

# Foreign and European Policy in 2016

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



**MINISTRY**  
**OF FOREIGN**  
**AND EUROPEAN AFFAIRS**  
**OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC**

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# 2016 – the year of Slovakia’s Presidency of the Council of the European Union



*“The Slovak Presidency gave the best it could.”*

Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission

*“The Slovak Presidency of the Council of the EU faces extreme challenges; the Union has been operating for a number of years in permanent crisis mode, where one crisis is followed by the next and one crisis summit is called after another.”*



Martin Schulz, Speaker of the European Parliament

*“The Bratislava process has already entered modern European political history by launching the process of self-reflection the EU needed after the British vote to leave the EU.”*



Robert Fico, Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic



*“The Presidency was a success for the EU and Slovakia. We helped calm Europe in difficult times by organising the Bratislava Summit and the EU signalled to Slovakia that it wanted to continue in the same direction together – because the EU is the best thing we have on the old continent.”*

Miroslav Lajčák, Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic



*“The Presidency was a great experience and investment in the people who enable us to pursue our national interests more effectively. It was great team work by the experts and specialists from all the ministries who sought to achieve consensus between the 28 member states.”*

Ivan Korčok, Plenipotentiary of the Government for the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the EU

# Slovakia's successful Presidency of the Council of the EU at a time of instability and crisis

Dear friends and readers, I am pleased that you have chosen Slovakia's annual foreign policy report produced by our Ministry. We are encouraged by your interest in the results of our work.

In March 2016 parliamentary elections were held in Slovakia. The government that was subsequently formed prepared its programme for 2016–2020. Stemming from this, the Ministry's main priority is to respond flexibly to opportunities and negatives in the external environment. In 2016 our work was consistently carried out with this priority in mind.

Unfortunately, the international situation last year presented Slovakia with further crises, destabilisation and military conflicts. We witnessed the continuation of unprecedented suffering among civilian populations, requiring large amounts of humanitarian aid to be supplied to areas hit by military conflicts and crisis. The continued violence and terrorist attacks have only served to increase feelings of global instability, reinforce mutual distrust and undermine peace efforts.

European countries did not escape the terrorism either. It took its toll on human lives but was also seen as an attack on our way of life and on the democratic system in which we live. It poses a new challenge – as do the migration flows from countries in the midst of war, especially Syria, as well as from Afghanistan, Iraq and numerous African countries.

These dramatic developments have been compounded by Europe's internal problems. The most notable of which was the UK's June referendum, resulting in its decision to leave the EU. For the Union, having gradually become accustomed to these endless crises, feelings of uncertainty, discontinuity, and a certain alienation, the departure of a large and influential European state is another new, unprecedented and negative experience.



In this context, I wish to reiterate that, despite the decision of the citizens of the United Kingdom, the EU remains a unique integration project, greatly needed to guarantee prosperity and security in Europe, and to confront the growing extremism and nationalism head on. Slovakia therefore worked to stabilise the EU, improve the way it functions and, ultimately, ensure its survival.

In 2016 the world again became slightly less safe and harder to predict. It becomes increasingly complex each year, aided by globalisation, which brings geographic, political and economic interests into contact with other phenomena producing the most varied of consequences. Parallel to this, rule-keeping is being eroded along with the basic principles of ethics and humanity, contributing to a feeling of danger and uncertainty among ordinary citizens. They live in fear of the never ending terrorism, spread of radical extremism and continuing instability in many regions of the world. We should not underestimate the phenomenon of populism and radicalism in Europe either. Numerous populist parties are gaining ever greater support at the expense of traditional political forces, but they cannot fulfil people's expectations in the long run. This endangers cooperation among EU member states, the ability to reach compromises and agreements, and ultimately leads to the dangers of renewed nationalism in societies.

In response, we must adapt to the new political trends and unconventional threats, making maximum use of our international mechanisms. We must put greater emphasis on security and defence, and above all on positive European cooperation based on renewed trust, mutual respect and listening carefully to one another.

Under these complex and complicated circumstances, Slovakia has seized several opportunities, turning them into successes. The most important of these was our first Presidency

of the EU Council. It is with pride and satisfaction that we can say that, in terms of the content, organisation and logistics, we conducted this role successfully, as demonstrated in the fact our international partners have independently acknowledged our professionalism, reliability and expertise.

Notwithstanding the difficult situation the EU finds itself in, substantive successes can be seen in the specific areas of our work. We achieved our aims in all four priority areas. Here I would like to stress the innovative way in which we performed these tasks. The informal Bratislava Summit in September responded promptly to the fissure in the EU and produced a unanimous commitment to continuing the European project. The Bratislava Process initiated thinking on the future of the EU, regaining citizens' trust in the Union and its ability to fulfil their expectations. In Slovakia's regions numerous projects and events were organised with the intention of reaching out to the people, and I firmly believe that these helped raise awareness of the Slovak Presidency and the importance of the EU for Slovakia.

A key security event last year was the Warsaw Summit of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, which strengthened NATO's important position and key security role. At the same time, it also underlined the need for it to strategically adapt to new challenges. The adoption of the joint declaration on intensifying NATO–EU security cooperation was a strong mandate for the two institutions to work closely together in the future.

Positive progress has also been made in our economic diplomacy, with 2016 seeing stronger and more effective cooperation between all those involved. The Ministry took on the role of coordinating dialogue and various other forms of mutual cooperation. We acted in accordance with the approved Strategy for External Economic Relations for 2014–2020. During our Presidency the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement with Canada was signed, which we see as a modern, comprehensive and ambitious agreement. It not only has economic significance, but is to become the model for negotiating trade liberalisation between the EU and countries outside it.

Energy continues to be a major foreign policy area for Slovakia. We spoke out in favour of the importance of continued use of the Ukrainian–Slovak gas pipeline corridor as a safe and cost-effective way of transporting natural gas in Europe. However, we and several other countries also pointed out that the intention to build the Nord Stream II pipeline is incompatible with the principles of the EU's energy policy, legislation and interests. We therefore welcomed the fact that energy security has become a pillar of the Energy Union strategy.

In view of the aforementioned security risks and the natural growth in mobility, high demands are being placed on the consular service by the need to look after Slovak citizens abroad, provide them with effective protection or assistance in emergency situation. Providing an effective service requires both tried and tested methods and the application

of new ones, such as the use of electronic modules, the expansion of mobile consular days and improving availability through the involvement of honorary consulates.

Last year, the Ministry completed the introductory phase of the creation of its national branding. The Slovak Republic now has its first brand, conveyed by the slogan *Good Idea Slovakia*. The state administration will gradually acquire a unified visual identity. The adapted version of the branding for cultural diplomacy was launched as *Culture & Slovakia – Good Idea*. It formed part of the multi-genre spectrum of cultural events put on during the Presidency based on the Memorandum of Cooperation between the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of Culture.

The Office for Slovaks Living Abroad celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Last year it began implementing the National Policy on Slovaks Living Abroad for 2016–2020, which will bring fresh impetus, and work will be directed by the Government Council for Expatriate Affairs.

The Ministry has collaborated on many foreign policy issues with the non-governmental sector, academic community and expert public, using their expertise in specific areas. The NGO sector was also an important partner in preparations for the Presidency and it helped increase Slovakia's visibility through events such as the Globsec Conference and Tatra Summit.

Finally, I have left out an important area the Ministry has been working on keenly – the multilateral dimension – particularly putting up candidates for posts in the United Nations and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe. In 2016, for the first time, Slovakia put forward a candidate in the new, more transparent and inclusive process for selecting the UN Secretary-General. This helped improve Slovakia's positive visibility and attested to the merits of Slovak diplomacy globally. Subsequently, the East European Regional Group unanimously agreed to back the Slovak candidate for the post of President of the 72<sup>nd</sup> session of the General Assembly of the United Nations in May 2017 election. In addition, Slovakia successfully campaigned for the OSCE Chairmanship. The OSCE Ministerial Council welcomed the Slovak initiative, which was approved by consensus. This was another first for Slovakia, which will hold the post for one year from January 2019. These candidacies are a historic opportunity for Slovak diplomacy to become an important player in global diplomacy and to effectively apply its political influence in pursuing the main priority of Slovak foreign policy: securing peace and prosperity for all. This is our response to the many challenges undoubtedly awaiting us in 2017.



Miroslav Lajčák  
Minister of Foreign and  
European Affairs of the  
Slovak Republic



▶ President Andrej Kiska with his French counterpart François Hollande at an official meeting at the Élysée Palace in Paris, 22 November 2016 (Photo: Office of the President of the Slovak Republic/Marián Garaj)



◀ Speaker of the Parliament Andrej Danko during the Bratislava Informal Parliamentary Summit, 7 October 2016 (Photo: Rastislav Polák)

▶ The Prime Minister officially introduces Slovakia's candidate for the UN Secretary-General for 2017–2021, 25 May 2016 (Photo: MFEA SR)



# Ivan Korčok, State Secretary and Government Plenipotentiary for the Presidency of the Council of the EU



**The Slovak Republic held the Presidency of the Council of the EU for the last six months of 2016. What do you view as the most striking success of our Presidency?**

I see it on two levels. The first is that we stuck hard to the priorities we chose. We wanted it to be a Presidency that issued fewer declarations and more specific results, and when we look at what we have achieved in all four areas (the economy, migration, the internal market, a globally engaged Europe), we see that the outcomes of the Presidency are positive.

The second success was the Bratislava Summit. I have to say that besides the content, getting the summit to be held in Bratislava was a great success. Although it may have seemed like a routine event, it was not plain sailing but the result of concerted diplomatic effort. Before the results of the UK referendum were announced, we had already emphasised that EU leaders needed an open debate away from Brussels, where debates are tied up with addressing concrete policies. Brexit brought new dynamism to the decision to organise a summit outside Brussels. The summit in Bratislava was certainly one of the great successes of our Presidency.

**One way we wanted to restore citizens' trust in the EU was to bring tangible results to their everyday lives. To what extent have we managed to achieve this objective?**

The objective to bring tangible results was not one we set randomly, but because we are having to fight against the loss of confidence in the EU among citizens. It is caused by two phenomena. The first is that in the last ten years the EU has experienced very serious crises. The second thing, I think, is that people have lost sight of the importance of many of the things the EU brings, but which are already taken for granted. We believe that by striving for tangible results we will help regain this trust. Whether we succeed in doing this to any significant extent will become evident in

the longer term. However, I think the Slovak Presidency has done a good job in this area.

**Has the Slovak Presidency of the EU Council helped to increase citizen awareness in Slovakia about the European Union?**

I think we will have to wait for another opinion poll in Slovakia. However, I am convinced that the EU's presence was very much in evidence in Slovakia during the Presidency. After all, there were dozens of events attended by thousands of delegates in Bratislava, which received a great deal of media attention. We also tried to make the Presidency felt in the regions by cooperating with non-governmental organizations and educational institutions. I believe that during the six months of the Presidency we succeeded in bringing the Union closer to Slovak citizens than it usually is. Of course, the greatest challenge for us is to continue communicating European topics. I admit that translating many of the undeniable benefits of European policies into everyday language is a problem. That is why I would like us to discuss European issues much more at home and not have to rely on the representatives of the European institutions.

**On this topic of discussing European issues, summits are being organised for member state leaders in Malta and Rome. What can we expect from these? Will they be a culmination of the Bratislava process?**

The Bratislava Summit is important primarily because it took place at a time when the United Kingdom's referendum result was still reverberating. The Bratislava Declaration and Bratislava Roadmap launched the process that is to take us to Rome, where part of the summit will also commemorate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Treaties of Rome. The Rome Summit will be important for the EU because it will bring the vision of the kind of European Union we want in the future. The preparatory talks on what the Rome Dec-

# *“Ours was a presidency with fewer declarations and more concrete results.”*

laration will look like are underway at the moment. It is an issue that will also be discussed in Malta. In our view, despite no longer being the presiding country, it is important that the Bratislava Process and the results of the Bratislava Summit still continue to exert an influence. The Bratislava Summit is therefore of great political and representational importance for Slovakia. In addition, the Bratislava Roadmap contains a number of measures such as the Paris Climate Agreement which was ratified during the cruise along the Danube. It is also worth mentioning here the approval of the CETA trade agreement with Canada and the progress made in other areas, whether that be the Energy Union or the Internal Market.

**The Slovak Presidency was both an enormous challenge and a great opportunity for the state administration. What lessons can we learn from the Presidency?**

I think it fully testifies to the fact that the Presidency gives the member state enormous experience and lets you into the last, unknown, secret chamber where you have the opportunity to fully engage in the decision-making process and you can see how it actually plays out.

The Presidency is a great “institutional” responsibility towards the European Commission and the European Parlia-

ment. Another great benefit is the expertise gained from experts from the working level up to the ministers – all of whom will be better prepared to promote Slovakia’s interests in the EU. I also consider it to have been a great experience because for six months we had to push our national interests onto the backburner and act for the benefit of the whole of the European Union. There is no doubt it has strengthened us and left its mark on the essence of the EU, which is founded on the principle that the member states only benefit if the Union functions as a whole.

**Many challenges await us in 2017 – Brexit, migration and others. Which do you consider the most serious?**

I consider the most serious challenge to be the situation in global international relations, which is changing daily before our eyes. We are still seeing conflicts in our neighbourhood. The challenge will be handling the departure of an EU member whilst quickly articulating our interests, and this is in the context of having as partner a new US administration which is clearly communicating a new approach to key issues affecting Europe. For this reason, I consider it crucial to set out the EU’s interests, because only then can we go on the offensive with them and be an equal partner to other global players.

## Lukáš Parížek, State Secretary

**Economic diplomacy, tackling the migration crisis, and policies towards Slovaks living abroad all have a common denominator – they require dynamism and deep contextual knowledge. What is your response to this challenge in 2016?**

We have been able to lean on the Ministry's experience and good reputation in the world and we are coming up with bold new solutions. If we operate from a strong moral and ethical basis and are perceptive of the world we can also address difficult tasks.

**Which policies and events do you consider key in the changing world and for Slovak security?**

The EU's new global strategy has resolutely set out the community's approach in several security areas, from internet use and cyber and military threats to energy security and development assistance. On this basis we will also build on Slovakia's Security Strategy, with clarity and the determination to act.

Another milestone was the NATO Warsaw Summit that strengthened the credibility of conventional, nuclear, cybernetic and anti-missile defences. The Allies also agreed to confirm security guarantees on the eastern wing of the Alliance, where we have committed to sending 150 soldiers and 35 pieces of equipment to a joint Visegrad Four training mission in 2017. Slovakia is interested in helping Ukraine with its reconstruction, and we have assumed responsibility for leading the NATO Demining Trust Fund for Ukraine.

**What is the Slovak diplomatic service's view on energy security?**

Experts and the general public have long been interested in the planned Nord Stream II pipeline that would reduce the amount of gas passing through our territory and sideline the



Slovak transit infrastructure. We coordinated our approach to Nord Stream II with other ministries and energy sector representatives. In conjunction with the heads of our embassies abroad and with the active support of economic diplomats, we have pointed out that this project is incompatible with the principles of the Energy Union and the diversification of resources. In subsequent activities, we have supported the Easting gas pipeline project to ensure the effective diversification of resources from Western Europe to the Balkans and beyond to Turkey, and in the opposite direction from the Caspian region and the Middle East. This should improve the security of gas supplies in Central and South Eastern Europe, while preserving Slovakia's transit role.

**This leads naturally into the topic of economic diplomacy. In 2016 business delegates accompanied you on foreign visits, as part of your mission to support and develop business.**

The Slovak Republic is one of the most open economies in the world, and economic diplomacy has an important role to play in promoting economic interests in the world. For our export-oriented economy, it is of utmost importance that our business and entrepreneurial activities are diversified well beyond the borders of the European Union. Economic diplomacy, the embassy network and the sensitive drawing up of new tasks in a given region all play an essential role in innovation. It is important for our country and for its self-confidence that small and medium-sized Slovak enterprises competing against large multinational companies in foreign markets should receive support. Our department therefore encourages the direct development of activities and the exchange of experience directly with partners abroad. The platforms we used to communicate from in 2016 included the foreign missions of the Minister and state secretaries, support for business, science and research in collaboration with the network of offices and partner ministries and agencies abroad. The business missions are organised with the

*“In recent years we have used the word change so often that when real changes came in 2016 it was a shock for us.”*

active support of SARIO and the Slovak Chamber of Commerce and Industry, thereby strengthening interdepartmental cooperation.

**Which countries remained on the map of successful economic diplomacy for 2016?**

I am the first representative of the Slovak Republic since 1993 to have gone on a working visit with a group of Slovak businessmen to Nigeria. I actively introduced entrepreneurs to countries such as Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Ministry representatives combined their trips with business missions to Iran, the United Arab Emirates, Italy, Angola, Vietnam, Ethiopia, Croatia, Kazakhstan, Cuba, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hungary, the Czech Republic and on three occasions to China. We were also involved in presidential visits with business delegations to France, Switzerland, Romania and Georgia to promote collaboration in science, research and the innovation ecosystem.

Slovakia is a participant country in the 16 + 1 initiative and as such has a keen interest in deepening economic relations with China, particularly with regards to food, the peaceful use of nuclear energy and increasing tourism in both countries. For example, the number of Chinese tourists increased by 42.6 per cent in 2016, and we expect further growth in the coming years. Likewise, the One Belt, One Road initiative and associated New Silk Road project are a means of intensifying mutual economic relations with China.

The priority for me is still to seek out opportunities for competitive Slovak products and services on foreign markets. The fast-growing economies in Asia, the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America are attractive to us.

**The year 2016 again saw large movements of people from the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa to Europe. What steps has Slovak diplomacy taken to solve the humanitarian crisis?**

Solving the migration crisis requires EU member states to adopt a unified position and to make effective use of foreign policy tools such as development cooperation. My goal is to set out a development and humanitarian agenda involving

cooperation with our partners to build resilience in non-EU countries and thereby prevent migratory flows. We still have much work ahead of us, regardless of whether we are talking about economic, security or social issues.

For the first time, during the Slovak Presidency, space was set aside for EU member states to debate the linking of development aid with humanitarian aid to create resilience in non-EU countries during times of crisis. Slovakia approved the conclusions of the first UN Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in May 2016, in which I participated, and reaffirmed its political intention to improve collective readiness to resolve humanitarian crises.

Slovak diplomacy was able, through chairing relevant EU Council working groups, to speed up the legislative process for setting up the European Fund for Sustainable Development, getting the EU Council to reach a common position in record time. The Fund is key to the implementation of the EU's External Investment Plan to tackle the root causes of migration. And we did our share of the work when we put forward Slovak development projects for EU funding opportunities.

The European Union has recognised Slovakia's activities, as indicated by the fact that linking development and humanitarian activities is now one of the priorities of the Maltese EU Council Presidency.

**Expatriates and Slovaks living abroad are an increasingly popular topic. How did you prepare for the coming years in 2016?**

The Government Council for Expatriate Affairs was created in November 2016. Its basic task is to fulfil the role of an advisory and coordinating government body and to strategically direct the Office for Slovaks Living Abroad. Its aim is to note generational trends, make systemic changes to the approach and set national policies to take advantage of the value and potential of young people abroad. We will help bring together the previously disparate activities through clear communication, and by providing strategic direction to the Office and coordinating the participation of Ministry representatives at expatriate events.



On Friday 1 July 2016 Slovakia took over the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. It concentrated on European projects of practical benefit to citizens. Slovakia attempted to unite the EU and seek solutions acceptable to all member states and beneficial to the EU as a whole. It was a pragmatic presidency with tangible results (Photo: MFEA SR)

# EUROPEAN POLICY AND THE SLOVAK PRESIDENCY

# 1

Slovakia's first-ever Presidency of the Council of the EU was an extraordinary Slovak foreign and European policy success. Slovakia capably managed the content, organisation and logistical aspects of the role.

The most important event of the Presidency was the informal EU 27 summit which took place in Bratislava on 16 September 2016 in response to the outcome of the UK referendum. The objective of the meeting between EU leaders was to initiate political reflection on the EU's future development. They agreed the Union's prospects and direction and set the key themes for the immediate future: migration and border protection, security, and the economic and social dimensions. The summit approved the Bratislava Declaration and the Bratislava Roadmap, setting targets for the coming months. These represent the beginning of the Bratislava Process culminating in March 2017 on the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Treaties of Rome.

The ambition of the Presidency was to help renew citizens' trust in the EU with specific outcomes in four areas.

## ECONOMICALLY STRONG EUROPE

In this extremely difficult period affected by Brexit, the Slovak Presidency achieved agreement on a balanced and flexible EU budget for 2017. Compared to 2016, there was an 11 per cent (6 billion euros) increase in the resources allocated to migration and security, a 12 per cent rise in support for economic growth and employment – Erasmus + and EFSI – and an additional 500 million euros allocated to the Youth Employment Initiative. Half a billion euros was set aside for milk producers and livestock farmers. The EU will thus be better financially prepared to cope with migration and its causes, and to enhance the security and protection of its borders.

In negotiations on the proposal for updating the **multi-annual financial framework for 2014–2020** the Presidency achieved broad Commission support for a compromise proposal to increase resources by 6 billion euros. Of this, almost 4 billion is reserved for **current priorities such as migration and security**, a further 2 billion is to support growth and employment, with billion euros to support young people and for migration and security challenges.

During the Presidency of the EU Council, conclusions were adopted on the results and new elements of the **cohesion policy and European structural and investment funds**. It was exceptionally important for the Slovak Republic, a cohesion country, to emphasise during discussions that **the cohesion policy is an important and fundamental part of EU investment policy to support growth and employment**.

## MODERN SINGLE MARKET

Under the leadership of the Slovak Presidency, member states agreed on a proposed regulation to prohibit the **unjustified geographical blocking of internet services** between member states. In practice this would mean that citizens will be able to buy online products and services from other countries – creating free electronic trade between EU states.



▲ The symbolic handover of the Presidency concluded the Dutch–Slovak cooperation within the Presidential Trio. This included the opening of an exhibition of the work of Joan Miró and the CoBrA creative group at Danubiana in the presence of Princess Beatrix of the Netherlands, 30 June 2016 (Photo: MFEA SR)



▲ On 9 September 2016 an informal meeting of finance ministers (ECOFIN) was held in Bratislava. The meeting was chaired by Finance Minister Peter Kažimír, who put four current topics on the agenda: the future of EU economic policy, smart integration within the euro zone, taxes as well as the future of the Juncker Plan (Photo: MFEA SR)

The Slovak Presidency worked towards abolishing **roaming charges**. The commitment the Union made last year was to remove charges for consumers in 2017 on the principle of “at home as abroad”. Fulfilling this commitment requires one final step – **adjustment to the charges operators can bill one another for network use** (charges for voice calls, text messaging and data use).

The Slovak Presidency ensured an agreement was reached by the European Parliament on **high-speed 5G internet connections**. This concerns the agreement to make a certain frequency band (700 MHz) available for WiFi, which will result in a new generation of high-speed communications and extensive coverage.

**The Paris Agreement** is a milestone in the battle against climate change. The Slovak Presidency did its utmost to achieve ratification at the Bratislava Summit and organised an extraordinary meeting between ministers for the environment. The adoption of the agreement is testament to the European Union’s ability to work together and respond to global challenges flexibly and as one.

One of the great successes of the Presidency is the European Parliament agreement on **intergovernmental agreements on energy**. The result of this will be a mechanism binding member states to undertake **transparent consultation of any agreement** on energy under preparation to prevent secretive and damaging arrangements, and this will help improve the Union’s energy security. Once the Presidency has come to an end, Slovakia will also support the completion of the EU Energy Union, which will secure ecologically sus-

tainable energy at an affordable price for EU member states and citizens. We welcomed the fact that energy security will be one of the pillars of the Energy Union strategy, since it is a key element for maintaining economic stability and predictability.

The Slovak Presidency succeeded in breaking the long-existing impasse in negotiations and brought about agreement on the directive **combating fraud and protecting financial interests of the EU**. The European budget comprises contributions from the member states, and therefore from all taxpayers including Slovak ones. In addition, we must have a means of effectively prosecuting such offences – under the leadership of the Slovak Presidency, most member states **confirmed a commitment to establish the European Public Prosecutor’s Office (EPPO)**. This will help better protect taxpayers’ money by improving the resolution of fraud cases involving EU financial resources.

Under the Slovak Presidency, member states agreed the Council of the EU’s negotiating position on the proposed **modernisation of market protection tools**. The agreement is groundbreaking as market protection instruments have not changed for more than 15 years, despite the situation in the world markets having changed dramatically. The proposed regulation will amend the current anti-dumping regulations so as to better respond to unfair commercial practices. The aim is to **protect EU producers** from damage caused by unfair competition and to ensure free and fair trade. In this context, it must be borne in mind that more than 30 million jobs in Europe depend on free and fair trade, including six million jobs in small and medium-sized enterprises.



In addition, the following were approved: the extended operation and increased capacity of the **European Fund for Strategic Investments**, conclusions on investment barriers and a directive allowing public access to information that would help expose money laundering. EU financial stability will be significantly enhanced by the political agreement reached with the European Parliament on market-based financial funds.

#### SUSTAINABLE MIGRATION AND ASYLUM POLICY

On October 6, the **European Border and Coast Guard Agency** officially began operating. Its launch was one of the key priorities of the Slovak Presidency, and the Agency will help protect the European Union's external borders. The European Border and Coast Guard Agency (formerly FRONTEX) has a **rapid deployment** unit of 1,500 border guards and a **pool of technical equipment**, so there should be an end to staff or equipment shortages affecting operations and the Agency will be able to act quickly and effectively in problem areas.

Since discussions on reforming the Dublin regulation are proving time-consuming, the Slovak Presidency drafted an **effective solidarity** compromise. This is based on the idea

that each country should assist in cases of emergency, but that the capacity and capability of the member state must be taken into account. The member states have not reached a unanimous position on the mandatory quotas – one group considers them to be conditional to finding a solution, while the other rejects them outright. The Slovak Presidency succeeded in reopening the discussion on this complex topic and reigniting interest in finding a compromise solution.

It was also possible to achieve member state agreement on creating the **European Fund for Sustainable Development** to address the root causes of the migration and refugee crisis.

In view of the other legislative proposals that form part of the reforms to the Common European Asylum System, the Presidency concentrated on areas where agreement in principle prevailed among member states and thus the greatest progress could be made. Under the leadership of the Presidency, member states agreed on a draft **Eurodac** regulation. The proposal would extend the scope of the regulation to enable member states to store and search data on third-country nationals or stateless persons who apply for international protection and who are illegally resident on EU territory, thus enabling them to be identified for the purposes of return and readmission.



The high point of the Slovak Presidency was the Bratislava Summit. Its tangible outcomes were the Bratislava Declaration and the Bratislava Roadmap, 16 September 2016 (Photo: Rastislav Polák)



▲ Prime Minister Robert Fico, President of the European Council Donald Tusk and the President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker in informal discussion during a press conference following the Bratislava Summit, 16. September 2016 (Photo: MFEA SR)

## GLOBALLY ENGAGED EUROPE

Another priority of our Presidency was a **credible enlargement policy**, which is an effective tool for political and economic transformation in Europe. We face many crises within the EU, but it is still attractive to those outside. This can be seen in the integration efforts of countries seeking membership, especially the Western Balkans. The Presidency made progress in this area – four new chapters were opened in the accession process with Serbia and two chapters in the accession process with Montenegro. The Council also adopted conclusions calling on the Commission to draw up its position on Bosnia and Herzegovina's EU membership.

In addition to this, the Council approved its negotiating position for visa liberalisation for Georgia and Ukraine.

The **Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement** with Canada was signed during the Slovak Presidency. It was an important moment for transatlantic trade – it brings EU companies new commercial opportunities in Canada and we expect it to help boost employment in Europe. The CETA agreement will remove 99 per cent of the tariffs currently applying to trade between the EU and Canada.

## ORGANISATION AND LOGISTICS DURING THE SLOVAK PRESIDENCY

The Slovak Presidency was extremely demanding in both organisational and logistical terms. The Government decided to use a centralised organisational model for the presidential events in Slovakia. In order to keep the logistics simple and

make most efficient use of public funds, the preference was to organise high-level events and working and expert meetings in Bratislava in Reduta building and at Bratislava Castle.

During the six-month Slovak Presidency, 18 informal ministerial events took place in Slovakia, including 14 informal EU ministerial meetings and four ministerial conferences as well as a summit of prime ministers and presidents, and a meeting for parliamentary speakers. Altogether, around 700 delegations from 45 countries attended the discussions. There were 51 Council meetings in Brussels and over 1,200 meetings at the working level. Organisational and logistical support was provided by the Slovak Presidency Secretariat.

The high-point of the Presidency was the **Bratislava Summit** (16 September 2016) – an informal meeting of 27 Heads of State and Government. It was called in response to developments on the European stage after the British referendum on the EU. The meeting and its outcomes, the Bratislava Declaration and the Bratislava Roadmap, attested to the urgency of strengthening European integration.

### The Presidency in numbers

- more than **25,000** delegates participated in events
- **833** VIP guests participated in the informal ministerial meeting in Bratislava
- **1,874** suppliers contributed to the preparations and running of Presidency events
- the Presidency events were attended by **1,521** journalists
- **3** airports were used – Bratislava, Vienna and Košice
- **2,071** passengers passed through VIP Vienna
- **549** passengers passed through VIP Bratislava
- delegates were transported in **40** minivans during category A events
- heads of delegations were transported in **40** limousines during Category A events
- the largest number of limousines for one event was used to transport Finance Ministers to an informal meeting (ECOFIN) – **78**
- more than **8,000** police officers were directly involved in providing security
- **130** military police officers were deployed in the organisation of transport for the delegations
- the security forces included **1,773** soldiers
- delegates stayed in **25** partner hotels
- during category A events **36** volunteers helped delegates, prepared rooms, organised transport and staffed the cloakrooms
- during the ministerial meetings individual delegations were accompanied by **91** liaison officers
- more than **15,000** heads of delegations, delegates, journalists and members of the organisation were fed in Reduta and Bratislava Castle
- During the ministerial meetings in Reduta **200** kilos of coffee and **2,000** cups of tea were consumed

The next high-level event was the **visit by the College of Commissioners** to Slovakia, who officially opened the Slovak Presidency, and the meetings of the EU Permanent Representatives (Coreper I, Coreper II and PSC).

Two informal ministerial events took place outside Slovakia – one in Brussels in cooperation with the EEAS and the other in Slovenia.

In its various formations, the Council of the EU held **49 formal meetings** in Brussels and Luxembourg, where there were also **1,212 working group meetings**, chaired by representatives of the Slovak Republic.

Apart from the high-level informal events in Slovakia, there were **more than 180** working group away-meetings, committees, seminars, workshops, conferences and other **working and expert level events**.

A separate category of Presidency events comprised the **six parliamentary sessions**, including an informal meeting for speakers of the EU member state parliaments. The Slovak Parliament was responsible for the content and organisation of these. Two events will be held in the first half of 2017 as part of the parliamentary dimension of the Presidency.

A special category was the **32 Presidency events** held in **non-EU countries**, i.e. working group meetings for relevant conventions, or UN protocols, and the coordination of member state meetings where the Slovak Republic was responsible for coordinating EU common positions. The Environment Ministry organised 23 such meetings, while the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development were responsible for two, the Ministry of the Interior organised six and one session was set up by the Ministry of Justice.

#### SLOVAK PRESIDENCY LOGO AND VISUAL IDENTITY

The logo of the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the EU featured specific Slovak elements – diacritics and the colours of the Slovak tricolour flag. It is a playful means of portraying Slovakia as a young and dynamic country.

#### Web

The Presidency web portal was the main communication channel for Presidency activities. It had approximately 180,000 unique users, and its pages were displayed around 800,000 times. Traffic on the different language versions was 48 per cent English, 44 per cent Slovak, 4 per cent German, and 4 per cent French.



▲ Photograph of the meeting room in Bratislava Castle during the informal meeting of 27 Heads of State and Government, 16 September 2016 (Photo: MFEA SR)



▲ Materials for participants in Slovakia's EU Council Presidency events (Photo: MFEA SR)

### Social networks

The Slovak Presidency communicated via Twitter using two accounts with 7,000 followers. Communication on social networks aimed at the domestic audience was via Facebook.

### Newsletter

The electronic information bulletin provided regular up-to-date information on the Presidency preparations. The target groups were the media (national and regional), members of parliament, employees of European institutions, regional governments, the general public, Slovak diplomatic mis-

sions, and Ministry employees. In total there were 19 editions and the mailing list comprised approximately 5,000 recipients.

The Justus Lipsius Council of the EU building is traditionally the visual flagship of the presiding country. The Slovak Presidency was depicted by the **Four Elements of Innovation** by the Slovak Academy of Interior Designers. This featured unique technologies and inventions by Slovaks: the AeroMobil flying car, Ecocapsule portable accommodation, a revolutionary new plasma drilling system and a kayak and canoe model.

### Promotional TV spots and presentational film

The Slovak Presidency was brought closer to domestic and international audiences through promotional TV spots and a presentational film. A series of four promotional spots presented the benefits EU membership and the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the EU bring to Slovaks. Another ten promotional spots featuring Slovak figures from the world of society, culture and sport conveyed the individual themes of the Presidency. In the presentational film, the events portrayed move from the traditional to the modern face of Slovakia, presenting the priorities of the Presidency in both Slovak and English.

### Marketing and presentational gifts

During the Presidency the following items were distributed: 250 sets of brooches and cufflinks, 27,100 presidency ties and 11,500 scarves, 22,400 commemorative postage stamps, 10,800 commemorative 2-euro coins, 15,600 CulCharge charging and data cables for mobile phones, 1,220 CD *Slovak Opera Stars – Beloved Songs with Slovak Opera Stars* box sets and 1,220 *Slovakia* DVDs and a multimedia project, *The Essence of Slovakia*, by director Pavol Barabáš. Slovakia was also promoted in the PR and information-based publications *Did you know? This is Slovakia* and *Slovakia*, as well as in the Bratislava Tourist Board brochure, *Spectacular Slovakia* and a map of Bratislava.

### Presidency subsidy scheme

The subsidy scheme for international relations and Slovak foreign policy associated with the Presidency provided a means of working with the third sector, schools and local government. The goal was to involve the general public in the Presidency and to raise awareness of it across the regions. The subsidy scheme provided financial support to 29 projects distributed evenly across Slovakia's regions. These covered a variety of activities from interactive education through discussions, exhibitions and events promoting business and popularising science to conferences and public educational and cultural events.

The goal was to actively involve the general public across Slovakia in the Presidency whilst supporting outstanding cultural, educational, professional, sports, charitable and other events that fulfilled the aims of the Presidency. Altogether there were 213 events in Slovakia and abroad.



▲ One of the Slovak Presidency communication channels was the official website www.eu2016.sk (Photo: MFEA SR)

### Cultural presentation

The presidency was a unique opportunity to present Slovak culture. Through its cultural programme, Slovakia presented work that was already familiar internationally as well as promising art from various fields – music, dance, visual art and theatre. Well-known historical figures in Slovak science and technology were also featured, and space was allocated to both contemporary and upcoming artists. The cultural programme included an interactive project called *Searching for Beauty* by young Slovak female animators at Ové Pictures as well as modern jazz adaptations of Slovak folk songs by Peter Breiner Triango, and performances by the Lúčnica Slovak folk ensemble. During the Presidency there were 176 exhibitions and 110 presentations abroad, as well as 68 concerts and live performances.

### Press centre

The press centre in Reduta was the main centre of activity for the Presidency events, and was the base for approximately 200 journalists. More than 1,500 journalists covered the informal events at the highest media level. The most extensively covered informal meetings were that of the visit by the College of Commissioners, the ECOFIN



▲ The band Fragile during the grand opening concert of the Slovak Presidency, at which they sang the Anthem of the European Union, 1 July 2016 (Photo: MFEA SR)

ministers' meeting and the foreign ministers' meeting. The largest attendance by journalists was recorded at the Bratislava Summit – about 850 journalists, including important world media.



▲ The grand opening concert of the Slovak Presidency Viva Europa – Voices of Europe, a mixed choir comprising singers from all 28 EU member states, accompanied by a symphony orchestra (Photo: Rastislav Polák)



▲ President Andrej Kiska in New York at the UN High Level Thematic Debate on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, the Agenda 2030. The debate was held at the invitation of UN General Assembly President Mogens Lykketoft, the day before the ceremonial signing of the Paris Agreement, 16 April 2016 (Photo: UN Photo/Manuel Elias)

# SLOVAKIA IN A SAFE AND DEMOCRATIC WORLD

The year 2016 did not bring about significant improvement in Slovakia's external security environment. Security challenges emerged in the EU's and NATO's eastern and southern neighbourhoods that required effective responses at various levels (Slovak, EU, NATO, UN).

In cooperation with other ministries, the Foreign Ministry began preparing the Slovak Republic's new **Security Strategy** in accordance with the Government Manifesto. It will be approved by the government and parliament in 2017.

## NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANISATION

Slovakia's basic pillar of defence remains the **North Atlantic Treaty Organisation** (NATO), and our strategic interest is its unity and ability to act. In July, a NATO summit was held in Warsaw primarily to set out the basic frameworks to further adapt NATO at the political, military and institutional levels. Important decisions were taken at the Summit to strengthen the collective defence and stability of NATO's southern and eastern neighbourhood.

The Slovak Republic reiterated its offer to send a 150-strong armed forces training mission to the Baltic republics in 2017 for a period of three months as part of the V4's joint contribution. It also committed to strengthening internal resilience to hybrid threats and cyber defence. As part of the move to strengthen NATO's stability on its borders, Slovakia has fulfilled its role in tackling illegal migration, monitoring migration flows and cooperating with NATO and the EU.

Slovakia approved the continuation of its mission in Afghanistan after 2016, and reaffirmed its military participation in this mission under the mandate of the Parliament, and its commitment to send an annual voluntary contribution of 500,000 US dollars for 2018–2020 to help maintain the Afghan national security forces. In addition, we advocated a more proactive role for NATO in training and transforming the Iraqi armed forces, and in the expansion of NATO's global coalition against Daesh through AWACS capability.

To strengthen NATO assistance to partner countries, Slovakia took on the role of leading the NATO Demining Trust Fund for Ukraine. It also made a basic financial contribution of

50,000 euros and welcomed the deepening of NATO's practical cooperation with Georgia, including sending a defence expert to the country. Slovakia is in favour of maintaining a positive dynamism in relations with aspiring members – Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Georgia.

The Alliance summit was preceded by the signing of the historic Joint Declaration intensifying **cooperation between NATO and the EU** in security. Slovakia was in favour of the declaration because closer cooperation is one of our top priorities in the interests of effectively addressing the security challenges of today. We consider the agreement on NATO and EU cooperation to be crucial to ensuring the security of Slovakia.

## COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY

The deteriorating security situation in the Euro-Atlantic area, the decline in people's trust in the EU institutions and the expected consequences of Brexit mean that the Union has to strengthen its capacity and credibility as a global player capable of ensuring the security of member states, stabilising their neighbourhoods and resolving conflicts in the world.

**The Bratislava Declaration** of September 2016 began the political process of euro-integration including the implementation of the Global Strategy for the European Union's foreign and security policy (EUGS) from June 2016. In December, following the Bratislava Declaration, the European Council approved steps to fulfil its ambitions regarding common European security and defence, particularly the development of military and civilian capabilities, deepening defence cooperation and the reinforcement of the structures and tools for managing EU civilian missions and military operations, including financial mechanisms.

The Slovak Presidency organised four events associated with common security and defence policy with four events focusing on the implementation of EUGS on security and defence, cyber threats, EU–NATO cooperation regarding hybrid threats and security sector reform. Slovakia gave its backing to a broader mandate for EUNAVFORMED operation Sophia. Slovakia was one of the first EU member states to contribute 50,000 euros to training the Libyan coastguard and plans to send a deployment team of ten military police officers.



▲ Slovakia at the 3<sup>rd</sup> UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development HABITAT III on 17–20 October 2016 in Ecuador, represented by State Secretary Lukáš Parížek (Photo: MFEA SR)

Slovakia engaged in EU military operations and civilian missions, deploying personnel to the EUFOR Althea mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, EUMM in Georgia, EULEX in Kosovo and EUBAM in Ukraine and Moldova.

## EFFECTIVE MULTILATERALISM

The Slovak Republic backed UN cohesion, the strengthening of preventive diplomacy, mediation, peace building and more effective UN peacekeeping operations.

It not only engaged in the political resolution of the problems associated with the mass movement of refugees and migrants, but also provided voluntary contributions to UN programmes and funds. The support Slovakia provided in relation to the migration crisis is unparalleled in its foreign policy history. It was targeted in different directions, from supporting the underlying democratic processes in crisis areas to the provision of humanitarian aid. At the high political level, Slovakia participated in the February London Conference on Syria, the March UNHCR meeting on the resettlement of Syrian refugees in Geneva, as well as the May World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul. At the 71<sup>st</sup> session of the UN General Assembly in September, President Andrej Kiska backed the adoption of the New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants. At the Summit of Leaders convened

### Participation in international crisis management operations and missions up to 31 December 2016

Mission	Area of activity	Number of members of Slovak Armed Forces	Number of members of the Police	Number of civilian experts	Ministry
<b>NATO</b>					
RSM (Resolute Support Mission)	Afghanistan	42	0	0	Defence
NATO HQ Sarajevo	Bosnia and Herzegovina	1	0	0	Defence
<b>UN</b>					
UNFICYP (United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus)	Cyprus	169	0	0	Defence
UNTSO (United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation)	Syria, Israel	2	0	0	Defence
UNSTAMIH (United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti)	Haiti	0	6	0	Interior
<b>EU</b>					
EUFOR ALTHEA (European Union Force Althea)	Bosnia and Herzegovina	41	0	0	Defence
EULEX (European Union Rule of Law Mission)	Kosovo	0	4	0	Interior
EUAM (European Union Advisory Mission)	Ukraine	0	1	0	Interior
EUBAM (European Union Border Assistance Mission)	Ukraine and Moldova	0	5	0	Interior
EUMM (European Union Monitoring Mission)	Georgia	1	3	2	Defence, Interior
EUTM (EU Training Mission)	Mali	2	0	0	Defence
<b>OSCE</b>					
OSCE Kosovo	Kosovo	0	0	1	Interior
OSCE Macedonia	Macedonia	0	1	0	Interior
OSCE Ashgabat	Turkmenistan	0	0	1	Interior
OSCE Bosnia and Herzegovina	Bosnia and Herzegovina	0	0	1	Interior
OSCE Observer Mission at the Russian Checkpoints Gukovo and Donetsk	Ukraine/Russia (Gukovo – Donetsk)	0	0	1	Interior
OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine	Ukraine	1	4	5	Defence, Interior



by the President of the United States, the Slovak Republic – the only country from our region to be invited apart from the Czech Republic and Romania – declared that it would increase its contribution to UN agency humanitarian aid for refugees and take further steps from 2016 to 2021.

Slovakia's close relationship with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), aimed at constructively addressing the causes and consequences of the migration crisis, was in evidence with the IOM Director-General making two visits to Slovakia.

The Slovak Presidency played its part in ensuring the early implementation of the Paris Agreement. The President signed the Agreement in April in New York and Slovakia deposited its ratification instrument with the depositary (the UN Secretary-General) in October 2016.

At the April UN General Assembly high-level thematic debate on achieving the sustainable development goals, Andrej Kiska reported on the fulfilment measures Slovakia has adopted. Slovakia was actively involved in preparations for HABITAT III – the UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development – in Ecuador. Slovak representatives held the positions of chair of the UN-HABITAT Steering Committee and member of the Bureau of the conference preparatory committee, and also held expert meetings at the EU in Brussels and the UN Economic Commission for Europe in Geneva.

#### **Security sector reform**

As co-chair of the Friends of Security Sector Reform Group (SSR) at the United Nations, the Slovak Republic actively backed the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2151 (2014). In June, Slovakia organised a session in New York aimed at assisting the national SSR process in the Central African Republic. The Slovak Republic was also actively involved in SSR affairs within the OSCE in Vienna. As Permanent co-chair of the United Nations Group of Friends of the SSR, Slovakia will continue to strengthen UN capacities for post-conflict reconstruction and the building of security institutions. In addition, it will seek to achieve complementarity with the OSCE.

#### **Slovakia's candidates for international organisations**

For the first time, Slovakia fielded a candidate in the election for UN Secretary-General. Miroslav Lajčák was selected as the candidate for the post, with the backing of senior officials and most of the parliamentary parties. The Slovak diplomatic corps ran a strong, professional and fair campaign, which increased the country's visibility. Slovakia's candidate ranked second and was first in the Eastern European Regional Group (VERS). Despite the unwritten principle of regional rotation, VERS was not ultimately awarded the seat of the UN Secretary-General.

VERS subsequently unanimously nominated Miroslav Lajčák, who following approval from the UN General Assembly will



▲ Minister Miroslav Lajčák during informal discussion on the election of the UN Secretary-General in New York, 7 June 2016 (Photo: MFEA SR)

take up the post of Chair of the 72<sup>nd</sup> UN General Assembly in 2017. The aim is to use the position effectively to implement the UN's established goals, taking account of global events in accordance with the principles of Slovak foreign policy.

In addition, Slovakia stood for Presidency of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe. Ministers of OSCE-participating countries welcomed this initiative, which was approved by consensus. This was another case of the Slovak Republic being awarded the post for the first time, for the period of one year beginning in January 2019.

Slovakia once again aspires to be a member of the UNHCR for the years 2018–2020 at the 72<sup>nd</sup> UN General Assembly in autumn 2017.

#### **Fight against terrorism**

Within the EU, Slovakia encouraged greater progress in the wider context of the fight against terrorism, including the stabilisation of non-EU regions, the protection of European internal security, closer cooperation between intelligence services and police forces and combatting the financing of terrorism.

The Slovak Republic supported prevention against violent extremism on the basis of the action plan presented by the UN Secretary-General. In July, it backed the adoption of the 5<sup>th</sup> UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and in October it co-sponsored the adoption of the United Nations Security Council resolution on the terrorist threat to civil aviation.

As part of strengthening the international legal framework for combating terrorism, Slovakia started the process of ratifying the Additional Protocol to the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism and signed it in September – subject to parliamentary ratification.

In co-operation with the United States, it will continue to implement a bilateral action plan to combat the smuggling of nuclear and radioactive material with a view to preventing possible misuse for terrorist aims.



▲ Robert Fico met with German Chancellor Angela Merkel in Berlin to discuss the Presidency, migration crisis, UK referendum and energy policy, 16 June 2016 (Photo: Government Office of the Slovak Republic)

# NEIGHBOURHOOD RELATIONS, REGIONAL AND BILATERAL COOPERATION

# 3

## NEIGHBOURHOOD RELATIONS

### Czech Republic

Slovakia's special relationship with the Czech Republic is attested to by the dynamism in working relations between senior officials in both countries. The fourth joint government session in Bratislava (September 2016) assessed progress and outlined new bilateral cooperation projects, mainly in defence and security, domestic affairs, energy, transport and culture. The approval of the Cooperation Program between the Czech and Slovak Armed Forces was indicative of close cooperation in defence. The Slovak Government appointed a national coordinator to organise the celebrations to be held in 2018 on the anniversary of historical events in the Slovak and Czech Republics (100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Czechoslovak Republic, 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the events in 1968 in Czechoslovakia and 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Slovak and Czech independent statehood). We also tackled challenges in energy (relating mainly to gas transmission network operators), road and rail infrastructure as well as the exchange of information and experiences of migration and asylum policy.

### Hungary

Bilateral relations with Hungary have evolved in all areas in a positive atmosphere and remain at their best level historically. The main area of cooperation is the development of economic relations targeted not only at cross-border regions but also the broader dimensions of bilateral trade economic growth and employment. One of the priorities in cooperation is to accelerate the construction of cross-border transport infrastructure. We welcomed the resumption of the work of the joint committees, which we consider to be the best framework for dialogue and developing cooperation.

### Poland

We continued to engage in active dialogue with Poland, primarily in relation to the development of transport and energy infrastructure. Cross-border cooperation between adjacent regions was successfully developed with the aim of identifying joint projects for the 2014–2020 programming period in tourism, cultural exchange and cultural heritage.

### Austria

We maintained the high level of bilateral economic cooperation with Austria. We continued to work together on dual

education, and progress was made in developing transport infrastructure. The focus was on priorities such as coordinating the development and modernisation of transport links, collaboration in innovation and research and implementing new cross-border cooperation projects.

### Ukraine

Slovakia sees Ukraine as an important neighbour with whom we share a common border and common interests. Stability and security remain a Slovak foreign policy priority in Eastern Europe, as is the desire to avoid another frozen conflict. Slovakia therefore promotes stability and security, while supporting Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty in addition to its European direction. We would like to see more impetus in Ukraine's relations with Slovakia and the EU in the context of the Association Agreement. The Slovak Republic backed Ukraine's reforms related to the implementation of the Association Agreement, the deepening of cross-border cooperation and the intensifying cooperation in economics and energy. In the energy sector, 9.1 billion cu-



Cooperation between Slovakia and the Czech Republic was the main topic of a joint session between Slovak and Czech governments in Bratislava on 26 September 2016 (Photo: MFEA SR)



▲ Miroslav Lajčák with his Hungarian counterpart, Péter Szijjártó, at the Globsec conference in Bratislava on 14 April 2016 (Photo: MFEA SR)

bic metres of gas were exported from Slovakia to Ukraine, which is a tangible indication of our support for Ukraine.

## REGIONAL COOPERATION

The **Visegrad Four** group continued to be our priority amongst the regional formats. Our partners supported and accepted the fact that in adopting V4 joint positions during the Slovak Presidency it was necessary to take account of Slovakia's institutional role as neutral mediator of compromises, respecting the interests of all 28 EU members. European and global players continued to display an interest in regular political dialogue with Central European countries using the V4 format during the Czech and Polish V4 Presidencies. At prime-minister level, it met along with Macedonia and Bulgaria (February), Germany (August) and Ukraine (September). The Foreign



▲ V4 countries, like their ministers, seek out and find common ground. At the meeting of the Hungarian ambassadors in Budapest on 29 August 2016 (Photo: MFEA SR)



▲ At a meeting with Petro Poroshenko, President of Ukraine, Kyiv, 2 February 2016 (Photo: MFEA SR)

Ministers consulted with NB 8 countries (April), Eastern partners (May), Benelux (June), Germany and France (June) and Western Balkan countries (November). The consultations resulted in a number of common V4 positions on the EU in favour of constructive solutions to crises facing the Union.

Slovakia has sought to deepen its expert dialogue and pragmatic neighbourly cooperation with the Czech Republic and Austria, and in the trilateral **Slavkov Format** (S3). This is seen as a complementary forum for transport infrastructure, energy security, the European agenda and dual education.

As the presiding country of the **EU Strategy for the Danube Region**, the Slovak Republic organised a meeting for national coordinators and priority area coordinators in March and May 2016. The objectives of the strategy were revised and agreed. In addition, issues concerning its management were



▲ 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Slovak–German Reflection Group, attended by Minister of State for Europe at the Federal Foreign Office Michael Roth and State Secretary Ivan Korčok, 11 October 2016 (Photo: MFEA SR)

discussed and supported (the coordination of priority areas, the Danube Strategy Point) and there was backing for the preparation of strategic projects through the international Danube programme.

The Slovak Republic organised the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Forum for the Danube Region (November) in conjunction with the European Commission (Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy) and the Joint Research Centre (Directorate General of the Joint Research Centre). The forum, entitled Innovation Flows – Water, Knowledge and Innovation in the Danube Region, dealt with the challenges and future of water management, as well as research and innovation. A meeting was organised for ministers responsible for research and innovation as part of this event.

## BILATERAL COOPERATION IN THE EU

### Germany

The successes of the Slovak Presidency further strengthened mutual ties with Germany and support was obtained from Germany's political representatives, especially Angela Merkel's office, on key issues such as preparations for the Bratislava Summit. In addition, Slovakia maintained continuity and dynamism in developing political and economic relations. Minister Miroslav Lajčák visited Berlin (February,

April, May, November), while the Minister of State for Europe at the Federal Foreign Office, Michael Roth, met with Ivan Korčok and attended a meeting of the Slovak–German Reflection Group in Bratislava (October), but it was Robert Fico's working visit to Berlin (June) and that of President Andrej Kiska to mark the end of the Slovak Presidency (December) that lent structure to the political cooperation.

In the economic field, in addition to further increasing the volume of trade and investment in Slovakia, there was a need to upscale collaboration in science and research.

### United Kingdom

The United Kingdom, including after its decision to leave the EU, remains one of Slovakia's central trading partners and an important ally in international security, partly because it is a NATO member. The investment by Jaguar Land Rover in Nitra lent significant impetus to mutual economic relations. Following the referendum, Slovakia continued its dynamic political dialogue, including in its role as Presidency of the Council of the EU, as Prime Minister Theresa May's visit to Bratislava (July) testified. We respect the Brexit decision and are interested in ensuring that the closest possible relations prevail between the United Kingdom and the European Union, despite the UK not being interested in being a member of the single market. However, our priority will be the status of Slovak citizens living and working in the UK, on a reciprocal basis.



▲ Robert Fico and UK Prime Minister Theresa May discuss Brexit among other things in Bratislava on 28 July 2017 (Photo: Government Office of the Slovak Republic)



▲ Minister Miroslav Lajčák with his counterpart from Luxembourg, Jean Asselborn, who was on a working visit to Bratislava during Slovakia's Council of the EU Presidency, 9 June 2016 (Photo: MFEA SR)

### France

Bilateral relations with France are developing well in line with the Strategic Partnership Action Plan for 2013–2018. Cooperation has also been deepened at the national parliament level. President Andrej Kiska's first reciprocal official visit to the Republic of France was a historical first since Slovakia became independent.

### Italy

The high level of political dialogue with the Republic of Italy was evidenced in the Slovak President's official visit to Rome. Slovakia will continue to foster mutual contacts in culture and education and strengthen economic ties. In response to the current migration situation, it has participated in joint FRONTEX operations in Italy.

### Greece

Dialogue between the two countries recommenced in order to address the consequences of the migration crisis, as is evident in the numerous high-level mutual visits. Greece is particularly affected by the migration crisis. In 2016, Slovakia provided assistance as part of bilateral cooperation, sending dozens of police officers independently as well as through Frontex and EASO, and providing humanitarian aid worth more than 200,000 euros.

## ACTIVE OUTSIDE THE EU AS WELL

### Swiss Confederation

Bilateral relations with the Swiss Confederation are illustrated by the extent of contact at the highest level. President Johann N. Schneider-Ammann visited the Slovak Republic in June and President Andrej Kiska and Miroslav Lajčák visited Switzerland in October. A visit to ETH Zurich and the innovation forum helped step up collaboration on innovation. The Slovak Presidency sought to reach a compromise solution in the negotiations between the EU and Switzerland on the free movement of people.



▲ Presidents of Slovakia and Georgia, Andrej Kiska and Giorgi Margvelashvili, on the South Ossetian Administrative Boundary Line, 31 May 2016 (Photo: Office of the President of the Slovak Republic/Marián Garaj)

### Kingdom of Norway

New life was breathed into relations with the Kingdom of Norway. Prime Minister Erna Solberg and Parliamentary Speaker Olemic Thommessen paid visits to Slovakia. At the end of the year, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed on the use of funds from the Norwegian Financial Mechanism and the European Economic Area financial mechanism for the period 2014–2021, which brings benefits in multiple areas, particularly the conservation and preservation of cultural heritage. Cooperation in education for Norwegian students in Slovakia was deepened.

### Eastern Europe

The Slovak Republic promoted the continuation of dialogue between the EU and **Russia** to address international problems and the EU's united position on sanctions against Russia. During the Slovak Presidency, consensus was reached on extending sectoral sanctions (until 31 July 2017) and individual sanctions (until March 2017). On the question of sanctions, Slovakia stressed its readiness to conduct a dialogue with Russia and to respond to Russia's positive engagement in resolving the conflict in Ukraine, including the full implementation of the Minsk Agreements. Robert Fico and Miroslav Lajčák paid a working visit to Moscow. Slovakia endeavoured to ensure there was a stable supply of raw energy materials to maximise its transit potential and develop tourism. The problems concerning the cyclotron centre were resolved. Issues regarding arms cooperation (licenses, helicopters) and other projects (broad-gauge railway) remain unsolved. Despite the complex international political situation, we declared an interest in continuing the intergovernmental commission for

economic cooperation and the working group for development of cooperation in industry, with the aim of deepening economic cooperation and implementing existing projects.

Slovakia also welcomed the positive development in **Belarus'** relations with the European Union and its foreign policy positions, which resulted in the lifting of most EU sanctions. The Slovak Republic also welcomed Minsk's activities to resolve the crisis in Ukraine. Prime Minister R. Fico visited Belarus. Slovakia has noted positive trends in economic cooperation and a growing interest among Belarusians in travelling to Slovakia.

In connection with our activities relating to the South Caucasus, Slovakia backed **Georgia's** reform process as part of the Association Agenda. President Andrej Kiska visited Georgia in 2016. In addition, the Slovak Republic views **Azerbaijan's** interest in upscaling economic cooperation positively, and the outcome of this was the approval of a mandate in November for negotiating a future agreement between the EU and Azerbaijan. During the Slovak Presidency, a mandate for negotiating a comprehensive aviation agreement between the EU and **Armenia** was approved.

Slovakia backed the development of relations between the EU and **Central Asia**, which is crucial to energy security (the Southern Corridor, Uranium Deposits). Minister Miroslav Lajčák's visit to Kazakhstan and State Secretary Lukáš Pařízek's consultations in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan helped improve the region's visibility within the EU, and the efforts of the EU Special Representative for the region, Slovak diplomat Peter Burian, also helped in this respect.



Minister Miroslav Lajčák opened the Slovak–Kazakh business forum in Astana. Photographed during the press conference with his counterpart Erlan Idrisov (Photo: MFEA SR)



▲ On the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Montenegrin independence, President Filip Vujanović awarded the highest Montenegrin state award to Miroslav Lajčák. In Podgorica, a new street was named after Slovakia, Slovak Street (Slovačka ulica), and officially unveiled. In the photograph with Prime Minister Milo Đukanović on 21 May 2016 (Photo: MFEA SR)

## WESTERN BALKANS AND TURKEY

During the Presidency, Slovakia fulfilled its ambition to improve the overall dynamism and credibility of EU enlargement policy, and focused on effective inward and outward communication in the EU. Slovakia will continue to do this and to



▲ President Andrej Kiska was given the European Leader award for supporting Bosnia and Herzegovina on its European Union path. He received the award in Mostar at the 15<sup>th</sup> Večernjak Seals award ceremony on 11 April 2016 (Photo: MFEA SR)

share its experiences of reform and of the integration processes relating to the European and Euro-Atlantic structures.

Slovakia has helped strengthen **Montenegro's** long-standing leading position in European and Euro-Atlantic integration. By opening another two chapters, Montenegro moved closer to joining the EU. We were one of the first countries to ratify its accession protocol to NATO and we will continue to actively support Montenegro in its integration efforts, which should serve as a positive example for the whole region.

Slovakia pushed for a breakthrough in **Serbia's** negotiation process during the Slovak Presidency by opening two key chapters on the rule of law (23 and 24) as well as two other chapters (5 and 25). The Slovak Presidency also managed to pre-conclude the first chapter in Serbia's accession. We have followed the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina with interest, as it is our neighbour's only means of addressing unresolved questions, as part of the effort to encourage normalisation and see both sides progress in their Euro-integration ambitions.

The attempted coup in **Turkey** negatively impacted on its progress with accession. However, the Slovak Presidency kept the dialogue between the EU and Turkey as positive as possible. The joint response to the migration crisis resulted in an agreement that has substantially reduced the numbers of refugees and economic migrants coming into the EU.

An important outcome of Slovak involvement was the adoption of the Presidency's Conclusions on enlargement at the December General Affairs Council, supported by the vast majority of member states. The part concerning **Albania** calls on the European Commission to report on the progress made, which should lead to accession negotiations being initiated in the future.

Following **Bosnia and Herzegovina's** application for EU membership, Slovakia helped achieve a consensus on fulfilling the remaining criteria. On this basis, the Council conclusions requested that the EC prepare its position on the application.

The December conclusions contained a provision calling on the Commission to respond to **Macedonia's** progress in the areas identified as conditional to progress regarding the EU. The first meeting between the Joint Commission for Economic Cooperation and the Establishment of the Bratislava–Skopje connection provided impetus for economic and tourism exchange between Slovakia and Macedonia. Slovakia will provide the new government with transformational experience, mainly through its National Convention on the EU model.

## TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS

The Slovak Republic continued to work with the **United States** in many areas – from modernising our armed forces and promoting stability in crisis areas of the world to fostering economic and business cooperation (in May the Slovak–



American Business and Innovation Council was set up to encourage trade and Slovakia's startup ecosystem) and study exchanges between Slovaks and US citizens. We believe that developing this practical cooperation will contribute significantly to the strengthening of transatlantic ties, under the new US administration as well, and this is a long-standing foreign policy priority.

#### Latin America and the Caribbean

The year 2016 was also unusual in the degree of contact with Central and Latin American countries.

Dialogue with **Mexico** was boosted in part by consultations between state secretaries in Bratislava and talks between the foreign ministers on the sidelines of the 71<sup>st</sup> UN General Assembly. In December, the second largest event in the Slovak Presidency was held outside the EU in Mexico. This was a meeting for the Parties to the COP 13 Convention on Biological Diversity. Slovakia was represented by ministers László Sólymos and Árpád Érsek.

The Slovak Presidency backed the normalisation of EU relations with **Cuba**. In December, the two sides signed an agreement on political dialogue and cooperation. Bilateral relations with Cuba regarding economic and foreign policy reached a new level. A definitive agreement was reached on the settlement of Cuba's historic debt, removing the main obstacle to the development of relations. Deputy Prime Minister R. Cabrisas signed a contract worth 90 million euros to build a power plant block in Cuba while on a visit to the Slovakia.

At the first ministerial meeting between the EU and the **Community of Latin American and Caribbean States** in the

Dominican Republic, Miroslav Lajčák engaged in bilateral relations with counterparts numbers from the **Dominican Republic, Haiti and Panama**. At the meeting, an agreement was signed on transforming EU-LAC (Latin America and Caribbean) into an international organisation.

President Andrej Kiska visited **Argentina** and **Chile**. His visit to **Brazil**, where he saw the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, helped improve the visibility of Slovakia. Miroslav Lajčák had a meeting in **Uruguay**, and state secretaries engaged in political consultations in **Argentina** and **Paraguay**. The Slovak Presidency sought to accelerate the pace at which a bilateral trade agreement between **Ecuador** and the EU is reached. Following the November signing of the peace agreement between **Colombia** and the FARC movement that ended more than 50 years of conflict in the country, an agreement was signed during the Presidency establishing a Trust Fund for Colombia, and Slovakia made a contribution of 20,000 euros.

Consequently Slovakia will concentrate on boosting trade and economic cooperation, especially in Argentina, Colombia, Mexico, Chile and Peru, and on organising high-level visits. There are prospects for expanding collaboration in education, innovation and modern technology. Slovakia will support the reopening of EU negotiations with Mercosur.

Slovakia gained observer status in the **Pacific Alliance** (June) the most promising business group in Latin America, creating an arena for business development.

After many years, the Slovak Republic also took part in the Non-Aligned Movement meeting in Venezuela at the political level. The delegation was led by State Secretary Lukáš Parížek.



During the working visit to Argentina, President Andrej Kiska met his counterpart Mauricio Macri. The discussion primarily concerned economic cooperation, 4 August 2016 (Photo: Office of the President of the Slovak Republic/Marián Garaj)



▲ At the last major event of the Slovak Presidency, SET PLAN 2016 – Central European Energy Conference X, the Vice-President of the European Commission reported on progress in building the Energy Union, Bratislava 1 December 2016 (Photo: Slovak Foreign Policy Association)

# SYNERGY IN ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY

# 4

Economic diplomacy has become an integral part of Slovak foreign policy. It has a role to play in increasing export and investment performance, sustaining economic growth and reducing unemployment. The Ministry assumed the role of coordinating dialogue on Slovakia's non-domestic economic activity between for instance economic ministries, agencies, chambers of commerce, business unions and associations and Eximbanka in Slovakia, and it also became coordinator for organising business missions, investment fora and round tables.

## INSTITUTIONAL COOPERATION

In 2016 the Ministry continued to make use of the Government Council for Promoting Export and Investment, SARIO's Council for Strategic Management, Coordination and Com-

pliance as a platform for dialogue between the state administration and the business sector. With a view to making the work of the Government Council for Export and Investment Promotion more strategically effective, the government agreed to reduce the number of members, considerably strengthening the weight of business unions and associations. The implementation of these coordination mechanisms has allowed the Ministry to prepare its policies for Economic diplomacy in bilateral and multilateral relations up to 2020, which follows on from the Slovak Strategy for External Economic Relations for the period 2014–2020.

Holding the Presidency of the Council of the EU also had a significant impact on the activities and content of economic diplomacy. The Presidency events exploited the potential of the presiding country to increase its visibility, by



▲ Miroslav Lajčák and the Japanese delegation from Keidanren at the Ministry, 19 October 2016 (Photo: MFEA SR)



▲ President Andrej Kiska in conversation at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH Zurich) with Swiss Federal President N. Schneider-Ammann in attendance, Zurich 21 October 2016 (Photo: Office of the President of the Slovak Republic/Marián Garaj)

promoting Slovakia as a country worth investing in and visiting. The unified portrayal of the country through the *Good Idea Slovakia* slogan has significantly contributed to Slovakia's promotional potential. Economic diplomacy was also aimed at promoting and developing congress tourism and presenting Slovakia as a year-round tourist destination.

## BUSINESS MISSIONS

2016 was a year in which the business missions that accompany the official and working missions of senior officials abroad were stepped up. These were used as a platform to establish contacts and business cooperation between business entities.

The Ministry was involved in the preparation and organisation of trips by senior officials accompanied by business delegations to numerous countries such as Ukraine, Iran, China, Vietnam, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Nigeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Belarus.

As part of efforts to boost dialogue and economic relations with Japan, Miroslav Lajčák received a delegation from Kei-

danren, the Japanese Business Foundation. He also received the Iranian Foreign Minister accompanied by a business delegation. The Ministry worked closely with those involved in economic and trade cooperation to organise business missions, investment fora and round tables. The Ministry launched negotiations with the Ministry of Finance, Eximbanka, the Ministry of the Economy and the SARIO Agency to prioritise the preparation and conclusion of double taxation treaties and contracts for the promotion and mutual protection of investments.

As part of their working trips abroad, the Prime Minister and several members of the Government helped promote the development of business and economic relations with partners, in for example Belarus and Vietnam.

President Andrej Kiska's visit to Switzerland and his trips to France, Romania and Hungary opened up new dimensions in collaboration in science, research, innovation and education.

Our special relations with neighbouring countries were reflected in the signing of the Memorandum of V4 countries

in innovation. At governmental level, joint Slovak and Czech governments sessions have become a regular feature and the fourth event to take place in this format was held in Bratislava in 2016. The second meeting of the Slovak–Hungarian Joint Economic Cooperation Committee involved the Slovak–Hungarian Economic Forum. The 21<sup>st</sup> session of the Slovak–Polish Intergovernmental Commission on Cross-Border Cooperation was held in Rzeszow, Poland.

The Ministry is not only actively involved in creating new business and investment opportunities for the business sector abroad, but it also worked closely with partner ministries and agencies to improve information and services for entrepreneurs. The Ministry’s own portal has streamlined the dissemination of financial information from abroad and the collation of sector-specific information. The Ministry sends weekly reports on business and investment opportunities and embassy economic events to more than 1,700 business entities.

Under the Ministry’s mechanism to boost economic diplomacy, the embassies have successfully implemented 19 projects in 14 countries. These concern the presentation of Slovak products and services and the promotion of Slovakia’s investment and business environment at business conferences, exhibitions, seminars and business missions abroad.

## SECTOR COOPERATION

The priority in economic diplomacy is to gain experience and seek out collaboration in science, research and innovation in a dynamically changing world.

The Ministry works with other relevant ministries, the scientific community, industry partners and the innovation and startup sectors to implement the Research and Innovation Strategy for the Smart Specialisation of the Slovak Republic. Innovation forums, workshops and B2B meetings were held in Austria, Germany, France, Finland, the UK and Denmark for example, and technological know-how transfer in Serbia, as well as in the United States of America, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Turkey and Israel. Senior Slovak officials often attended in order to promote Slovak science and research and to form links with scientific centres abroad.

We exploited new types of cooperation, such as the setting up of innovative platforms, the Slovak–American Business and Innovation Council (SABIC), and the Slovak–Turkish Permanent Forum on Science and Innovation. We continued with the work of the Slovak Innovation Liaison Office in Helsinki (SILO) and undertook preparations for the establishment of the Slovak–Israeli scientific association in Israel.



Robert Fico’s speech at the summit of 16 Central and Eastern Europe countries and China in Riga, 5 November 2016 (Photo: Government Office of the Slovak Republic)



▲ Miroslav Lajčák and OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría discuss the priorities of Slovakia's cooperation with the OECD as well as the situation in Ukraine, where Slovakia initiated more active cooperation and assistance from the OECD in reforming and modernising the country in 2015, 19 February 2016 (Photo: MFEA SR)

The Ministry engaged in cooperation as part of **Horizon 2020**, the EU Framework Program for Research and Development, supported projects relating to Slovak and EU priorities in research, development and innovation, especially Slovak Academy of Sciences projects in collaboration with Finland and Turkey.

Support for science, research, innovation and technology transfer saw greater dynamism in the **China plus 16 Central and Eastern European** countries format. At the 1<sup>st</sup> ministerial conference on innovation cooperation, we followed up on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Symposium on Innovation, Cooperation in Technology and International Transfer of Technology in Bratislava as well as the signed Declaration on mutual cooperation in the field of technology transfer support between China and Central and Eastern European countries.

Education and a quality education system were a popular theme at the negotiations with OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría, who met members of the Slovak Government several times in 2016. In Bratislava the Secretary-General presented the OECD recommendations on improving the quality of Slovak education. Another key area of cooperation was the fight against tax evasion and fraud, which is a political priority of the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the EU, and the results were rated very positively. A major success in direct taxation relating to the implementation of Action Plan on Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (anti-BEPS) was the significant progress made in amending the directive on combating tax evasion as part of hybrid non-compliance in non-EU countries. With the help of the OECD, the Council

of the EU conclusions on criteria for drawing up a list of non-cooperative jurisdictions at EU level for tax purposes were approved.

Within international economic organisations, Slovakia focused mainly on overcoming the effects of the global crisis and on creating optimal conditions for Slovakia's industrial sectors that will benefit Slovak economic interests.

The key topics relating to the **EU's common trade policy** were the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, a trade agreement with the USA, and the EU–Canada Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement. Partly owing to the efforts of Slovak diplomacy, a modern and ambitious free trade agreement was signed with Canada, which is not only of economic importance but also has broader strategic and geopolitical implications.

Combating climate change and enhancing energy security and competitiveness are important aspects of creating the **EU Energy Union**. During the Presidency, Slovakia aided the adoption of energy legislation and organised an informal EU ministerial meeting on energy and climate change at which an important discussion on achieving the EU's climate and energy objectives was held. Another part of the Slovak Presidency was the **SET Plan Conference 2016 – 10<sup>th</sup> Central European Energy Conference** dedicated to research development and innovation in the Energy Union.

Regarding security of energy supply, the Ministry strongly advocated the continued use of the **Ukrainian–Slovak gas**

**corridor** as a safe and cost-effective way of transporting natural gas to the EU up to 2019. Slovakia and like-minded countries argued that the intention to build the Nord Stream II pipeline, circumventing the Ukrainian–Slovak corridor, is incompatible with EU energy policy, the legislation and its interests.

Slovakia pushed hard for the right of member states to optimise their energy mix, including the use of nuclear energy as a carbon-free resource. It contributed to the expert discussion on nuclear energy issues by organising the **11<sup>th</sup> European Nuclear Energy Forum in Bratislava**. In February 2016, another **V4 Roadshow** event on energy efficiency was held, attended by state institutions, academics and the non-governmental sector as well as several Slovak private companies.

With its network of embassies, the Ministry plays an important role in these activities. It helped fulfil economic diplomacy responsibilities and priorities in 2016 by streamlining the coordination of activities and cooperation of all key actors involved in Slovak economic diplomacy.



▲ At the invitation of Prince Charles of Wales, President Andrej Kiska visited Dumfries House, a training centre in Scotland. At the centre, unemployed people are trained to work in the restaurant industry, grow agricultural crops, and various other courses are organised here as well (Photo: Office of the President of the Slovak Republic)



▲ President of the EC Jean-Claude Juncker, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau of Canada, President of the EU Council Donald Tusk and Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico at the signing of the free trade agreement between the EU and Canada — CETA, Brussels 30 October 2016 (Photo: European Union)



Despite limited resources Slovak organisations are still visible in Africa (Photo: Zuzana a Daniel Laurinc)



# DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AND HUMANITARIAN AID

# 5

There were several important priorities relating to development cooperation between the Slovak Republic and partner countries and our activities within the EU. Alongside the need to operationalise the new legislative framework, they included the World Humanitarian Summit, the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the EU and the need to implement the Agenda 2030 goals.

The World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul was an opportunity to exchange views on the ever-increasing sense of the need for humanitarian aid and resources. But it also brought an awareness that our own system for delivering humanitarian aid needs to be reassessed and adjusted in line with the demand for flexibility and efficiency. Slovakia is gradually implementing the commitments agreed at the summit and has already succeeded in passing an amendment to the income tax act which will allow the private sector to become more involved in the provision of humanitarian aid.

The new development agenda has been adapted for Slovakia within the Framework for implementation of Agenda 2030 in the international environment. Several ministries, such as the Environment Ministry, have already elaborated this further for their own activities. A useful reference frame for assessing the outcomes of implementing Agenda 2030 goals is the Slovak Statistical Office publication, *The Slovak Republic and 2030 sustainable development agenda*, issued at the end of 2016.

The humanitarian aspects of mass migration have come to occupy centre-stage, and we therefore paid this issue the attention it deserves. As part of the measures taken, Slovakia allocated more than 13 million euros to international organisations and bilateral assistance. Overall, funding for international development and humanitarian activities, bilateral development interventions and humanitarian aid has exceeded 98 million euros.

The most important issue during the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the EU was the review of the European Consensus on Development following the implementation of Agenda 2030. However, the External Investment Plan, designed to achieve sustainable goals and address the causes of migration in partner countries by investing in them, is also crucial. Discussions continued on the future partnership

framework between the EU and Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific States. Slovakia selected energy and digitisation as the national development priorities under its Presidency of the Council of the EU

In 2016 Slovakia's most important partners in bilateral cooperation were its **programme countries** – Afghanistan, Kenya and Moldova.

Given the deteriorating security situation in **Afghanistan**, Slovakia continued its cooperation with Kabul Polytechnic University. Government grants and the use of micro-grants remained in place – two micro-grants were provided to print textbooks for medical students and to help the children of Afghan refugees in Iran. At the donors' conference on Afghanistan (in October in Brussels), Slovakia committed, in addition to its annual allocation of funds for development cooperation, a one-off contribution of 500,000 euros.



▲ Building a sustainable waste water treatment system in the Moldovan village of Bucovăț (Photo: SlovakAid/Peter Tomášek)



▲ Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) project: Economic empowerment of small farmers in the Busia District through Sesame plantation and market access (Photo: SlovakAid/Izabela Nagyová)

In Kenya the implementation of projects approved in the previous period continued, for example projects associated with the Socio-economic integration of former street children, Support for the production and marketing of fair trade oil from oil-plants: building the economic independence of small farmers in Kenya and other projects aimed at the acquisition of practical work skills in disadvantaged communities. Four new projects to support agriculture, education and strengthen the position of women in society also received funding.

The Slovak Republic contributed both financially and actively to newly created EU funds: EU Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian Crisis (MADAD), the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa to help foster stability in the regions to respond to the challenges of irregular migration and displacement and to contribute to better migration management, and the Facility for Refugees in Turkey. Our involvement in the Emergency Trust Fund for Africa has been a major success: for the first time since joining the EU, SlovakAid has been engaged in managing EU funds. This was also facilitated by a successful project supporting small farmers and creating new jobs, implemented with the support of SlovakAid in Kenya.

The Slovak Republic participated in joint programming by EU member states in Kenya in the agriculture sector. We received 2 million euros from the Trust Fund for Africa for a joint V4 project in which Slovakia is the European Commission's main partner. The aim of the three-year V4 project is to permanently improve the socio-economic situation of 15,000 small farmers and create new jobs in the growing of organic and fair trade cashew and sesame nuts. This activity is important because it focuses on removing the causes of migration in the countries of origin and transit.

The strategy for development cooperation with **Moldova** for 2014–2018 is aimed at helping the country build a stable, functioning democratic state and improve the living conditions of its citizens. Two new environmental and water and sanitation projects have been approved under the small grant scheme. The main projects begun in previous years also continued, such as support for safe drinking water supplies and setting limits for the reduction of hazardous substances via water sanitation in Moldova and a transparent, financially sound and competitive local government in Moldova.

A trilateral development project run in cooperation with the Czech Republic concerns water and sanitation in educational institutions in the districts of Căușeni and Leova. Work also



▲ Miroslav Lajčák hands over financial support to an obstetrics clinic in Uzhhorod, the regional University Hospital of Infectious Diseases in Uzhhorod and the non-profit organisation, Ukraine–Slovakia SOS while on a visit to Ukraine, 1 February 2016 (Photo: MFEA SR)

continued on CETIR and microgrant projects, aimed for example at exploiting natural energy sources or increasing the staff capacity of the Moldovan ambulance services and sharing experiences of handling hazardous waste.

Slovakia also engaged in its development cooperation **project countries** as part of the **Eastern Partnership** (Belarus, Georgia, Ukraine) and in the **Western Balkans** (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo), especially through small subsidy schemes, microgrants and the CETIR programme.



▲ A Slovak Foreign Policy Association project, the National Convention on the EU in Georgia, was officially launched by President Andrej Kiska, Tbilisi, 29 May 2016 (Photo: Levan Mikeladze Foundation)

Most direct aid went to Ukraine in response to the ongoing conflict there.

The refugee crisis has required special attention to be paid to the humanitarian needs of South Sudan and Syria and neighbouring countries in the Middle East. In South Sudan, the Slovak Republic is currently implementing a development project through SlovakAid, aimed at providing paediatric care in the Gordim area. For the first time, as part of a Slovak government scholarship programme, 30 places were allocated in 2016 to Syrian citizens living in Syria or neighbouring Middle Eastern countries.

## HUMANITARIAN AID

Humanitarian aid was an important element of our work and this was not simply related to the substantial increase in our contributions to EU funds and various international organisations. We attached equal importance to bilateral activities. The most important of these was delivering humanitarian aid to Syria in cooperation with Magna Children at Risk and to Italy in response to a series of earthquakes, as well as the establishment and running of the Bratislava-based St. Elisabeth University field hospital in Greece in the G. Pelagou and Amartola Kokkinos refugee camps in the Imathia area.

Although 2016 was a successful year for development cooperation and humanitarian aid, it was also a tragic one. In South Sudan, a Slovak missionary nurse, V. T. Racková was gunned down by militants and died as a result of her injuries.



▲ Lukáš Parížek handing over a symbolic cheque to a non-governmental organisation as part of humanitarian aid activities for Aleppo, Syria, Bratislava, 13 December 2016 (Photo: MFEA SR)



▲ The Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro in August 2016 increased the demands on our embassy in Brazil in providing assistance to Slovak citizens. But this was also an opportunity for the Slovak Republic to promote itself in a region with high potential for cooperation. The photograph shows Andrej Kiska cheering on Slovak competitors in Rio on 4 August 2016 (Photo: Ján Súkup)

# 6

## SERVICES FOR THE PEOPLE

The consular assistance workload is heavy and is still increasing over the long-term in several areas. There are multiple reasons for this – Slovaks increasingly travel for work, tourism or study, there is a limited number of embassies and these are unevenly distributed and consular staffing levels vary, and some are located in geographically extensive countries.

### MOBILE CONSULAR DAYS

A well-established way for improving and increasing the availability of consular services are the consular days offered by several Slovak embassies outside the capital. The Embassy in London, along with the one in Prague, has long been the busiest one and therefore organises consular days in cities with large Slovak communities. It carried out three in Peterborough, two in Birmingham, two in Manchester, and one in Newcastle and Glasgow. Two visits were arranged specially (in Folkestone and Rotherham) to issue passports to disabled persons.

The Embassy in Ottawa held a total of six consular days in three locations – Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver. The Slovak Consulate General in New York brought its services closer to Slovak citizens living in the states of Illinois, Wisconsin, Ohio, Michigan and Indiana by organising two trips to Chicago.

A seasonal consular office was opened in Zadar during July and August to provide consular assistance to Slovak citizens spending the summer holidays on Croatia's Adriatic coast. It issued 31 replacement travel documents (for lost passports), intervened to help 51 citizens, including providing assistance to five hospitalised persons and repatriating the physical remains of two Slovak citizens. By dispatching staff from headquarters to the embassy in Paris, we were able to ensure consular services were available to citizens requiring them at the various championships venues, during the EURO 2016 tournament.

### DIGITAL ASSISTANCE ABROAD

The Ministry also responded to the increase in various kinds of security threats and offered Slovak citizens a free informa-

tion service giving early warning of threats abroad and assistance in emergency situations. Furthermore, the Ministry recommends that prior to travelling abroad citizens should consider activating this free service. Registration is voluntary, and the service can be activated simply by filling out a registration form and giving details of contact addresses in the countries citizens plan to visit. Every year an increasing number of citizens get into difficulties because of natural disasters, industrial, environmental or technical accidents, pandemics, epidemics, social crisis, organised crime, terrorism or armed conflict. The Ministry warns citizens about crisis situations by SMS or by phone. Using the data from the registration form, our embassies abroad can provide speedy assistance to Slovak citizens in need in the situations listed above.

The system of providing consular assistance to Slovak citizens via a welcome SMS was first introduced in February 2013 and has been positively evaluated by citizens and embassies alike. It is an up-to-date approach to improving the level of consular services provided. The system allows Slovak citizens in foreign countries to make speedy contact with an embassy or the Foreign Ministry. Citizens travelling



▲ Mobile consular days proved very popular in Canada. The photograph shows consuls at work in Calgary, the Canadian Province of Alberta (Photo: MFEA SR)



▲ The Slovak Government plane transported 23 – Slovak (13) and Czech (10) – tourists to Bratislava after their bus crashed in Serbia, 21 June 2016 (Photo: MFEA SR)

to remote countries with higher degree of risk particularly welcome this service.

Another way in which the Foreign Ministry provides information and keeps Slovak tourists abroad safe is through *Svetobežka*, a mobile app unveiled by the Foreign Ministry in mid-October 2013. It is an aid for those travelling abroad. The app contains useful information on what to consider before travelling abroad and advice on how to proceed in emergency situations. It's available free on devices running Android, iOS (Apple) or Windows systems. It also enables access to the voluntary registration system prior to travel abroad.

#### MUTUAL REPRESENTATION

Slovakia continued to negotiate agreements with other EU countries on visa representation in countries where Slovakia does not have a consular office. The agreements

with the Czech Republic and Austria, who represented us in Lebanon up until July had to be changed. Since then the Slovak Consulate in Beirut issues visas. As part of an existing agreement with Hungary, talks have started on Slovak representation in Vietnam. Negotiations have also begun with France, and an agreement has been concluded with Germany.

At present, the Slovak Republic represents six members of the European Union or the Schengen Area in eight countries:

In 2016 visa-free travel agreements were signed with Kiribati (23 June 2016), Tuvalu (1 July 2016), the Marshall Islands (27 June 2016), Peru (14 March 2016), Micronesia (19 September 2016) and the Solomon Islands (7 October 2016). All these agreements are in force from date of signing.

in Belarus (Portugal), Cyprus (Czech Republic, Slovenia, Hungary), the People's Republic of China (Lithuania), South Korea (Lithuania), Kenya (Czech Republic), Mexico (Lithuania), Romania (Lithuania and Slovenia) and Ukraine (Slovenia).

At the end of the year, we had agreements with 14 member states of the European Union who represent us in 56 countries: Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Angola, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Benin, Bolivia, Burundi, Montenegro, China (Chongqing), Dominican Republic, Eritrea, Ethiopia, the Philippines, Ghana, Georgia, Guinea Bissau, Haiti, India (Mumbai), Iraq (Erbil), Jamaica, Jordan, South Africa (Cape Town), Cape Verde Islands, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Colombia, Congo (Brazzaville), Democratic Republic of Congo, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Morocco, Moldova, Mongolia, Mozambique, Nepal, Nigeria, Oman, Sao Tome and Principe, Pakistan, Peru, Côte d'Ivoire, Russian Federation (Ekaterinburg, Kaliningrad), Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda, United States of America (Los Angeles), East Timor, Zambia and Zimbabwe.



▲ Slovakia and Japan agreed a working holidays programme for young people from both countries. It reciprocally entitles citizens of the sending state to a stay of one year in the receiving state. Miroslav Lajčák being photographed with the Ambassador of Japan to Slovakia Aki Egawa, 24 February 2016 (Photo: MFEA SR)

#### Comparison of consular activity in 2013–2016

Type of consular service/activity	Year			
	2013	2014	2015	2016
Emergency consular assistance for Slovak citizens	3,091	3,460	4,079	4,073
Certifications performed at diplomatic missions abroad (including translations)	33,637	38,033	43,669	47,875
Certifications provided by the Ministry's legalisation department	4,287 (of which 679 apostilles)	4,319 (of which 726 apostilles)	4,359 (of which 745 apostilles)	4,118 (of which 885 apostilles)
Processing passport applications	10,733	13,556	14,430	14,695
Issuing diplomatic and service passports	649 + 528	642 + 396	558 + 270	685 + 478
Issuing national ID cards	627	978	1,332	1,081
Issuing driving licences	544	545	615	618
Registrar work and applications for registrar documents	7,690	8,122	8,087	8,324
Certification/confirmation of Slovak citizenship	1,999	2,226	2,387	2,368
Applications for granting Slovak citizenship	36	23	71	76
Renouncement of Slovak citizenship	218	194	65	140
Criminal record extracts	794	1,005	950	848
Accompanying letter for transport of physical remains	68	84	49	67
Various forms of assistance relating to the death of Slovak citizens abroad	690	755	770	803
Issuing replacement travel documents for Slovak citizens	3,950	4,326	5,324	5,039
Marriages performed at the embassy	35	40	32	28
Replies to email requests for information	59,448	58,935	77,653	86,232
<b>Total number of selected consular actions</b>	<b>129,024</b>	<b>137,639</b>	<b>164,700</b>	<b>177,548</b>
Visa requests	132,898	106,417	77,921	64,958
Visa requests undertaken when representing other states	821	1,259	1,706	1,175
Income from visa fees	3,464,902	2,652,801	1,994,270.50	1,576,630
Income from consular fees	1,108,154	1,291,187	1,507,859.50	1,722,614.50
<b>Total income</b>	<b>4,573,056</b>	<b>3,943,989</b>	<b>3,502,087.00</b>	<b>3,298,777.50</b>



▲ Cyclist Peter Sagan is the first ambassador of the *Good Idea Slovakia* brand – an individual who plays a significant role in promoting Slovakia across the world (Photo: Creative Department)



# PUBLIC AND CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

# 7

## PUBLIC DIPLOMACY – COMMUNICATING THE FOREIGN POLICY PRIORITIES

Public diplomacy is carried out by the Ministry as part of the long-term process of communicating with the public at home and abroad with the aim of enhancing Slovakia's appeal and credibility and conveying its foreign policy goals. Communicating the objectives and priorities of Slovak foreign and European policy to the public promotes a view of Slovakia as a dynamic country with a successful European story.

The Ministry does this through successful projects such as a series of debates on current foreign policy topics for high school students, specialist lectures at universities, collaboration with the online journal *Zahraničná politika* (Foreign Policy), social networking, sectoral information materials, and thematic exhibitions. Constructive dialogue was maintained with non-profit NGOs, particularly the beneficiaries of the

Ministry's subsidy mechanism, to improve the outcomes of projects implemented on behalf of the public both at home and abroad.

Public diplomacy projects were also part of preparations for Slovakia's first Presidency of the Council of the EU. A series of discussions was held with external partners, marketing and media experts and non-profit NGOs to seek ideas for underpinning the Slovak Presidency and appropriate ways to promote a deeper understanding of the EU's importance and its benefits to citizens, and positively promote Slovakia within the European space. The Presidency logo was an important and the most publicly visible aspect of the Presidency's visual identity. It was created via a public tender involving over two hundred participants, which is a positive reflection of the public interest it generated. A selection of gifts and items were chosen by the public diplomacy unit for Slovak Presidency delegates, based around the key promotional messages of the Presidency (e.g. the promotional

The screenshot shows the website 'ZP ZAHRANIČNÁ POLITIKA'. The header includes navigation links for RSS, Facebook, and Twitter. A search bar is present with the text 'Začítaj hlavný text'. Below the search bar are links for 'O nás', 'Naši autori', 'Pre autorov', 'Členstvo v SFPA', and 'Archív'. The main content area features a photograph of a meeting around a table with the caption 'f. olo. M/V SR'. Below the photo is the article title 'Upevnil sa formát V4+ počas slovenského predsedníctva vo Vyšehrade?' and the author's name 'Lubomír Reňák'. A 'Rubrika' section with a 'Forum' link is also visible.

Ministry staff contribute to *Zahraničná politika* (Foreign Policy) webzine



▲ Gifts for delegates attending Slovakia's EU Council Presidency events (Photo: Bedřich Schreiber)

information brochures *Did you know? This is Slovakia*) and in keeping with the attributes of the Slovakia Brand. All the presentational gifts incorporated narrative ideas portraying Slovakia's story in a unique and compelling way.

The Ministry not only initiated a contemporary documentary film about Slovakia entitled *S tebou ma baví Slovensko*, (*From Slovakia with Love*), primarily aimed at an international audience, but it also proposed ideas for it. With the launch of the Presidency, RTVS radio and television broadcast the film premiere and granted the Ministry an international licence. This was an opportunity to present Slovakia in a unique way through a highly professional documentary.

The various publications and promotional materials produced by the Foreign Ministry are an integral part of promoting Slovakia abroad. The Embassies distributed 40,000 copies to interested parties abroad. The most interesting



▲ A virtual perspective of the most interesting places in Slovakia (Photo: MFEA SR)

and popular publication was the English version of *SLOVAKIA* and the French version of *UNESCO*.

Visitors to promotional events abroad could take a virtual tour of Slovakia and see the most interesting things in each region in 3D using the special software and 3D glasses made available by the Slovak Embassies to liven up the many promotional events.

In 2016 we continued our tradition of awarding the title of Goodwill Envoy to successful Slovaks living abroad who are successful professionally, spread the country's reputation abroad and help build the Slovak brand. Minister Miroslav Lajčák first awarded the title of Goodwill Envoy in 2010. Since then, the Ministry has maintained close contact with all the laureates as part of its public diplomacy programme. They declared their willingness to engage in mutual cooperation when they met on the margins of the 5<sup>th</sup> award ceremony.



▲ Book covers of the English version of *SLOVAKIA* and the French version of *UNESCO*



## Alexander DUBČEK

A Slovak who gave hope to freedom



▲ The book cover of *Alexander Dubček: A Slovak who gave hope to freedom*

As part of the public diplomacy projects, the Minister was patron at the launch of *The Human Face of Politics* exhibition celebrating Alexander Dubček's 95<sup>th</sup> birthday. The exhibition portrays a different view of the world of our distinguished statesman from that generally known to the public. The three language versions of the exhibition were very well received abroad, where it was displayed by 23 Slovak embassies. The Ministry also published a book on Alexander Dubček's life and achievements in conjunction with the exhibition.



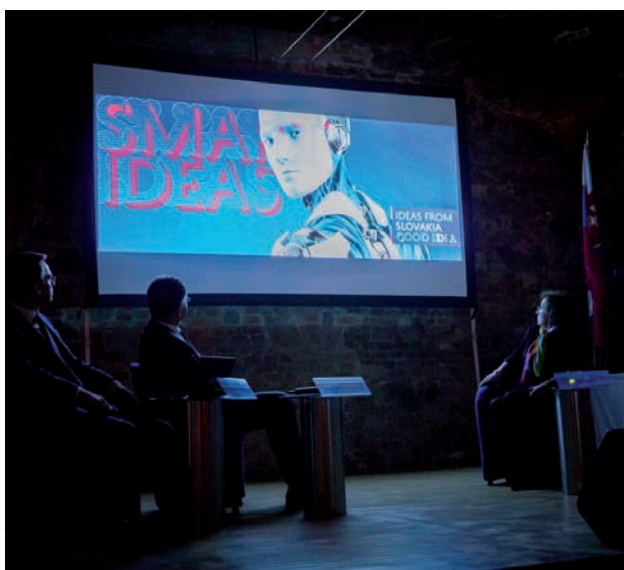
▲ Alexander Dubček's sons with the Minister in front of the introductory panel of the exhibition *Alexander Dubček: The human face of politics* (Photo: MFEA SR)

### THE SLOVAKIA BRAND AND INTERDEPARTMENTAL COOPERATION IN COORDINATING THE UNIFIED PRESENTATION OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC ABROAD

After a few years of hard work, the Foreign Ministry successfully completed the initial stage of national branding. For the first time in its history Slovakia has a unified and comprehensive brand, based on an authentic identity and expressed in the slogan *Good Idea Slovakia*. The brand was unveiled by minister Miroslav Lajčák in April 2016.



▲ 2016 Good Will Envoys Ján Zoričák, Maja Poláčková and Petra Hamerlík with Miroslav Lajčák (Photo: MFEA SR)



▲ Official public unveiling of the Slovakia brand (Photo: MFEA SR)

The comprehensive design of the Slovakia brand will integrate the visual identity and public relations of the Slovak state administration, and ensure that its institutions are easily identified. The Ministry and central government are bound by government resolution to use the unified logotype of the state administration and Slovak Republic.

Part of the long process of creating the country's brand was the creation of *Good Idea Slovakia* ambassadors. This title is conferred on exceptional individuals, groups or entities who help promote Slovakia and build the Slovak brand. The first to hold this honorary title is cyclist Peter Sagan.

The Ministry will use the brand and associated promotional communication in all its public relations work. Fans of the most important sports event of the year had the opportunity to see the *Good Idea Slovakia* logo featured on the post-



▲ Minister Miroslav Lajčák awarding the honorary title of *Good Idea Slovakia* ambassador to Peter Sagan (Photo: MFEA SR)

age stamp commemorating the XXXI Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro 2016.

Key promotional events and projects organised by the Ministry and embassies not only used the different versions of the Slovak brand but were also linked by characteristics emphasising that investing, doing business, studying and vacationing in Slovakia is truly a good idea.

By granting free licence to use the logo and slogan, the Ministry can engage government and public administrations, key implementation agencies, interested professionals and the public.

Since the logo was introduced, the Ministry has received more than 100 applications for licences from various entities. The *Good Idea Slovakia* logo is now used in the public relations and promotional work of a number of manufac-



▲ Postage stamp issued to commemorate the 31<sup>st</sup> Summer Olympic Games in Brazil featuring the slogan *Sport & Slovakia Good Idea*

turers of Slovak products, cultural and sports event organisers, regional and regional tourism organisations and so on.

Creating the best conditions for promoting Slovakia abroad and coordinating the state's key public relations work remains the primary objective of interministerial cooperation. The established platform for this is the interdepartmental working group for the coordinated presentation of the Slovak Republic abroad. The working group was formed at the behest of the Foreign Ministry and is part of the Slovak Government Council for Export and Investment Promotion. Last year, major progress was made in the systematic and uniform promotion of the Slovak Republic abroad.

By expanding on the attributes of the Slovakia brand as part of public diplomacy projects and Slovak embassies' activities, the Foreign Ministry is reinforcing Slovakia's public identity. Through the coordination of public, economic, sports, cultural and digital diplomacy, the first *Good Idea Slovakia* brandbook adds to the synergy of promoting Slovakia's interests abroad.



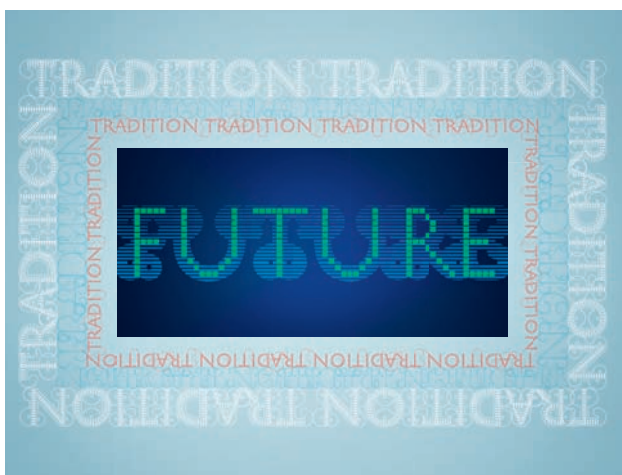
▲  
Page from the first *Good Idea Slovakia* brandbook

### COOPERATION WITH THE NGOS

The Foreign Ministry worked with NGOs, mainly in connection with foreign and security policy, organising successful events with well-known brands such as the Globsec Security Conference and the Tatra Summit, as well as in connection



▲  
The Slovakia brand at the International Engineering Fair in Brno presented by the SARIO agency (Photo: SARIO)



▲ Page from the first *Good Idea Slovakia* brandbook

with humanitarian aid (especially for Syria and countries affected by the migration crisis), and in development cooperation to improve employment levels in Kenya or

living standards and environmental protection in Moldova. The non-governmental sector was also an important partner in preparations for the Slovak Presidency.

An important tool in cooperation with the non-governmental sector is the **subsidy mechanism**:

1. The International Relations and Foreign Policy (MVZP/2016) supported 32 projects to a total of 118,820 euros. NGOs display a greater interest in grants. Projects concerned the preparation of specialist materials on European and global security issues, the production of single-issue publications and the organisation of events, seminars and conferences.
2. International Relations and Foreign Policy was aimed at the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the EU (MVZP-SK PRES / 2016) and funded 29 projects to a total of 320,000 euros. The projects were implemented in the Slovak Republic and abroad, and some received patronage.
3. Support and protection of human rights and freedoms (LP / 2016) funded 48 projects totalling 763,500 euros. As of 2047, this grant mechanism will be run by the Ministry of Justice.



▲ German Federal Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble receiving the Globsec European Award from the Slovak Finance Minister Peter Kažimír and State Secretary Ivan Korčok at the opening of Globsec Tatra Summit 2016. The visual presentation of the event included the *Good Idea Slovakia* brand (Photo: MFEA SR)

## CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

Cultural diplomacy portrayed Slovakia as a modern, prosperous country with youthful, creative potential. It used a version of the new Slovakia brand, *Culture & Slovakia Good Idea*, in cultural groups such as the Central European Cultural Platform, the Asia–Europe Foundation, EU National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC) and joint cultural diplomacy activities by EU delegations in non-EU countries.

### Expanding the treaty and contract base

By expanding bilateral cultural cooperation and initiating new intercultural exchanges our **treaty and contract base** can be extended. Slovakia approved a cooperation programme in education, culture and sport with Spain for the years 2016–2019, signed a cooperation programme with the State of Israel for 2017–2019 in education, science, culture, youth and sport and an agreement with Egypt on cooperation in science, education, culture and sport. The Ministry concluded a five-year contract with Bratislava City Council on cooperation in promoting Bratislava and the Slovak Republic abroad through Slovak institutes.

During our Presidency Slovakia demonstrated it was a unique and dynamic country in Europe, presenting a multi-genre repertoire in accordance with the Memorandum signed with the Ministry of Culture. Events included the *Magical Slovakia* photography exhibition and an updated version of the exhibition *Slovakia: Member of the EU, Slovakia – richness in diversity*, in parallel with presentations and promotional events at Slovakia’s diplomatic missions. Slo-

via organised more than 250 cultural events in 30 countries as part of its cultural public relations. In addition, under the framework priorities for the presentation of Slovak art and culture abroad, the diplomatic missions and Slovak institutes organised events celebrating the 95<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Alexander Dubček, the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the V4 and the Year of Slovak Music.

## SLOVAKS LIVING ABROAD

The Office for Slovaks Living Abroad celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. In September the Government approved a proposal to set up the Government Council for Expatriate Affairs to strategically guide the Office with the aim of improving coordination of expatriate policy. The first Council meeting took place in November.

The Office began implementing the National Policy on Slovaks Living Abroad for the period 2016–2020. The permanent conference Slovakia and Slovaks Living Abroad was held in October and is a key event.

The Office also supported traditional cultural and social events that contribute to the development of a linguistic, cultural and national identity and common values of cultural and spiritual heritage, as well as promoting expatriate activities in education and training. The council also organises summer camps for Slovak children living abroad.

The number of applications for Slovaks living abroad certificates has risen substantially in recent years (the Office received 941 applications in 2014, and 2,653 in 2016), with the largest number of applicants coming from Serbia (2223).



During the Slovak Presidency, EU member-state higher officials with responsibility for culture came to Slovakia for an informal meeting (Photo: MFEA SR)



▲ During our Presidency Reduta was temporarily transformed into a conference centre for informal meetings of ministers and ministerial conferences (Photo: MFEA SR)



# PROFESIONAL FOREIGN SERVICE IN THE YEAR OF THE SLOVAK PRESIDENCY 8

## HUMAN RESOURCES AND STAFF TRAINING

The diplomatic corps has long been a popular employer, as can be seen from the fact that for every ten vacancies in the permanent service there were 265 external candidates. The best and most highly qualified were selected as new employees at the Ministry. In addition, candidates were externally selected to fill temporary specialist posts created to meet the demands of the Presidency. Fifteen of the 238 applicants were accepted.

Prior to the start of the Presidency, staffing levels were increased at the Permanent Representation of the EU in Brussels, the UN missions in New York, Geneva and Vienna, and the Embassy in Rome, while additional specialists were employed at Ministry headquarters. All this points to the appeal of the diplomatic sector, especially among international relations and political science graduates and those graduating abroad. The Ministry regularly collaborates with the European Union's diplomatic service on personnel issues, since some Ministry staff are employed there, as is the case with some national experts.

In education as well, preparations for Slovakia's first Presidency of the Council of the EU were a priority. From the beginning of the year, there was a training programme for four groups of employees who had not been included in the two-year project Improving the Performance of State Administration Employees working on EU issues – Training for the Presidency. Attendees received training for positions in the international Offices – mainly for the Brussels office (37), but also liaison officers (87), spokespersons and ministerial communications staff (25), and ultimately government members (10), i.e. future head of EU Councils.

In accordance with the Memorandum of partnership between the Slovak Republic and the International Organisation of La Francophonie (OIF) for the years 2016–2018 and the associated National Francophone Initiative for the years 2016–2018, the Ministry of Education and Culture implemented the annual French Language Education Plan as part of its preparations for the Presidency. This concerned group and individual French language courses for civil servants, expert French language seminars relating to the Presidency, intensive weekly language stays in France and French courses at the Alliance Française for staff in Brussels. This type of training was attended by more than 200 state employees.

Alongside this the Ministry also continued to provide continuous and specialist training for staff as part of its internal programmes.

A short student internship was attended by 118 undergraduate and PhD students at headquarters, and 119 (46 of whom were reinforcements for the Presidency) participants at embassies and other diplomatic missions. Altogether the Ministry accepted 237 trainees, 22 more than in 2015.

## MODERNISATION OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE

The Ministry continued to modernise its information and communication infrastructure. The information system created as part of the Digitisation of services in regards to protecting the rights and interests of Slovak citizens and entrepreneurs project was implemented under the Ministry umbrella. A system for the electronic administration of the registry was introduced using government cloud infrastructure. In 2016 a project was implemented to safeguard services as part of the protection of sensitive information in the electronic environment, aimed at operability, on-line communication and mobility. One priority was training and the operation of specialised information systems for the purposes of the 2016 Presidency.



▲ Bratislava Summit meetings were also held at Bratislava Castle (Photo: MFEA SR)



▲ Slovak Presidency of the Council of the EU team (Photo: MFEA SR)

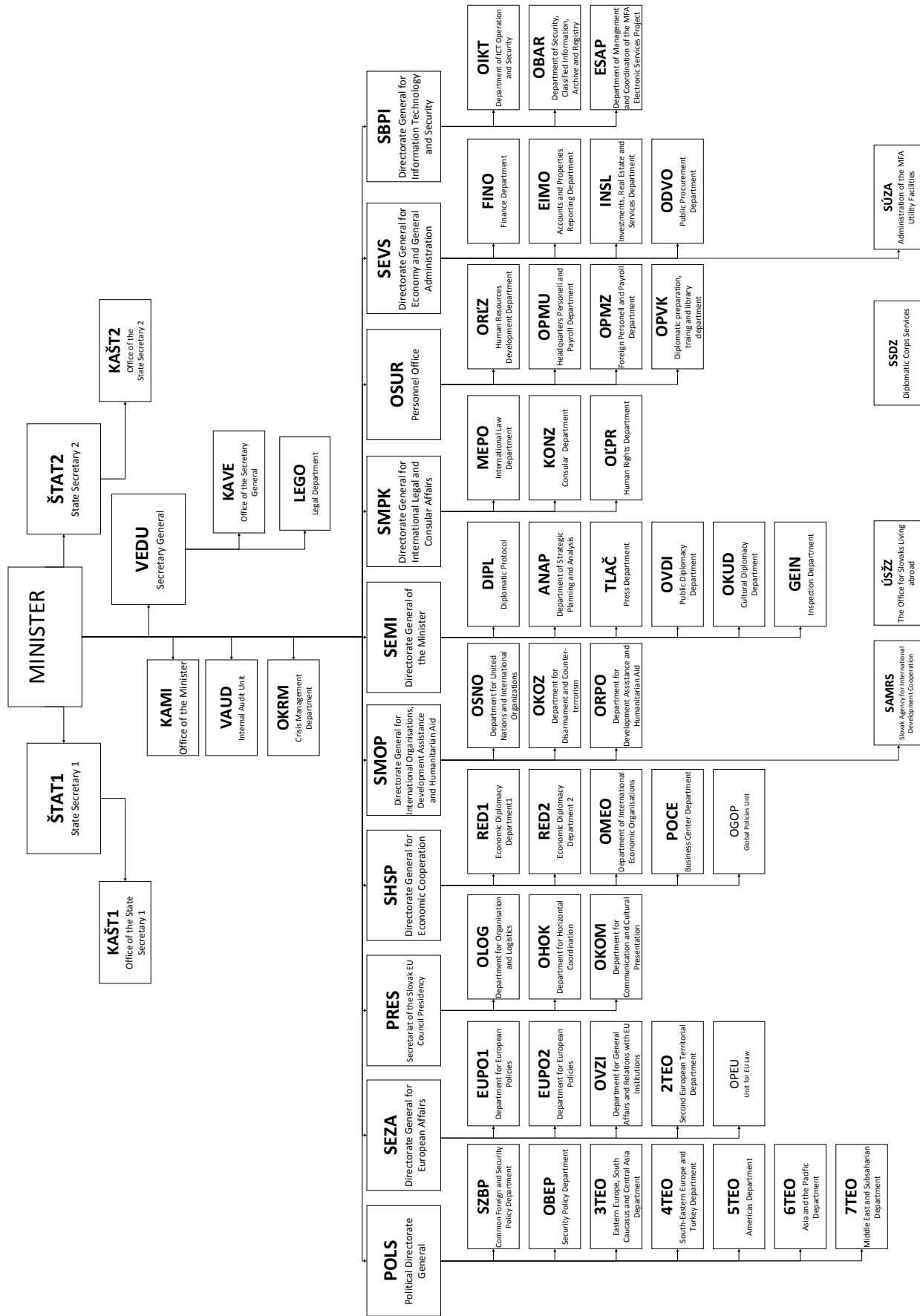
### Ministry's expenditure in 2016

(simplified overview of programme structure – actual expenditure in euros)

Programmes:

<b>Foreign relations</b> .....	<b>113,766,387</b>
Managing programmes.....	41,470,854
Gabčíkovo Nagymaros legal dispute.....	182
Cooperation with the third sector.....	111,000
Staff education and training.....	50,649
Drafting and implementation of human rights policies.....	766,580
Reimbursement of expenditure from Technical Assistance Operational Programme.....	357,058
Economic diplomacy.....	66,776
Diplomatic representation of Slovakia abroad.....	66,578,600
Cultural representation of Slovakia abroad.....	1,089,695
Staff employed locally abroad.....	3,274,993
<b>Assistance to expatriates</b> .....	<b>1,700,800</b>
Inter-ministerial programmes:	
<b>Official development cooperation – Ministry</b> .....	<b>6,646 160</b>
<b>Slovakia's EU Council Presidency 2016</b> .....	<b>25,698,198</b>
<b>Digitisation of Ministry's services</b> .....	<b>359,827</b>
<b>Human resources</b> .....	<b>25,813</b>
<b>Slovakia's contributions to international organisations – Ministry</b> .....	<b>33,186,525</b>
<b>Total expenditure</b> .....	<b>181,383 709</b>

# Organisational Chart



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