



MINISTRY OF FOREIGN  
AND EUROPEAN AFFAIRS  
OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

# 2013



## Foreign and European Policy in 2013

Annual Report of the Ministry of Foreign  
and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic



## Leaders of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic



**Pavol SÝKORČIN**  
Secretary General

**Peter BURIAN**  
State Secretary

**Miroslav LAJČÁK**  
Deputy Prime Minister  
and Minister of Foreign  
and European Affairs  
of the Slovak Republic

**Peter JAVORČÍK**  
State Secretary



MINISTRY OF FOREIGN  
AND EUROPEAN AFFAIRS  
OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC



## Foreign and European Policy in 2013

Annual Report of the Ministry of Foreign  
and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic



---

**Foreign and European Policy in 2013  
Annual Report of the Ministry of Foreign  
and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic**

© Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, Bratislava 2014  
All rights reserved.

Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic  
Hlboká cesta 2  
833 36 Bratislava

Tel.: + 421 2 5978 1111  
Fax: + 421 2 5978 3638  
Email: [info@mzv.sk](mailto:info@mzv.sk)  
Website: [www.mzv.sk](http://www.mzv.sk)

Photographs on the cover: Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (MFEA SR), The News Agency of the Slovak Republic (TASR), Office of the President of the Slovak Republic/Marián Garaj, eu2013.lt, European Union

Illustrative photographs: European Union, NATO, Halánová/Laurinc, MFEA SR

Language Editor: Catriona Menzies

Designed and printed by: AEPRESS, s. r. o.

ISBN 978-80-88726-59-3



# Table of Contents

Forewords.....	5
1 Deepening European integration.....	13
2 Economic diplomacy.....	19
3 Relations with neighbours, regional and bilateral cooperation.....	25
4 Safe and democratic world.....	31
5 Development cooperation.....	37
6 Services for the people.....	41
7 Public and cultural diplomacy.....	45
8 Modern and professional foreign service.....	51

# Year 2013 – the year of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the Slovak Republic and diplomatic relations



*“Slovakia is a successful and dynamically developing country. It is a stable, reliable, trustworthy and responsible member of the international community. This has a tangible positive impact upon the lives of all Slovaks.”*

Ivan Gašparovič, President of the Slovak Republic, at the Annual Review Conference on the Foreign and European Policy of the Slovak Republic in 2012, Bratislava, 26 March 2013

*“Over twenty years of independence, the Slovak people have succeeded in building modern, democratic institutions founded on the values of freedom, tolerance and solidarity ... Slovakia has given its people a transatlantic and primarily European perspective based on the best Europe has to offer today.”*



Pavol Paška, Speaker of the National Council, from his speech on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the Slovak Republic, Bratislava, 1 January 2013

*“Throughout these two decades we have proved that we form a mature and responsible political nation. We have proved that we can manage our domestic affairs democratically and lead our country towards prosperity and stability, to pay our debts and show solidarity to those in need.”*



Robert Fico, Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic, at the opening of the GLOBSEC 2013 international conference in Bratislava, 18 April 2013



*“The last quarter of a century has seen many new beginnings for Slovakia. This year, your country is celebrating twenty years since its foundation. A peaceful foundation that will forever go down in History books: few countries came into being in such serene circumstances.”*

Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council during the National Convention on the EU, Bratislava, 12 June 2013

## A year of anniversaries and a year with a positive balance...



Dear friends, I am glad that, in the pages that follow, we can share with you our assessment of events in foreign and European policy in 2013. In 2012 measures were adopted to consolidate the diplomatic sector, transfer responsibility for new areas and set up the ministry's operational mechanisms. I can now confirm that these changes were fully implemented last year and that they have improved the running of the ministry and the services we provide for people.

The year 2013 was a year in which there were several anniversaries – we celebrated the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of an independent Slovak Republic and the 1150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of Sts Cyril and Methodius in Great Moravia, as well as two decades of UN membership and one decade of *SlovakAid*.

The year 2014 will also be a highly symbolic one with the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our membership of the European Union and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation to remind us of the route Slovakia chose to follow and indeed continues to do so in foreign policy-making.

For the past 10 years, we have been at the heart of European integration and today we play a full role – we use the common European currency, we travel throughout the Schengen countries without border controls, and many of our people make use of the opportunities to travel, study or work abroad. There is no doubt that ours is a success story that is inspirational to many countries seeking entry to the EU.

Last year was also a year of challenges. Following difficult discussions in the EU, we agreed on a new multiannual financial framework for 2014–2020. Within this timeframe, Slovakia is entitled to obtain 2 billion euros more than the previous year. One of Slovak foreign policy's achievements in the EU is the exemption agreed for Slovakia, whereby the timeframe for spending European funding for the years 2011 and 2012 has been extended by another year.

Discussion continues in the EU on the future direction it will take. Slovakia was actively involved in adopting other measures to improve the effectiveness of the EU and remove systemic management flaws. The themes currently being debated in the EU, particularly the post-crisis return to economic growth, were also the main topics at the June Central European Summit in Bratislava, attended by 20 heads and representatives of Central and Eastern European countries.

There is every suggestion that the reforms adopted in the previous period are starting to bring visible results and that the European economy is recovering. Today no-one doubts the survival of the euro and there is no talk of leaving the eurozone. Just the opposite, the people of Latvia adopted the euro on 1 January 2014.

I am very glad that in working alongside civil society we have managed to re-launch the National Convention on the EU and thus encourage greater public debate on the European issues directly affecting us. We plan to carry on in this way. There is discussion within the

# “The year 2013 also affirmed the importance and success of enlargement policy, of which Slovakia has been a keen advocate.”

EU about the future direction of the entire European project and the Slovak position should not only be created in the ministries and civil service, but also in discussions with the general public.

The year 2013 also affirmed the importance and success of enlargement policy, of which Slovakia has been a keen advocate, when in July the EU welcomed its 28<sup>th</sup> member state – Croatia. The Western Balkans has long been a priority for Slovak foreign policy and 2013 was mainly a year of long awaited progress in normalising relations between Serbia and Kosovo. This positive development is the result of EU engagement and the fact that both sides understood that there is no sensible alternative other than dialogue.

One of the key events was undoubtedly the Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius. Although, despite our efforts, we did not succeed in signing an *Association Agreement* with Ukraine, I do not think the summit should be viewed negatively. The fact we initialled agreements with Georgia and Moldova brought them another step closer to the EU. After the summit, many fundamental questions emerged in relation to Ukraine. This is also why the Eastern Partnership region remains a key foreign policy priority for Slovakia.

In 2013, Slovakia also continued fulfilling its tasks in the area of international security, mainly by participating in the missions in Afghanistan, Cyprus and other crisis areas. Sadly, last year will go down in Slovak history as a year in which Slovakia came face to face with terrorism, which led to the deaths of civilians as well as members of our peacekeeping forces.

Nonetheless, this does not alter our obligation to contribute towards international security. In this

respect, a determining factor in our efforts is our membership of NATO and, more broadly, our drive to strengthen transatlantic links, which encountered a number of problems last year. Slovakia wishes to help revitalise transatlantic links and to this end use the upcoming 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of NATO's enlargement into Central and Eastern Europe, including our country.

Globally, the main issue has been Syria. The situation in the country is still tense and one positive thing to come out of it is the success in signing the agreement on destroying Syrian chemical weapons. This is a step in the right direction and full implementation of the agreement may help gradually resolve the serious situation in the country. The Slovak Republic has also helped dispose of the chemical weapons arsenal.

Staying in the Middle East, Iran was a prominent theme in Slovakia this year. Not only because of the negotiations over its nuclear programme, which I welcome, along with the outcome thus far, but also because nine Slovak citizens were arrested in Iran during the year, all of whom we were able to bring home safely. This is further evidence of the quality of the diplomatic and consular services provided by our ministry. Moreover, there are hundreds of other successfully resolved consular cases that did not reach the media.

Dear friends, I have only mentioned a few of the key events in 2013. However, in this publication, you will find an overall summary of the most important work the Slovak Republic carried out in foreign and European policy.

I hope you enjoy reading it.



Miroslav LAJČÁK  
Deputy Prime Minister  
and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs  
of the Slovak Republic

President Ivan Gašparovič meets United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon on 25 September 2013 at the United Nations General Assembly in New York  
(Photo: UN Photo/Amanda Voisard)



Prime Minister Robert Fico at a meeting with US President Barack Obama at the White House, 21 November 2013 (Photo: TASR)

Speaker of the Parliament Pavol Paška and President of the Senate of the Czech Parliament Milan Štěch at a conference *Czechs and Slovaks – 20 years of Cooperation between Independent States and their work in the EU and NATO*, Prague, 8 January 2013  
(Photo: NC SR/Matúš Zajac)



“Slovakia is both able and capable of helping resolve regional and global problems.”



**How do you evaluate the previous year in terms of implementing the priorities of the Slovak foreign services?**

In my opinion, and in terms of the work I do within my portfolio, it should be evaluated as a success. Firstly, Slovakia further defined itself as a responsible member of the international community, able to help resolve complicated regional and global problems despite the fairly difficult financial situation and the ministry's limited budget. This has forced us to carefully consider the work we do to ensure that effective outcomes and benefits are achieved when pursuing foreign policy goals and priorities. We have concentrated primarily on issues and areas where Slovakia can bring real added value and unique expertise.

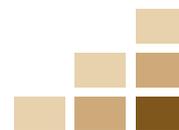
In this context, I positively value our joining the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in September 2013, which completes another stage in our integration. Slovakia is now a full member of this elite club of world donors and has therefore gained the right to participate in its programmes and projects. In his speech celebrating our membership of DAC, OECD Secretary General Angel Gurría noted that Slovakia's achievements in establishing a system for providing development assistance are admirable. Full membership of DAC, however, also means that Slovakia has an obligation to continue reforming its system of development cooperation, thereby improving its quality, effectiveness and transparency. In doing so, we shall primarily follow the DAC recommendations, which are based on the experiences of the committee members.

Another important outcome of our long-term engagement in reforming the security sector on the international scene is the publication of a second report by the UN Secretary General in autumn 2013. In this report, the Secretary General explicitly acknowledged the Slovak Republic's work in fostering international debate on the subject. Both as a founder and now the permanent co-chair of the UN Group of Friends of Security Sector Reform, I am pleased that Slovakia helped compile this report. We also strive to ensure this topic attracts similar attention in our work with the Swiss presidency and in the OSCE and other regional organisations. Security sector reform is extremely important since it is fundamental to good governance, development, conflict prevention, building democratic institutions, the rule of law and enforcing human rights in countries undergoing transformation.

Last but not least, I judge our work in international crisis management operations, mainly in the ISAF operations in Afghanistan, to be a very real and fundamental contribution towards strengthening regional and global security. Our determination to continue in this way in the battle against international terrorism has not been weakened by the deaths of members of our military forces who risk their own lives to protect our security.

I wish to emphasise, however, that these are only some of the examples from last year which our diplomatic corps can be truly proud of.

The year 2013 did, nonetheless, also contain moments which did not fully meet our expectations; for example, the Eastern Partnership Summit in



Vilnius. Nevertheless, by engaging within the EU and working intensely with its partners, Slovakia helped strengthen awareness of the eastern dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy amongst EU countries as a whole, and also contributed ultimately to the undeniable success in transforming the Eastern Partnership countries and their cooperation with the EU. I believe that this long term investment will bear fruit in the form of a more stable and more democratic neighbourhood to the east of our borders.

**The foreign ministry took over responsibility for economic diplomacy quite recently. How do you evaluate its current work and where do you see opportunities for further action to increase the effectiveness of the system in supporting Slovak businesses abroad?**

Effective economic diplomacy helps strengthen security, stability and prosperity in the world. Politics and the economy go hand in hand and this is also reflected in our work and relations with foreign partners. In areas we felt Slovakia should penetrate and where we saw opportunities to support Slovak exports, joint visits were organised for high ranking representatives of state institutions accompanied by business delegations. These produced positive outcomes in a

number of important areas, e.g. in the Middle East, various countries in South East Asia and Latin America, as well as China. In 2014, we will seek out new areas for our representatives to visit, countries with great potential for Slovak businesses. We also see further opportunities in the existing and ever expanding mechanism of mixed intergovernmental and interministerial committees for economic cooperation, which include trade missions, and presentations and meetings between Slovak businesses and foreign partners. The work carried out by economic diplomats at Slovak embassies assists Slovak businesses in setting themselves up in the local market. The network of economic diplomats also monitors opportunities for Slovak businesses to participate in tenders and offers from foreign governments. One such example is the success of Slovak companies abroad in the energy industry.

After taking on responsibility for economic diplomacy, in 2013 the ministry also concentrated on important global themes affecting the economy, such as energy and food safety, and water and climate change. Given diversification of resources for economic growth, great emphasis was also laid on supporting the knowledge economy and international collaboration in science, research and innovation.



## “2013 was not only about the budget.”

**The number 13 is associated more with negative emotions than positive messages. How was last year from a European viewpoint?**

The end of 2012 signalled that the next year would be about finishing off the work outstanding from the previous period. In November 2012, the leaders of the member states did not agree the EU budget for 2014–2020. This constitutes a framework for financing all policies implemented by the EU, including cohesion policy. However, 2013 got off to a very good start. The agreement was already on the table at the February summit. This gave us an opportunity to concentrate on completing the legislation during the year. So by no means can we describe it in negative terms. We succeeded in stabilising the eurozone and recovering – albeit fragile – trust in the European financial markets and the banking system. By the end of the year, economic estimates were more positive than the year before. In the third quarter, growth in GDP increased for the first time, although only slightly (by 0.1 per cent) in comparison with the same period in 2012. Confidence in the European economy grew throughout the year and in September it exceeded the EU average since July 2011.

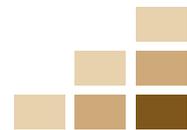
**You mentioned cohesion policy. How did Slovakia fare in terms of the agreement on the EU 2014–2020 budget?**

It must be said that at a time when national budgets are being consolidated, cohesion policy is one of the few tools we have to stimulate economic growth and employment. Our success in pursuing Slovak priorities can be quantified in figures: between 2014 and 2020, we will contribute approximately 7 billion euros to the EU; however, our income from the EU budget may exceed 20 billion euros. From cohesion policy

alone, Slovakia has the opportunity to reinvest almost 14 billion euros which, when calculated per capita, is the second highest figure after Estonia. However, it is not just about numbers. During the negotiations, we not only focused on the amount of resources for the next period, but also on advantageous conditions for using the funding from the previous period. Slovakia and Romania, the countries with the greatest growth in cohesion policy allocations – 10 per cent compared to 2007–2013 – succeeded in gaining an extra year for using existing resources. We are incorporating the agreement on the 2014–2020 budgetary framework into the *Partnership Agreement with the European Commission*, which will serve as a framework for using EU funding. Johannes Hahn, Commissioner for Regional Policy, commented favourably on the way it was set up and its priorities when visiting Bratislava in December last year. As far as the results of budgetary agreement go, Slovakia is one of the most successful countries.

**Which other important themes were discussed in the EU last year?**

From the Slovak viewpoint, there was success in moving forward in several directions. The second most prominent theme was continuing the process of deepening the economic and monetary union. The financial, and later the economic crisis, revealed systemic faults within the eurozone. Therefore, the priority has been to break the vicious circle of the indebtedness of banks and states and lay the foundations for a true banking union. In September, the first pillar of the banking union was approved – a single supervisory mechanism covering 130 banks in the eurozone. It should be fully functional by autumn 2014. In December, EU finance ministers also achieved agreement on the second pillar – a single resolution



mechanism – and on the gradual creation of a common resolution fund. We already have tangible results. Moreover, in both cases, we were able to safeguard our interests in terms of Slovak priorities. However, we did not make significant progress on the issues of fiscal and economic integration, the bulk of which await our attention in 2014. Many things still need to be clarified. This was also the signal from the December EU summit.

**Completing the economic and monetary union also led to increased debate on the future of the EU and the eurozone itself. However, there is also growing scepticism in the EU over the European project as such. How did we react to this at the national level?**

In the last year we have relaunched the National Convention on the EU. It is an arena for constructive discussion and an open platform for communicating with all sections of society. Last year, the three working groups had several meetings assessing Slovakia's ten year membership in the EU, looking at the current challenges facing Europe and preparations for the Slovak presidency of the EU Council in 2016. In cooperation with the Centre for European Affairs, which organizes the National Convention on the EU, a number of regional trips were organised and discussions were held to determine student opinion on these themes. I have very positive experiences from the University of Matej Bel in Banská Bystrica. It is not true that people have no interest in the EU. We have a lot of clever young people who have proved that this is not the case. However, we will also make an effort to address the public at large.

**The Visegrad Four (V4) presidency awaits us next year. What preparations have already been made?**

This will not be the first time we will hold the presidency. At the end of last year, we had already started working with other ministries to lay out the basis of the programme – priorities in energy, transport, science and research, as well as activities and meetings we would like to organise. Visegrad cooperation has moved to a new qualitative level. The coordination of our positions on European issues has achieved a new quality and there is a discernible trend towards strengthening the internal and regional dimension of

our work. Our V4 presidency will therefore differ from that of four years ago.

**Only a year after Slovakia comes to the end of its V4 presidency, its presidency of the EU Council will begin. How far have we got with preparations for this?**

Our “small” V4 presidency will enable us to sound out some of the topics which will also be of interest to the “big” presidency of the EU Council. At the same time, it is an opportunity to assess our ability to propose an agenda and demonstrate the necessary leadership. I would define 2013 as a year which laid important foundations for the effective performance of presidency. We have fully established the preparatory mechanisms and structures. The Slovak government has approved several strategy documents relating to the organisation and financing of the presidency and we have also made progress in preparing the promotional and presentational aspects of the presidency. The closer we get to 2016, the greater the number of tasks and responsibilities. We expect that in 2014 we will also start discussions on the content with our partners in the presidency trio – the Netherlands and Malta.

**You mentioned some of the priorities and tasks facing Slovak foreign policy in 2014. What sort of year can we expect in terms of European issues?**

Predicting events is not a very fruitful task. In terms of European policy, this will be a transitional year. There will be the elections to the European Parliament, a new European Commission will be formed and there will be changes in the main posts in EU institutions. However, I assume that the themes which dominated the previous period – deepening economic and monetary union, combatting unemployment, seeking new stimuli for economic growth – will still form the bulk of the EU agenda. To this we can add issues such as establishing a framework for EU climate and energy policy after 2020, expanding the debate on what should be addressed at EU level and what should be resolved at the national or regional level. It is clear that an interesting year awaits us. Nonetheless, I believe that by the end of the year, we will be able to state that we have moved the whole EU forward in the right direction and that this will also be thanks to the work done by Slovakia.

**MINISTERSTVO  
ZAHRANIČNÝCH VECÍ  
A EURÓPSKYCH ZÁLEŽITOSTÍ  
SLOVENSKEJ REPUBLIKY**



High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton visits Bratislava in February 2013 (Photo: MFEA SR)

# 1

## Deepening European integration



The main thrust of Slovak policy on European issues was the ambition to support European integration and thus be a proactive partner in shaping the future of the EU. In discussions on deepening EU integration, we are guided by the principles of responsibility and solidarity. From our viewpoint, the best way to overcome the crisis is to strengthen cooperation and remove the now apparent systemic faults – especially in the eurozone. Measures such as the European Stability Mechanism, the *Fiscal Compact* and ECB intervention in the bond market have proven to be effective.

In order to ensure that legislation is in line with conditions set out in the *Lisbon Treaty*, including improving the mechanisms of cooperation between the Slovak government and parliament, in 2013 the ministry revised the way in which positions on EU draft legislation are coordinated. The rules have been revised to incorporate our ten-year experience as an EU member in terms of coordinating EU policy. One of the changes is to allow greater space for NGOs to formulate their opinions on proposed EU legislation.

Throughout 2013, a year which could be labelled “budgetary”, Slovakia performed successfully on the European stage and made several important positive achievements.

During negotiations on the multiannual financial framework for 2014–2020, Slovakia proved to be a reliable and predictable partner, maintaining consistent

positions and concentrating on a strong cohesion policy. Our consistent approach bore fruit in the form of an improved net budgetary position in relation to the EU budget compared with the previous period. Slovakia’s national allocation was increased by 10 per cent in comparison with the previous framework, despite the fact that within cohesion policy overall, the framework saw a real decrease of 8.5 per cent for the 2014–2020 period. We have also achieved a significant increase in funding to decommission two blocks of the Jaslovské Bohunice nuclear power station. We also obtained the opportunity to increase direct payments for



Representatives of the political parties represented in the National Council of the Slovak Republic sign a joint declaration on preparations for the Slovak presidency of the EU Council in 2016, Bratislava, 16 May 2013 (Photo: MFEA SR)

# Deepening European integration



Prime Minister Robert Fico at an international conference on youth unemployment, Berlin, 3 July 2013 (Photo: TASR)

the agricultural sector through greater transfers of resources from the rural development fund.

In close coordination with the Visegrad Four countries, Slovakia helped achieve agreement over common agricultural policy reform which will lead to a gradual equalising of the differences in direct payments between member states.



Minister Miroslav Lajčák at the National Convention on the European Union, Bratislava, 9 May 2013 (Photo: MFEA SR)

In terms of the structural funds, Slovakia, together with Romania, pushed for changes to the legislation and to make it possible to extend the use of resources allocated for 2011 and 2012 for a further year, i.e. ensuring a shift from the  $n+2$  rule to the  $n+3$  rule, thereby decreasing the risk that unused funding will be automatically returned to the EU budget.

Preparations for the new budgetary period also had implications on the domestic front. Throughout the year, Slovakia made significant progress in preparing the *Partnership Agreement between Slovakia and the European Commission for 2014–2020*, a Slovak strategy document determining the framework in which funding from the structural funds can be used. The Slovak Republic was one of a number of countries to make significant progress in preparing the next operational programmes.

In 2013, Europe saw high levels of unemployment, mainly amongst young people. Prime Minister Robert Fico participated in two international head-of-state and government conferences addressing this theme – in Berlin (3 July) and in Paris (12 November) – with the aim of finding a quick and effective solution to



this sensitive problem. He shared our experiences of implementing projects to encourage youth employment using reallocated EU funding.

In 2012, the government started two projects to foster employment financed from reallocated funding, which by the end of 2013 had led to the creation of 11,500 jobs for young people. The government also prepared a *National Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan*, which consists of legislative measures and projects.

Another Slovak priority regarding the economy was to participate in discussions on the future of the EU and deepening integration in relation to the economic and fiscal consolidation of member states. Slovakia was fully involved in all four pillars of the Economic and Monetary Union project, and in its social dimension. In terms of the banking union, which is to sever the ties between states and financial institutions by transferring responsibility for regulation and rescuing banks to the EU level, Slovakia pushed for a fast-track procedure in negotiations on a single supervisory mechanism and a single resolution mechanism, but not at the cost of quality. During discussions on creating a budgetary and economic union to coordinate structural reforms, Slovakia stressed the need to ensure that the mechanisms will not have a negative impact upon the budgets and national debts of member states.

Effective infrastructure connecting European regions is prerequisite to the functioning of the EU internal market, long-term economic growth and increasing competitiveness. This is why, last year, Slovakia was actively involved in finalising directives on navigating Trans-European Networks in the transport, energy and telecommunications sectors (TEN-T, TEN-E and TEN-Tele). The directives create a framework for Projects of Common Interest which, thanks to the sustained common approach of the V4 countries, also includes projects that are extremely important to Slovakia. Slovakia also stressed the importance of nuclear energy in our energy mix.

In 2013, the ministry relaunched the National Convention on the European Union. Its role is to engage various segments of society in debate on Slovakia's membership and on Slovak prospects in the EU, and therefore assist in forming consensual national positions. Three working groups discussed, in particular, the prospect of deepening EU integration. They also evaluated the ten years of EU membership and discussed the challenge for Slovakia in taking up the first chair of the presidency of the EU Council. This is also one of the priority issues of the convention.

In the second half of 2016, the Slovak Republic will chair the EU Council (SK PRES). As part of preparations for this important role, a number of essential steps were taken in 2013. The interministerial coordinating council for preparations for the presidency, government advisory body, met three times. Interministerial working groups also took part in meetings, mainly addressing logistics and budgetary issues. The government approved essential materials:

- National Education Programme (provision 13/2013). The material sets out educational activities for particular target groups of experts and diplomats to prepare them for a high quality presidency.
- Analysis of the costs of the presidency (provision 160/2013), which will form the basis for preparing the budget.
- Proposal to provide adequate premises required for the Permanent Representation in Brussels (provision 278/2013), concerning the materials and technical backup required for an increase in Permanent Representation diplomats in Brussels during the presidency.
- Proposal on logistics and organisation of events during the presidency (provision 354/2013). The material sets out the basic requirements for approximately 200 events to be organised in Slovakia from the highest political level to the working level.

Political consensus, support and public awareness are key factors in the presidency's success. The ministry compiled the first *Report on the status of preparations for the presidency* and once it had obtained government approval (provision 119/2013), submitted it to the Slovak National Council Committee for European Affairs on 13 May 2013. Minister Miroslav Lajčák also initiated the signing of a *Declaration on preparation and holding of the Presidency of the Council of the European Union* by the Slovak Republic in the Second Half of 2016 by the political parties represented in parliament. The leaders of all parliamentary parties agreed that the presidency is an opportunity to showcase the country and should not be the subject of political wrangling.

In communicating with the public on EU issues, the ministry also cooperated with the Representation of the European Commission and the European Parliament Information Office in the Slovak Republic. Several management projects were implemented using funding from the Partnership programme (e.g. a cultural and social event on the *Days of Europe in Košice* and a textbook on the EU for secondary school students).

## Western Balkans

We evaluate the year 2013 positively in terms of EU enlargement and development in the Western Balkans. Slovak foreign policy played a significant role in this and supporting the EU enlargement process is one of

# Deepening European integration



Family photo of the highest representatives of EU member states celebrating Croatia's accession to the European Union in Zagreb on 1 July 2013 (Photo: European Union)

its foreign policy priorities. In the first half of the year, Slovakia concentrated on assisting **Croatia** in fulfilling the remaining conditions of the accession process so the country could accede to the EU on 1 July 2013. Prior to Croatia's EU accession, we passed on the experience and expertise gained by the foreign, defence and interior ministries as well as experience relating to Croatia joining the Schengen Area.

Croatia's EU accession was an important signal for countries in the region and Croatia is the second former Yugoslavian state to successfully manage the challenges of the transformation process and state-building. Slovakia was the first EU member state to approve the accession agreement on Croatia's entry to the EU.

Another example of positive development was **Montenegro** which, during the EU accession process, successfully opened new chapters. The most important of these were chapters 23 and 24, which relate to strengthening the rule of law. At the same time, Montenegro became a hot favourite for NATO entry in the next wave of enlargement. Slovakia also helped Montenegro to implement its strategic foreign policy goals

in 2013 at both the political and expert level. In addition to relaunching the National Convention, a platform for public discussion on the wider aspects of European integration, we also engaged in an information campaign supporting public awareness of entry into NATO.

The adoption of the *April Agreement* signed in Brussels, part of the process of normalising relations between **Serbia** and **Kosovo**, can be seen as a breakthrough or perhaps even a historic success. The *April Agreement* positively impacted on the decision to begin accession negotiations between the EU and Serbia taken at the December European Council meeting. The dialogue demonstrates the great transformation potential of the EU as evidenced in the unprecedented progress achieved in the normalisation process between Belgrade and Prishtina. Both sides understood the advantages of direct dialogue and initial outcomes have exceeded our expectations.

## Eastern Partnership

The primary aims of the **Eastern Partnership** policy are to politically and economically stabilise the region and



create conditions for further democratic development and to bring countries closer to EU standards on an individual basis. There was dynamic communication between Slovakia and the Eastern Partnership countries – Minister Miroslav Lajčák visited Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Moldova, and opened an embassy in Chisinau. Ministers from Ukraine (Leonid Kozhara), Moldova (Natalia Gherman) and Georgia (Maia Panjikidze) visited Bratislava. The foreign minister met his Azerbaijani and Armenian counterparts at the UN.

Through its work as part of a group of like-minded countries and its policy towards Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova, Slovakia was one of the main players involved in creating the Eastern dimension of European Neighbourhood Policy.

Slovakia was in frequent communication with **Ukraine**, the country's only non-EU neighbouring state, and Slovakia naturally supported the country's pro-European ambitions throughout. Within the EU, Slovakia supported a strategic view of relations with Ukraine. Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák organised two appropriately timed meetings of the Group of Friends of Ukraine in Brussels (in January and October) for foreign ministers of EU member states, which were also attended by Ukrainian Foreign Minister Leonid Kozhara, thus helping maintain a favourable atmosphere in relation to Ukraine.

President Ivan Gašparovič and his Polish counterpart, President Bronisław Komorowski, participated in a number of mutually coordinated activities at repeated meetings with Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich. The last meeting with Viktor Yanukovich before the Vilnius summit took place at the Summit of Central European Presidents in June in Bratislava.

A milestone in the EU's eastern policy was the Eastern Partnership Summit at the end of November in Vilnius, where association agreements on political association and economic integration between the EU and Moldova and between the EU and Georgia were initialled. Although the agreement on political association and political integration with Ukraine was not signed, the Vilnius Summit was successful in that it set out the aims of the Eastern Partnership project up to the next summit in Riga in 2015. In Vilnius, European leaders agreed that the agreement with Ukraine would remain on the table.

In addition to the frequent political contact between Slovakia and Ukraine, there were also bilateral meetings of all three intergovernmental commissions – for national minorities, education and culture, economic cooperation and cross border cooperation. The National



The Eastern Partnership and the Vilnius Summit were the main issues Minister Miroslav Lajčák discussed at a Slovak Foreign Policy Association conference on 22 October 2013 in Bratislava (Photo: MFEA SR)

Convention on the EU in Ukraine project was completed, creating a unique platform for public debate on issues of European integration in Ukraine. We continued to share our transformation and integration experiences via the Centre for Experience Transfer in Integration and Reforms programme (CETIR) and adopted practical measures to simplify the issuing of visas to Ukrainian citizens, which came into operation at the end of 2012 and did much to encourage an increase in tourism, cross border cooperation and commercial exchanges.

Slovakia was one of the EU's most active supporters of the European integration ambitions of **Moldova**, as manifested in the quality of the political dialogue over the last year. Slovakia also co-chaired the foreign policy working group for migration within the *Moldova Task Force*. We shared transformation and integration experience via the CETIR programme and continued with the successful National Convention on the EU in Moldova, which is implemented by the Slovak Foreign Policy Association. Support for this and for developing commercial exchanges has also been provided by the newly established Slovak Embassy in Chisinau since mid-2013.

The Eastern Partnership platform proposed by the ministry and organised by the Slovak Foreign Policy Association brings together representatives from all segments of society – civil society, state administration and the business sector. Last year, this platform also helped set out the responsibilities and other opportunities for Slovakia within the Eastern Partnership region. With support from the European Commission, the ministry set up and implemented a successful project supporting prison reform in Eastern Partnership countries.



Prime Minister Robert Fico addresses the Economic Forum in the Polish town of Krynica, 3 September 2013 (Photo: Government Office of the Slovak Republic)



# 2

## Economic diplomacy

In 2013, in keeping with the *Manifesto of the Government of the Slovak Republic*, the responsibilities of the ministry were expanded to include the new role of economic diplomacy coordinator.

With the establishment of the Council of the Government of Slovakia for Export and Investment Support, a key institutional platform was created to support export and investment and direct interaction between the state and the business sector. In 2013, there were six meetings at which the council discussed materials of strategic significance, such as strategies for Slovak foreign economic relations, Exim Bank of the Slovak Republic, developing tourism and tourism marketing strategy. Over the year, we also implemented changes to the way in which the state agencies of SARIO and SACR are managed in accordance with findings adopted by the council. The findings also included establishing a Council for the Strategic Direction, Coordination and Inspection of SARIO activities and a Council of Transport, Construction and Regional Development to coordinate the work of SACR. The aim is for these state agencies to coordinate the plans of the state and the business sphere.

The network of economic diplomats was also strengthened at the embassies, mainly in areas of key economic and financial importance, and strategic regions in the EU – such as Prague, Warsaw, Budapest,

Paris, London and Vienna – but also in the US – in Washington and New York. A total of 49 systemised positions for economic diplomats have been created on the basis of dialogue and requirements and recommendations from the business sphere.

Responsibility for economic diplomacy was taken over by the heads of embassies and their offices handled selected project work, resulting in the creation of a “reservoir” of trade, investment, research

### Expanding opportunities to use EU support tools

During 2013, the ministry expanded opportunities for Slovak entities to export products and services by publicising tenders in the following areas: Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) projects, the neighbourhood policy ENPI/ENI instrument and the common EU and OECD tool – SIGMA. The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs also took on responsibility for the National Contact Point and the coordination centre for utilising EU external assistance financial instruments: an implementation instrument for creating state and public administration institutions, Twinning, and an instrument for technical assistance and exchange of information, TAIX.

# Economic diplomacy



The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs and the Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic organised a meeting for the largest Slovak exporters attended by Prime Minister Robert Fico and Minister of Economy Tomáš Malatinský, Bratislava, 13 December 2013 (Photo: MFEA SR)

and collaborative production projects set up by the embassies, and projects the embassies were involved or were implementing in May 2013. In terms of economic diplomacy, 2013 could mainly be characterised as the year in which attention shifted to project management. Training for economic diplomats and diplomats who expressed an interest in economic diplomacy continued in the shape of an annual course accredited by the University of Economics in Bratislava. Economic training

was also provided in further higher education and pre-appointment preparation of diplomats.

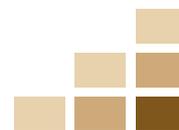
An important occurrence was a shift in focus in economic diplomacy to interministerial and global themes which have a significant economic impact upon Slovakia and the Slovaks, such as energy safety, food safety, water and climate change, international cooperation in the defence industry and fostering a knowledge economy, as well as international cooperation in science, research and innovation.

The significance Slovakia attaches to developing the economic dimension of diplomacy is illustrated by Prime Minister Fico's official visit to the Kingdom of Spain in April 2013. The visit succeeded in its main aim which was to make Spanish economic and political entities more aware of the opportunities for investment and enterprise in Slovakia. The Spanish prime minister also backed the Slovak request that the European Commission display greater flexibility over the use of untouched European funding to help build infrastructure and increase youth employment.

In 2013, Slovakia also extended relations with the Kingdom of Denmark, the Kingdom of Sweden and the Republic of Finland. Slovakia is particularly interested in the prospects of using northern European experience in science and research, especially in developing advanced technology and its practical use in innovations. Foreign



Developing economic cooperation and new investment opportunities were the subject of discussion between Robert Fico and Spanish King Juan Carlos I, Madrid, 23 April 2013 (Photo: Government Office)



Minister Miroslav Lajčák visited these countries in 2013 and also met the speaker of the Danish parliament in Bratislava when the latter made an official visit to Slovakia. In addition to cooperation over innovation and the transfer of technology, the minister also agreed with his northern partners to further develop trade and economic cooperation and bilateral political dialogue.

Another priority in economic diplomacy is to encourage the diversification of Slovak exports to non-European markets, mainly the BRICS countries but also Japan and other countries in South East Asia, the Gulf and Latin America. There were also prime ministerial meetings with Japan and China where there was a strong emphasis on economic themes. Foreign Minister Lajčák visited Chile, India, Mongolia and the Republic of Korea on business, while the minister of finance visited Japan. Intergovernmental commission meetings were held with Russia, Kazakhstan, China, India and Indonesia, and leading state representatives were received from China, Japan, Singapore, Brazil, Australia and Kenya.

The new mechanism of taking advantage of visits by senior representatives of state institutions to regions

where there is a need to support Slovak exports proved very effective. One such example is the outcome of official visits to the Gulf by secretaries of state at the foreign, economic and finance ministries accompanied by business delegations.

One of the successes in economic diplomacy was making headway in helping Slovak companies to enter the regional Russian market, which provides great potential for the implementation of future projects. An important event in fostering cooperation was the seventh Slovak Matchmaking Fair involving companies from eight Russian regions.

Slovak embassies also worked alongside the ministry of economy to arrange Slovakia's official participation in exhibitions and trade fairs abroad. Our successes include, for example, the LAAD 2013 international exhibition of defence and security technology in Rio de Janeiro, which was followed by an official visit by the Brazilian minister of defence, and the FIHAV international trade fair in Havana, where a number of contracts were developed.



Minister Miroslav Lajčák and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea Yun Byung-se sign an intergovernmental agreement on scientific and technical cooperation and a memorandum of understanding between the foreign ministries, 24 November 2013 (Photo: MFEA SR)

# Economic diplomacy



State Secretary Peter Burian at a meeting with Vice-Minister of Trade of the People's Republic of China Wang Shouwen, 26 September 2013  
(Photo: MFEA SR)

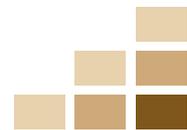
The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, together with the Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic, also made use of the mechanisms of joint intergovernmental and interministerial commissions for economic cooperation. These included trade missions, presentations and mainly meetings between Slovak businesses and their international partners. In 2013, Minister Miroslav Lajčák headed meetings between an intergovernmental commission and the Russian Federation and the ministry cooperated with the economy ministry in preparing similar meetings with Ukraine, Belarus, Indonesia, China, Mongolia, Vietnam, India and Kazakhstan, and in organising concurrent trade forums. We also focused on developing cooperation using the 16 Central and Eastern European countries plus China format, which opened upon new possibilities in business, investment and regional cooperation, and tourism, using preferential loans to support joint projects. The Slovak side submitted proposals for approximately 20 projects.

The economic cooperation section organised 13 specialist seminars, four international conferences and eight economy related business trips abroad for senior representatives at the ministry and the business

community, focusing on the Russian Federation, the South Caucasus, South East Asia, the Gulf States and Latin America.

## Expanding the web portal for businesses

In 2013, public access to information available from Slovak embassies was improved when alterations were made to the ministry website extending its *Let's do business abroad* portal to include new information sections: The EU for Businesses and Public Administration including information on opportunities for becoming involved in EU projects, in public procurement abroad and in international organisations. We have started publishing a weekly magazine entitled *Economic news from abroad*, which is distributed electronically to the commercial public and to companies, embassies, honorary consuls, etc. (currently over 1,000 recipients).



## International economic organisations

In relation to international economic organisations and financial institutions, the Slovak Republic concentrated on seeking ways to overcome the crisis in favour of economic growth, higher employment and competitiveness.

Slovakia's involvement in the **Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development** consisted of identifying and adopting anti-crisis measures that would help consolidate public finances, increase employment, etc. On 17 September, Slovakia became a member of the Development Assistance Committee, whose aim is to improve the effectiveness of development assistance.

At **World Trade Organisation** negotiations, Slovakia sought to ensure retention of the principle of an equal or preferential approach to Slovak exports on non-EU markets. At the ninth Ministerial conference in Bali, Slovakia was involved in concluding the issue of facilitating trade, one of the pillars of multilateral Doha agenda negotiations.

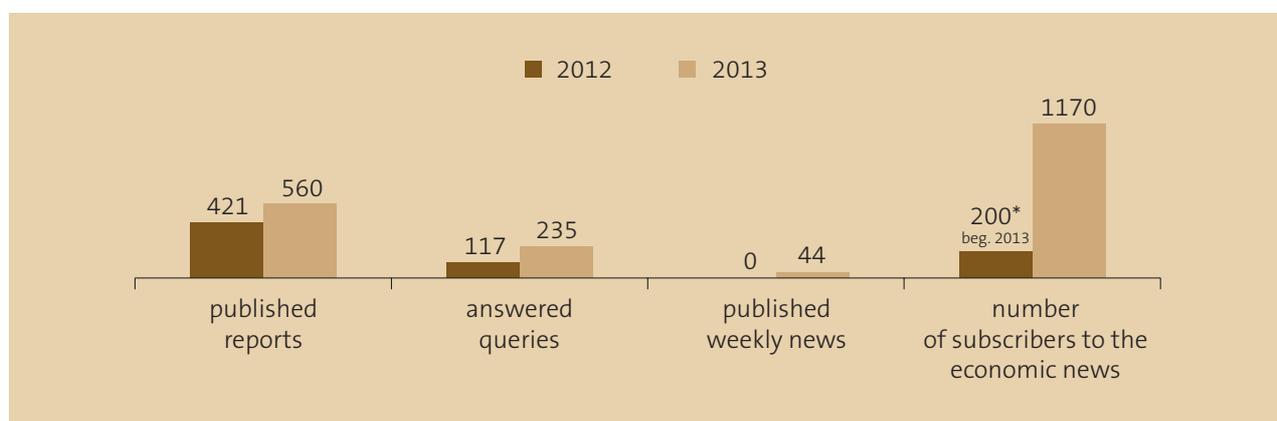
At the **World Bank**, Slovakia focused upon negotiations relating to Slovakia's representation in the bank in 2014–2024. A *Borrowing Agreement* was approved between the Slovak Republic and the **International Monetary Fund** for a period of four years, whereby Slovakia plays its role in strengthening IMF lending capacity and global financial and economic stability. As part of the desire to engage Slovak businesses in **European Bank for Reconstruction and Development** (EBRD) projects, a seminar was held on public procurement for supplying goods and services for projects co-financed by the EBRD. Slovakia organised a workshop for the Slovak business sector and the

EBRD, which identified the main problems and possible solutions with regard to financing exports and supporting the development of trade and foreign investment activities. At the **European Investment Bank**, Slovakia sought to increase the loan portfolio to help youth employment and small and medium business funding.

## Energy security

Last year's priority was to create a common EU energy market, secure competitive energy supplies for it and reduce emissions. Given that the energy system is interconnected, regional cooperation is the key to achieving this ambition. On 17 April, the regulation of the European Parliament and the Council for the trans-European energy infrastructure was approved, prioritising strategic trans-European corridors and energy infrastructure areas. We consider it a success that the preliminary list includes the north–south gas corridor and the north–south electricity and oil connections, which are strategically important to Slovakia. By finishing construction of the energy infrastructure that will connect up Slovakia with Hungary, Poland and Austria, and by expanding the capacity of the Adria crude oil pipeline, we will be able to diversify energy supplies, utilise unconventional resource capacities and improve stability on the European energy market.

Despite great efforts to diversify energy supply resources and routes, existing infrastructure and regional initiatives still remain central to our energy security. Over the year, there were negotiations between Eustream and Ukraine on utilising existing infrastructure in reverse flow.



Overview of ministry's Business Centre activities in 2013



■ The 18<sup>th</sup> Central European Summit of Heads of State in Bratislava, 13 June 2013  
(Photo: Office of the President of the Slovak Republic/Marián Garaj)



# 3 Relations with neighbours, regional and bilateral cooperation

The year 2013 saw an increase in the number of visits, meetings and receptions as part of the cultural activities celebrating the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of an independent Slovak Republic and to commemorate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of diplomatic relations.

One of the key foreign policy events held in Slovakia was the **18<sup>th</sup> Summit of the Presidents of Central, Eastern and South-Eastern European Countries (12–13 June)**. In terms of scope, it was the most important political event in 20 years of Slovak independence. Eighteen heads of state accepted the president's invitation, making it the most attended summit in the 20 years it has been held. It was attended by the Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the presidents of Albania, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Montenegro, Estonia, Croatia, Macedonia, Moldova, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Austria, Romania, Slovenia, Serbia and Ukraine. The summit was also attended by the President of the European Council and the leader of Kosovo. The Slovak Republic maintained its position on the independence of Kosovo. Delegates addressed the post-crisis recovery in the region, the need for social consensus over deepening integration and for a proactive labour market policy to counteract unemployment, especially amongst young people. In terms of support for the enlargement process, the summit in Bratislava was exceptional in that for the first time representatives from Belgrade and Pristina had discussions within a multilateral framework, which serves as a model for future meetings.

The strategic partnership among the Central European countries has been further strengthened within the **Visegrad Group** over priority areas such as internal cohesion, energy security, transport infrastructure and defence policy. In June, the prime ministers of the V4 countries approved a road map for creating a regional gas market. In transport and energy infrastructure, the V4 countries continued to implement projects to set up a north–south connection in the region. At the GLOBSEC conference



Meeting between representatives of the V4, EU and Eastern Partnership countries' foreign ministers, Cracow, 17 May 2013 (Photo: MFEA SR)

# Relations with neighbours, regional and bilateral cooperation



Minister Miroslav Lajčák addressed a conference on *Twenty years of Independent Czech and Slovak Diplomacies* in Prague, 21 February 2013 (Photo: MFEA SR)

in Bratislava in April, foreign ministers of the V4 countries adopted a joint declaration entitled, *For a more effective and stronger common EU security and defence policy*.

During Slovakia's one-year Presidency of the **International Visegrad Fund** (IVF) (1 January – 31 December 2013), the Council of Ambassadors met twelve times and the Conference of Ministers met seven times. Out of the IVF budget of 7 million euros, more than 350 NGO projects were approved from the V4 countries and up to 200 scholarship were



One of the outcomes of a meeting between Minister Miroslav Lajčák and his Czech counterpart Jan Kohout is an agreement enabling Lebanese citizens to apply for Slovak visas at the Czech Embassy from 1 August 2013, (Photo: MFEA SR)

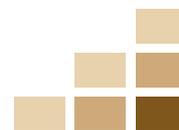
awarded to students from the V4, Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries.

## The Czech Republic

Our extremely good relationship with the Czech Republic is also visible in the close and professional bilateral cooperation between the two countries. This is reflected in activities performed via multilateral relations and shared approaches to pursuing the interests of both countries within the V4 and EU. Furthermore, the frequency of bilateral contacts and their importance was also underlined by events celebrating the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of independent republics – the Prague conferences, *Czechs and Slovaks – 20 years of cooperation between independent states and their activities in the EU and NATO* and *20 years of independent Czech and Slovak diplomacies*. An important step in cooperation in education was the signing of an *Agreement to recognise qualifications awarded in the Czech and Slovak Republics* by the prime ministers of both countries in November 2013.

## Poland

The strategic partnership with the Republic of Poland declared some time ago was affirmed



with the implementation of outcomes from the first joint government sessions in March 2013 in Poprad, primarily the completion of cross border transport and energy infrastructure and the joint bid for the 2022 Winter Olympics. In November, a bilateral intergovernmental agreement was signed on cooperation over implementation of the gas pipeline project connecting the Polish and Slovak supply network. In November, the Polish Olympic Committee submitted a bid for the joint organisation of the 2022 Winter Olympics in Cracow and the Tatra Mountains. In November construction began on the Svrčinovec–Skalité section of the D3 motorway, which is good news for the future development of bilateral, and also economic, relations.

## Hungary

The President of the Slovak Republic paid his first official visit to Hungary in nine years. The visit affirmed and consolidated the nature of mutual cooperation and focused on a broad, positive and pragmatic agenda, and strengthening common interests.

The first joint session of government representatives of both countries also took place. It focused on developing joint infrastructure and cross border cooperation projects in order to make greater use of EU funding. Both sides agreed to implement 25 transport connection projects. The dialogue between legal experts on issues relating to citizenship also continued.



At a joint session of representatives of the Slovak and Hungarian governments several memoranda of cooperation and understanding were signed, 2 July 2013  
(Photo: Government Office of the Slovak Republic)



Energy, cross-border transport infrastructure and the 2022 Winter Olympics bid were the subject of the first session between the Slovak and Polish government representatives in Poprad, 27 March 2013  
(Photo: Government Office of the Slovak Republic)

## Austria

The year 2013 was also the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of diplomatic relations between Slovakia and Austria. January began with Prime Minister Robert Fico's visit to Vienna for talks with the federal president, the head of parliament and the federal chancellor. He also visited the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber. The event was concluded with an informal meeting between the presidents in Slovenský Grob, and the prime minister made another official visit to Vienna in November. Talks with Austria mainly concerned utilising the potential inherent in our developed economic relations and the fact that we are neighbours.

## Bilateral cooperation

In addition to seeking joint positions or common ground on various aspects of the European agenda, bilateral negotiations between Slovakia and EU partners were dominated by subjects such as overcoming the consequences of the economic crisis, unemployment measures, fostering mutual trade and investment, as well as cooperation in expanding science, research and innovation. Dialogue with the USA centred around security threats and risks as well as NATO enlargement, while discussions with Russia concentrated on re-commencing economic cooperation.

French President François Hollande's October visit to the Slovak Republic – a historic first since Slovakia gained independence – was both a key meeting and

# Relations with neighbours, regional and bilateral cooperation

the high-point of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of **Slovak–French** relations. The meetings between François Hollande and all leading Slovak state representatives attested to the strategic partnership between the two countries in foreign policy dialogue, the economy, energy, defence, culture, science and education sealed in 2008. A round table of experts co-chaired by Robert Fico and François Hollande on potential collaboration in science and research, and energy and sustainable urban development testified to the partnership. A new *Action plan for the Slovak–French partnership for 2013–2018* was signed in the presence of the presidents by Minister Miroslav Lajčák for the Slovak side. Prospects for future cooperation had already been set out at previous meetings by Prime Minister Robert Fico and President François Hollande and Prime Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault in Paris in April 2013.

Despite not sharing a common border, **Germany** perceives Slovakia as a “neighbouring” country. The relationship between the two countries in 2013 is evidence of this closeness. During the year, the prime minister made several official visits to Germany. In addition to participating in a youth employment international conference, he visited Hannover Messe trade fair to foster Slovak–German trade. Minister Miroslav Lajčák also visited Germany frequently. In January, he met his ministerial counterpart and commemorated the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the Slovak Republic and diplomatic relations. On a number of occasions, he discussed current European foreign policy themes with the German chancellor’s adviser. Of particular importance in Slovak–German parliamentary relations was President of the Bundestag Norbert Lammert’s working



While on an official visit to the Slovak Republic, French President François Hollande highlighted Slovakia’s twenty year journey in the post-independence era, 29 October 2013 (Photo: Office of the President of the Slovak Republic/Marián Garaj)

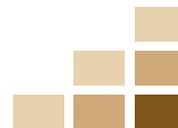
visit to Slovakia in 2013. The political meetings were important as they reflect the Federal Republic of Germany’s leading position in Slovak foreign trade.

The intensive cooperation and political dialogue with Slovakia’s strategic partner, the **United States of America**, culminated last year in discussions between Prime Minister Fico, President Barack Obama and Vice President Joseph Biden at the White House on 21 November.

Top US officials acknowledged Slovakia’s readiness to take on greater responsibility in international matters. This is also evident in Slovak–American cooperation in Afghanistan over creating the Afghan security forces, as well as the intensive dialogue – through the EU and at NATO – on important global issues, such as the crisis in Syria, the Iranian nuclear programme and the Middle East peace process. In keeping with long-term priorities, Slovak diplomacy continued dialogue with



State Secretary Peter Javorčík opened the second session of the Slovak–German Reflection Group, 22 March 2013 (Photo: MFEA SR)



the USA advocating that NATO enlargement include the Western Balkan countries, and that the EU and the USA work closely together to support Eastern European countries in their EU trajectories.

Economically, there was a strengthening of Slovak–American cooperation to help foster innovation, science, research and the knowledge economy in Slovakia. Minister Miroslav Lajčák’s visit to the Cambridge Innovation Center in Boston at the beginning of November contributed to this. A new dynamism entered into Slovak–American relations when negotiations began on creating a free-trade zone between the EU and the USA as part of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership.

In terms of foreign policy strategy, it was important to Slovakia that it should complete its work on strengthening the strategic partnership between the European Union and the **Russian Federation**.

Slovakia encouraged balanced relations between the EU and the Russian Federation in order to achieve mutually advantageous conditions in economic and security issues. In March, the Intergovernmental Commission on Economic and Scientific–Technical Cooperation began work to ensure that it becomes



The 16<sup>th</sup> session of the Intergovernmental Commission for Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation takes place in Moscow, attended by Deputy Prime Minister Miroslav Lajčák and his Russian counterpart Dmitry Rogozin. During the visit, Miroslav Lajčák also met Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, 4–5 March 2013 (Photo: MFEA SR)

a modern, dynamic and functioning mechanism for developing pragmatic, constructive trade and economic cooperation with Russia, with a focus on results.



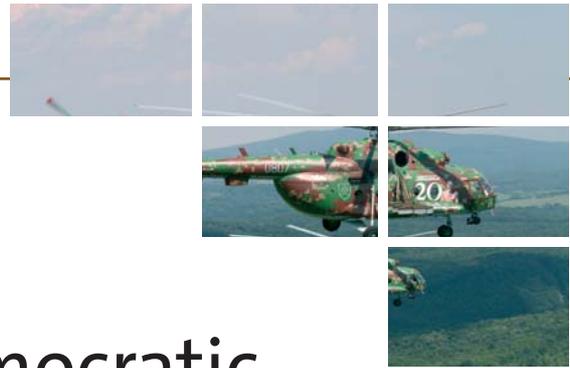
The Slovak delegation at a meeting with US President Barack Obama at the White House, 21 November 2013 (Photo: TASR)



A Slovak soldier defusing an explosive close to the air base in Kandahar, Afghanistan  
(Photo: ISAFmedia)

# 4

## Safe and democratic world



### 20 years in the UN

Over the past two decades, Slovakia's relationship with the United Nations has strengthened and developed as Slovakia has grown and matured into a stable democracy and become a reliable international partner committed to the ideals of effective multilateralism.

A dedicated supporter of the work of the United Nations, Slovakia has avidly endeavoured to assist in a wide range of United Nations activities, be it through the work in the main UN organs or through its participation in more than 17 peacekeeping operations, in delivering humanitarian assistance or development aid through more than 400 projects in more than 20 countries. In 20 years, Slovakia has worked pro-actively to advance the causes of the United Nations even further in all three main pillars of its work: peace and security, human rights and development, when entrusted with membership of the main UN organs dealing with these issues. Slovakia demonstrated its commitment to maintaining international peace and security as a member of the Security Council in 2006–2007, its dedication to advancing human rights as a member of the Human Rights Council in 2008–2011 and its dedication to fostering development while a member, and recently president, of the Economic and Social Council. Slovakia also supported scientific, research and cultural projects of global significance, not only as a member but also as vice president of the UNESCO Executive Board in 2009–2013.

Slovakia and other EU countries worked tirelessly to ensure that the *UN Arms Trade Treaty* was adopted. The treaty sets out stricter rules for the global arms trade and for consistent control of legal trade in order to prevent illicit use, including terrorist activity and uncontrolled arms stockpiling. Slovakia signed the treaty on 10 June and ratification is expected in 2014.

### Slovakia in the OSCE

In 2013, Slovakia, as Coordinator of the Economic and Environmental Committee of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), focused upon the economic and environmental dimension and energy security. On the basis of a Slovak initiative, the OSCE Ministerial Council adopted a decision in December on protecting energy networks from natural and man-made disasters. Slovakia was greatly involved in this since the country is highly dependent on imported energy supplies and because of its negative experience during the gas crisis. Working with its partner countries, the Slovak Republic was able to ensure this issue was firmly on the OSCE agenda.

In the OSCE, Slovakia also advocated that the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) retain its autonomous position and suppressed attempts by some countries to water down the methodology for monitoring elections. Slovakia sent eight short-term election observers on OSCE/ODIHR election monitoring missions to Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Macedonia.

# Safe and democratic world



At a New York reception organized to mark the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the Slovak Republic, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon positively assessed Slovak diplomacy in coordinating international efforts in post-conflict regions, New York, 9–11 June 2013 (Photo: MFEA SR)



Minister Miroslav Lajčák with Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency Yukiya Amano when the latter was on an official visit to Slovakia in October 2013 (Photo: MFEA SR)

As part of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2013, Slovakia contributed 100,000 euros towards the destruction of chemical weapons in Syria. The training centre in Zemianske Kostoľany continued training inspectors for the OPWC.

## An active partner in NATO

In addition to being an EU member, membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) was important in terms of Slovakia's foreign security in 2013.

On questions concerning the future of NATO, Slovakia strived to retain sufficient engagement in the local region, mainly in the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe. Slovakia also backed NATO's new initiatives,

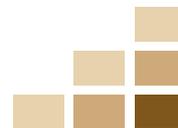
such as being able to provide assistance for building defence capabilities in countries which both need and have expressed an interest in such capabilities. The Slovak Republic also offered to share her experience of security sector reform in the UN.

Slovakia continued to push for an open door policy. As part of preparations for the NATO summit in September 2014 in Great Britain, Slovakia was one of the countries behind the decision to compile by summer 2014 an objective assessment of progress made in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia and Georgia who are pursuing membership. The assessment will be used by NATO member states to decide further possible steps for enlargement.

During NATO engagement in the Western Balkans, the Slovak Republic ensured that NATO forces in Kosovo (KFOR) continued to fulfil their responsibilities



Family photograph of the 20<sup>th</sup> session of the OSCE Ministerial Council in Kiev, 5 December 2013 (Photo: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe)



Meeting of the foreign ministers of NATO member states in December 2013  
(Photo: NATO)

mandated by UN Security Council resolution No. 1244/1999. Slovakia believes that any change to the scope of duties should be based exclusively on security developments in the region.

### NATO contact point embassy in Serbia

In 2013, the Slovak embassy in Belgrade began its two-year mandate as a NATO Contact Point Embassy in Serbia. Slovakia's work was mainly concerned with increasing Serbian public awareness of NATO, but also on cooperation between NATO, Slovakia and Serbia. One example was the support given to organising the second international conference of the *Belgrade Security Forum* in September 2013. The Serbian media also published a series about discussions between Slovak experts and the Serbian public, called *Partnership Tour*, which relayed the Slovak experience of NATO cooperation, integration and membership. This project was realised in collaboration with the Slovak Atlantic Commission. Slovakia contributed 18,446 euros to NATO trust fund for destroying munitions stockpiles in Serbia and 20,000 euros for reducing risk of corruption in the security sector.

### Participating in international crisis management

To help create a secure and stable international environment, Slovakia assisted in international crisis



The work of the Slovak Embassy in Belgrade, the NATO Contact Point Embassy in Serbia, was one of the topics of discussion between Slovak and Serbian foreign ministers Miroslav Lajčák and Ivan Mrkić in Bratislava on 22 January 2013 (Photo: MFEA SR)

## Safe and democratic world



High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton with Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs Javad Zarif during E3+3 plus Iran negotiations in Geneva in November 2013 (Photo: European External Action Service)

management operations led by NATO, the EU and the UN.

The priority in this area was participation in the International Security and Assistance Forces (ISAF) operations led by NATO in Afghanistan. As this operation is planned to be completed by the end of 2014, Slovakia adapted its contribution in accordance with the changing requirements, resulting in a temporary reduction in the number of soldiers sent from around 350 to approximately 220. At the same time, the Slovak Armed Forces prepared and began implementing a qualitative change which means that, from January to December 2014, forces comprising of 78 members sent to Afghanistan will concentrate on providing support, mentoring and training in the field of special operations.

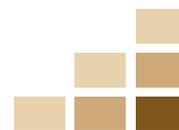
Despite the deaths of three members of the Slovak Armed Forces in the line of duty in Afghanistan in July and December, this did not stop Slovakia from providing further support to train and to educate the Afghan Armed Forces so they will be capable of ensuring security in the country independently and as soon as possible. The year 2013 was the first in which Slovakia had to face the fatal consequences of terrorist attacks. Apart from the casualties in Afghanistan, the attacks caused death of Slovak mountain climbers in Pakistan. The Slovak Republic expressed its intention

to take part in the new, smaller NATO training and assistance mission in Afghanistan from 2014, which is currently being prepared. The Slovak Republic was actively involved in preparations for the mission and emphasised the need for a strong legal framework.

In addition to issues related to the further stabilisation and development of Afghanistan, Slovakia was also involved in seeking a solution to the ongoing conflict in Syria and in EU discussions on Iran's nuclear programme. In both cases, and in other similar cases, Slovakia advocated using all available effective multilateral tools and opting for political solutions over force.

Slovakia also adhered to the EU joint position on Iran's nuclear programme. We welcomed the greater openness of Iran over the country's nuclear policy and EU High Representative Catherine Ashton's success at the November negotiations in Geneva. We also declared our readiness to develop bilateral relations with Iran in areas not affected by sanctions.

The Slovak Republic strictly opposed the use of chemical weapons in Syria or in other conflicts and we therefore welcomed the agreement reached on destroying Syria's chemical weapons and weapon-making equipment. At *Geneva I*, Slovakia backed the search for a peaceful solution to the conflict, whilst



fully respecting the common position of EU countries. Slovakia was also actively involved in resolving the humanitarian crisis in Syria.

## EU Common Security and Defence Policy

In 2013, the Slovak Republic engaged in the talks on developing an EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), and on enhancing the crisis management procedures. Slovakia advocated that the EU and NATO work together as closely as possible and on the basis of complementarity. The Slovak Republic favoured seeking the most financially effective methods of building defence capabilities within the EU “pooling and sharing” and NATO “smart defence” initiatives, whilst endorsing maximum use of the potential for regional cooperation. In 2013, work continued in creating the EU V4 Battle Group, which will be ready in the first half of 2016.

A European Council meeting on security and defence was held in Brussels in December and determined the further strategic priorities of the CSDP. During

preparations for the meeting, the Slovak Republic focused on strengthening defence cooperation between the EU and NATO, supporting small and medium enterprises in the defence industry, strengthening the inclusion of partner countries in CSDP cooperation and determining practical steps to enable implementation of the European Council conclusions.

Issues in which Slovakia was more prominent globally in 2013 included security sector reform (SSR). Slovakia has been involved, through the UN, in this area since 2006 and is currently permanent Co-Chair of the Group of Friends of Security Sector Reform, a group which was created thanks to a Slovak initiative. In order to promote the issue, Slovakia co-organised, along with the Geneva Centre for Democratic Control of the Armed Forces (DCAF), a high level seminar on the UN’s future role in security sector reform, held at the UN Office in Geneva in March. In November, Slovakia organised a meeting of the Group of Friends of SSR at the UN in New York. At the meeting there was discussion on a recently published second report by the UN Secretary General on security sector reform, which directly praised the work performed by Slovakia in promoting the issue.

## Participation in international crisis management operations and missions as of 1 January 2014

Mission	Region	Number of members of the Slovak armed forces	Number of civilian experts, Slovak ministry
<b>NATO</b>			
ISAF (International Security Assistance Force)	Afghanistan	289	
<b>UN</b>			
UNFICYP (United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus)	Cyprus	157	2, interior ministry
UNTSO (United Nations Truce Supervision Organization)	Egypt and Syria	2	
<b>EU</b>			
EUFOR ALTHEA (European Union Force Althea)	Bosnia and Herzegovina	36	
EUPOL (European Union Police Mission)	Afghanistan		2, interior ministry
EUMM (European Union Monitoring Mission)	Georgia	1	2, interior ministry 1, foreign ministry
EULEX (European Union Rule of Law Mission)	Kosovo		6, interior ministry
EUBAM (European Union Border Assistance Mission)	Moldova and Ukraine		3, interior ministry 1, finance ministry
EUPOL COPPS (European Union Co-ordinating Office for Palestinian Police Support)	Palestinian territories		1, interior ministry
<b>OSCE</b>			
OSCE Centre Bishkek	Kyrgyzstan		1, interior ministry
<b>Total</b>		<b>485</b>	<b>19</b>



■ The Slovak Republic was active in almost 20 countries implementing over 400 projects as part of its development and humanitarian work (Photo: Halánová/Laurinc)

# 5 Development cooperation



The year 2013 brought with it the need to fulfil obligations relating to development cooperation in order to achieve sustainable growth and create democratic institutions in partner countries. Slovak development cooperation celebrated its 10 year anniversary and over the decade we have created a functional, transparent and effective system for providing development assistance and have gradually put together a strategic, legal and institutional framework programme for *SlovakAid*.

## Ten years of *SlovakAid*

In October, on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *SlovakAid*, the ministry organised an international conference entitled *Ten Years of SlovakAid – A Vision of Development Cooperation for a Changing World*. The key themes were development cooperation with the Western Balkan countries, the African continent and the Eastern Partnership. At the conference, attended by EU Commissioner for Development Andris Piebalgs, the ministers of foreign affairs of *SlovakAid* partner countries, e.g. Moldova, Montenegro and Kenya, discussed the outcomes, commitments and prospects for official development cooperation provided by the Slovak Republic. The Conference conclusions attest to the fact that Slovak development assistance is perceived significantly and positively, and that it has left its mark on the social

and economic development and transformation of partner countries. The Conference saw the launch of a publication entitled *Slovensko pomáha/Slovakia helps*, containing selected development projects that were implemented in twenty partner countries between 2003 and 2013 as part of official Slovak development assistance.

For the first time in the history of *SlovakAid*, Golden Plaquettes were awarded to people who had shared in the creation and implementation of the system



Minister Miroslav Lajčák awarded Golden Plaquettes of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs to Marián Čaučík, co-founder of the Slovak Non-Governmental Development Organisation Platform and David Chaplin, project manager and expert from the Canadian International Development Agency (Photo: MFEA SR)

# Development cooperation



In September 2013, the Slovak Republic became a member of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (Photo: MFEA SR)

of official Slovak development assistance in partner countries. The first plaquettes were awarded to the two nominees who co-created the *SlovakAid* system – David Chaplin, a long-standing project manager and expert from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and Marián Čaučík, co-founder and former long-standing chairman of the Slovak Non-Governmental Development Organisation Platform.

## Joining the OECD Development Assistance Committee

During its 20 years of independence, Slovakia has gone from being a country in receipt of assistance to one providing assistance and has become a firm member of the donor community. This culminated in the Slovak Republic becoming a member of the elite club of donors of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) on 17 September 2013. Being accepted onto the DAC is also recognition of the development assistance system that Slovakia has created.

## Humanitarian Aid

The Slovak Republic also responded to humanitarian crises around the world. Slovakia has provided financial and material humanitarian aid to Syria, Mali, the Philippines, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Belarus.

## Making progress in new programmes and activities

In 2013, the ministry announced nine calls for grants and 33 projects were approved.

It is anticipated that a new programme to send volunteers and experts to developing countries begun in March 2012, which had a positive response and grew rapidly, will continue to attract keen attention and interest. The funding allocated to the programme was increased by 30 per cent in 2013 in comparison to the pilot year and, owing to NGO interest, was again increased in autumn 2013. Over almost two years, Slovakia has sent approximately 40 volunteers, primarily to *SlovakAid* programme and project countries as part of the programme.

Sending volunteers helps improve human resources but also increases awareness and acceptance of development cooperation since, upon their return, the volunteers are involved in development education.

## Successful projects

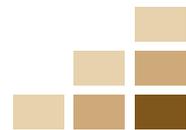
### Public procurement in Georgia

Improving the efficiency of the public procurement system in Georgia (by strengthening its integrity and anti-corruption instruments), ensuring transparent tender conditions, increasing awareness and improving the legislation were the main aims of a project entitled Increasing the transparency and efficiency of the public procurement system in Georgia.

The transfer of Slovak know-how in public procurement helped improve the skills of civil society in Georgia, e.g. monitoring and evaluating processes to enable them to put pressure on the government and other authorities. One output was the launch of a public procurement portal ([tendermonitor.ge](http://tendermonitor.ge)), which provides a comprehensive overview of procurement and compares and monitors trends.

## We are improving the quality of life for the isolated community on the island of Rusinga

Slovakia continued to support the Island of hope project on Rusinga Island in Lake Victoria. Over the last five years, a community centre has been established in this isolated area and *SlovakAid* financial support and coordinated cooperation between Slovakia and the Czech Republic have meant that there is now a health centre, school facilities and an orphanage located



here. The inhabitants of Rusinga Island now have access to treatment for HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria. The centre provides pre-school and primary education for 260 pupils and there is also an orphanage providing shelter for approximately 50 orphans from the Rusinga area. In 2013 support was mainly provided to help improve the centre's financial and food self-sufficiency via a project to establish a farm and invest the profits from selling the produce in running the health centre, school facilities and orphanage.

### Healthcare in Afghanistan

Afghanistan suffers from a continued lack of healthcare facilities, qualified personnel and in some provinces, healthcare is practically inaccessible. As part of the Development of secondary and tertiary healthcare in gastroenterology in Afghanistan project, a new diagnostic centre was created in the existing gastroenterology centre (funded by *SlovakAid* in 2008) in Wazir Akbar Khan Hospital in the capital, Kabul. A new gastroenterology centre was also built in the town of Taloqan in north east Afghanistan. In addition to supplying the necessary equipment, the project also trained specialist medical personnel including female doctors. Four doctors undertook study trips to Slovakia.

### National Convention on the EU in Moldova

Transfer of know-how and integration experience is a priority of Slovak ODA. Given the Slovak Republic's comparative advantage, European integration is a key part of Slovak technical assistance. The National Convention on the EU in Moldova project



Slovak assistance was also provided to the Kenyan island of Rusinga (Photo: NAROVINU Humanitarian Centre)

concentrated on strengthening Moldova's capacities during negotiations on the *Association Agreement*, and implementing Eastern Partnership instruments and a *Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement* with the EU. The project also involves the public in national policy-making and in formulating Moldova's positions on European integration, reform and modernisation. It also concerns the creation of a long-term, reliable, interactive and permanent information source on the EU. The platform also helps build expert capacities in governmental and non-governmental organisations, thereby helping Moldova become prepared for integration into international structures.



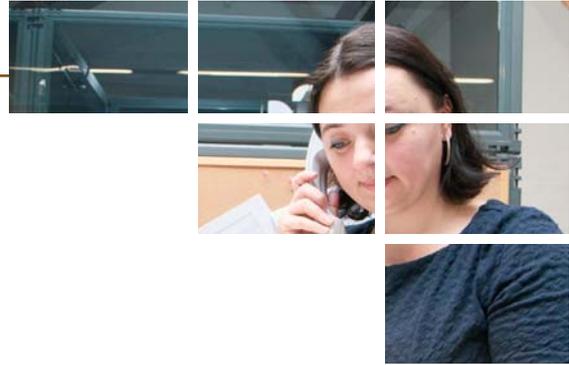
Slovakia helped finish work on healthcare facilities to improve healthcare in Afghanistan (Photo: Association of Friends of Afghanistan – AFAN)



An open public discussion as part of the National Convention on the EU helps improve politicians' responsibility for further development in Moldova (Photo: Slovak Foreign Policy Association)



In 2013 consular services provided assistance and protection to the citizens of Slovakia, promoted their interests abroad, improved the quality and accessibility of consular assistance and services for citizens and foreigners and pushed for the enforcement of rights (Photo: MFEA SR)



# 6

## Services for the people

### Consular help and assistance

To improve the quality and accessibility of services for people abroad, some embassies used the proven method of a mobile consular service. The mobile service involved sending employees to selected regions in the United Kingdom (Belfast, Manchester, Peterborough, Birmingham, Deal, and Cardiff). Regular trips to Chicago were also organised by the Consulate General of Slovakia in New York.

During the high summer season, we reopened the seasonal consulate office in Split. This service was welcomed not only by Slovak people but also by Croatian local government. In summer 2013, the seasonal consular office in Split provided non-financial assistance in 171 cases, issued 49 temporary travel documents and, in cooperation with the local authorities, dealt with 39 cases of injury and 11 deaths.

The total number of Slovak citizens registered with the foreign ministry in 2013 was 16,830. The number of registered citizens travelling to high risk countries increased (e.g. Afghanistan, Thailand, Tunisia, Nigeria, Libya and others), while the number of registered citizens travelling to low or minimal risk countries decreased (e.g. Croatia).

The year 2013 saw a continued increase in the number of international parental child abductions. This sensitive issue is no longer unique to the United Kingdom, but is also an issue that Slovak embassies have had to deal with in Egypt, Russia, Iraq and Belgium. There is also an increase in international adoptions.

In these cases, consular offices acted in close cooperation with organisations providing international legal protection for children, mainly with the Centre for International Legal Protection of Children and Youth, the Centre for Labour, Social Affairs and Family, and with the authorities in the receiving states. These cases are usually time consuming and legally complicated requiring a case-by-case approach by the embassies and the ministry.

One of the visa policy priorities in 2013 was to reduce the burden of visa requirements for Slovak citizens, or to make it easier to obtain visas at border crossings. By 21 August, visa requirements had been abolished for Slovak citizens travelling to Turkey. From 1 August, the Philippines extended the length of time Slovak tourists may stay in the country without a visa from 21 to 30 days and Kuwait allowed Slovak citizens to obtain Kuwait entry visas at border crossings. China allows Slovak citizens and EU member state citizens 72-hour visa-free transit through Shanghai and Shenyang (from 1 January 2013) and Guangzhou (from 1 August

In 2013 work continued on creating and organising a network of consular offices headed by honorary consular officers. By 15 December 2013, the Slovak Republic had established 181 consular offices headed by honorary consular officers. Of these 172 are already in operation – 80 in Europe, 37 in Asia, 18 in Africa, 15 in North America, 21 in Latin America and the Caribbean and 4 in Australia.

# Services for the people



A conference marking the International Day of Human Rights was held under the auspices of Deputy Prime Minister Miroslav Lajčák in Bratislava on 6 December 2013 (Photo: MFEA SR)

2013) on producing a plane ticket and visa for the final destination.

In order to make it easier for the citizens of Russia and Ukraine to travel to Slovakia, the Slovak Republic adopted measures from 15 March allowing citizens of the Russian Federation and Ukrainian to obtain 1–5 year multiple entry Schengen visas for travel to the Slovak Republic for the purposes of tourism, family visits and business and trade (Russian Federation citizens may also obtain visas for study purposes) if they have not previously violated Slovak legal and visa regulations. From 23 August, similar measures also apply to some groups of Turkish citizens travelling to the Slovak Republic on business and trade. From 11 November, citizens from Belarus and China who often travel to the Slovak Republic on business may also obtain a 1–5 year multiple entry Schengen visa.

In compliance with Regulation (EC) No. 810/2009 of the European Parliament and Council of 13 July 2009, the Slovak Republic continued its efforts to make it easier for citizens from non-EU countries to obtain Slovak visas, including countries where the Slovak Republic has no representation. Therefore, new agreements on representation were signed with two other states (Belgium and Spain) for issuing visas, thereby extending the number of EU states with which we have agreements to nine. Agreements with Portugal and Switzerland have been drawn up and are due to be signed at the beginning of 2014. The agreements signed to date allow citizens from non-EU countries to obtain visas for travel to the Slovak Republic in 24 countries in which the Slovak Republic has no diplomatic representation. Slovakia represents other EU states in issuing visas in nine countries.

## Slovaks living abroad

When the competency law was amended, the Office for Slovaks Living Abroad came under the responsibility of the ministry and so we gained responsibility for implementing state policy relating to Slovaks living abroad. Increased responsiveness and more effective cooperation with organisations for Slovaks living around the world was achieved as part of organisational consolidation and partly due to better coordination among embassies. The Office for Slovaks Living Abroad began to draw up a *Strategy of Slovak state policy on Slovaks living abroad 2016–2020*. The strategy will be followed by an amendment to the *Law on Slovaks living abroad*.

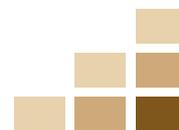
## Human rights

The fact that the ministry's responsibilities were extended to include protection of human rights work brought several new challenges. The ministry did not just take over responsibility from the Government Council for human rights, national minorities and gender equality as the key human rights advisory body to the government, but also became responsible for an important platform for dialogue with civil society

In 2013 we:

- issued 10,719 passports and 3,995 temporary travel documents,
- certified 32,473 documents, signatures and translations,
- issued 131,531 visas and dealt with 1,174 applications for local border traffic permits,
- registered 4,320 entries in the special registry and provided 3,326 registry documents from the Slovak Republic,
- dealt with 1,986 citizenship certificates and 254 applications for citizenship or denaturalisation,
- dealt with the deaths of 665 Slovak citizens,
- assisted 306 injured and hospitalised citizens,
- dealt with 101 cases of children abducted from Slovak citizens, assisted in 193 cases of protecting the rights of minors,
- provided non-financial emergency assistance in 3,083 cases and financial assistance in 11 cases,
- provided consular assistance to 107 citizens from other EU states,
- married 37 couples,
- processed 817 applications for permanent or temporary residence permits,
- provided assistance to 175 victims of trafficking,
- recorded 1,803 cases in which Slovak citizens committed crimes abroad,
- replied to 56,998 emails.

The Slovak treasury received income of 4,545,500 euros arising from these activities.



and for providing grants for national human rights protection projects.

## The international dimension

At the international level, Slovakia stresses the need to maintain and strengthen international human rights standards, mainly during meetings of the UN Human Rights Council, the highest UN human rights body and the UN General Assembly's Third Committee. During regular UN Human Rights Council sessions, Slovakia addressed the situation in regions where there is serious concern over the protection of human rights (e.g. Syria, North Korea, Egypt, Burma/ Myanmar, and Belarus). Slovakia is also regularly involved in assessing countries through the Universal Periodic Review, one of the main pillars of the UN Human Rights Council. By actively engaging in the UN forums over the issue of protecting and promoting human rights, Slovakia is preparing the groundwork for election to the UN Human Rights Council in 2018–2020.

Slovakia helped strengthen the Council of Europe's three basic pillars – human rights, democracy and the rule of law – and backed the adoption of measures to increase the effectiveness of the European Court of Human Rights. To this end, Slovakia was one of the first countries to sign Protocol No. 15 which amends the *Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms*, as well as Protocol No. 16 which enables the European Court of Human Rights to issue statements on the implementation of individual provisions of the *Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms*. Slovakia continued to work closely with the European Council's monitoring mechanisms, including the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, and implemented their recommendations.

As a reliable OSCE member, Slovakia was careful to fulfil its obligations arising from OSCE membership. Slovakia maintained active, factual and constructive dialogue with the OSCE High Commissioner on the issue of national minorities and with the OSCE representative on freedom of the media on issues of mutual interest.

## National dimension

2013 can be seen as the “year of human rights” because it was the year in which the basic programme document for the national protection of human rights was drawn up – the *National Strategy to Protect and Support Human Rights in Slovakia*. The expert and



Minister Miroslav Lajčák presenting an award to Ľubica Gáľisová and Alena Pániková for having made a significant contribution to protecting and supporting human rights (Photo: MFEA SR)

public debate which accompanied the creation of the strategy is one of the most important discussions on the nature and scope of human rights in Slovakia to have occurred since 1989.

To support the work carried out primarily by civil society, and which has an important role to play in the implementation of human rights policy, the ministry awarded funding of 900,000 euros as part of the The support and protection of human rights and freedoms LP/2013 grant scheme to 58 projects targeting vulnerable groups according to type of discrimination. Other activities included *Human Rights in the Eyes of Children*, the first creative literary competition for pupils from primary and grammar schools as well as the conference traditionally held to celebrate International Human Rights' Day.

The Government Council, the permanent advisory body to the Slovak government which is chaired by the foreign minister, met five times in 2013 to discuss, approve and recommend that the Slovak government approve the materials relating to national policy and fulfil Slovakia's international obligations in protecting and supporting human rights.

In order to strengthen guarantees for protecting the rights of the child, the Slovak Republic signed up to the *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child* in December 2013. The Optional Protocol is the first international convention on human rights and Slovakia played a leading and coordinating role during preparations.

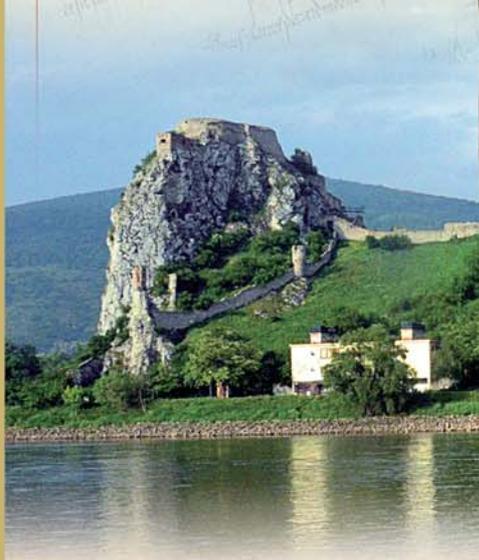
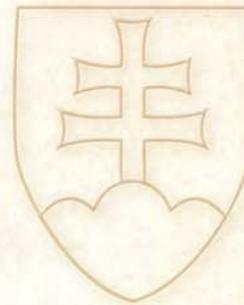
# 1150e anniversaire de l'arrivée de Constantin et Méthode dans les terres slovaques

CONSTITUTION  
DE LA REPUBLIQUE SLOVAQUE

## PRÉAMBULE

*Nous, nation slovaque,  
Nous rappelant l'héritage politique et  
culturel de nos ancêtres, ainsi que les  
expériences séculaires de luttes pour notre  
existence nationale et notre propre État,  
Dans l'esprit de l'héritage spirituel des  
saints Cyrille et Méthode et du legs  
historique de la Grande Moravie,  
Partant du droit naturel des peuples à  
disposer d'eux-mêmes...*

(Loi no. 460/1992 Coll.)



The 1150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of Constantine and Methodius in present-day Slovakia exhibition toured 51 embassies and Slovak institutes

# 7 Public and cultural diplomacy



In 2013, the foreign ministry's continued goal in coordinating the presentation of the Slovak Republic abroad included promoting Slovakia as an attractive and trustworthy country so as to improve Slovakia's potential to attract foreign investment and to enhance the country's appeal as a tourist destination and support domestic exports, as well as develop good political relations.

In creating the "Slovakia brand", the ministry focused on involving representatives from the ministries and state agencies in presenting Slovakia abroad, alongside renowned experts in national branding, marketing, PR as well as representatives from NGOs and academia. The main platform for interministerial cooperation was the Working Group for the Coordinated Presentation of Slovakia Abroad, which is part of the Government Council for the Support of Export and Investment. One important outcome in creating the country's brand was *Branding Slovakia: from concept to message and communication* a study which proposes frameworks for marketing messages to present the Slovak Republic abroad.

## Year of anniversaries

The year 2013 included two exceptionally important anniversaries: the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of an independent Slovak Republic and the 1150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of Sts Cyril and Methodius

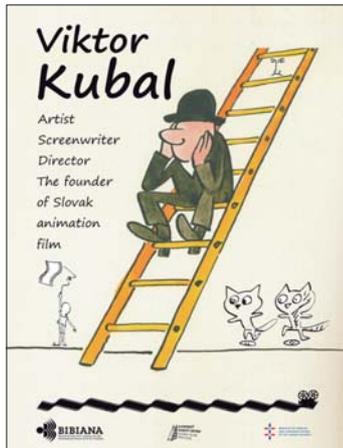
in Great Moravia. Both anniversaries represented opportunities to show other countries how deeply rooted Slovakia is in the history of Europe and, at the same time, present Slovakia as a young and successful country. The ministry was also involved in promoting Košice – European Capital of Culture 2013 and in promoting the Travelling City Abroad initiative.

The ministry prepared several cultural, promotional and informational projects to celebrate these important anniversaries:

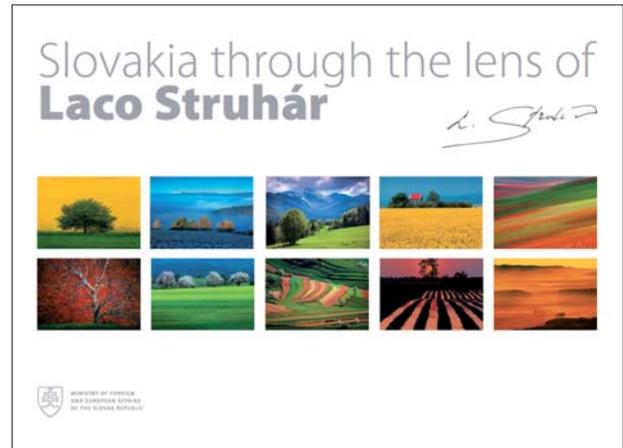


Minister Miroslav Lajčák at the first meeting of the Working Group for Coordinating the Presentation of Slovakia Abroad, Bratislava, 5 April 2013 (Photo: MFEA SR)

# Public and cultural diplomacy



Poster for an exhibition by the creator of Slovak animated film, Viktor Kubal



The first panel of the *Slovakia through the lens of Laco Struhár* exhibition

An exhibition of the 1150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of Constantine and Methodius in present-day Slovakia, which was shown at 51 embassies and Slovak institutes in English, German, Russian, French, Spanish, Polish and Greek.

As part of a three-day event, Days of Sts Cyril and Methodius in Vienna, there was an exhibition by Andrej and Mária Rudavský to celebrate the 1150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of the missionaries in Great Moravia. In addition, there was also a gathering of Slovak writers at the Komensky School in Vienna and a byzantologists meeting. The event concluded with a concert by the Bratislava Greek Catholic Choir, Kyrillomethodeon, in Schottenkirche.

In June 2013 in Zalavár, statues of Sts Cyril and Methodius by sculptress Ľ. Cveňošová were ceremoniously unveiled as was a plaque celebrating the 1150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of Sts Cyril and Methodius in Great Moravia, which took place in the Basilica di San Pietro di Castello in Venice.

There were also ceremonial visits to Slovakia by representatives from countries with which Slovakia shares the Cyril and Methodius tradition – President of Bulgaria Rosen Plevneliev, and President of the Hellenic Republic Karolos Papoulias, as well as a reciprocal visit to Athens by Miroslav Lajčák.

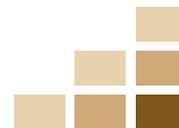
In celebration of the two most important anniversaries, Slovak diplomatic missions abroad also received commemorative letters and envelopes with first day issue of postage stamps – 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the Slovak Republic, Košice – European Capital of Culture 2013 and the 1150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of Sts Cyril

and Methodius in Great Moravia, prepared by the Slovak Post Office.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of an independent Slovak Republic, Minister Miroslav Lajčák presented awards to 90 public figures from 38 countries who had made an outstanding contribution to developing friendly relations with the Slovak Republic and spread the good name of Slovakia around the world. The awards were presented by the heads of



Postage stamps issued to mark the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the Slovak Republic and Košice – European Capital of Culture 2013



embassies at events celebrating the establishment of an independent Slovak Republic.

In 2013, embassies and Slovak institutes organised many important cultural events and projects promoting a wide range of genres of Slovak art and culture abroad. High profile events included the following:

### Exhibitions

- *Richness in diversity* – a project dedicated to the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of an independent Slovak Republic
- an exhibition of *20 years of the Czech and Slovak Republics – Social life in the streets and squares*
- *Visual inspirations and the quest for roots* – selected works by 52 Slovak artists, such as Hložník, Brunovský, Jančovič and Ševčovič
- an exhibition of art work by disabled people – *National presentation of the art of disabled Slovak artists*
- *Viktor Kubal* – an exhibition dedicated to well-known animator representative and creator of Slovak animated film, produced for diplomatic missions abroad by the BIBIANA International House of Art for Children
- *Slovak Press Photo* – an exhibition of selected award winning photographs from contemporary Slovak photography

- *Slovakia through the lens of Laco Struhár* – an exhibition of large photographs by a renowned photographer, dedicated to the beauty of Slovak nature

### Concerts

- an operetta in Warsaw for the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the Slovak Republic performed by Adriana Kučerová, Pavol Kubáň and Ondrej Šaling
- a concert in Budapest by the Cappella Istropolitana chamber orchestra for the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the Slovak Republic

### Days of Slovak Culture

- Sixteen accompanying events held in Berlin including *Richness in diversity* an exhibition for the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the Slovak Republic
- *Slovak days in Malta* with operetta by Soprano Mária Porubčinová with piano accompaniment by Róbert Pechanec. The concert was also performed in Rome on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the Slovak Republic
- *Week of Slovak culture in Marseille*

2013 also saw positive outcomes in cooperation between Visegrad countries. Artists from these countries organised several joint events. There was a jazz concert by the V4 countries in Moscow, at which Matúš Jakabčic represented Slovakia.



The *Modern diplomacy: 20 years of service for Slovakia* conference was attended by Miroslav Lajčák, Ján Kubiš, Eduard Kukan, Peter Tomka, Maroš Šefčovič and Miroslav Jenča, Bratislava, 21 January 2013 (Photo: MFEA SR)



Minister Miroslav Lajčák awarding medals to cyclists at the first Visegrad Bicycle Race in Poland, 18 May 2013 (Photo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland/Justyna Ciešlikowska)

bringing together national cultural institutes – EUNIC. *Night of literature* has already become a traditional common event organised in several EU countries.

### Ministry for the people

In January 2013 the traditional New Year's meeting was held between Miroslav Lajčák and NGOs, whose experts are important partners in helping the ministry perform its work.

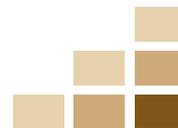
The Faculty of Political Science and International Relations at Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica organised, under the auspices of the ministry, a *Modern diplomacy: 20 years of services for Slovakia* conference (21 January 2013), which was held at the ministry. Leading Slovak diplomats who had achieved recognition and held positions in international organisations during their careers spoke at the conference, which was transmitted live by TA3 television.

V4 countries performed together with Austria and Slovenia at Central European Cultural Platform events, e.g. *What's for breakfast* in Tbilisi and a *Preludes* musical evening at the Tirana University Concert Hall. There is also ongoing cooperation at EU member-state level

The ministry is a long-term patron of the family-style children's home in Nové Mesto Nad Váhom. In 2013, Minister Miroslav Lajčák's wife, who regularly visits the children's home, donated an extra-special gift – the resources to purchase a nine seater minibus.



The traditional new-year meeting between Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Miroslav Lajčák and representatives from non-governmental organisations in Bratislava, 8 January 2013 (Photo: MFEA SR)



In May 2013, the ministry supported the organisation of the first Visegrad Bicycle Race, whose 533 km long route ran through Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Poland. The best Slovak competitor Meleg, finished seventh.

On 25 May 2013, the ministry opened its doors to the public and organised an Open Day accompanied by a rich cultural programme. At the Open Day, the Goodwill Ambassador prize was awarded to successful Slovaks working abroad who, through their work, do an excellent job of spreading the good name of Slovakia. In 2013, Miroslav Lajčák presented the award to Monika Gullerová, a molecular biology researcher at Oxford University in Britain, Marián Mark Stolárik, the long-standing Head of the Department of Slovak History and Culture at Ottawa University in Canada, and Matej Krén, a renowned Slovak artist who has worked in Prague for many years.

Also in 2013, the ministry was involved in the traditional Christmas Bazaar, the largest charity social event of the international and diplomatic communities in Slovakia. The 23<sup>rd</sup> Christmas Bazaar was attended by the representatives of 44 countries in Slovakia. Visitors to the Christmas Bazaar showed great interest in the



M. Lajčák awards presented to 90 important figures from 38 countries by the heads of Slovak embassies abroad at events celebrating the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of Slovak Republic (Photo: MFEA SR)

traditional Slovak products, as is evidenced by the proceedings totalling 2,827 euros which the diplomatic sector donated to charity.



Minister Miroslav Lajčák with the recipients of the 2013 Goodwill Ambassador awards – Monika Gullerová, Marián Mark Stolárik (left) and Matej Krén (Photo: MFEA SR)



■ The main building of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic  
(Photo: MFEA SR)

# 8

## Modern and professional foreign service



**A**s an active and successful international political player, one of the Slovak Republic's most important pillars is a professional foreign service. The only guarantee of functionality and performance is a solid, institutional and legislative framework and improving this is one of my priorities.

It sounds simple, but in practice achieving this aim involves a lot of hidden responsibility and specialised work, because the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic works with its diplomatic missions in a dynamic international environment.

Our ministry did not escape the restrictive budgetary measures of 2013 either, yet it was necessary to perform a growing amount of foreign policy work using limited resources. This is the reality. Nonetheless, we do not see this as a negative, but as a challenge forcing us to seek opportunities to rationalise in all areas. We continually strive to improve our work, making use of our great advantage – opportunities to obtain the best experience directly from abroad.

The demands associated with this can only be handled in the long term by true professionals. Through our everyday work, the general public and experts both at home and abroad create their own image of the Slovak foreign services. I consider this to be natural and so I am strict in ensuring that ministry posts are held by the most qualified people. In this respect, the support of continuous professional and language training occupies a prime position at the ministry.

I evaluate 2013 positively in terms of the functioning of the ministry. We focused upon new tasks: improving the training of economic diplomats and the successful launch of across-the-board training of state administration employees in preparation for the Presidency of the Council of Europe in 2016. The network of diplomatic missions abroad responded to Slovakia's foreign policy and economic interests.

I am happy that despite the budget cuts and money-saving measures, we succeeded in fulfilling our responsibilities. This was demonstrated to me by the reactions of many institutions and citizens – this feedback is the best kind of motivation.

Pavol SÝKORČÍN  
Secretary General

# Modern and professional foreign service

## Foreign service capacity in 2013

In 2013, the ministry closed the embassy in Malaysia and the Consulate General in Los Angeles (USA), and opened embassies in Moldova and in the United Arab Emirates. Consequently, Slovakia currently has a **total of 82 diplomatic missions**, namely 64 embassies, seven permanent missions to international organisations, eight consulates general, two liaison offices and one Slovak Economic and Cultural Office. In addition there are also eight Slovak institutes promoting Slovak culture in

the world. The embassies in Libya and Syria were temporarily closed due to the deteriorating security situation.

On 31 December 2013, the ministry had 1,160 employees, of whom 476 were working at headquarters and 684 (including contract staff) at diplomatic missions. In 2013 a total of 188 students of 24 Slovak universities and universities abroad completed an unpaid short-term internship at the ministry. Of these 105 undertook their internship at ministry headquarters and 83 at diplomatic missions.

## MFEA Expenditure in 2013

(simplified summary of overall breakdown – actual expenditure in euros)

Budget programmes:

<b>Improving foreign services</b> .....	<b>101,755,073</b>
Programme management .....	34,075,458
Gabčíkovo Nagymaros legal dispute.....	665
Working with NGOs .....	122,000
Staff training .....	88,755
Creating and implementing policy in the field of human rights .....	923,074
Diplomatic representation abroad.....	62,458,257
Cultural representation abroad.....	1,103,557
Local staff employed abroad.....	2,983,307
<b>Supporting Slovaks living abroad</b> .....	<b>1,970,995</b>

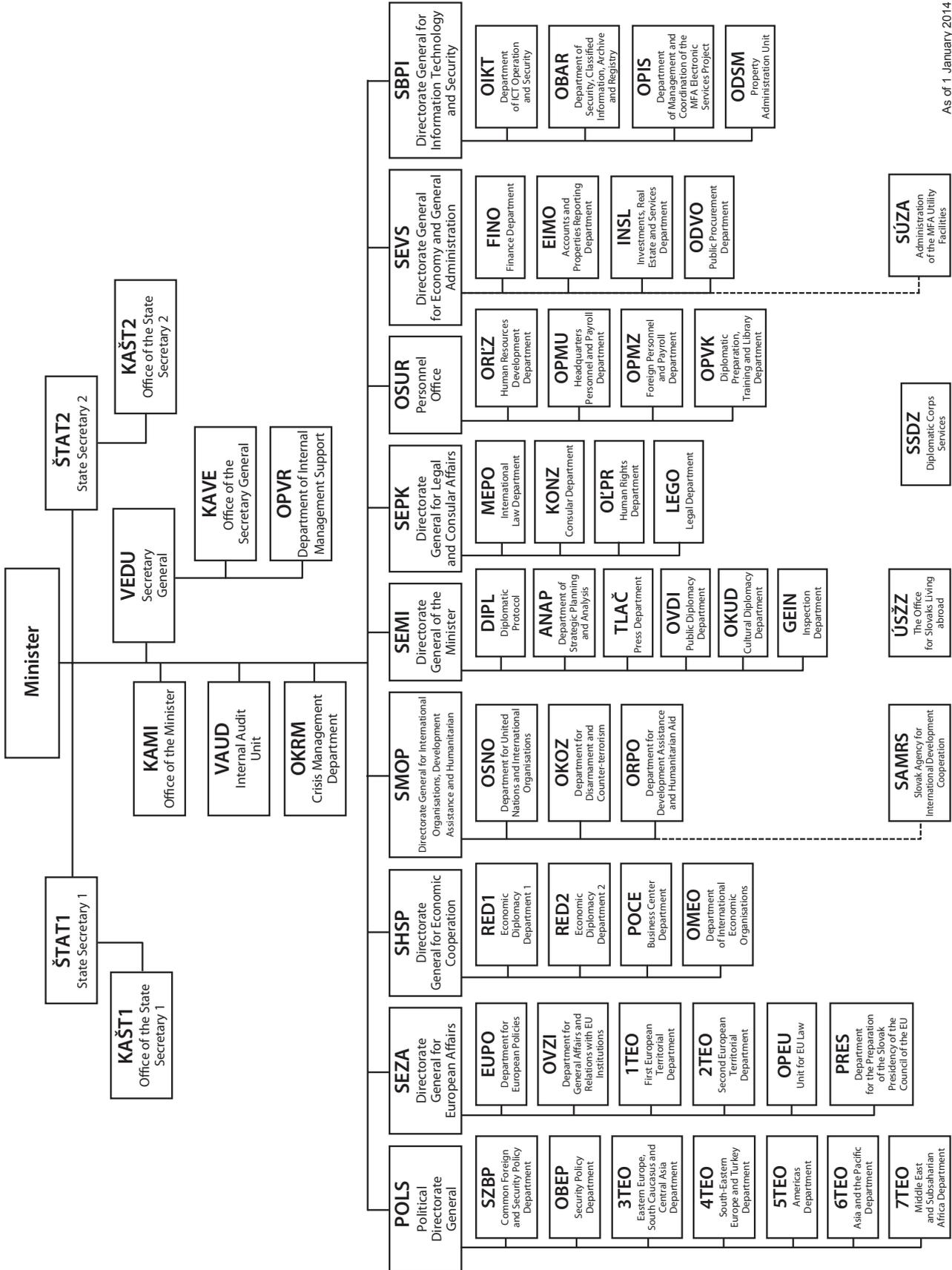
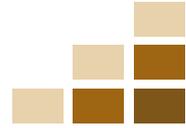
Interministerial programmes:

<b>Official development aid – MFEA SR</b> .....	<b>6,174,841</b>
<b>Posting civilian experts to work in crisis management activities abroad – MFEA SR</b> .....	<b>81,761</b>
<b>Contributions to international organisations – MFEA SR</b> .....	<b>22,938,213</b>

---

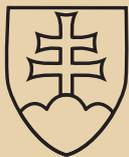
<b>Total</b> .....	<b>132,920,883</b>
--------------------	--------------------

# Organisational Chart



As of 1 January 2014





Published by the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic

ISBN 978-80-88726-59-3