation headed by Prime Minister P. Pellegrini attends a European Council session in Brussels. The 2021–2027 Multiannual Financial Framework and the Long-term Emission Reduction Strategy are the main topics of discussion. The Prime Minister meets with newly elected President of the European Council, Charles Michel, at the beginning of the session.

*December 13* Slovakia provides humanitarian aid worth €42,839 to war-stricken Afghanistan consisting of school uniforms made in Slovakia for 700 students, 700 pairs of sneakers and 224 pairs of winter shoes.

*December 13–14* Minister M. Lajčák attends the 19th Doha Forum in Qatar at the invitation of the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister of the State of Qatar, Sheik Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani. M. Lajčák gives a keynote speech at a panel on migration challenges, regional cooperation and the new constellation of powers.

*December 16* Minister M. Lajčák delivers a speech at the 14th ASEM Foreign Ministers Meeting (ASEM FMM 14) in Madrid. There was clear support for effective multilateralism and supporting cooperation between Europe and Asia on global issues such as combatting climate change, ensuring trade and commerce follow international rules, and implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

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## TREATIES, AGREEMENTS, CONVENTIONS PUBLISHED IN 2019

### PRESIDENTIAL TREATIES AND AGREEMENTS

1. Agreement between the Slovak Republic and Hungary on state border (Amsterdam, January 25, 2016, published under No. 50/2019 Z. z.)
2. Termination of the provisional execution of the Agreement between the Slovak Republic and the International Investment Bank concerning opening of the IIB European Regional Office in Bratislava (announcement No. 95/2015 Z. z.)  
Provisional execution of the agreement was terminated on December 31, 2018, published under No 87/2019 Z. z.
3. Agreement between the Slovak Republic and Japan on social security (Bratislava, January 30, 2017, published under No. 179/2019 Z. z.)
  - a) Implementing agreement to the Agreement between the Slovak Republic and Japan on social security (Tokyo, March 6, 2019, published under No. 179/2019 Z. z.)
4. Protocol between the Slovak Republic and the Republic of Moldova to the Agreement between the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on legal assistance and legal relations in matters of civil, family and criminal matters from August 12, 1982 (Chisinau, July 19, 2017, published under No. 243/2019 Z. z.)
5. Changes and amendments to Agreement between the Slovak Republic and the Republic of Finland on avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income and property (published under No. 255/2019 Z. z.)
6. Changes and amendments to Agreement between the Slovak Republic and the Republic of Georgia on avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income and property (published under No. 256/2019 Z. z.)

7. Changes and amendments to Agreement between the Slovak Republic and Ireland on avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income and property  
(published under No. 257/2019 Z. z.)
8. Changes and amendments to Agreement between the Slovak Republic and Malta on avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income and property  
(published under No. 258/2019)
9. Changes and amendments to Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Government of Singapore on avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income and property  
(published under No. 259/2019 Z. z.)
10. Changes and amendments to Agreement between the Government of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and Government of the Kingdom of Denmark on avoidance of double taxation with respect to taxes on income and property (notice No. 53/1983 Zb.) and Protocol to Agreement between the Government of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and Government of the Kingdom of Denmark on avoidance of double taxation with respect to taxes on income and property, signed in Prague on May 5, 1982  
(published under No. 481/2019 Z. z.)
11. Changes and amendments to Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Government of Canada on avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income and property (announcement No. 96/2007 Z. z.)  
(published under No. 482/2019 Z. z.)
12. Changes and amendments to Agreement between the Slovak Republic and Republic of Island on avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income and property (announcement No. 225/2003 Z. z.)  
(published under No. 483/2019 Z. z.)
13. Changes and amendments to Agreement between the Government of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and Government of India on avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income and property and Protocol to the Agreement (notice No. 77/1987 Zb.)  
(published under No. 484/2019 Z. z.)
14. Changes and amendments to Agreement between the Government of the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic and the Government of Luxembourg on avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income and property and Protocol to the Agreement (announcement No. 227/1993 Z. z.)  
(published under No. 485/2019 Z. z.)
15. Changes and amendments to Agreement between the Government of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands on avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income and property (notice No.138/1974 Zb.), the Protocol amending Agreement between the Government of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands on avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes

on income and property (announcement No. 199/1997 Z. z.) and Protocol between the Slovak Republic and the Kingdom of the Netherlands changing and amending Agreement between the Government of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands on avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income and property and the Protocol to the Agreement (announcement No. 450/2010 Z. z.) (published under No. 486/2019 Z. z.)

16. Changes and amendments to Agreement between the Slovak Republic and the Kingdom of Belgium on avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income and property (announcement No. 92/2007 Z. z.) (published under No. 487/2019 Z. z.)
17. Changes and amendments to Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and Government of Ukraine on avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income and property (announcement No. 173/1997 Z. z.) (published under No. 488/2019 Z. z.)
18. Changes and amendments to Agreement between the Slovak Republic and the Republic of Latvia on avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income and property (announcement No. 317/2000 Z. z.) (published under No. 489/2019 Z. z.)

## GOVERNMENTAL TREATIES AND AGREEMENTS

1. Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Government of the Republic of Poland on construction of the road bridge on river Jelešňa between towns of Trstená and Chyžné on Slovak–Polish state border (Barwinek, July 16, 2018, published under No. 44/2019 Z. z.)
2. Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Government of the Republic of Poland on point of crossing of R4 and S18 express way S19 between towns of Vyšný Komárnik and Barwinek (Barwinek, July 16, 2018, published under No. 45/2019 Z. z.)
3. Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Government of Hungary on construction of the road bridge on river Ipel' and related objects on joint border between towns of Vrbovka and Ŕrhalom (Bratislava, December 11, 2018, published under No. 116/2019 Z. z.)
4. Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Government of Hungary on construction of the road bridge and related objects on joint border between towns of Dobrohoš' and Dunakiliti (Bratislava, December 11, 2018, published under No. 117/2019 Z. z.)
5. Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Government of Federative Republic of Brazil on employment of the family members of diplomatic missions and consular offices members (Bratislava, August 18, 2017, published under No. 193/2019 Z. z.)

6. Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Government of Hungary on construction of the road bridge on river Ipel' and related objects on joint border between towns of Ipel'ské Predmostie and Drégelypalánk (Komárno, May 28, 2019, published under No. 247/2019 Z. z.)
7. Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Government of the Republic of Kenya on development cooperation (Nairobi, January 14, 2019, published under No. 336/2019 Z. z.)
8. Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Government of the Republic of Cuba on consolidation of economic relations (Havana, May 13, 2019, published under No. 346/2019 Z. z.)

### **MINISTERIAL TREATIES AND AGREEMENTS**

1. Change to the Amendment to the Agreement between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Federal Ministry of European and International Affairs on execution of the Agreements between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Federal Government of the Republic of Austria on mutual visa representation through diplomatic missions and consular offices, signed on May 6, 2011 in Bratislava (exchange of notes, December 10, 2018 and March 1, 2019, published under No. 85/2019 Z. z.)
2. Amendment No. 2 to Agreement between the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary on mutual visa representations (exchange of notes, March 12, and April 5, 2019, published under No. 118/2019 Z. z.)
3. Amendment to Implementing protocol between the Interior Ministry of the Slovak Republic and Interior Ministry of the Republic of Croatia on cooperation during the holiday season (Bratislava, May 2, 2019, Zagreb, May 17, 2019, published under No. 180/2019 Z. z.)
4. Protocol on grant between the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic and International Francophone Organisation (Paris, July 5, 2019, published under No. 238/2019 Z. z.)
5. Cooperation Program between the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia for 2019–2023 (Paris, November 19, 2019, published under No. 427/2019 Z. z.)

### **MULTILATERAL TREATIES AND AGREEMENTS**

1. Protocol on sustainable transportation to Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians Agreement (Mikulov, September 26, 2014, published under No. 23/2019 Z. z.)
2. Convention on centralized customs clearance concerning the allocation of national collection costs retained when traditional own resources are made available to the EU budget (Brussels, March 10, 2009, published under No. 24/2019 Z. z.)

3. Changes and amendments to the European Agreement concerning the international carriage of dangerous goods by inland waterways (ADN) (Geneva, January 26, 2018, published under No. 51/2019 Z. z.)
4. Convention on jurisdiction, applicable law, recognition, enforcement and co-operation in respect of parental responsibility and measures for the protection of children from October 19, 1996 (published under No. 67/2019 Z. z.) – change of the state administration body
5. Changes to Implementing Regulations of the Patent Convention (adopted on October 2, 2018, published under No. 86/2019 Z. z.)
6. Convention on jurisdiction, applicable law, recognition, enforcement and co-operation in respect of parental responsibility and measures for the protection of children from October 19, 1996 (published under No. 125/2019 Z. z.) – Republic of Fiji, convention party as of April 1, 2019
7. Protocol amending the Treaty concerning a European Vehicle and Driving Licence Information System (EUCARIS) (Luxembourg, June 8, 2017, published under No. 144/2019 Z. z.)
8. Air Transport Agreement between the European Community and its Member States, of the one part, and Canada, of the other part (Brussels, December 17, 2009, published under No. 148/2019 Z. z.)
9. Changes and amendments to Convention on international carriage of dangerous goods by rail (RID) – Annex C 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 30, 2018, published under No. 190/2019 Z. z.)
10. Changes and amendment to Annexes A and B to European Agreement concerning the international carriage of dangerous goods by road (ADR) (published under No. 191/2019 Z. z.)
11. Changes to Annexes I and II to the Convention on the control and marking of articles of precious metals (Stockholm, April 20, 2018, published under No. 192/2019 Z. z.)
12. Additional Protocol to the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism (Riga, October 22, 2015, published under No. 194/2019 Z. z.)
13. Changes to Implementing Regulations of the European Patent Convention (Munich, March 28, 2019, published under No. 195/2019 Z. z.)
14. Protocol changing Air Transport Agreement between the European Community and its Member States, of the one part, and Canada, of the other part considering the accession of the Republic of Croatia to the European Union (Brussels, January 27, 2017, published under No. 196/2019 Z. z.)
15. Changes to schedule of specific commitments of the Slovak Republic in the field of service after the accession of the Slovak Republic to the European Union (Geneva, December 15, 2006, published under No. 197/2019 Z. z.)

16. Changes and amendments to the Agreement on international goods transport by rail (SMGS) (Tashkent, June 4–7, 2019, published under No. 237/2019 Z. z.)
17. Convention on jurisdiction, applicable law, recognition, enforcement and co-operation in respect of parental responsibility and measures for the protection of children from October 19, 1996 (published under No. 253/2019 Z. z.) – Republic of Paraguay – convention party as of July 1, 2019
18. Changes to text and annexes II – IX and adding annexes X – XI to Protocol to abate acidification, eutrophication and ground-level ozone to the Protocol on long-range transboundary air pollution from 1979 (Geneva, May 4, 2012, published under No. 294/2019 Z. z.)
19. Acts of the Universal Postal Union from the Tenth Additional Protocol to the Constitution of the Universal Postal Union, Second Additional Protocol to the General Regulations of the Universal Postal Union, and Additional Protocol Universal Postal Convention (Addis Abeba, September 7, 2018, published under No. 339/2019 Z. z.)
20. Convention on jurisdiction, applicable law, recognition, enforcement and co-operation in respect of parental responsibility and measures for the protection of children from October 19, 1996 (published under No. 480/2019 Z. z.) – Republic of Nicaragua – convention party as of December 1, 2019

## STRUCTURE OF THE STATE ADMINISTRATION AUTHORITIES ACTING IN INTERNATIONAL AND EUROPEAN AFFAIRS IN 2019

AS OF FEBRUARY 2020

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*Department of Political and Security Affairs*

Head of the Department: Róbert Kirnág, tel.: 02/5978 3660, robert.kirnag@mzv.sk

*Department of Logistics, Communication and Budget*

Head of the Department: Ingrid Horvay, tel.: 02/5978 3690, ingrid.horvay@mzv.sk

**Directorate General for Economy and General Administration**

Director General: Tibor Králik, tel.: 02/5978 2801, tibor.kralik@mzv.sk

*Finance Department*

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

*Investments, Real Estates and Services Department*

Head of the Department: Eva Bezáková, tel.: 02/5978 2850, eva.bezakova@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 Ondrišeková, 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**

Mlynské nivy 44, 827 15 Bratislava 212

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

**MINISTRY OF INTERIOR OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC**

Pribinova 2, 812 72 Bratislava  
tel.: 02/5094 1111, 02/5094 4397  
www.minv.sk

**Minister**

Denisa Saková

**State Secretary**

Michal Bagačka (since March 15, 2019)  
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**

Ladislav Kamenický (since May 7, 2019)  
Peter Kažimír (until April 11, 2019)

**State Secretary**

Radko Kuruc (until October 23, 2019)  
Dana Meager

**MINISTRY OF CULTURE OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC**

Námestie SNP 33, 813 31 Bratislava

tel.: 02/2048 2111

[www.culture.gov.sk](http://www.culture.gov.sk), [www.mksr.sk](http://www.mksr.sk), [mksr@culture.gov.sk](mailto:mksr@culture.gov.sk)

**Minister**

Ľubica Laššáková

**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](http://www.health.gov.sk), [office@health.gov.sk](mailto:office@health.gov.sk)

**Minister**

Andrea Kalavská (until December 17, 2019)

**State Secretary**

Jaroslav Ridoško

Stanislav Špánik

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

Špitálska 4, 6, 8, 816 43 Bratislava

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[www.employment.gov.sk](http://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

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[www.minedu.sk](http://www.minedu.sk)

**Minister**

Martina Lubyová

**State Secretary**

Peter Krajňák

Oľga Nachtmannová

**MINISTRY OF JUSTICE OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC**

Župné námestie 13, 813 11 Bratislava

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www.justice.gov.sk

**Minister**

Gábor Gál

**State Secretary**

Edita Pfundtner

Monika Jankovská (until September 3, 2019)

**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

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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**

Peter Ďurček  
Ladislava Cengelová

**ANTIMONOPOLY OFFICE OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC**

Drieňová 24, 826 03 Bratislava  
tel.: 02/4829 7111  
[www.antimon.gov.sk](http://www.antimon.gov.sk)

**Chairman**

Tibor Menyhart, tel.: 02/4829 7230, [predseda@antimon.gov.sk](mailto:predseda@antimon.gov.sk)

**STATISTICAL OFFICE OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC**

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**President**

Alexander Ballek, tel.: 02/5542 5802, [alexander.ballek@statistics.sk](mailto:alexander.ballek@statistics.sk)

## LIST OF THE EMBASSIES IN THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

### THE EMBASSIES IN THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC AND THEIR HEADS AS OF JANUARY 2020

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	
The Republic of Albania	1. 1. 1993	Ventúrska 16 811 01 Bratislava	<b>Enkeleda Mërkuri</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
People's Democratic Republic of Algeria	1. 1. 1993	Rudolfingasse 18 A-1190 Vienna Austria	<b>Fauzia Mebarki</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Principality of Andorra	3. 6. 1996	Kärtnering 2A/13 A-1010 Vienna Austria	<b>Marta Salvat Batista</b> <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
The Republic of Angola	30. 9. 1993	Seilerstätte 15/1/10 1010 Vienna Austria	<b>Mariano João Baptista</b> <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
The Argentine Republic	1. 1. 1993	Lugeck 1-2/7/44A A-1010 Viedeň Austria	<b>Maite Fernandez Garcia</b> <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
The Republic of Armenia	14. 11. 1993	Hadikgasse 28 1140 Vienna Austria	<b>Armen Papikyan</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: December 17, 2019
The Commonwealth of Australia	1. 1. 1993	Mattliellstrasse 2 A-1040 Vienna Austria	<b>Brendon Charles Hammer</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Cooperative Republic of Guyan	-	Guyana High Commission 3 Palace Court Bayswater Road W2 4LP London United Kingdom	<b>Frederick Hamley Case</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: May 21, 2019
The Republic of Azerbaijan	27. 11. 1993	Hügelgasse 2 A-1130 Vienna Austria	<b>Galib Israfilov</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Kingdom of Bahrain		Klingelhöfstrasse 7 10785 Berlin Germany	<b>Abdulla Abdullatif Abdulla</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: December 12, 2019

Country	Start of diplomatic relations	Adress of embassy	In charge of embassy (LoC)
The People's Republic of Bangladesh	3. 3. 1993	Kaiserin-Augusta-Allee 111 D-10553 Berlin Germany	<b>Imtiaz Ahmed</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Kingdom of Belgium	1. 1. 1993	Schönburgstrasse 10 1040 Vienna Austria	<b>Ghislain D'Hoop</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Benin	19. 1. 1993	Englerallee 23 D-14159 Berlin Germany	<b>Josseline Marie Louise da Silva Gbony</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Belarus	1. 1. 1993	Jančova 5 811 02 Bratislava 1	<b>Igor Leshchenya</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Plurinational State of Bolivia	5. 3. 1993	Prinz-Eugen-Strasse 18 Top 10A A-1040 Vienna Austria	<b>Nardi Elizabeth Suxo Iturry</b> <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1. 1. 1993	Opletalova 27 110 00 Praha Czech Republic	<b>Rajka Beribaka</b> <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
The Republic of Botswana	-	6 Stratford Place W1C 1AY London United Kingdom	<b>Roy Warren Blackbeard</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Federative Republic of Brasil	1. 1. 1993	Palisády 47 811 06 Bratislava	<b>Eduardo Ricardo Gradilone Neto</b> <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
The Republic of Bulgaria	1. 1. 1993	Kuzmányho 1 811 06 Bratislava 1	<b>Yordanka Chobanova</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Burkina Faso	1. 8. 1997	Strohgasse 14c A-1030 Vienna Austria	<b>Dieudonné Kere</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Burundi	29. 6. 1999	Berliner Strasse 36 D-10715 Berlin Germany	<b>Else Nizigama Ntamagiro</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Côte d'Ivoire	-	Neulingasse 29/6/20 A-1030 Vienna Austria	<b>A. Georgette M'Brah</b> <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
The Republic of Cyprus	1. 1. 1993	Michalská 12 811 01 Bratislava	<b>Nicos P. Nicolaou</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: November 21, 2019
The Republic of Chad		Lepsiusstrasse 114 D-12165 Berlin Germany	<b>Mariam Ali Moussa</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: December 17, 2019
Czech Republic	1. 1. 1993	Hvezdoslavovo nám. 8 P.O.Box 208 810 00 Bratislava	<b>Tomáš Tuhý</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Montenegro	1. 1. 1993	Lothringerstrasse 14-16 Top II/3, 1030 Vienna Austria	<b>Željko Perović</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Chile	1. 1. 1993	Lugeck 1/311 A-1010 Vienna, Austria	<b>Gloria Navarrete</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The People's Republic of China	1. 1. 1993	Jančova 8b 811 02 Bratislava 1	<b>Wang Ji</b> <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
The Kingdom of Denmark	1. 1. 1993	Führichgasse 6 A-1010 Vienna Austria	<b>René Rosager Dinesen</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: December 5, 2018

Country	Start of diplomatic relations	Adress of embassy	In charge of embassy (LoC)
Representation of European Commission in the SR	-	Palisády 29 811 06 Bratislava	<b>Ladislav Miko</b> <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
European Parliament Information Office	-	Palisády 29 811 06 Bratislava	<b>Dionýz Hochel</b> <i>Director</i>
The Arab Republic of Egypt	1. 1. 1993	Panská 14 811 01 Bratislava	<b>Bassem Mohamed Abdel-Alim Khalil</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Ecuador	1. 1. 1993	Andrássy út 20.1/2. 1061 Budapest Hungary	<b>Maria del Carmen González Cabal</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Estonia	1. 1. 1993	Wohlebengasse 9/12 A-1040 Vienna Austria	<b>Toomas Kukk</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia	-	Boothstrasse 20a D-12207 Berlin Germany	<b>Mulu Solomon Bezuneh</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: December 17, 2019
The Republic of the Philippines	1. 1. 1993	Donau City Strasse 11 (ARES Tower, 20 & 21 Floor) A-1220 Vienna Austria	<b>Maria Cleofe R. Navidad</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: February 13, 2019
The Republic of Finland	1. 1. 1993	Hellichova 1 118 00 Prague Czech Republic	<b>Jukka Uolevi Pesola</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The French Republic	1. 1. 1993	Hlavné námestie 7 812 83 Bratislava 1	<b>Christophe Léonzi</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of the Gambia	18. 8. 1995	Avenue F. D. Roosevelt 126 1050 Brussels Belgium	<b>Teneng Mba Jaitèh</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Ghana	-	Na Zatorce 89/6 160 00 Praha 6 – Bubeneč Czech Republic	<b>Virginia Hesse</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Georgia	25. 11. 1993	Michalská 9 811 01 Bratislava	<b>Revaz Gachechiladze</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Guatemala	15. 4. 1993	Prinz Eugen Strasse 18/1/ Top7 A-1040 Vienna Austria	<b>Antonio Roberto Castellanos López</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Guinea	16. 3. 1993	Jägerstrasse 67-69 DE-10117 Berlin Germany	<b>Mamadou Bouliwel Sow</b> <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
The Republic of Guinea-Bissau	-	Kronenstrasse 72 DE-10117 Berlin Germany	<b>Malam Djassi</b> <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
The Hellenic Republic	1. 1. 1993	Hlavné námestie 4 811 01 Bratislava 1	<b>Georgios Dimitriadis</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: December 17, 2019
The Kingdom of the Netherlands	1. 1. 1993	Fraňa Kráľa 5 811 05 Bratislava 1	<b>Hendrik-Cornelis van der Kwast</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Honduras		Cuxhavener Strasse 14 DE-10555 Berlin Germany	<b>Christa Castro Varela</b> <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
The Republic of Croatia	1. 1. 1993	Mišíkova 21 811 06 Bratislava 1	<b>Aleksandar Heina</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of India	1. 1. 1993	Dunajská 4 811 08 Bratislava	<b>Vanlalhuman</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>

Country	Start of diplomatic relations	Adress of embassy	In charge of embassy (LoC)
The Republic of Indonesia	1. 1. 1993	Brnianska 31 811 04 Bratislava 1	<b>Adiyatwidi Adiwoso Asmady</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Iraq	1. 1. 1993	Johannesgasse 26 (P.O.Box 322) 1010 Vienna Austria	<b>Baker Fattah Hussein</b> <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
The Islamic Republic of Iran	1. 1. 1993	Jauresgasse 9 A-1030 Vienna Austria	<b>Hamid Reza Madad</b> <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
Ireland	1. 1. 1993	Carlton Savoy Building Mostová 2 811 02 Bratislava	<b>Hildegard Ó Riain</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Iceland	1. 1. 1993	Naglergasse 2/3/8 A-1010 Vienna Austria	<b>Thórir Ibsen</b> <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
The State of Israel	1. 1. 1993	Slávičie údolie 106 811 02 Bratislava	<b>Boaz Modai</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: October 16, 2019
Jamaica	1. 1. 1993	Schmargendorfer Strasse 32 D-12159 Berlin Germany	<b>Margaret Ann Louise Jobson</b> <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
Japan	1. 1. 1993	Hlavné nám. 2 813 27 Bratislava	<b>Jun Shimmi</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Yemen	1. 1. 1993	Reisnerstrasse 18 – 20 1030 Vienna Austria	<b>Haytham Abdulmomen Shoja 'Aadin</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Hashemite Kingdom of Yordan	3. 3. 1993	Rennweg 17/4 A-1030 Vienna Austria	<b>Leena Al-Hadid</b> <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
The Republic of South Africa	1. 1. 1993	Sandgasse 33 A-1190 Vienna Austria	<b>Johnny Thabo Pitswane</b> <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
The Kingdom of Cambodia	-	Benjamin-Vogelsdorf Str. 2 D-13187 Berlin Germany	<b>Touch Sopharath</b> <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	<b>Heidi Alberta Hulan</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
		Carlton Savoy Building Mostová 2 811 02 Bratislava	<b>John von Kaufmann</b> <i>chargé d'affaires, Bratislava</i>
The State of Qatar	-	Schottenring 10/Top 7a 1010 Vienna Austria	<b>Abdulla Nasser Al-Harji</b> <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
The Republic of Kazakhstan	1. 1. 1993	Kancelária v Bratislave Gunduličova 6 811 05 Bratislava	<b>Roman Vassilenko</b> <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
The Republic of Kenya	1. 1. 1993	Andromeda Tower, 16th Floor Donau-City Strasse 6 1220 Vienna Austria	<b>Stella Mokaya Orina</b> <i>chargé d'affaires</i>

Country	Start of diplomatic relations	Adress of embassy	In charge of embassy (LoC)
The Kyrgyz Republic	1. 1. 1993	Invalidenstrasse 3/8 1030 Vienna Austria	<b>Bakyt Aliev</b> <i>č</i> <b>Žusupov</b> Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: December 17, 2019
The Republic of Colombia	1. 1. 1993	Stadiongasse 6-8/15 A-1010 Vienna Austria	<b>Miguel Camilo Ruiz Blanco</b> Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
The Republic of the Congo	30. 6. 1998	Wallstrasse 69 D – 10179 Berlin Germany	<b>Jacques Yvon Ndovhu</b> Ambassador Designated
The Democratic Republic of the Congo	18. 2. 1993	Soukenická 34/1765 110 00 Prague Czech republic	<b>Mibanga Ngala-Mulumr Wa Badidike Benoit-Labre</b> <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
The Republic of Korea	1. 1. 1993	Štúrova 16 811 02 Bratislava	<b>Byung Hwa Chung</b> Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
The Democratic People's Republic of Korea	1. 1. 1993	Na Větru 395/18 162 00 Prague Czech Republic	<b>Kim Pyong Il</b> Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
The Republic of Costa Rica	6. 10. 1993	Flussgasse 7 A-1020 Vienna Austria	<b>Herbert Daniel Espinoza Solano</b> Consul General, <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
The Republic of Cuba	1. 1. 1993	Somolického 1/A 811 05 Bratislava	<b>Yamila Sonia Pita Montes</b> Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
The State of Kuwait	1. 1. 1993	Lodná 2 811 02 Bratislava	<b>Essa Y. K. E. Alshamali</b> Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
The Lao People's Democratic Republic	-	Sommerhaidenweg 43 A-1180 Vienna Austria	<b>Sithong Chithhothinh</b> Ambassador Designated
The Kingdom of Lesotho	8. 5. 1995	Via Serchio 8 001 98 Rome Italy	<b>Lineo Irene Molise-Mabusela</b> Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
The Lebanese Republic	1. 1. 1993	Oppolzgasse 6/3 A-1010 Vienna Austria	<b>Ibrahim Assaf</b> Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Libya	1. 1. 1993	Révova 45 811 02 Bratislava	<b>Nasr A.M. Hasan</b> <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
The Republic of Lithuania	1. 1. 1993	Löwengasse 47/4 A-1030 Vienna Austria	<b>Donatas Kušlys</b> Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
The Republic of Latvia	1. 1. 1993	Stefan Esders Platz 4 A-1190 Vienna Austria	<b>Veronika Erte</b> Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg	1. 1. 1993	Sternwartestrasse 81 A-1180 Viedeň Austria	<b>Marc Ungeheuer</b> Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
The Republic of North Macedonia	1. 1. 1993	Kinderspitalgasse 5/2 A-1090 Vienna Austria	<b>Nenad Kolev</b> <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
The Republic of Madagascar	16. 2. 1996	Koursovoy Per. 5 119 034 Moscow Russian Federation	<b>Eloi A. Maxime Dovo</b> Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Hungary	1. 1. 1993	Štefánikova 1 811 05 Bratislava	<b>Tibor Pető</b> Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Malaysia	1. 1. 1993	Floridsdorfer Hauptstrasse 1-7 Florido Tower 24.fl. A-1210 Vienna Austria	<b>Dato ' Ganeson A/L Sivagurunathan</b> 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	<b>Michael Barth Kamphambe Nkhoma</b> <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
The Republic of Mali	-	Ambasciata del Mali Via Antonio Bosio, 2 00161 Roma/Italia	<b>Aly Coulibaly</b> <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
The Republic of Malta	1. 1. 1993	Opernring 5/1 1010 Vienna Austria	<b>Anthony Licari</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Kingdom of Morocco	1. 1. 1993	Hasenauerstrasse 57 A-1180 Vienna Austria	<b>Azzeddin Farhane</b> <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
The Islamic Republic of Mauritania	-	Kommandantenstrasse 80 D-10117 Berlin, Germany	<b>Mohamed Mahomud Ould Brahim Khilil</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Republic of the Union of Myanmar	-	Kneza Miloša 72 11000 Belehrad Serbia	<b>Myint Htun</b> <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
The Republic of Moldova	1. 1. 1993	Löwengasse 47/10 A-1030 Vienna Austria	<b>Victor Osipov</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Mongolia	1. 1. 1993	Na Marně 5 160 00 Prague Czech Republic	<b>Davaasambuu Uuganbayar</b> <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
The Republic of Namibia	9. 12. 1997	Zuckerandlgasse 2 A-1190 Vienna Austria	<b>Nada Kruger</b> <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
The Federal Republic of Germany	1. 1. 1993	Hviezdoslavovo nám. 10 813 03 Bratislava	<b>Joachim Bleicker</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Nepal	4. 3. 1994	Guerickestrasse 27 D-10587 Berlin Germany	<b>Ramesh Prasad Khanal</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Federal Republic of Nigeria	1. 1. 1993	Rennweg 25 A-1030 Vienna Austria	<b>Vivian Nwunaku Rose Okeke</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Republic of the Niger	-	Machnowerstraße 24 D-14165 Berlin Germany	
The Republic of Nicaragua	5. 1. 1993	Joachi-Karnatz-Alle 45 10557 Berlin Germany	<b>Tatiana Daniela García Silva</b> <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
The Kingdom of Norway	1. 1. 1993	Palisády 29 811 06 Bratislava	<b>Terje Theodor Nervik</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
New Zealand	1. 1. 1993	Mattiellistrasse 2-4/3 A-1040 Vienna Austria	<b>Nicole Jocelyn Robertson</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Sultanate of Oman	3. 3. 1993	Wahringer Strasse 2-4/24-25 A-1090 Vienna Austria	<b>Yousuf Ahmed Hamed Aljabri</b> <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
The Islamic Republic of Pakistan	1. 1. 1993	Hofzeile 13 A-1190 Vienna Austria	<b>Mansoor Ahmad Khan</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The State of Palestine	1. 1. 1993	Gorkého 3 811 01 Bratislava	<b>Attalla S. A. Qubia</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>

Country	Start of diplomatic relations	Adress of embassy	In charge of embassy (LoC)
The Republic of Panama	-	Goldschmiedgasse 10/403 1010 Vienna Austria	<b>Anabella Guardia de Rubinoff</b> <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
The Republic of Paraguay	8. 1. 1993	Prinz Eugen Strasse 18/1/7 A-1040 Vienna Austria	<b>Juan Francisco Facetti</b> <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
The Republic of Peru	1. 1. 1993	Mahlerstrasse 7/22 A-1010 Vienna Austria	<b>Eric Anderson Machado</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: May 21, 2019
The Republic of Poland	1. 1. 1993	Paulínyho 7 814 91 Bratislava	<b>Krzysztof Strzałka</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Portugal	1. 1. 1993	Ventúrska 16 811 01 Bratislava	<b>Ana Maria Coelho Ribeiro Da Silva</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Austria	1. 1. 1993	Astoria Palace Hodžovo námestie 1/A 811 06 Bratislava	<b>Margit Bruck-Friedrich</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Romania	1. 1. 1993	Fraňa Kráľa 11 811 05 Bratislava	<b>Steluta Arhire</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Russian Federation	1. 1. 1993	Godrova 4 811 06 Bratislava 1	<b>Alexei Leonidovič Fedotov</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Rwandese Republic	-	Jägerstrasse 67-69 D-10117 Berlin Germany	<b>Igor Cesar</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: May 21, 2019
The Republic of El Salvador	1. 1. 1993	Prinz Eugen Strasse 72/2/1 A-1040 Vienna Austria	<b>Ramiro Recinos Trejo</b> <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
The Republic of San Marino	1. 1. 1993	Palazzo Begni, Contrada Omerelli, 31 47890 San Marino Italy	<b>Dario Galassi</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	16. 6. 1995	Formanekgasse 38 A-1190 Vienna Austria	<b>Khalid bin Ibrahim Al-Jindan</b> <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
The Republic of Senegal	-	Klingelhöferstrasse 5 Postfach 610420 D-10785 Berlin Germany	
The Republic of Seychelles	-	51, Avenue Mozart 75016 Paris France	
The Republic of Sierra Leone	-	Rublevskoe šosse, 26/1, of. 58-59 121615 Moscow Russian Federation	<b>John Bobor Laggah</b> <i>Consul</i>
The Republic of Singapore	12. 2. 1993	MFA, Tanglin 248163 Singapore	<b>Chay Wai Chuen</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Slovenia	1. 1. 1993	Ventúrska 5 813 15 Bratislava 1	<b>Gregor Kozovinc</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Federal Republic of Somalia	-	Simferopolsky Bulvar 7a-145 117 556 Moscow, Russian Federation	<b>Mohamed Mahmoud Handule</b> <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
The United Arab Emirates	3. 1. 1993	Chimanistrasse 36 A-1190 Vienna Austria	<b>Ahmed Hasan Alshehhi</b> <i>chargé d'affaires</i>

Country	Start of diplomatic relations	Adress of embassy	In charge of embassy (LoC)
The United kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	1. 1. 1993	Panská 16 811 01 Bratislava 1	<b>Andrew Garth</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The United States of America	1. 1. 1993	Hviezdoslavovo námestie 4 811 02 Bratislava 1	<b>Bridget Ann Brink</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: August 20, 2019
The United Mexican States	1. 10. 1993	Renngasse 5 A-1010 Vienna Austria	<b>Alicia Buenostro Massieu</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Serbia	1. 1. 1993	Búdkova 38 811 04 Bratislava 1	<b>Momčilo Babić</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Democratic Socialist republic of Sri Lanka	15. 2. 1993	Weyringergasse, 33-35 A-1040 Vienna Austria	<b>Saroja Sirisena</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: December 17, 2019
The Republic of the Sudan	27. 7. 1993	Reisnerstrasse 29/5 A-1030 Vienna Austria	<b>Mohamed H. H. Zaroung</b>
The Holy See	1. 1. 1993	Nekrasovova 17 811 04 Bratislava 1	<b>Mons. Giacomo Guido Ottonello</b> <i>Apostolic Nuncio</i>
The Kingdom of Eswatini	-	Avenue Winston Churchill 188 1180 Brussels Belgium	
The Syrian Arab Republic	1. 1. 1993	Daffingerstrasse 4 A-1030 Vienna Austria	<b>Bassam Ahmad Nazim Al Sabbagh</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Kingdom Of Spain	1. 1. 1993	Prepoštská 10 811 01 Bratislava 1	<b>Luis Belzuz De Los Ríos</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Switzerland	1. 1. 1993	Michalská 12 811 06 Bratislava 1	<b>Alexander Hoffer</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Kingdom of Sweden	1. 1. 1993	Liechtensteinstrasse 51 A-1090 Vienna Austria	<b>Mikaela Kumlin Granit</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Tajikistan	-	Hutweidengasse 47 1190 Vienna Austria	<b>Idibek Kalandar</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: February 13, 2019
The Republic of Italy	1. 1. 1993	Palisády 49 811 06 Bratislava	<b>Gabriele Meucci</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The United Republic of Tanzania	1. 1. 1993	Eschenallee 11 D-14050 Berlin Germany	<b>Abdallah Saleh Possi</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: May 21, 2019
The Republic of Togo	-	Grabbeallee 43 13156 Berlin Germany	<b>Komi Bayedze Dagoh</b> <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
The Kingdom of Thailand	1. 1. 1993	Cottagegasse 48 A-1180 Vienna Austria	<b>Morakot Sriswasdi</b> <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
The Republic of Tunisia	1. 1. 1993	Nárcisz Utca 36 Budapest Hungary	<b>Samia Ilhem Ammar</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: February 13, 2019
The Republic of Turkey	1. 1. 1993	Holubyho 11 811 03 Bratislava 1	<b>Hatice Ashgül Üğdül</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Turkmenistan	1. 1. 1993	Argentinerstrasse 22/II/EG A-1040 Vienna Austria	<b>Silapberdi Ashirgeldivevich Nurberdiyev</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>

Country	Start of diplomatic relations	Adress of embassy	In charge of embassy (LoC)
Ukraine	1. 1. 1993	Radvanská 35 811 01 Bratislava 1	<b>Jurij Muška</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Uganda	-	Axel-Springer Str. 54° C-10117 Berlin Germany	<b>Mercel Robert Tibaleka</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Eastern Republic of Uruguay	-	Mahlerstrasse 11/2/2 A-1010 Vienna Austria	<b>Javier Giz</b> <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
The Republic of Uzbekistan	20. 1. 1993	Pötzleinsdorfer Strasse 49 A-1180 Vienna Austria	<b>Rustamdjan Khakimov</b> <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela	1. 1. 1993	Prinz Eugen Strasse 72/1/1.1 A-1040 Vienna Austria	<b>Dulfa Dalila Hernández Medina</b> <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
The Socialist Republic of Vietnam	1. 1. 1993	Dunajská 15 811 08 Bratislava	<b>Minh Trong Duong</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Zambia	5. 5. 1993	Axel-Springer Strasse 54 A D-10117 Berlin Germany	<b>Anthony L. Mukwita</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Zimbabwe	3. 3. 1993	Chemin William Barbery 27 1292 Chambésy Geneva Switzerland	<b>Taonga Mushayavanhu</b> <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	<b>Alfred Prinz von Schönburg-Hartenstein</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>

## LIST OF CONSULATES IN THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

### THE HEADS OF THE CONSULATES AS OF JANUARY 2020

State	Address of the consulate in the SR	Consul
The Republic of Azerbaijan	Klobučnícka 4 811 01 Bratislava	<b>Džalal Gasymov</b> Honorary Consul
The Republic of Albania	Mostná 56 949 01 Nitra	<b>Valér Husarovič</b> Honorary Consul
The Republic of Armenia	Ventúrska 1 811 01 Bratislava	<b>Bagrat Hakobyan</b> Honorary Consul
The Commonwealth of the Bahamas	Ventúrska 10 811 01 Bratislava	<b>Michal Lazar</b> Honorary Consul
The People's Republic of Bangladesh	Pod záhradami 41 841 01 Bratislava	<b>Štefan Petkanič</b> Honorary Consul
The Kingdom of Belgium	Moskovská cesta 10/B 040 11 Košice	<b>Dany R. E. Rottiers</b> Honorary Consul
The Kingdom of Belgium	Moskovská 13 811 08 Bratislava	<b>Bart Waterloos</b> Honorary Consul
Belize	Krajná ulica 56C 821 04 Bratislava	<b>Miroslav Strečanský</b> Honorary Consul
The Republic of Belarus	Osadská 679/15 028 01 Trstená	<b>Marián Murín</b> Honorary Consul
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Tureň 385 903 01 Tureň	<b>Munir Pašagić</b> Honorary Consul
Montenegro	Zelená 2 811 01 Bratislava	<b>Rudolf Autner</b> Honorary Consul
The Republic of Chile	Kízává 31/C 831 01 Bratislava	<b>Jaroslav Šoltys</b> Honorary Consul
The Kingdom of Denmark	Bajkalská 5/A 831 03 Bratislava	<b>Michal Lörincz</b> Honorary General Consul
The Republic of Estonia	Drieňová 3 821 01 Bratislava	<b>Peter Pochaba</b> Honorary Consul
The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia	Bojnická 3 831 04 Bratislava	<b>Štefan Rosina</b> Honorary Consul
The Republic of Philippines	Cesta na Senec 15725/24 830 06 Bratislava	<b>Pavol Konštiak</b> Honorary General Consul
French Republic	Hlavná 104, 040 01 Košice	<b>David Mortreux</b> Honorary Consul

<b>State</b>	<b>Address of the consulate in the SR</b>	<b>Consul</b>
The Republic of Finland	Moyzesova 5 811 05 Bratislava	<b>Karol Kállay</b> Honorary General Consul
The Republic of Finland	Žriedlová 12-14, 040 01 Košice	<b>Rastislav Puchala</b> Honorary Consul
Georgia	Hlavná 24 040 01 Košice	<b>Franco Pigozzi</b> Honorary Consul
Georgia	Orlové 116 017 01 Považská Bystrica	<b>Nodari Giorgadze</b> Honorary Consul
The Republic of Ghana	Palisády 31 811 06 Bratislava	<b>James Arthur</b> Honorary Consul
The Republic of Guatemala		
Hellenic Republic	Hlavná 20 040 01 Košice	<b>Liberios Vokorokos</b> Honorary Consul
Hungary	Hlavná 67 040 01 Košice	<b>Emese Diána Gris</b> Honorary Consule
The Kingdom of The Netherlands	Košická 44 P.O. Box 21 080 01 Prešov	<b>Matúš Murajda</b> Honorary Consul
The Republic of Iceland	Palisády 39 811 06 Bratislava	<b>Otto Halás</b> Honorary Consul
The State of Israel	Garbiarska 5 040 01 Košice	<b>Peter Frajt</b> Honorary Consul
Jamaica	Porubského 2 811 06 Bratislava	<b>Marián Valko</b> Honorary Consul
The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan	Račianska 96 831 02 Bratislava	<b>Jaroslav Rebej</b> Honorary Consul
The Republic of Cabo Verde	Dvořákovo nábřežie 8/A 81102 Bratislava	<b>Štefan Czucz</b> Honorary Consul
The Republic of South Africa	Fraňa Kráľa 1 851 02 Bratislava	<b>Milan Lopašovský</b> Honorary Consul
The Republic of Korea	Dolný val 5 010 01 Žilina	<b>Oldřich Kovář</b> Honorary Consul
The Kyrgyz Republic	Miletičova 1 821 08 Bratislava	<b>Tibor Podoba</b> Honorary Consul
The Republic of Colombia	AC Diplomat Palisády 29/ A 811 06 Bratislava	<b>Anton Siekel</b> Honorary Consul
The Republic of Costa Rica	Palisády 56 811 06 Bratislava	<b>Tomáš Chrenek</b> Honorary Consul
The Lao People's Democratic Republic	Panská ulica 27 811 01 Bratislava	<b>Bounthong Bounthong</b> Honorary Consul
The Republic of Lithuania	Za záhradami 16 900 28 Zálesie	<b>Marián Meško</b> Honorary Consul
The Republic of Latvia	Krmanova 1 040 01 Košice	<b>Miroslav Repka</b> Honorary Consul
The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg	Prievozska 4/A 821 09 Bratislava	<b>Peter Kriško</b> Honorary Consul
Malaysia	Jaškova 2 821 03 Bratislava	<b>Igor Junas</b> Honorary Consul
The Republic of Madagascar	V záhradách 4 811 02 Bratislava	<b>Peter Brudňák</b> Honorary Consul
The Republic of Maldives	Lazaretská 29 811 09 Bratislava	<b>Andrej Matko</b> Honorary Consul
The Republic of Mali	Mikulášska 3 - 5 811 02 Bratislava	<b>Eugen Horváth</b> Honorary Consul

<b>State</b>	<b>Address of the consulate in the SR</b>	<b>Consul</b>
The Republic of Malta	Palisády 33 811 06 Bratislava	<b>Martin Hantabál</b> Honorary Consul
The Kingdom of Morocco	Krajná 86 821 04 Bratislava	<b>Ľubomír Šídala</b> Honorary Consul
The Republic of Moldova	Zámocká 16 811 01 Bratislava	<b>Antonio Parziale</b> Honorary Consul
The Republic of Moldova	Hlavná 81 040 11 Košice	<b>Ján Varga</b> Honorary Consul
The Principality of Monaco	Mostová 2 811 02 Bratislava	<b>Miroslav Výboh</b> Honorary Consul
Mongolia	Národná trieda 56 040 01 Košice	<b>Peter Slávik</b> Honorary Consul
The Republic of Namibia	Zadunajská cesta 8 851 01 Bratislava	<b>Karol Biermann</b> Honorary Consul
The Federal Republic of Germany	Timonova 27 040 01 Košice	<b>Juraj Banský</b> Honorary Consul
The Federal Republic of Germany	Priemyselná 14 010 01 Žilina	<b>Peter Lazar</b> Honorary Consul
New Zealand	Dvořákovo nábrežie 10 811 02 Bratislava	<b>Peter Korbačka</b> Honorary Consul
The Sultanate of Oman	Sasinkova 12 811 08 Bratislava	<b>Oszkár Világi</b> Honorary Consul
The Republic of Paraguay	Rigeleho 1 811 02 Bratislava	<b>Martin Šamaj</b> Honorary Consul
The Republic of Peru	Tuhovská 5 831 07 Bratislava	<b>Andrej Glatz</b> Honorary Consul
The Republic of Poland	Nám. osloboditeľov 1 031 01 Liptovský Mikuláš	<b>Tadeusz Frackowiak</b> Honorary Consul
Romania	Kapitulská 1 974 01 Banská Bystrica	<b>Ladislav Rehák</b> Honorary Consul
Romania	Nám.sv. Mikuláša 2 064 01 Stará Ľubovňa	<b>Marián Gurega</b> Honorary Consul
Russian federation	Komenského 3 974 01 Banská Bystrica	<b>Juraj Koval</b> Honorary Consul
The Republic of El Salvador	Záhradnícka 62 82108 Bratislava	<b>Igor Moravčík</b> Honorary Consul
The Republic of Senegal	Kálov 655/10 010 01 Žilina	<b>Souleymane Seck</b> Honorary Consul
The Republic of Seychelles	Beblavého 4 811 01 Bratislava	<b>Andrej Hryc</b> Honorary Consul
The Republic of Seychelles	Pod Strelnicou 161/1 040 18 Nižná Hutka	<b>Wanda Adamík Hrycová</b> Honorary Consul
The Republic of Sierra Leone	Partizánska 16 811 03 Bratislava	<b>Branislav Hronec</b> Honorary General Consul
The United Mexican States	Rigeleho 1 811 02 Bratislava	<b>Václav Míla</b> Honorary Consul
The Republic of Serbia	Jesenského 12 040 01 Košice	<b>Eva Dekanovská</b> Honorary Consul
The Republic of Serbia	Pavla Mudroňa 12 036 01 Martin	<b>Mojmír Vrlík</b> Honorary Consul
The Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka	Mostová 2 811 02 Bratislava	<b>Peter Gabalec</b> Honorary Consul
The Kingdom of Spain	Hutnícka 1 040 01 Košice	<b>Daniel Lučkaníč</b> Honorary Consul

<b>State</b>	<b>Address of the consulate in the SR</b>	<b>Consul</b>
Switzerland	Vajanského 10 080 01 Prešov	<b>Helena Virčíková</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Kingdom of Sweden	Tomášikova 30 821 01 Bratislava	<b>Vladimír Kestler</b> <i>Honorary General Consul</i>
The Kingdom of Thailand	Viedenská cesta 3-7 851 01 Bratislava	<b>Alexander Rozin</b> <i>Honorary General Consul</i>
The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago	Nobelova 34 831 02 Bratislava	<b>Roman Danda</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Turkey	Kuzmányho 16 974 01 Banská Bystrica	<b>Vladimír Soták</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Turkey	Mlynská ulica 2 040 01 Košice	<b>Štefan Melník</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Tunisia	P. Mudroňa 5 010 01 Žilina	<b>Patrik Rapšik</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Uganda	Ružová dolina 25 821 09 Bratislava	<b>Andrej Brna</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Ukraine	Budovateľská 29 093 01 Vranov nad Topľou	<b>Stanislav Obický</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Eastern Republic of Uruguay	Trnkova 46 851 10 Bratislava	<b>Milan Beniak</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Uzbekistan	Hotel Park Inn by Radisson Danube Rybné námestie 1 811 02 Bratislava	<b>Ľudovít Černák</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Socialist Republic of Vietnam	Hlavná 70 040 01 Košice	<b>Rastislav Sedmák</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>

## 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 JANUARY 2020

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	<b>Peter Holásek</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Abu Dhabi	The United Arab Emirates	Al Mataf Street No. 16, Villa 2 Abu Dhabi United Arab Emirates	<b>Michal Kováč</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</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	<b>Drahomír Štos</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Ankara	Turkey	Atatürk Bulvarı 245 06692 Ankara Turkey	<b>Anna Tureničová</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Athens	The Hellenic Republic (Greece)	Georgiou Saferi 4, Palaio Psychiko 154 52 Athens Greece	<b>Iveta Hricová</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Baku	Azerbaijan	Azerbaijan 90A Nizami, Landmark III, 1010, Baku, Azerbaijan	<b>Milan Lajčiak</b> <i>Charge d' Affaires a. p. Head of the Mission</i>
Bangkok	Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar	9-th Floor, South Sathorn Road 25 Bangkok 10 120 The Kingdom of Thailand	<b>Stanislav Opiela</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Beijing	China, Mongolia	Ritan Lu, Jianguomen Wai, 100 600 Beijing The People's Republic of China	<b>Dušan Bella</b> <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
Beirut	Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Syria	Weavers Center, 14th FL. Clemenseau Street, Beirut Lebanon	<b>Lubomír Macko</b> <i>Head of the Mission</i>
Belgrade	Serbia	Bulevar umetnosti 18 110 70 Novi Beograd Serbia	<b>Fedor Rosocha</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Berlin	Germany	Hildebrandstraße 25 10785 Berlin Germany	<b>Maroš Jakubócy</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>

<b>Embassy</b>	<b>Accredited</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Head of the Embassy</b>
Bern	Switzerland, Liechtenstein	Thunstrasse 63 3074 Muri b. Bern, Switzerland	<b>Andrea Elscheková Matisová</b> <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	<b>Milan Zachar</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Brussels	Belgium, Luxemburg	Avenue Moliere 195 1050 Brusel Belgium	<b>Peter Kormúth</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Budapest	Hungary	Stefánia út 22 – 24. 1143 Budapest XIV Hungary	<b>Pavol Hamžík</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Buenos Aires	Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay	Figuroa Alcorta 3240 Buenos Aires Argentina	<b>Rastislav Hindický</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Bucharest	Romania	Strada Otetari 020 977 Bucuresti Romania	<b>Karol Mistrík</b> <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	<b>Valér Franko</b> <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	<b>Tomáš Ferko</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Chisinau	Moldova	A. Sciuseva 101 Chisinau Moldova	<b>Dušan Dacho</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Copenhagen	Denmark	Vesterled 26 – 28 2100 Copenhagen Denmark	<b>Miroslav Wlachovský</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Delhi	India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Bhutan	50-M, Niti Marg, Chanakyapuri 110021 New Delhi India	<b>Ivan Lančarič</b> <i>Head of the Mission</i>
Dublin	Ireland	80 Merrion Square South Dublin 2 Ireland	<b>Igor Pokojný</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Hague	Netherlands	Parkweg 1 2585 Den Haag Netherlands	<b>Juraj Macháč</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Hanoi	Vietnam	12 Ba Huyen Thanh Quan Ba Dinh District Hanoi Vietnam	<b>Jozef Cibula</b> <i>Charge d'Affaires a. p Head of the Mission</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	<b>Roman Hošťák</b> <i>Head of the Mission</i>
Helsinki	Finland, Estonia	Vähäniityntie 5 00570 Helsinki Finland	<b>Slavomíra Mašurová</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Jakarta	Brunei, East Timor, Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore	Jalan Profesor Mohammad Yamin 29 Jakarta 103 10 Indonesia	<b>Jaroslav Chlebo</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>

<b>Embassy</b>	<b>Accredited</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Head of the Embassy</b>
Kuwait	Kuwait, Bahrein, Quatar	Block No. 2, Street No. 16 Villa No. 22 131 23 Area Surra Kuwait	<b>Igor Hajdušek</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Kyiv	Ukraine	Jaroslavov val 34 019 01 Kyiv Ukraine	<b>Marek Šafin</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Lisbon	Portugal	Avenida da Liberdade 200 5 Esq., 1250-147 Lisbon Portugal	<b>Oldřich Hlaváček</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
London	The United Kingdom	25, Kensington Palace Gardens W8 4QY London The United Kingdom	<b>Lubomír Rehák</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Ljubljana	Slovenia	Bleiweisova 4 1000 Ljubljana Slovenia	<b>Eva Ponomarenková</b> <i>Head of the Mission</i>
Madrid	Spain, Andorra, Morocco	C/Pinar, 20 28006 Madrid Spain	<b>Jaroslav Blaško</b> <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	<b>Terézia Šajgaliková</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Minsk	Belarus	Volodarskogo 6 220 030, Minsk Belarus	<b>Jozef Migaš</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Moscow	Russian Federation	J. Fučika 17/19 115 127 Moscow Russian Federation	<b>Peter Priputen</b> <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	<b>František Dlhopoček</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Nicosia	Cyprus	Kalamatas Street No. 4 Strovolos, 2002 Nicosia, Cyprus	<b>Ján Škoda</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Nur-Sultan	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan	D.A Kunajeva 1, C 11 010 000, Astana Kazakhstan	<b>Milan Kollár</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Oslo	Norway, Iceland	Thomas Hefteyes gate 24 N-0244 Oslo Norway	<b>Denisa Frelichová</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Ottawa	Canada	50 Rideau Terrace K1M 2A1, Ottawa, Ontario Canada	<b>Vít Koziak</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Paris	France, Monaco, Algeria	125 rue du Ranelagh 75016 Paris France	<b>Igor Slobodník</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Podgorica	Montenegro	Crnogorskih Serdara 5 81000 Podgorica Montenegro	<b>Boris Gandel</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Prague	Czech Republic	Pelléova 12 160 00 Prague Czech Republic	<b>Peter Weiss</b> <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	<b>Monika Tomašovičová</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>

<b>Embassy</b>	<b>Accredited</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Head of the Embassy</b>
Prishtina	Serbia (Kosovo)	Selim Berisha č. 11, Dragodan, 10000 Prishtina Kosovo, Serbia	<b>Lubomír Batáry</b> <i>Head of the branch office</i>
Riga	Latvia, Lithuania	Smišū iela 8 1050 Riga Latvia	<b>Ladislav Babčan</b> <i>Head of the Mission</i>
Rome	Italy, Malta, San Marino	Via dei Colli della Farnesina 144VI/A00194 Rome Italy	<b>Ján Soth</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Sarajevo	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Trnovska 6 710 00 Sarajevo Bosnia and Herzegovina	<b>Martin Kačo</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Skopje	FYROM (Macedonia)	Budimpeštanska 39 1000 Skopje FYROM	<b>Henrik Markuš</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Sofia	Bulgaria	Blv. Janko Sakazov 9 1504 Sofia Bulgaria	<b>Manuel Korček</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Seoul	South Korea, North Korea	28, 10gil Hannamdae-ro, Yongsan-gu Seoul South Korea	<b>Ján Kuderjavý</b> <i>Head of the Mission</i>
Stockholm	Sweden	Arsenalsgatan 2/3 TR, Box 7183 10 388, Stockholm Sweden	<b>Martina Balunová</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Taipei (Slovak economic and cultural office)	Republic of China (Taiwan)	333 Keelung Road, Section 1 110 Taipei Taiwan	<b>Martin Podstavek</b> <i>Head of the Mission</i>
Tashkent	Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan	Kičik Bešjogoč 38 100070 Tashkent Uzbekistan	<b>Ján Bóry</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Tehran	Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan	72 Moghadassi St., Niavaran St., 1971836199, P.O.Box 19395-6341, Tehran Iran	<b>Lubomír Golian</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Tel Aviv	Israel, Palestine	Jabotinsky 37 P.O. Box 6459 Tel Aviv Israel	<b>Igor Maukš</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Tirana	Albania	Rruga Skenderbej 8 Tirana Albania	<b>Peter Spišiak</b> <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	<b>Pavel Vízdal</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Tokyo	Japan, Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Palau	2-11-33, Moto-Azabu, Minato-ku 106-0046 Tokyo Japan	<b>Marián Tomášik</b> <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	<b>Marek Lisánsky</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Vienna	Austria	Armbrustergasse 24 A-1190 Vienna Austria	<b>Peter Mišík</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Warsaw	Poland	Litewska 6 00-581 Warsaw Poland	<b>Juraj Droba</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>

Embassy	Accredited	Address	Head of the Embassy
Washington	USA	3523 International Court, NW 20008 Washington D.C. USA	<b>Ivan Korčok</b> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Zagreb	Croatia	Prilaz Gjure Deželica 10 10000 Zagreb Croatia	<b>Peter Susko</b> <i>Ambassador</i>
Yerevan	Armenia		<b>Miroslav Hacek</b> <i>Charge d'Affaires a. p. Head of the Mission</i>

## PERMANENT MISSIONS

Permanent mission	Address	Head of the Mission
PM International Organizations Vienna	Blaastraße 34 A-1190 Vienna Austria	<b>Radomír Boháč</b>
PM EU Brussels	Avenue de Cortenbergh 107 1000 Brussels Belgium	<b>Peter Javorčík</b>
PM NATO Brussels	Boulevard Leopold III NATO HQ 1110 Brussels Belgium	<b>Radovan Javorčík</b>
PM OECD Paris	28, Avenue d'Eylau 750 16 Paris France	<b>Ingrid Brocková</b>
PM UN New York	801 Second Avenue 10017 New York USA	<b>Michal Mlynář</b>
PM UN Geneva	9, Chemin de l'Ancienne Route 1218 Grand Saconnex Switzerland	<b>Juraj Podhorský</b>
PM Council of Europe Strasbourg	1 Rue Ehrmann 67000 Strasbourg France	<b>Marek Ěstok</b>
PM UNESCO Paris	1, rue Miollis 757 32, Paris France	<b>Igor Grexa</b>

## CONSULATES GENERAL

State	Address	Consul Genral
The People's Republic of China	1375 Huaihai Central Road 200031 Shanghai	<b>Ivana Vala Magátová</b>
Hungary	Derkovits sor 7 5600 Békéscsaba	<b>Emil Kuchár</b>
Poland	Św. Tomasza 34 31 027 Cracow	<b>Tomáš Kašaj</b>
Russian Federation	Orbeli č. 21/2 194 223 Saint Petersburg	<b>Igor Derco</b>
USA	801 Second Avenue, 12th Floor New York, N.Y. 10017	<b>Ladislava Begeč</b>

Germany	Vollmannstrasse 25d 819 25 Munich	<b>František Zemanovič</b>
Turkey	3. Levent Bambu Sokak No: 6 343 30 Istanbul	<b>Veronika Lombardini</b>
Ukraine	Lokoty 4 880 00 Uzhhorod	<b>Miroslav Mojžita</b>

## SLOVAK INSTITUTES

<b>Name</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Head</b>
Slovak Institute Berlin	Hildebrandstr. 25 10785 Berlin Germany	<b>Ivo Hanuš</b>
Slovak Institute Budapest	Rákóczi út. 15 H-1088 Budapest Hungary	<b>Ildiko Siposová</b>
Slovak Institute Moscow	Ul. 2 Brestská 27 125-056 Moscow Russia	<b>Ján Šmihula</b>
Slovak Institute Paris	125 Rue de Ranelagh F-75016 Paris France	<b>Jakub Urik</b>
Slovak Institute Prague	Nám. Republiky 1037/3 110 00 Praha 1 Czech Republic	<b>Vladimír Valovič</b>
Slovak Institute Rome	Via dei Colli della Farnesina 144 00135 Rome Italy	<b>Lubica Mikušová</b>
Slovak Institute Warsaw	Krzywe Kolo 12/14a PL-00 270 Warsaw Poland	<b>Adrián Kromka</b>
Slovak Institute Vienna	Wipplingerstrasse 24 -26 A-1010 Vienna Austria	<b>Igor Skoček</b>

## LIST OF CONSULATES OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC HEADED BY THE HONORARY CONSULS

THE HEADS OF THE CONSULATES AS OF JANUARY 2020

State	Consulate	Consul
Albania	Tirana	<b>Faik Dizdarii</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Argentina	La Plata	<b>Eduardo Kabát</b> <i>Honorary General Consul</i>
Armenia	Yerevan	<b>Gagik Vladimirovič Martirosian</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Australia	Brisbane	<b>Michal Horvath</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Australia	Melbourne	<b>Eugénia Mocnay</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Australia	Perth	<b>Pavol Faix</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Austria	St. Pölten	<b>Veit Schmid-Schmidfelden</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Austria	Innsbruck	<b>Jurgen Bodenser</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Austria	Linz	<b>Harald Papesch</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Austria	Salzburg	<b>Gerald Hubner</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Austria	Eisenstadt	<b>Alfred Tombor</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Austria	Graz	<b>Friedrich Wolfgang Sperl</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Bangladesh	Dhaka	<b>Miran Ali</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Belgium	Antwerp	<b>Gunnar Riebs</b> <i>Honorary Consul General</i>
Belgium	Gent	<b>Arnold Vanhaecke</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Belgium	Mons	<b>Peter De Nil</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Belarus	Brest	<b>Ivan Michailovič Kozič</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>

<b>State</b>	<b>Consulate</b>	<b>Consul</b>
Belarus	Vitebsk	<b>Alexej Nikolajevič Syčov</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Bolivia	La Paz	<b>Hernán Guido Vera Ruiz</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Medjugorje	<b>Rajko Zelenika</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Brazil	Belo Horizonte	<b>Renato Werner Victor de Queiroz</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Brazil	Joinville	<b>Ernesto Heinzelmann</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Brazil	Recife	<b>João Alixandre Neto</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Brazil	Rio de Janeiro	<b>Mohamad Façal Mohamad Said Hammoud</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Bulgaria	Varna	<b>Edita Blagoevova</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Comoros	Moroni	<b>Mohamed Zamine Sondarjee</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Congo	Kinshasa	<b>Ali Reza Rawji</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Czech Republic	Brno	<b>Jaroslav Weigl</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Croatia	Osijek	<b>Ivan Komak</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Croatia	Split	<b>Goran Morović</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Chile	Santiago	<b>Paul Nador</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
China	Hong Kong	<b>Willy Lin</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Cyprus	Limassol	<b>Angelos Gregoriades</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Denmark	Aarhus	<b>Claus Jorgen Sogaard Poulsen</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Egypt	Alexandria	<b>Mohamed Moustafa el Naggar</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Estonia	Tallinn	<b>Even Tudeberg</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Ethiopia	Addis Abeba	<b>Feleke Bekele Safo</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Philippines	Cebu City	<b>Antonio N. Chiu</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Finland	Teerijärvi	<b>Mikael Ahlbäck</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Finland	Tampere	<b>Harri Tapio Airaksinen</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
France	Grenoble	<b>Menyhért Kocsis</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
France	Lille	<b>Alain Bar</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
France	Marseille	<b>Marc-André Distanti</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Ghana	Akkra	<b>Nii Kwansa Allan Codjoe</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>

<b>State</b>	<b>Consulate</b>	<b>Consul</b>
Greece	Chania	<b>Stavros Paterakis</b> Honorary Consul
Greece	Thessaloniki	<b>Konstantinos Mavridis</b> Honorary Consul
Greece	Patras	<b>Phaedon Couniniotis</b> Honorary Consul
Greece	Pireus	<b>Michael Bodouroglou</b> Honorary Consul
Georgia	Tbilisi	<b>Besarion Kvartskhava</b> Honorary Consul
Germany	Leipzig	<b>Albrecht Heinz Tintelnot</b> Honorary Consul
Germany	Bad Homburg	<b>Imrich Donath</b> Honorary Consul
Germany	Hamburg	<b>Michael Stein</b> Honorary Consul
Germany	Hildesheim	<b>Dirk Bettels</b> Honorary Consul
Germany	Stuttgart	<b>Cristoph Goeser</b> Honorary Consul
Guatemala	Guatemala	<b>Mario Fernando Montúfara Rodrigues</b> Honorary Consul
Guinea	Conakry	<b>Boubakar Lombonna Diallo</b> Honorary Consul
Haiti	Port-au-Prince	<b>Claude Martin jr.</b> Honorary Consul
Netherlands	Eindhoven	<b>Gerardus Hendrik Meulesteen</b> Honorary Consul
Netherlands	Groningen	<b>Denisa Kasová</b> Honorary Consul
India	Kolkata	<b>Patra Sadhan Bose</b> Honorary Consul
India	Bangalore	<b>Chiriankandath Joseph Roy</b> Honorary Consul
India	Mumbai	<b>Amit Choksey</b> Honorary Consul
Indonesia	Denpasar	<b>Jürgen Schreiber</b> Honorary Consul
Ireland	Galway	<b>Lorraine Higgins</b> Honorary Consul
Iceland	Reykjavík	<b>Runólfur Oddsson</b> Honorary Consul
Israel	Haifa	<b>Josef Pickel</b> Honorary Consul
Israel	Ha Sharon	<b>Karol Nathan Steiner</b> Honorary Consul General
Israel	Jerusalem	<b>Martin Rodan</b> Honorary Consul
Italy	Forli	<b>Alvaro Ravaglioli</b> Honorary Consul
Italy	Milan	<b>Luiggi Cuzzolin</b> Honorary Consul
Italy	Napoli	<b>Stefania Ginfatti</b> Honorary Consul

<b>State</b>	<b>Consulate</b>	<b>Consul</b>
Italy	Trieste	<b>Miljan Todorovič</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Italy	Florence	<b>Massimo Sani</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Italy	Torino	<b>Giuseppe Pellegrino</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Ivory Coast	Abidjan	<b>Rami Omais</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Jamaica	Kingston	<b>Christopher Richard Issa</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Japan	Osaka	<b>Shiro Murai</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Japan	Kirishima	<b>Masahiro Yamamoto</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Japan	Utsunomiya	<b>Eichii Ishikawa</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Yemen	Sana'a	<b>Adel Mohamed Al Huraibi</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Jordan	Amman	<b>Khaldun A. Abuhassan</b> <i>Honorary General Consul</i>
South Africa	Cape Town	<b>Geoffrey Leighton Ashmead</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
South Africa	Johannesburg	<b>Juraj Michlo</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Cameroon	Yaoundé	<b>Mohamadou Salihou</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Canada	Calgary	<b>Eva Hadzima</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Canada	Montreal	<b>Dezider Michaletz</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Canada	Vancouver	<b>Pavol Hollosy</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Canada	Toronto	<b>Michael Martinček</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Kazakhstan	Almaty	<b>Marat Džachanovič Sabalakov</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Kazakhstan	Karaganda	<b>Alexej Petrovič Neřjodov</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Kenya	Mombasa	<b>Christoph Modigell</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Kyrgyzstan	Bishkek	<b>Igor Konstantinovič Gusarov</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
South Korea	Busan	<b>Myung-Hwan Oh</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
South Korea	Soul	<b>Nan Se Gum</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Laos	Vientiane	<b>Vongnam Vongvilay</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Lebanon	Beirut	<b>Samir Doumet</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Liechtenstein	Vaduz	<b>Fabian Frick</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Macedonia	Skopje	<b>Vlade Stojanovski</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>

<b>State</b>	<b>Consulate</b>	<b>Consul</b>
Madagaskar	Antananarivo	<b>Ismael Danilhoussen</b> Honorary Consul
Malaysia	Kota Kinabalu	<b>Khen Thau Wong</b> Honorary Consul
Malaysia	Kuala Lumpur	<b>Tan Sri Tee Keat Ong</b> Honorary Consul
Malawi	Blantyre	<b>Salim David Babu</b> Honorary Consul
Malta	Valletta	<b>Godwin Edvard Bencini</b> Honorary Consul General
Monaco	Monaco	<b>Tatiana Paracková</b> Honorary Consul
Morocco	Casablanca	<b>Kamil Ouzzani Touhamy</b> Honorary Consul
Mauritius	Port Louis	<b>Yatemani Gujadhur</b> Honorary Consul
Mexico	Cancún	<b>Francisco Edmundo Lechón Rosas</b> Honorary Consul
Mexico	Guadalajara	<b>Juan Sierra Martínez</b> Honorary Consul
Mexico	Monterrey	<b>Jorge García Segovia</b> Honorary Consul
Moldova	Chisinau	<b>Iurie Grigore Popovici</b> Honorary Consul
Mozambique	Maputo	<b>Samuel Jay Levy</b> Honorary Consul
Nepal	Kathmandu	<b>Pasang Dawa Sherpa</b> Honorary Consul
Nigeria	Port Harcourt	<b>Eze Clifford Amadi</b> Honorary Consul
Nigeria	Lagos	<b>Ramesh Hathiramani</b> Honorary Consul
Nicaragua	Managua	<b>Bergman Castillo Jovel</b> Honorary Consul
Norway	Drammen	<b>Zuzana Opavská Wahl</b> Honorary Consul
New Zealand	Auckland	<b>Peter T. Kiely</b> Honorary Consul
Oman	Muscat	<b>Mohammed S. Al-Harthy</b> Honorary Consul
Pakistan	Lahore	<b>Muhammad Malik Asif</b> Honorary Consul
Palestine	Betlehem	<b>George Suliman Malki Jabra</b> Honorary Consul
Panama	Panama	<b>Julio César Benedetti</b> Honorary Consul
Paraguay	Cuidad del Este	<b>Charif Hammoud</b> Honorary Consul
Paraguay	Asunción	<b>Alex Hammoud</b> Honorary Consul
Peru	Lima	<b>Victor Andrés Belaunde Gutiérrez</b> Honorary Consul
Poland	Bydhost	<b>Wiesław Cezary Olszewski</b> Honorary Consul

<b>State</b>	<b>Consulate</b>	<b>Consul</b>
Poland	Gliwice	<b>Marian Czerny</b> Honorary Consul
Poland	Poznaň	<b>Piotr Stanisław Styczynski</b> Honorary Consul
Poland	Rzeszow	<b>Adam Góral</b> Honorary Consul
Poland	Sopot	<b>Jerzy Leśniak</b> Honorary Consul
Poland	Wroclaw	<b>Maciej Kaczmarski</b> Honorary Consul
Poland	Zakopané	<b>Wiesław Tadeusz Wojas</b> Honorary Consul
Portugal	Faro	<b>Rui Marques Dias Gomes</b> Honorary Consul
Portugal	Funchal	<b>Roberto Rodrigo Vieira Henriques</b> Honorary Consul
Romania	Salonta	<b>Miroslav Iabloncsik</b> Honorary Consul General
Russian Federation	Astrachan	<b>Vladimir Stepanovič Sinčenko</b> Honorary Consul
Russian Federation	Chanty-Mansijsk	<b>Eduard Vasiljevič Lebedev</b> Honorary Consul
Russian Federation	Omsk	<b>Jurij Viktorovič Šapovalov</b> Honorary Consul
Russian Federation	Krasnojarsk	<b>Valerij Alexandrovič Gračev</b> Honorary Consul
Russian Federation	Ekaterinburg	<b>Alexander Petrovič Petrov</b> Honorary Consul
Russian Federation	Vladivostok	<b>Apres Gvidonovič Voskanian</b> Honorary Consul
Russian Federation	Perm	<b>Boris Abramovič Švajcer</b> Honorary Consul
El Salvador	San Salvador	<b>Elizabeth Salume</b> Honorary Consul
Saudi Arabia	Jeddah	<b>Saeed Omar H. Balubaid</b> Honorary Consul
Seychelles	Victoria	<b>Joseph France Albert</b> Honorary Consul
Singapore	Singapore	<b>Cheo Guan Ow</b> Honorary Consul General
Serbia	Niš	<b>Stela Jovanovič</b> Honorary Consul
Sri Lanka	Colombo	<b>Mahen Roshan Andrew Kariyawasan</b> Honorary Consul
Sudan	Khartoum	<b>Nasreldin Ibrahim Shulgami</b> Honorary Consul General
Syria	Latakia	<b>Anas Dib Joud</b> Honorary Consul
Spain	Barcelona	<b>Joan Ignacio Torredemer Galles</b> Honorary Consul General
Spain	Eclépens	<b>François Georges de Coulon</b> Honorary Consul
Spain	Santa Cruz de Tenerife	<b>Francisco José Perera Molinero</b> Honorary Consul

<b>State</b>	<b>Consulate</b>	<b>Consul</b>
Spain	Malaga	<b>Jesús García Urbano</b> Honorary Consul
Spain	Zaragoza	<b>José Javier Parra Campos</b> Honorary Consul
Sweden	Göteborg	<b>Carl Magnus Richard Kindal</b> Honorary Consul
Sweden	Lulea°	<b>Jonas Lundström</b> Honorary Consul
Syria	Lattakia	<b>Anas Dib Joud</b> Honorary Consul
Tanzania	Dar es Salaam	<b>Moustafa Hassanali Khataw</b> Honorary Consul
Togo	Lomé	<b>Vivoto James Victor Sossou</b> Honorary Consul
Trinidad & T.	Port of Spain	<b>Lawrence Sonny Naipaul</b> Honorary Consul
Turkey	Bursa	<b>Hüseyin Özdilek</b> Honorary Consul
Turkey	Edirne	<b>Coskun Molla</b> Honorary Consul
Turkey	Izmir	<b>Selçuk Borovali</b> Honorary Consul
Turkey	Trabzon	<b>Suat Gürkök</b> Honorary Consul
Turkey	Kayseri	<b>Osman Güldüoğlu</b> Honorary Consul
Turkey	Antalya/Manavgat	<b>Dr. Şükrü Vural</b> Honorary Consul
Turkey	Mersin	<b>Emir Bozkaya</b> Honorary Consul
Turkey	Tekirdağ	<b>Levent Erdoğan</b> Honorary Consul
Turkey	Kusadasi	<b>Tevfik Bağcı</b> Honorary Consul
Turkey	Izmit	<b>Onur Sümer</b> Honorary Consul
Uganda	Kampale	<b>Abel M. S. Katahoire</b> Honorary Consul
Ukraine	Kharkov	<b>Viktor Vasiljevič Popov</b> Honorary Consul
Ukraine	Mariupol	<b>Tamara Timofejevna Lysenko</b> Honorary Consul
Ukraine	Odesa	<b>Mykhaylo Viktorovič Muzalev</b> Honorary Consul
Ukraine	Velikyj Bereznjy	<b>Oleg Ivanovič Adamčuk</b> Honorary Consul
United Kingdom	Glogow	<b>Craig Murray</b> Honorary Consul
United Kingdom	Belfast	<b>Thomas Sullivan</b> Honorary Consul
United Kingdom	Cardiff	<b>Nigel Bruce Harold Payne</b> Honorary Consul
Uruguay	Montevideo	<b>Matias Balparda</b> Honorary Consul

<b>State</b>	<b>Consulate</b>	<b>Consul</b>
USA	Detroit	<b>Edward Zelenak</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
USA	Indianapolis	<b>Steve Zlatos</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
USA	Kansas City	<b>Ross P. Marine</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
USA	Dallas	<b>Martin Valko</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
USA	North Miami	<b>Cecilia F. Rokusek</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
USA	Pittsburgh	<b>Joseph T. Senko</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
USA	San Francisco	<b>Barbara M. Pivnicka</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
USA	Naperville	<b>Rosemary Macko Wisnosky</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
USA	Boston	<b>Peter Mužila</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
USA	Denver	<b>Gregor James Fasing</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
USA	Lafayette	<b>Zoltán Gombos</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>
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Vietnam	Ho Chi Minh City	<b>Huy Ho</b> <i>Honorary Consul General</i>
Zambia	Lusaka	<b>Jozef Breza</b> <i>Honorary Consul</i>

## SLOVAKIA'S PARTICIPATION IN FOREIGN MILITARY OPERATIONS AND OBSERVER MISSIONS IN 2019

AS OF JANUARY 2020

Mission	Country	Armed Forces Members	Police Force Members	Civilian Experts
<b>UN</b>				
UNFICYP (United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus)	Cyprus	241	5	
UNTSO (United Nations Truce Supervision Organization)	Syria, Israel	2		
<b>NATO</b>				
RS (Resolute Support)	Islamic Republic of Afghanistan	51		
NMI (NATO Mission Iraq)	Iraq	7		
eFP (Enhanced Forward Presence)	Latvia	150		
<b>EU</b>				
EUFOR Althea (European Union Force Althea)	Bosnia and Herzegovina	41		
EUMM (European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia)	Georgia	1	6	
EUAM (European Union Advisory Mission in Ukraine)	Ukraine		2	1
EUBAM (EU Border Assistance Mission in Moldova)	Ukraine/Moldova		2	
EULEX	Kosovo		3	
EEAS Liaison Officer Belgium	Belgium		1	
<b>OSCE</b>				
SMM (Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine)	Ukraine		2	

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**V.**

**AUTHORS**

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## AUTHORS

**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 (until September 2019) 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, the Assistant Professor (Doc.) degree from the Comenius University in Bratislava in 2009 and the Professor degree from Masaryk University in Brno in 2019. Since May 2010 he has been teaching at the Prešov University. (duleba@sfp.sk)



**Dušan Fischer** graduated in American Studies from Heidelberg University and Applied Security Studies from the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany. Between 2010 and 2018, he worked as a researcher at the Slovak Foreign Policy Association and the Center for European and North Atlantic Affairs (CENAA). His previous experience includes working for the NATO Joint Analysis Lessons Learned Center (JALLC) in Lisbon, Portugal, and NATO HQ Supreme Allied Command Transformation (HQ SACT) in Norfolk, Virginia. His research is in American studies, NATO, and European and transatlantic security. Currently he works as Director of Armaments Planning Division at the Ministry of Defense of the Slovak Republic. (dusan.fischer@mod.gov.sk)





**Samuel Goda** works as a project manager and researcher at the Slovak Foreign Policy Association and as an assistant professor at the University of Economics in Bratislava. His research is focused on OSCE related issues, cooperative security and conflict transformation. Samuel is now based in Bratislava, but worked for several years in the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine in the field of good governance, youth engagement, education and advocacy. Besides that he was involved with the OSCE as a consultant including during the Slovak and Italian OSCE chairmanships. (goda@sfp.sk)



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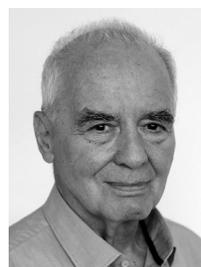


**Daniel Kaba** studied international public law at the University of Vienna, specializing in human rights and law at the University of Comenius in Bratislava. In the past 8 years he has been active in development cooperation and humanitarian aid, working as a project manager, trainer, director of ADRA Slovakia and led the team implementing projects in Kenya, Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova, Lebanon among others. Currently he works as an executive secretary for the Ambrela Platform for Development Organizations. His main focus is advocacy and partnerships. He also provided inputs for strategic documents such as the Act on Official Development Cooperation and Medium Term Strategy for Development Cooperation 2019–2023. In the past he served on the board of Ambrela. (daniel.kaba@ambrela.org)

**Miroslav Lajčák** began his professional career when he joined the Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry in 1988. He was ambassador to Japan between 1994 and 1998, and later ambassador to Belgrade, and accredited 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 Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana, overseeing 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, running from September 2017 to September 2018. (kami@mzv.sk)



**Július Lőrincz** has been working as a professional journalist for over forty years. In the 1970s the focus of his interest was Yugoslavia, and especially during the crisis years of the 1990s. He is the author and co-author of numerous interviews with important political figures in the region published in the newspaper *Pravda*. In 2002–2005, he worked for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic at the Slovak Embassy in Zagreb. He has worked with various non-governmental organizations for many years, especially in relation to the Western Balkans.



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- publishes periodical and non-periodical expert publications serving to increase awareness in the field of international relations and foreign policy of the Slovak Republic and as a source of qualified information for both, the expert and general public;
- 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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