

# Foreign and European Policy in 2019

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



Foreign and European Policy in 2019  
Annual Report of the Ministry of Foreign  
and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic

© Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, Bratislava 2020  
All rights reserved

Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic  
Hlboká cesta 2  
833 36 Bratislava 37

Tel.: +421 2 5978 1111  
Fax: +421 2 5978 3638 (3639)  
E-mail: [info@mzv.sk](mailto:info@mzv.sk)  
Website: [www.mzv.sk](http://www.mzv.sk)

Cover photograph: MFEA SR (26th OSCE Ministerial Council in Bratislava,  
5 December 2019)

Language editor: Catriona Menzies

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

ISBN 978-80-88726-75-3

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

Forewords.....	4
1 European pillar.....	11
2 Security pillar.....	15
3 Multilateral pillar .....	19
4 Slovak OSCE Chairmanship .....	23
5 Regional and bilateral cooperation .....	27
6 The foreign service's economic tools .....	35
7 Development cooperation and humanitarian aid.....	39
8 Consular service and compatriots .....	43
9 Cultural and public diplomacy .....	47
10 Professional foreign office .....	55

# On values, challenges and responsibility in international relations



The year 2019 was about the values that have shaped and, we hope, will continue to shape the modern face of Europe. It is a face that reveals experience and maturity, but one that acquired a few additional wrinkles last year.

In 2019 European values were foremost in our minds when we celebrated the 15th anniversary of the EU's 'big-bang' enlargement. We reminisced about an era full of hope and euphoria, when we believed our dreams of a united Europe were within easy reach. We recalled a time before Europe was beset by a series of crises that would come to define the last ten years.

We remembered those days, but did not truly celebrate them. Paradoxically the anniversary of the EU's biggest enlargement was also the moment at which a member state chose to leave the EU, and yet the EU was unable to muster up the internal strength to send a positive signal on future enlargement. The most fragmented European Parliament in the EU's history, which we elected in May, was no testament to unity either.

None of this fills us with joy, but there is no reason to despair either. Clichéd as this may sound, the EU was born out of the greatest crisis in European history, and it is almost as if it has a genetically encoded ability to rise up out of a crisis rejuvenated and stronger. We must hope it will this time too. After the blow of the Brexit referendum, the EU negotiated an agreement with the United Kingdom that is in all likelihood the most effective way of dealing with the reality of Brexit. Despite its hesitation, the EU wants to enlarge. However, to succeed it will have to revise its enlargement methodology and perhaps even undergo reform itself so as to be better

prepared. We see no reason why these processes cannot take place simultaneously.

Europe's aim is to become a global player, but first it has to devote its attention to its neighbourhood. Not only in the Balkans, but also in the East, the ten-year old Eastern Partnership requires new impetus. Nonetheless our primary concern has to be resolving the conflict in Ukraine. The Normandy Four finally met at the end of 2019, bringing new hope and dynamism after three years, and we must back it with all our strength.

Last but not least, 2019 was also a year of hope for the EU itself. We agreed a new strategic agenda and are negotiating a new financial framework that will give it the necessary resources. Ultimately, the European parliament has produced a new European Commission with a programme that, after a decade of crisis management, is progressive rather than reactionary and seeks to propel the EU back onto the global stage. The EU is once again showing signs of leadership with the colour green now featuring among its traditional blue and yellow. The EU showed strength when inspiring the world through example, and its Green Agenda may be what gives the EU new impetus, not just because of its appeal, but because it will enable it to become a technological and economic leader.

2019 was also the 15th anniversary of our NATO membership, NATO's 70th anniversary and the 20th anniversary of the first NATO enlargement beyond the former Iron Curtain. The Alliance is strong, militarily perhaps the most powerful it has ever been. It represents half the world's GDP and half the world's defence spending. It need have no fear of

an attack from outside, so long as it maintains its internal unity. This should always be in our minds, not least because other world players are conscious of it. In 2019 it was not our borders that came under attack, but our unity. And while we may not have maintained full political unity in 2019, in military terms there was no doubt that our determination held firm. On the European side of the Atlantic, we took up the challenge and understood the need to contribute to our security. Our defence costs have risen continually for five years in a row, and we took the first steps in relation to our defensive capabilities in the EU. We still have to think through all the implications of our strategic autonomy and explain them to our closest partners, but this is an era that requires decisiveness, and in the twenty-first century the EU has to decide whether it wants to be a player or a playground.

In 2019 we celebrated the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall and our own Velvet Revolution. We recalled a time in which we thought the end of history as we knew it was coming and in which the world would no longer be divided into zones of influence. When we thought there would come a period of enlightened progress when all of humanity would unite in pursuit of freedom, democracy, prosperity, and economic and social progress. But we were rudely awoken from this dream, and 2019 again showed us that instead of the ideals of '89' we are again facing the old '-isms' of unilateralism and isolationism on the one hand and multipolarism with its renewed spheres of influence on the other.

The EU has to accept that it has economic competitors and systemic rivals in the world. It named one, but we can assume there are more. The era in which the model of liberal democratic government was in ascendance across the planet may not be completely over, but it has slowed down considerably, and serious consideration must be given also to defensive aspects. The free world has to defend itself against an enemy that is often invisible and reliant on hybrid weapons and especially disinformation.

In this world Slovakia's options are clear: we choose to be part of the free world and wish to remain so and protect it. We are opposed to the creation of new zones of influence. We believe in the equality of nations and peaceful coexistence. We believe global issues can only be resolved through the common efforts of the international community. That is why we continued to support effective multilateralism in 2019.

Our primary contribution to this was our Chairmanship of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), an organisation that brings together 57 countries and three continents. Our Chairmanship revealed both the potential and limits of the OSCE. We injected new dynamism and new topics of debate and raised its visibility. We are now handing the Chairmanship over to Albania in a stable insti-

tutional and financial state. We prevented several conflicts from escalating and sought ways to resolve the most pressing one which occupies the minds and prevents full cooperation, not just in the OSCE. Ukraine was the focal point of our efforts, and I believe our Chairmanship was of some help in reviving the peace process there. We organised a number of events at different levels, culminating in the ministerial meeting, which was the largest such international event Slovakia organised. And while doing so, we became aware that the OSCE still has many deficiencies. We therefore launched the Bratislava Appeal, calling for the will to compromise, and to practise multilateralism rather than just talking about it. We achieved a lot over the year, but I will be content if our Chairmanship is remembered for one thing: for shifting the emphasis onto people and for rejecting the traditional logic of international relations, so that conflicts in the OSCE area were seen not through the lens of geopolitics, but through the eyes of its victims,.

Slovakia's Chairmanships of the OECD Ministerial Council and the Visegrad Four reflected our responsibilities regarding effective multilateralism. We took up the lead position in the Slavkov format and the post of Vice-President of the Human Rights Council. We helped to keep the peace in Cyprus and provided military assistance and support to our allies in the Baltic. We trained security forces in Iraq and Afghanistan so they can find stability again. We provided development assistance across three continents, increased our support for compatriots abroad, and our consular services again provided assistance in tens of thousands of cases around the world. We helped Slovak businesses export their products, import innovations and new technologies, and attract skilled labour to Slovakia. Last but not least, we spread Slovakia's good name around the world under the *Good Idea Slovakia* brand.

All of this was accomplished by a relatively small but determined foreign service from the heart of Europe. May we be equally successful in 2020!



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

## František Ružička, State Secretary



The year 2019 brought with it a great many initiatives and ideas. There were positive and not-so-positive moments and these influenced Slovakia's development and shaped its foreign and European policy.

Thirty years have passed since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Iron Curtain. For thirty years we have lived in freedom and democracy.

Fifteen years have passed since Slovakia joined NATO. For fifteen years we have lived in peace and security guaranteed through treaty obligations. We joined NATO to strengthen our sovereignty, and our security is measurably greater. Fifteen years have passed since Slovakia joined the EU. For fifteen years we have lived in a land without borders and in freedom, underpinned by shared values, economic development and common prosperity.

The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs carefully applies the policies that reinforce Slovakia's European and trans-Atlantic anchor. We are well aware that many of the things we take for granted today – peace, human dignity, individual rights, freedom and prosperity – are not automatic. Slovakia's position and interests, and the security and rights of its citizens, depend on the performance, effectiveness and outcomes of foreign policy. We are a small country as regards our population, and so we have to be even 'smarter'.

The world is changing, and it is difficult to foresee how it will develop. There are troubling trends in Europe too. The foundations of the multilateral world order are continuously being shaken. Global and regional alliances based on respect for rights and freedoms and multilateralism are being deliberately destabilised. Disinformation campaigns that shape our views, opinions and behaviour have unfortunately become an eve-

ryday reality. Passivity is a dangerous luxury, and equally we cannot afford to lose our European cornerstone nor our friends and allies. With them we are stronger. Without them Slovakia would be a small boat adrift in the storms of global politics.

In the past year, European politics have been hectic. The elections to the European Parliament were a key event, redrawing the political map of Europe and proving that Euro-sceptic political parties do not have the strongest hand in the EU. Europe's citizens rejected populism and extremism outright. They placed their trust in Europe's institutions and in the European project. Another encouraging sign was the increase in voter turnout, including in Slovakia, giving the European Parliament greater legitimacy.

After the elections, new representatives took up positions in the main European institutions. The Council, the Parliament and the Commission unveiled ambitious work programmes encapsulating the European values of freedom, security and prosperity. They also showed that they are prepared to lead a constructive interinstitutional dialogue. However, achieving real results that demonstrate the EU is truly capable of moving from promises to actions will be crucial.

Citizens sent a clear signal in the parliamentary elections – they want a Europe that is more democratic, more ecological, more social and more secure. They want to be involved in the decision-making. Therefore, in Sibiu, Romania, the EU member states agreed a new strategic agenda focused on protecting citizens and freedoms, developing a strong economy, building a climate-neutral and fair Europe and supporting EU interests in the world.

The EU cannot afford to hesitate. Otherwise it will endanger not just its reputation but its very existence. Therefore Slo-

vakia backs the Conference on the Future of Europe, with the aim of actively conversing and engaging with citizens and involving them in discussions on ideas for the future development of the EU. Slovakia's representative in the European Commission, Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič, has responsibility for the EU's strategic foresight and future prospects.

As part of the #MYSMEEU [#wearetheeu] initiative, the Ministry is visiting secondary schools and universities and holding discussions with students about the meaning, contributions and advantages of the EU. I consider this to be both part of our work and the direct responsibility of democratically elected representatives of the European and national parliaments.

Developments in the EU do not take place in a linear fashion. We continue to face various challenges. The referendum in the United Kingdom that led to Brexit is proof of this. Arriving at the withdrawal agreement has cost us a great deal of energy. Slovakia has drafted its own legislation to limit insofar as is possible the consequences Brexit will have on citizens and businesses. We have been in regular communication with all our important partners regarding current developments and preparations for Brexit. Contacts with the United Kingdom will not end once Brexit is over. The merry-go-round of discussions on future relations is just beginning and here too we want to play an active and constructive role.

Besides these internal challenges, we had to face external ones as well. Cybernetic and hybrid threats and disinformation campaigns are a form of aggression targeted at critical infrastructure, information systems and anyone who moves in the virtual world of social networks and the internet. In the fight against hybrid threats, the Ministry's diplomacy has focused on readiness and implementing basic protection and prevention measures and on cooperation with foreign partners, especially the EU and NATO. In efforts to enhance Slovakia's resistance, we concentrated on creating an interministerial mechanism, under the auspices of the Security Council of the Slovak Republic. Slovakia has been integrated into the NATO centres of excellence for strategic communication in Riga and the fight against hybrid threats in Helsinki. We will therefore be directly at the source of the latest approaches, making our response to potential threats more effective.

Our primary task was and is to look after the security of our citizens – whether by strengthening the system for protecting the EU's external borders, achieving better cooperation in the fight against organised crime and flows of illegal migration or by strengthening cooperation in defence and security, including the battle against terrorism.

EU member states agree on the need to strengthen the standing of the Union. However, to achieve our higher ambitions requires more resources. We cannot ask the EU to do more, to move forward, to be globally competitive, to strengthen its position in innovation, digitalisation, climate

goals, industry or security, while placing restrictions on its budget at the same time. Slovakia is ready to take on its share of the responsibility and to increase its contribution to the European budget. But we also want to see cohesion and agricultural policy funding to continue without restriction. Both contribute to social and economic convergence between member states and regions. Without sufficient financial resources, we cannot imagine being able to carry out the new policies that will be essential if the EU is to be able to fully resolve the problems regarding the security of our external borders, migration, terrorist threats and defence.

The EU must lead the fight against climate change. It must demonstrate the political will and courage. At the December summit, EU leaders – with the support of Slovakia – approved the commitment to be carbon neutral by 2050. There is clear public demand for this and no doubting the necessity. The EU has the economic and technological requirements to become world leader. And although this may seem unachievable today, we need to look at it in the context of technological advance. Transitioning to a low-carbon economy will come at a huge financial cost and will have a substantial effect on all areas of the economy, industry and society. Slovakia supports the creation of a fair transition fund to help the most vulnerable regions and communities cope with the environmental burdens and the transition to more effective forms of energy production. We don't know what the world will be like in 2050, but we do know that we want to give those who come after us a chance. We have to believe in a green, healthy and sustainable planet.

If we look back 30 years, I think the ideas we had then were far from the peaceful, secure and democratic reality of 2019. At that time, no one dared to hope that Slovakia would become a successful prosperous European country, integrated in Euro-Atlantic structures and a member of major international and economic organisations. Of all the Central and Eastern European countries, we have come farthest in the European integration process – we are members of both the euro area and the Schengen Area. We have acquired our first European agency – the European Labour Authority – which will be based in Bratislava. That decision is an expression of trust, acknowledgement of our professionalism and proof that Slovakia is a credible and respected partner.

Slovakia is part of the solution – whether in Ukraine (OSCE Chairmanship), the Western Balkans (support for enlargement) or the global environment (UNGA Presidency). Through the use of effective dialogue, we are working to strengthen bilateral, regional, European and global cooperation. This brings Slovakia recognition and credit, but most of all prosperity for our people, good trade relations, economic growth and mutual cultural enrichment. We are often even unaware of these things, but the fact that we don't see them doesn't mean that they don't exist. They create the necessary protection so Slovak citizens can live a peaceful life in freedom with many opportunities.

# Lukáš Parížek, State Secretary, Special Representative Slovak OSCE Chairmanship



The events of 2019 reflect our work and tell us something about the quality of the relationships we have built up over the past four years. Agreement was reached on the 'scales of contribution' for participating OSCE countries. We talked to more than 200 businesses at regional events, doubled the compatriot budget, tied development assistance to economic diplomacy, amended the law and set up a new mechanism. I therefore judge this year to have been an exceptional one.

## TACKLING DEMANDING FINANCIAL NEGOTIATIONS

Slovak OSCE Chairmanship ended in success with the OSCE now following a more consistent trajectory. Funding is always a sensitive subject, and negotiations on the level of contributions made by participating countries had been at stalemate for several years. The scales of contribution agreed in 2005 no longer reflected the inflation rate, economic growth or even political changes. The lack of a more recent agreement led to a legal vacuum in December 2017, and by January 2019 the need to resolve this had become most urgent. With a view to tackling this, I led an informal working group to address the scales of contribution.

My OSCE management and finance team displayed excellent negotiating skills and a talent for consensus seeking and balanced diplomacy. Where necessary, I intervened on the political level. On 11 April our proposal was unanimously backed by representatives from the 57 participating states at the OSCE's Permanent Council at Vienna headquarters. The agreement 'opened the door' to approval of the OSCE's overall budget for 2019 and created the framework for the coming decade.

In the final phase of our chairmanship, we focused on negotiations to overhaul the scales of contribution for the long term. The Slovak team worked intensively on preparations for extensive funding reform. The proposal has been discussed by all

participating countries, and 56 have given their backing. Only one more approval is needed. I firmly believe that the Albanian Chairmanship will take this balanced and structured proposal and see the reforms through to their successful conclusion.

## EXCHANGING EXPERIENCE AND SOLUTIONS FOR THE PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

More than 400 participants from governments, regional organisations, specialist agencies, experts and NGO representatives met at the International Counter-Terrorism Conference in Bratislava in March. The agenda drafted by the Bratislava working groups contained issues that remained crucial over the year – whether they were about handling intelligence, the radicalisation of groups in Europe, the financing of terrorist activities or the misuse of advanced technologies. Slovakia initiated a number of activities during its Chairmanship, including an international conference that capitalised on its experience of protecting cyberspace, among other things. No country is immune to terrorism, and the response can only be to continually strengthen our defensive capabilities, update our knowledge and boost cooperation between international organisations.

## A NEW DIMENSION FOR ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY

Geopolitics is dominated by pragmatism, and that has brought economic sanctions, the emergence and expiration of global agreements, new energy projects and environmental initiatives. Economic diplomacy can act as the driving force in developing relations – whether between countries or in coalition. Good trade relations between countries can have a positive impact on political relations. But we can always improve the extent to which good political relations translate into opportunities for economic growth. Only some 15 per cent of Slovak exports go outside Europe, but I am convinced

that Slovakia can make a strong commercial impact in developing economies. We will be stronger if businesses, institutions, ministries and diplomacy work together.

Therefore in 2019 I organised business missions to India, China, North Macedonia, Ukraine, Belarus and the Russian Federation. Foreign trips were undertaken by more than 200 Slovak companies from more than 20 industrial sectors, ranging from the traditional engineering sectors to information technology and scientific and research.

## FROM REGION TO WORLD

The first *Together for Slovakia: from Region to World* discussion club was held in Žilina in April 2018, followed by meetings in Trnava and Trenčín and a joint event in Košice for businesses from the Prešov and Košice regions. In 2019 further meetings were held in Banská Bystrica, Nitra and Bratislava. We began with about 10 companies and this grew to 70. We invited SARIO, the Slovak Business Agency, Eximbanka and the Slovak Chamber of Commerce and Industry to take part in the discussions. The 200 participants, with growing interest in the regional capitals, considered these one of the best steps to take 'at home'.

Our work takes on meaning and value when we listen carefully to small and medium-sized businesses, promote our services to them and pique their interest. So this year we set up a Slovak Economic Diplomacy page on Facebook and LinkedIn, and are pleased to see our efforts being reflected in the growing number of users.

## ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY IN V4 COOPERATION

The Visegrad countries have followed a successful model of economic and social transformation and represent a positive example for reforming nations. Since joining the EU, their economic growth has exceeded the member state average.

Negotiations with ministerial partners in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland were therefore particularly inspiring. Sharing our experiences in economic diplomacy takes us a step further in adapting gradually to current trends. The role of economic diplomacy is to seek opportunities in the countries we operate in, while creating an ecosystem to support Slovak businesses there.

## BRIDGING DEVELOPMENTAL ASSISTANCE AND ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY

Besides the usual sectors, there are a great many industrial sectors that have the potential to expand abroad. There are business opportunities for Slovak companies in international tenders and calls for development aid to non-European countries, some of which relate to government supplies.

Since October 2019, Slovak exporters have been able to take advantage of preferential export loans from Eximbanka for selected developing countries. This was made possible by

the introduction of legislation our department helped draft, and I consider it to be one of the successes of long-term ministerial cooperation and a platform for economic diplomacy. It has resulted in new opportunities opening up for Slovak companies and institutions enabling them to penetrate new markets over the long term.

## WE SET OUR STRATEGY FOR 2023

Under the Medium-Term Strategy for Slovak Development Cooperation in 2019–2023, Kenya, Moldova and Georgia were designated as SlovakAid programme countries. We are implementing deeper development cooperation there by providing greater funding tranches and strengthening our personnel capacities through the diplomats who have been working in Moldova and Kenya since 2014. In December 2019 a development diplomat began working in Georgia.

In 2019 Slovakia expanded its ODA activities to Eastern Sub-Saharan Africa, building on the basis of good experiences in development cooperation with Kenya. Ethiopia occupies a special position, as the Slovak embassy in Addis Ababa plays an important role in project implementation. Ethiopia is becoming a promising partner country, particularly regarding the involvement of businesses in development cooperation.

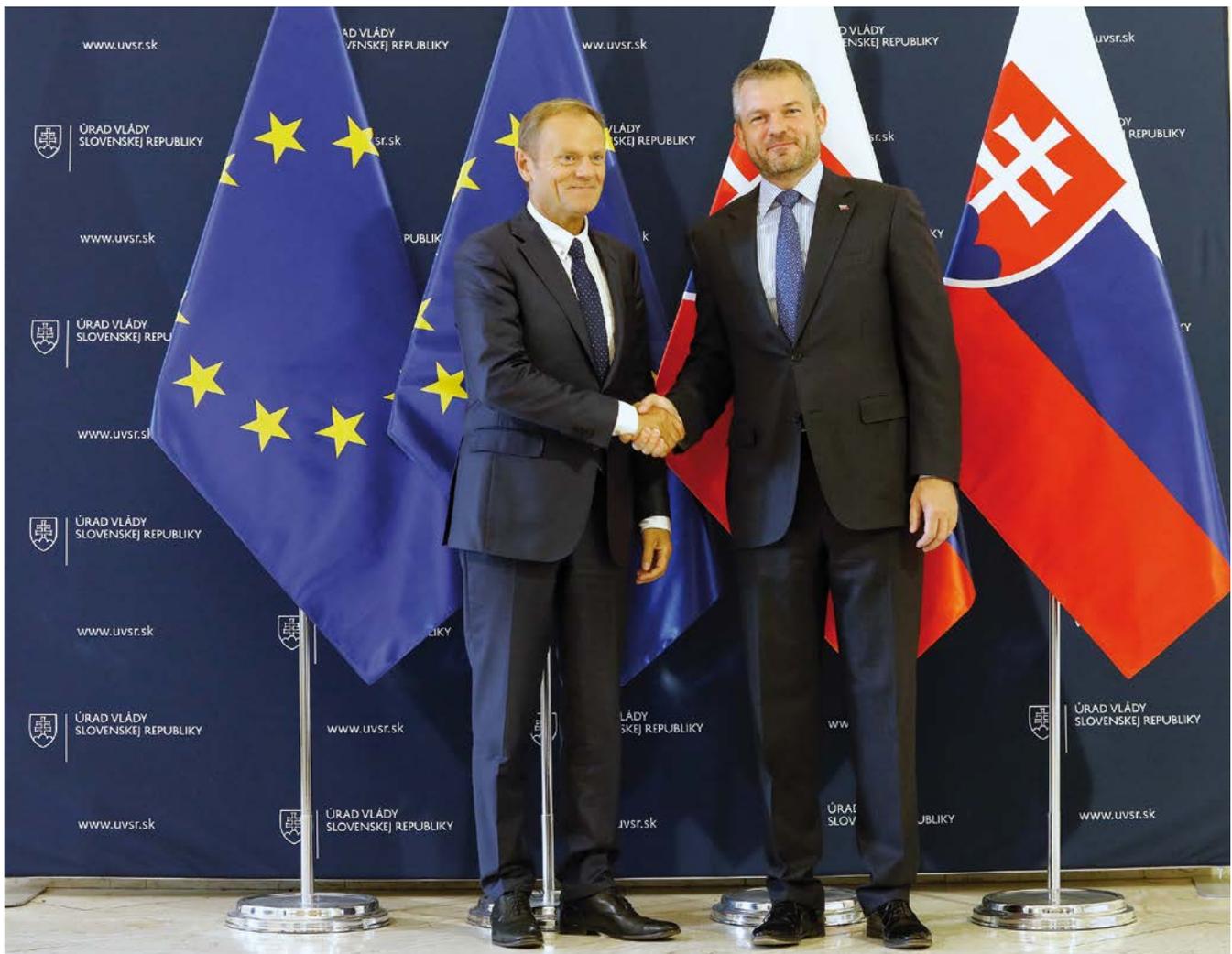
## SUPPORT FOR COMPATRIOTS

I wish to thank all the members of the Government Committee for Compatriot Issues, of which I was Executive Chairman. I consider the proposed 2 law on the state budget for 2020–2022 to be a breakthrough, as the Government increased the budget for supporting Slovaks living abroad by more than €2 million to nearly €4 million. For four years I have closely followed the needs of our compatriots and pushed for an increase to the budget for Slovaks living abroad. The Office for Slovaks Living Abroad supports projects by expatriates relating to education, secular and spiritual culture, information, publishing activities and media.

The 2020 budget allocates a portion of the finances from Serbia's debt for use in infrastructure projects in areas in what used to be known as the Lower Lands that are inhabited by Slovaks. In Serbia there are plans to build a Centre for Vojvodina Slovaks in Novi Sad; in Hungary there is the planned renovation of an Evangelical church in Budapest; in Romania there are proposed projects for multifunctional cultural centres in Bihor and Nădlac; and in Croatia the Slovak Cultural Centre in Našice is to be completed.

## CONCLUSIONS

No matter how good our annual evaluation is, how much Slovakia has grown geopolitically or raised its exports, I still have one unfulfilled wish that I continue to pursue: I want to do everything I can to help make Slovakia the country young people will always want to return to and bring up their children in.



▲ President of the European Council Donald Tusk meets Prime Minister Peter Pellegrini in Bratislava prior to the June EU Summit to discuss nominations to the top European positions of cyber security and the strategic agenda for the next five years, 14 June 2019 (Photo: Government Office of the Slovak Republic)

# EUROPEAN PILLAR

In 2019 we celebrated both the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Iron Curtain that divided Europe for decades and the 15th anniversary of our accession to the European Union. The Slovak Republic plays an integral role in European solutions and has a greater voice than if it had remained outside the EU. The advantages our EU membership has brought us are gradual convergence, economic prosperity, financial stability, a high degree of security and the ability to directly shape shared solutions to global issues such as climate change, migration, digitisation and the technological revolution.

## STRATEGIC AGENDA AND INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES

2019 was the final year of Jean-Claude Juncker's leadership of the European Commission. It was thus a year of political transition towards the new five-year period, which kicked off with the European Parliament elections in May 2019. These were won by the European People's Party (EPP) and Ursula von der Leyen, the German EPP candidate, took office as the new Commission President on 1 December

2019. Slovakia's nominee, Maroš Šefčovič, was appointed as one of the European Commission's Vice-Presidents and given responsibility for Interinstitutional Relations and Foresight. Slovakia backs the priorities of the new European Commission, including combating climate change by achieving carbon neutrality by 2050; supporting the European economy, including completion of the single market and the euro area; developing the European pillar of social rights; promoting fair taxation; enhancing the EU's digital market; protecting European values and internal security; strengthening Europe's global role through a balanced trade policy and by building defence capabilities; and consolidating European democracy.

As part of the institutional transition, the European Council adopted its Strategic Agenda, which sets out the basic framework of political priorities and instruments for a five-year period. Leaders approved the new Strategic Agenda for 2019–2024 in June 2019. It forms the basis of the Council's legislative programming: preparation of the European Commission's annual programme, taking into account the priori-



On 5 December 2019 newly-elected President of the European Council Charles Michel met with Vice President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Central Bank Christine Lagarde and President of the Eurogroup Mário Centeno (Photo: EU/Dario Pignatelli)



▲ Topics discussed at the informal January meeting of EU foreign ministers in Bucharest on 31 January and 1 February 2019 included 10 years of the Eastern Partnership and the current situation in Venezuela (Photo: EU/Dario Pignatelli)

ties of both the Council and the European Parliament. During the drafting stage, the Slovak Republic emphasised the need to overcome the social and economic disparities within and between European countries; to build infrastructure, introduce and promote new technologies, research and development; and focus on internal and external security issues and combat climate change.

With the newly configured institutional relations, the new European Commission is planning to organise a Conference on the Future of Europe. With the significant involvement of civil society, member states and European institutions, it will help define the future shape of the EU and its relations. In preparing for the Conference, Slovakia will continue its public discussions on the future of the EU, currently carried out by the Ministry under the #MYSMEEÚ (#WearetheEU) brand.

### A MODERN EU SINGLE MARKET

Slovakia considers the single market to be one of the key successes of European integration. Our economy is one of the most open economies in the EU, and up to 85 per cent of our exports go to EU countries. It is therefore in our interests to continue promoting the further deepening and strengthening of the single market and its four basic freedoms. In 2019 our long-term European policy priorities continued to be removing barriers, harnessing the potential of digitisation and innovation, and strengthening the EU's global competitiveness, in pursuit of a socially fair and sustainable economic model with a smaller carbon footprint.

To help develop the potential of the single market through labour mobility, the European Labour Authority (ELA) has been created. In 2019 the decision was taken to locate its headquarters in Bratislava. It is the first EU agency to be based in Slovakia. The fact Slovakia was chosen shows its pro-European position and professional reputation.

### EU MULTIANNUAL FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK

In May 2018 the European Commission unveiled its draft Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021–2027. It sets out the conditions for financing the EU priorities for the forth-



▲ The European Labour Authority, the first EU agency to be based in Slovakia, 13 June 2019 (Photo: MFEA SR)

coming period. The focus in the negotiations in 2019 was on clarifying the positions of the member states and trying out potential compromises in several areas. Slovakia's key priorities are to ensure cohesion policy and the common agricultural policy are adequately funded, and that the conditions for drawing down these funds are favourable and flexible. The Slovak Republic initiated preparations for a joint document on eliminating rebates and budgetary corrections on the revenue side of the EU budget, which was supported by a further 17 EU member states, and a joint document on raising rural development funding. Given the increasing scope of common European policies and the new priorities (climate change, defence, security), Slovakia considers it right that all EU member states should contribute more to the EU budget than at present. We expect agreement will be reached at the European Council level in 2020.

## MIGRATION

Migration continued to be an issue in 2019. The common European asylum system still requires reform, and discussions covered the arrival and subsequent redistribution of people rescued in the Mediterranean Sea. Slovakia is one of the countries that consider the key to a comprehensive and sustainable solution to the causes of migration to lie in a consensus-based decision by all EU member states. We have pushed for the causes of migration to be resolved in the countries of origin, for a more effective repatriation policy, for the protection of external borders and the elimination of the pull factors that lead to uncontrolled migration. Consequently, under the Slovak Presidency of the V4, a joint €30 million project between the V4 and Germany was proposed to provide assistance to Morocco for managing migration. Morocco lies on the main migration route via the western Mediterranean which is used by migrants headed for the EU. Slovakia also backed strengthening the mandate of the European Coast and Border Guard Agency, and the associated creation of a permanent 10,000 member force by 2027 to strengthen protection of the EU external border.

## BREXIT

Brexit continued to be a complicated issue in 2019. During the negotiations, we were a constructive partner supporting the efforts to reach an agreement. For Slovakia, the important thing is that the European Union has remained united and that the revised Withdrawal Agreement did not alter citizens' rights nor the financial settlement, both of which have been preserved in full.

The Slovak Government prepared for the possibility of the British Parliament being unable to approve the agreement and the United Kingdom subsequently leaving without an agreement. Act No. 83/2019 (Lex Brexit) was adopted to amend the relevant laws and regulations, such as those covering residency, social security, health insurance and the recognition of



▲  
14th meeting of the Interministerial Coordination Group for Brexit in Bratislava, 31 October 2019 (Photo: MFEA SR/Tomáš Bokor)

qualifications, so as to reciprocally guarantee citizens' rights. Other tasks of a non-legislative nature were also completed, including ensuring the administrative and technical capacities and human resources are in place; providing information to citizens on residency, health care and social security matters; advising entrepreneurs on exports, customs and taxes; and analysing the impact on the Slovak economy.

Once the United Kingdom leaves the EU, subsequent negotiations on future relations between the EU and the United Kingdom will be led by the European Commission on behalf of the EU. The Slovak Republic considers it important to defend its commercial interests in the automotive, electronic, agricultural, food and chemical industries, while maintaining transport connections and mobility and protecting its security interests. Slovakia will push for these as part of the mandate the member states give to the European Commission.

Slovakia's position on Brexit was drafted at state secretary level by the Interministerial Coordination Group for Brexit under State Secretary František Ružička. It was convened twice by the Prime Minister.

## CLIMATE POLICY

Combating climate change has become one of the EU's central policies and, at the European Council in June 2019, the Slovak Republic signed up to the EU's ambitious goal of climate neutrality by 2050. This objective was endorsed at the European Council in December, however one member state could not commit to implementing this objective and the European Council will return to the issue in June 2020. At the UN Climate Summit in September 2019, Slovakia presented its climate-related activities, and President Zuzana Čaputová delivered a speech. Slovakia has also increased its efforts to combat climate change by providing funding. In 2019 we contributed €100,000 to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Trust Fund, and made our first-ever donation, amounting to \$2 million, to the Green Climate Fund.



▲ Fifteen years of NATO membership is about more than just a higher level of security. It shows that Slovakia belongs to an alliance of states that subscribe to and safeguard liberty and democracy – the values that underpin our way of life. NATO has been ensuring the stability and prosperity of its members for 70 years and is the most reliable and economically advantageous guarantee of Slovakia's security

# SECURITY PILLAR

Our security environment is changing rapidly. The rules that were created after World War II to guarantee peace in Europe are no longer being fully adhered to. Sovereignty is being violated, established borders are no longer recognised, international law no longer attracts the respect it did and international agreements are being challenged. The negative effects of hybrid activities, disinformation and propaganda have become part of everyday life. Cyber attacks are becoming more serious, and radicalism, extremism and nationalism are on the rise.

When Slovakia joined the EU and NATO 15 years ago, we were clearly setting out our intended direction and the values, strategy and vision we share with our partners in these integration organisations. We are full members of both and, as part of our rights and obligations, we are boosting our defence spending and continuing involvement in foreign operations and missions. NATO remains the primary guarantee of our security in the international environment. Strengthening European defence capacities is important to us and we are actively working on EU initiatives in this area. We also seek to reinforce peace and European security through other international fora. Defending multilateral institutional and contractual frameworks for arms control, disarmament and

non-proliferation is another key area. We are pushing for effective multilateralism and a rule-based international order. Through our OSCE Chairmanship in 2019, we made a special contribution to these efforts.

## NATO

NATO is the fundamental pillar of our security. It is therefore in the strategic interests of the Slovak Republic to ensure it is united and able to act. NATO Heads of State and Government met in London on 4 December 2019 and, in a declaration adopted at the meeting, reaffirmed NATO's values, the strength of the transatlantic link and its commitment to collective defence under Article 5 of the Washington Treaty. They also confirmed their readiness to work together to make the necessary adaptations to NATO, focusing on the need to increase defence investments and fulfil existing commitments. The Secretary-General was mandated to reflect on NATO activities with a view to deepening the political dimension.

Slovakia endorses these principles and we continued our efforts to increase defence spending to 2 per cent of GDP by 2024. In 2018 we fulfilled our commitment to spend 20



▲ President Zuzana Čaputová leads the Slovak delegation at the December 2019 NATO Leaders Meeting to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the North Atlantic Treaty and the anniversary of the accession of Central and Eastern Europe countries to NATO. The summit sent a strong signal of unity, resilience and readiness among the Allies to continue guaranteeing the security and prosperity of their democratic systems (Photo: NATO)



▲ President Andrej Kiska hosts the summit of the Bucharest Nine (B9) presidents in Košice. The summit was attended by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and dominated by discussions on Russia, migration and new technologies (Photo: NATO)



▲ Defence ministers discuss progress in implementing PESCO projects and the need to strengthen the EU-NATO partnership, emphasising the prevention and combating of hybrid threats. Brussels, 14 May 2019 (Photo: MFEA SR)

per cent of our defence budget on modernising the armed forces. By continuing our contribution to NATO's enhanced forward presence in the Baltic States, we are demonstrating our desire to contribute both politically and operationally to protect our allies. We continue to play an active role in the NATO training mission in Iraq and the Resolute Support mission in Afghanistan. In 2019 the Slovak Republic took part in the activities of the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence in Riga. The contributions we make to NATO's operations, missions and other activities are part of our commitment to take greater responsibility for the functioning of NATO. We have also expressed our support for enhanced cooperation between NATO and the EU over the long-term, especially in areas related to military mobility and the coordination of military planning outputs.

We believe that every country has the right to freely decide its strategic direction. We therefore actively supported the rapid integration of North Macedonia into NATO under the Open Door Policy and were among the first to ratify the Protocol to the North Atlantic Treaty on the Accession of the Republic of North Macedonia in April 2019. As part of NATO's collaborative partnerships, Slovakia continued to provide political and practical support and assistance for defence and security sector reform in Georgia, Ukraine, and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

### EU COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY

The Slovak Republic also backed expansion of the EU's defence capabilities. These efforts continued through work on the European Union's Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) initiative, with the approval of a third wave of projects in 2019. Slovakia completed its National PESCO Implementation Plan and is leading the EuroArtillery project, while participating in another five projects. In cooperation with the other V4 countries, the Slovak Republic made the Battlegroup available to the EU. Its role was to fulfil a wide range of tasks as part of EU international crisis management. It consists of 2,250

members of the armed forces of the participating states, and Slovakia announced it had 229 members on standby for deployment. The European Defence Fund (EDF) will be of particular importance as it brings opportunities to foster competitiveness and innovation in the Slovak defence sector.

In 2019 progress continued in strengthening the civilian dimension of EU crisis management. Slovakia drew up its national implementation plan for implementing its obligations arising from the EU Civilian CSDP Compact. The main objective is to ensure we have sufficient capabilities and resources for the growing number of EU missions and operations resulting from the deterioration in the neighbourhood security environment.

In response to the increasing number of hybrid threats in the security environment, European institutions and member states have begun implementing the Action Plan against Disinformation. In 2019 we began efforts to become a member of the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats in Helsinki, which is a joint EU-NATO hub of expertise.

### COMBATING TERRORISM AND DISARMAMENT

The priority in 2019 was to boost and expand counterterrorism efforts under our OSCE Chairmanship, concentrating primarily on preventing radicalisation and violent extremism, concentrating especially on young people and education. An international OSCE conference was held in Bratislava in March 2019 with a particular focus on specific areas of multilateral cooperation in combating terrorism and implementing best practices to prevent the violent extremism and radicalisation that gives rise to terrorism in the OSCE area.

We continued to be involved in the Global Coalition against Daesh seeking to defeat this extremist group once and for all. The Slovak Republic provided voluntary financial contributions to support UN investigations of Daesh crimes com-

mitted in Iraq and to stabilise and rebuild the country following the defeat of the terrorists. One contribution to combating terrorism was the Slovak Armed Forces involvement in NATO training operations to build security capacities in Afghanistan and Iraq. Slovakia also completed its fifth round of evaluations by the Committee of Experts of the Council of Europe on the Evaluation of Anti-money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism (MONEYVAL).

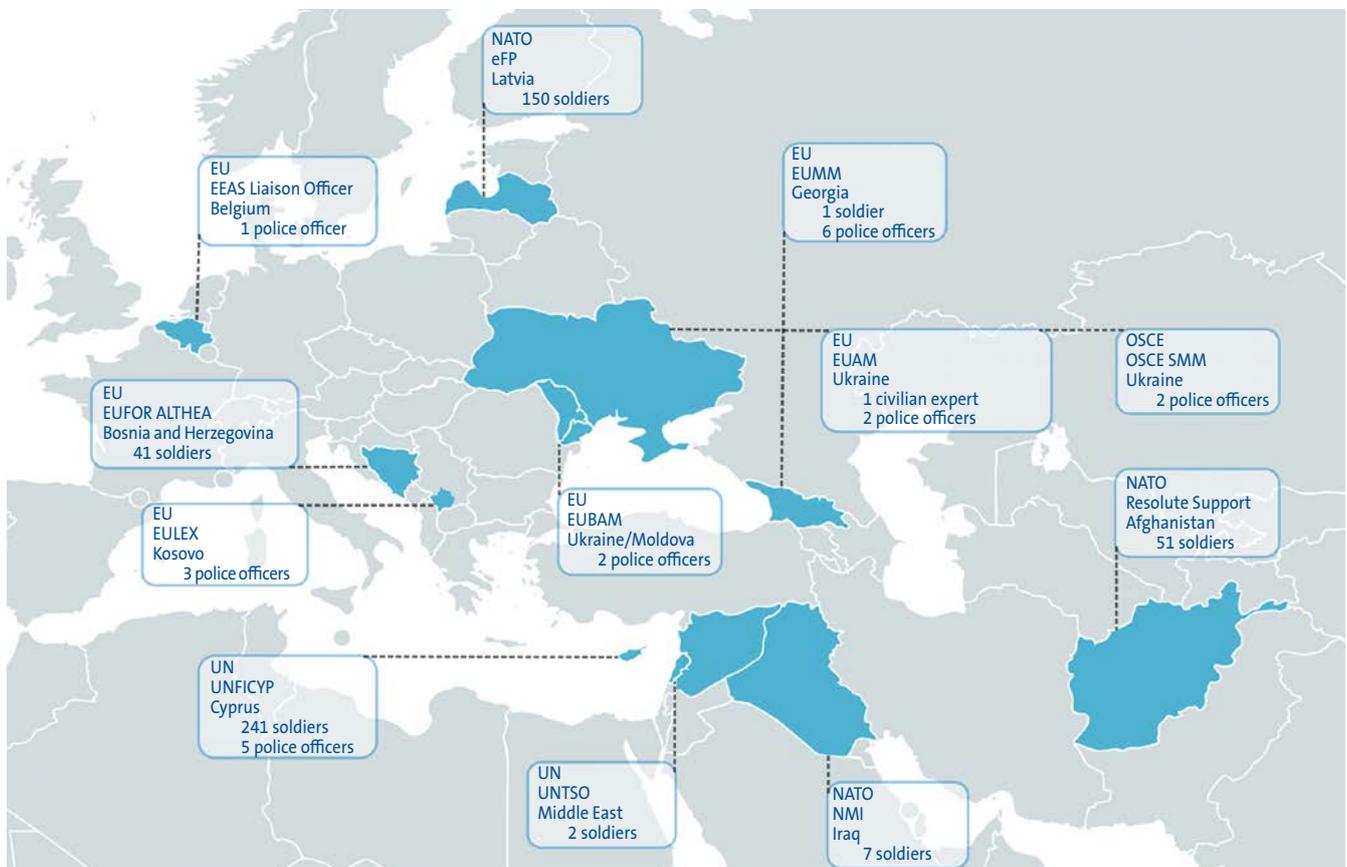
Slovakia is negatively affected by the undermining of multilateral disarmament legal frameworks. The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) expired on 2 August 2019, and we are concerned by the question marks over the continuation of the New START Treaty. It places limits on the number of strategic nuclear weapons and launchers, and is due to expire in February 2021. The undermining of multilateral legal frameworks is exacerbated by the weakening of the Iran nuclear deal (JCPOA). Following the US withdrawal from the deal, Iran decided to take countermeasures in May 2019 by gradually suspending some of its commitments under the deal. Slovakia nevertheless continued to support efforts within the EU to uphold the JCPOA.

Turning to chemical weapons, we actively supported the activities of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), in part by continuing to organise courses for OPCW inspectors and specialists at the Slovak Armed



State Secretary František Ružička welcomes OPCW Director-General Fernando Arias on his first visit to Slovakia. Bratislava, 6 June 2019 (Photo: MFEA SR/Tomáš Bokor)

Forces training centre in Zemianske Kostolány. OPCW Director-General Fernando Arias made his first ever visit to the Slovak Republic in June 2019 and commended Slovakia for her constructive, consistent and principled attitude towards the OPCW and for making a voluntary financial contribution to support the construction of the new OPCW Chemistry and Technology Centre in The Hague. International developments in the prohibition of chemical weapons and OPCW activities in the changing security environment were also discussed.



Slovakia's participation in foreign military operations and observer missions



▲ UN Secretary General António Guterres praises Slovakia's approach and commitment to combat climate change at a meeting in New York with President Zuzana Čaputová, 25 September 2019 (Photo: UN Photo/Rick Bajornas)

# MULTILATERAL PILLAR

# 3

There is much international concern at the shift away from multilateralism towards unilateral steps and isolationist policies. These are accompanied by increasing tensions in international relations, and the polarisation and politicisation of expert forums and formats. It is crucial for Slovakia to push for a multilateral approach to address the challenges of the twenty-first century and insist that international law is respected. Effective multilateralism is therefore a long-term foreign policy priority.

## UNITED NATIONS

The UN remains an important platform for promoting our national and shared European values. President Zuzana Čaputová, Minister Miroslav Lajčák and Minister of the Environment László Sólymos represented the Slovak Republic at the 74th session of the UN General Assembly. Slovakia conveyed its sense of responsibility and sensitivity to the current challenges and its readiness to face up to them. The President addressed the General Assembly, emphasising the need to respect universally recognised values, standards and principles, and highlighted the importance of trust and responsibility in international relations.

In 2019, Slovakia focused predominantly on three intertwined priorities: 1. Conflict prevention, peace and security; 2. Sustainable development and climate protection; 3. Active engagement in global challenges. In relation to global challenges, Slovakia supported the Franco-German Alliance for Multilateralism initiative. Together with other UN member countries, Slovakia is committed to the UN Secretary-General's Peacekeeping Action and contributed to UN peacekeeping operations. Our main contribution was the deployment of 241 Slovak soldiers and five police officers as part of the UNFICYP peacekeeping mission in Cyprus. We have been engaged in security sector reform and supporting the work of the International Criminal Court for many years now.

Slovakia was also involved in revising the implementation mechanisms for the UN Convention against Corruption and the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime and undertook joint activities with UN agencies and organisations, particularly the UNDP, UNICEF and UNESCO.

## ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT

In 2019 Slovakia undertook preparations for its Presidency of the OECD's 2019 Ministerial Council Meeting (MCM), held on 22–23 May 2019. Our Presidency reflected our engagement in the OECD and was the result of almost two decades of active cooperation. It was the first time Slovakia had presided over the OECD. It was also the first occasion on which the presiding country was from Central Europe. The theme of our Presidency of the 2019 MCM was Harnessing Digital Transition for Sustainable Development: Opportunities and Challenges, and included taxing the digital economy, skills in the digital age and business in the era of digital transformation. Under the Presidency, a joint Ministerial Declaration and four OECD legal instruments were adopted: OECD Principles on Artificial Intelligence; the revised OECD Code of Liberalisation of Capital Movements; OECD Anti-Corruption and Integrity Guidelines for State-Owned Enterprises (ACI Guidelines); and the OECD Declaration on Public Sector Innovation.



▲ President of Slovakia Zuzana Čaputová prior to the opening of the UN Climate Summit in New York, 23 September 2019 (Photo: UN Photo)



▲ Slovakia's delegation to the OECD Council at the Ministerial Council Meeting in Paris, 22–23 May 2019 (Photo: MFEA SR)

In February 2019 the OECD Secretary-General presented the *Economic Survey of the Slovak Republic*, one of the OECD's most important analytical outputs concerning member countries. It concluded that Slovakia's economic growth was among the fastest in the OECD and that its unemployment rate was headed for a historical low. It indicated that the most important structural challenge facing the Slovak Republic was the need to reform the school and education systems. The OECD survey also pointed to Slovakia's dependence on the automotive and electrical industries and warned that the gradual digitisation and automation will endanger almost a third of jobs.



▲ OECD Secretary-General Ángel Gurría at the launch of the 2019 OECD Economic Survey of the Slovak Republic in Bratislava, 5 February 2019 (Photo: MFEA SR/Tomáš Bokor)

## HUMAN RIGHTS

In our second year of being a member of the UN Human Rights Council, Slovakia focused on promoting the children's rights, combating anti-Semitism and extremism, and promoting freedom of religion and belief. In March we organised a round table in Geneva with the EU Special Envoy for the promotion of freedom of religion or belief outside the EU, Ján Figel', and in April we co-organised an event to support the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a Communications Procedure. Then, in May 2019, in honour of that occasion, and as part of our efforts regarding the UN sustainable goals – especially the right to education, Slovakia opened its Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava at the UN in Geneva. In December 2019, the Permanent Representative of the Slovak Republic to the United Nations in Geneva, Ambassador Juraj Podhorský, was appointed Deputy Chairman of the UN Human Rights Council, reflecting Slovakia's good reputation.

## COUNCIL OF EUROPE

In 2019 Slovakia participated in resolving the political and financial crisis with the Council of Europe, thereby confirming that we share the same values. The Council of Europe is the oldest pan-European political organisation, and in 2019 it celebrated its 70th anniversary. Another success for Slovak diplomacy was the appointment of Ambassador Drahoslav Štefánek as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Migration and Refugees.



▲ Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák expresses his support for multilateral approaches at the 40th session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva. The Minister stressed the importance of prevention in avoiding conflicts where the protection and promotion of human rights plays a primary role, 26 February 2019 (Photo: UN Photo)

## 2030 AGENDA

The 2030 Agenda for sustainable development is a set of guidelines for responding to the most pressing challenges at home and abroad. Climate change, poverty, growing economic and social inequalities, and unsustainable production and consumption are complex, interconnected problems. Isolated interventions and measures are ineffective. But without international cooperation, effective solutions cannot be found. The Ministry is responsible for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda abroad and for presenting our results internationally and communicating international developments and commitments domestically. The Ministry proposed that the Slovak Government Council for the 2030 Agenda should oversee policy coherence for development to ensure consistency. The Ministry worked closely with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for Investment and Informatisation, which holds ultimate responsibility for the national dimension of the 2030 Agenda.



▲ During Slovakia's V4 Presidency, an international conference on building partnerships for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was held at the Ministry. UN Assistant Secretary-General Mirjana Spoljarić Egger addresses the audience, 30 May 2019 (Photo: MFEA SR/Tomáš Bokor)



▲  
Conflict prevention, providing for a secure future and effective multilateralism were Slovakia's priorities during its OSCE Chairmanship, from 1 January to 31 December 2019.

# SLOVAK OSCE CHAIRMANSHIP

The Slovak Republic assumed the Chairmanship of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe in 2019. This was at a time when the security environment was in a turbulent state, new security threats were emerging and confidence among the OSCE participating states was in decline. Throughout the year, our activities were aimed at providing practical support to encourage dialogue, trust and stability in the OSCE area. Our diplomatic efforts led to a consensus between participating states on a number of issues, including the OSCE budget, the extension of mandates for the OSCE missions and agreement over holding the largest human rights conference in Europe – the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting.

## OUR ACTIVITIES COVERED THREE MAIN PRIORITIES:

1. *Prevention, mediation and mitigation of the impact of conflict on human lives.* We devoted great attention to conflict-affected regions, proposing and implementing confidence-building measures. One such example is the conflict in eastern Ukraine. The Slovak Chairmanship pushed for measures that would improve the situation of people affected by the conflict. For instance, under the Slovak Chairmanship, we were able to ensure the bridge at Stanytsia Luhanska was repaired in 2019. Minister Lajčák, the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, visited all the conflict-affected countries in the OSCE area (Ukraine, Moldova, Azerbaijan,



OSCE Chairman-in-Office and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Miroslav Lajčák presented the priorities of Slovak OSCE Chairmanship at headquarters in Vienna, 10 January 2019 (Photo: MFEA SR/Tomáš Bokor)



▲ Miroslav Lajčák ended his series of trips as Chairman-in-Office with a visit to Ukraine, where he inspected the repaired bridge in Stanytsia Luhanska, the only transit point across the cease-fire line to the Luhansk region crossed by more than 10,000 people every day. He handed over certificates for three fully equipped ambulances, 29 November 2019 (Photos: MFEA SR/Tomáš Bokor)

Armenia, Georgia) and countries with OSCE missions (all countries in Central Asia and the Western Balkans). The activities of the personal and special representatives of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office were another means of engaging in the conflict areas.

Slovakia actively supported Structured Dialogue, focused particularly on enhanced transparency, risks reduction and incident prevention. We worked together with the chairmanships of the Forum for Security Co-operation to support implementation of existing political and military commitments. In relation to conventional arms control, the Slovak Republic concentrated on supporting the implementation of the legal instruments for the conventional arms control regime and debates about their relevance.

2. *Ensuring a secure future.* Here the focus was on technological progress, digitisation and innovation, and harnessing their potential for a secure future in the OSCE area. We



▲ Sophisticated forms of terrorism, the prevention of radicalism and the need for open dialogue were the topics of at the OSCE International Conference in Bratislava on 25–26 March 2019 (Photo: MFEA SR)

concentrated on cyber security (Chairmanship Conference on Cyber Security in Bratislava, June 2019), the use of OSCE tools to prevent the radicalisation and violent extremism that leads to terrorism (Chairmanship Conference in Bratislava, March 2019), support for security sector reform and governance (conference in Bratislava in September 2019), and the position of young people (Youth Forum in Bratislava, October 2019). Developing energy cooperation and security was another pressing priority, as was our long-term priority to improve the security of critical energy infrastructure through an online education platform.

As part of our efforts to ensure full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and commitments under the OSCE's human dimension, the Slovak Chairmanship concentrated on combating anti-Semitism and discrimination based on faith or religion (Chairmanship Conference on Anti-Semitism in Bratislava, February 2019), preventing torture, tackling gender inequality and helping vulnerable groups. We supported the OSCE Representative for Media Freedom in relation to the safety of journalists and helped maintain an open dialogue with civil society in the OSCE by organising additional implementation meetings as part of the human dimension.

3. *Effective multilateralism.* The extraordinary efforts of the Slovak Chairmanship in relation to OSCE governance and internal administration led to various successes, such as increased funding for the OSCE institutions and several field missions and approval of changes to the financial contributions made by OSCE participating states after 12 years of stalemate. Despite the politically tense presidential elections in Ukraine in March 2019, the Slovak Chairmanship managed to extend the mandate of the OSCE Special Observation Mission in Ukraine and approve its new budget. Slovakia supported deepening cooperation with multilateral partners, especially the EU and UN. Slovakia became the first country to implement the December 2018 OSCE–EU cooperation agreement.



▲ Minister Miroslav Lajčák in Odzisi, Georgia, on the South Ossetia administrative boundary line, discussing the security situation and daily life of local people, Odzisi, 10 February 2019 (Photo: MFEA SR/Tomáš Bokor)



▲ *Perspectives 20-30* played a major role in the Youth Forum in Bratislava on 28–29 October 2019. The initiative was developed by a group of 22 young experts and reflects the OSCE's gender and geographical diversity (Photo: MFEA SR/Tomáš Bokor)

The Chairmanship organised an informal meeting for Ministers of the OSCE participating states in the High Tatras. The away days in various regions attended by permanent representatives and experts also proved a success. Slovakia also increased its visibility by organising regional promotions of Slovakia's higher territorial units which were held in Vienna.

Slovak Chairmanship culminated in a meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council on 5–6 December 2019 in Bratislava. Important decisions were taken regarding the 2021 and 2022 OSCE chairmanships. OSCE Chairman-in-office and Minister Miroslav Lajčák spoke about his political reflections and shared his

message – the Bratislava Appeal – with partners. He recalled the principles and goals that led to the founding of the OSCE, emphasising that they are now at risk. If we are serious about achieving security and cooperation in Europe, the OSCE participating states have to show greater flexibility and willingness to compromise. The Appeal stresses that it is no good just talking about multilateralism, it has to be practised as well.

Slovak OSCE Chairmanship increased its image in the field of diplomacy and negotiations and was a testimony of our commitment to helping to build a secure OSCE region, while fulfilling our membership obligations.



▲ The Informal Ministerial Gathering of the OSCE foreign ministers in High Tatras. The gathering placed a strong focus on the past lessons, current practices and future potential of the Organization in the area of conflict prevention, 9 July 2019 (Photo: MFEA SR/Tomáš Bokor)



▲ German Chancellor Angela Merkel meets with Prime Minister Peter Pellegrini in Bratislava on 7 February 2019 as part of her visit to Slovakia. They discussed the two countries' cooperation in digitalisation and the development of bilateral relations against the backdrop of the 30th anniversary of the restoration of liberty and democracy in Slovakia (Photo: Government Office of the Slovak Republic)

# REGIONAL AND BILATERAL COOPERATION

# 5

## V4

Visegrad cooperation continues to be an important tool for implementing neighbourhood, regional and European policies. The second half of our V4 Presidency, which concluded in June 2019, was one of great activity and dialogue with major European and non-European V4+ partners. In keeping with tradition, there was a meeting of the V4 Presidents, and four meetings of the speakers of the V4 parliaments. A further 19 ministerial meetings were held for the remaining ministers. Progress was made in sectoral cooperation, with real outcomes and projects in transport, defence, health care, migration, agriculture and other areas.

The Slovak Presidency was keen to show that the V4 has a broad and positive agenda and that it is capable of delivering constructive solutions that bring added value to the region and the EU as a whole. The results of the work undertaken during the Presidency are testimony of this: the establishment of a collaborative World Health Organisation centre for tuberculo-

The goal of the Slovak V4 Presidency was to bring tangible results that would benefit citizens of our countries in three priority areas: Strong Europe, Secure Environment and Smart Solutions.

### Summits and meetings

- 1 Meeting of the V4 Presidents
- 12 Summits of V4 Prime Ministers in V4 and/V4+ formats
- 4 Meetings of the Speakers of Parliaments in V4 and/or V4+ formats
- 10 Meetings of V4 Foreign Ministers in V4 and/or V4+ formats
- 23 Ministerial meetings in V4 and/or V4+ formats
- 9 Events at State Secretary level
- 26 Documents (signed or adopted) – joint statements, declarations, memoranda and protocols of understanding and cooperation.



President Zuzana Čaputová speaks at the V4 Presidents Summit about the situation and challenges facing the EU, and the V4's position in Europe. During the second day of the summit, held in Lány, Czech Republic, the V4 presidents, the Slovenian President Borut Pahor and Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić discussed the EU's relationship with the Western Balkans, 3 October 2019 (Photo: Office of the President of the Slovak Republic)

sis in Vyšné Hágy, serving Central Europe; progress in preparations for the high-speed rail project connecting the V4 capitals; and the V4 EU Battlegroup, which has been on standby since the second half of 2019. Intensive sectoral cooperation led to a joint approach to combat unfair commercial practices in the food supply chain, dual food quality and to promote the bioeconomy under the BIOEAST initiative. Positions were coordinated on cohesion policy, the Multiannual Financial Framework, migration and the protection of the EU's external borders.

### SLAVKOV DECLARATION

The activities of this trilateral platform were set under the Czech leadership in the first half of 2019 and taken up by the Slovak Presidency on 1 July 2019 (until 30 June 2020). Cooperation continued in relation to European affairs, international law and development aid. The parliamentary dimension was also strengthened. The new annual work plan was created under the Slovak leadership. It contains realistic objectives for sectoral cooperation and enhancing synergies within the EU, including through the use of the S3+ format.

### NEIGHBOURLY RELATIONS

#### Czech Republic

The very close dialogue between the two countries continued at a high political level. In November 2019, the 7th Joint Meeting of the Slovak and Czech Governments was held in Valtice. It was an occasion for political reflection on the 30th

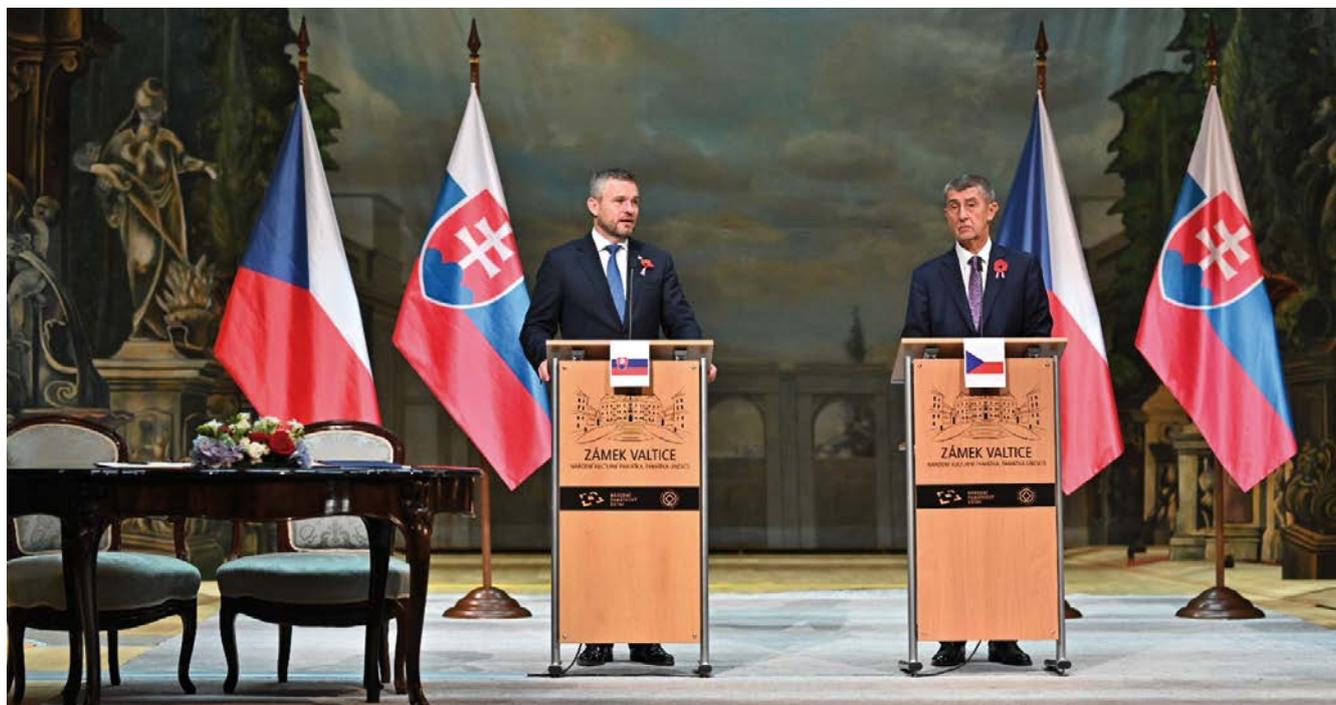


▲ During a visit to Budapest, President Zuzana Čaputová agreed with Hungarian President János Áder on the need to continue constructive and sincere dialogue, 11 July 2019 (Photo: Office of the President of the Slovak Republic)

anniversary of the Velvet Revolution, and the two countries declared a shared ambition to tackle new challenges in a coordinated and constructive way. New joint projects have been created to further enhance quality of life and security for citizens in both countries, for instance in defence, interior, transport, culture and the environment.

#### Hungary

Slovak–Hungarian relations were characterised by the continuing focus on a pragmatic agenda and on implementing



▲ Economic and cross-border cooperation, energy security, transport infrastructure, security defence, and foreign policy were the topics of the joint meeting of the governments of Slovakia and the Czech Republic, held in Valtice on 11 November 2019 (Photo: Government Office of the Czech Republic)



▲ State Secretary František Ružička and his Polish counterpart Konrad Szymański discussing the future of the EU in Bratislava, prior to the 5th Slovak-Polish Discussion Forum, 22 May 2019 (Photo: MFEA SR/Tomáš Bokor)



▲ President of Austria Alexander Van der Bellen and Mayor of Hainburg Helmut Schmid unveil a plaque commemorating the 30th anniversary of the Freedom March from Bratislava to Hainburg, 10 December 2019 (Photo: MFEA SR)

projects that benefit citizens in both countries. The frequent political dialogue also served this purpose. There are a number of projects aimed at the continued expansion and improvement of cross-border energy and transport infrastructure.

#### Poland

Relations with Poland continued through close dialogue, including between senior state officials. The economic side of cooperation was reflected in the increasing volume of mu-

tual trade and tourism. Despite the progress made, potential in this area is hampered by the need for improvements to the transport infrastructure. It therefore remains crucial that strong, systematic political and material support is targeted at accelerating implementation of cross-border interconnection projects. Our work in looking after our compatriots was boosted when construction began on the House of Slovak Culture in Jablonka, with financial support from the two governments.

#### Austria

Relations with Austria continued their recent positive trend, with frequent, regular high-level political dialogue and the continuous deepening of economic and cross-border cooperation. With the opening of the Honorary Consulate for Styria and Carinthia in Graz, the network of honorary consulates in Austria is now complete. We jointly celebrated the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Iron Curtain, in which Austria played an important role.

#### Ukraine

The Slovak Republic firmly supports the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders, the peaceful resolution of the Donbas conflict in accordance with the Minsk Agreements and condemns the illegal annexation of Crimea. Slovakia continued to help Ukraine in its transformation efforts and to achieve its integration ambitions. Political dialogue at the highest level increased between the two countries in 2019, with President Zuzana Čaputová paying an official visit to Ukraine in September 2019, Ukrainian Prime Minister Volodymyr Hrojsman visiting the Slovak Republic in April 2019 and Minister Miroslav Lajčák paying four visits to Ukraine in his role as OSCE Chairman-in-Office. The outcome is growth in the volume of mutual trade and deeper cooperation in energy, transport, education, humanitarian and other areas.



▲ Minister Miroslav Lajčák with newly-elected President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky in Kyiv. Their meeting focused on resolving the crisis in eastern Ukraine and the OSCE's role in the process, 13 June 2019 (Photo: MFEA SR)



▲ President Andrej Kiska in talks with Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier during his farewell visit to Germany in Berlin. He also met with President Steinmeier's predecessor, Joachim Gauck, 30 April 2019 (Photo: Office of the President of the Slovak Republic)

## SLOVAKIA'S STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS IN THE EU

### Germany

The high level of dynamism in bilateral relations continued in 2019. Germany has long been Slovakia's largest

trading partner, with an annual trade turnover of over €30 billion. Political dialogue continued apace. Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel visited the Slovak Republic in February 2019, and in March and August there were bilateral visits at the presidential level. The shared symbolism of the 30th anniversary of democratic change in Europe culminated in the attendance of President Zuzana Čaputová at the celebrations in November 2019 for the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. Contact between the government ministries of Germany and Slovakia is coordinated through the 2019–2021 Action Plan for Deeper Dialogue.

### France

Mutual relations between Slovakia and France continued on their positive trajectory, with the 2018–2022 Action Plan for the Slovak–French Strategic Partnership providing an extra boost. The high point of a dynamic political dialogue marked President Čaputová's visit to the Élysée Palace.

### Transatlantic cooperation

Relations between our European allies and the US continued to be dominated by the issue of equal burden-sharing in collective defence and security and trade relations. It is important for Slovakia to continue in its pro-Atlantic orientation based on common values. Productive bilateral liaisons contributed to this. The highlights were US President Donald Trump receiving Prime Minister Peter Pellegrini in the White House and US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's visit to Slovakia. The US Secretary of State and Minister Miroslav Lajčák met three times in 2019. Our priorities in



▲ During a state visit by President Zuzana Čaputová to France, President Emmanuel Macron spoke in Paris about Slovakia and France working together towards a Europe that takes control of its own destiny, 24 July 2019 (Photo: Office of the President of the Slovak Republic)



▲ Slovak Prime Minister Peter Pellegrini is received by President of the United States Donald Trump at the White House; their meeting in Washington was dominated by defence and security, strengthening transatlantic cooperation, US-EU trade relations and investment and energy, 3 May 2019 (Photo: White House)

relations with the US and Canada continue to be promoting the principles of effective multilateralism, strengthening the US–EU strategic dialogue and maintaining a united transatlantic alliance.

### Eastern Partnership

In 2019 the Slovak Republic and the EU celebrated the tenth anniversary of the Eastern Partnership. Numerous programmes and projects were implemented, with Slovakia's support, to assist our Eastern Partners with their reforms. Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine have achieved the greatest progress in harmonising domestic law with EU law and in political association and economic integration with the EU. Slovakia took part in the discussions on the post-2020 future of the Eastern Partnership, submitting several proposals and recommendations, including greater emphasis on differentiating between partners, strengthening sectoral integration, developing cooperation on security and partner resilience, and improving overall communication. We also organised the annual Ministerial Meeting of the V4 countries and the Eastern Partnership in Bratislava in May 2019.

Our growing interest in the Partnership can be seen in the opening of embassies of the Slovak Republic in Baku and Ye-

revan. These will enable us to more effectively promote Slovakia's foreign policy interests throughout the South Caucasus region, focusing on trade and economic cooperation and consular activities, while paying particular attention to protecting the interests of Slovak citizens.



▲ Miroslav Lajčák at the inauguration of the Embassy of the Slovak Republic in Baku, Azerbaijan, 28 November 2019 (Photo: MFEA SR)



▲ Slovak Prime Minister Peter Pellegrini was joined by Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák and Economy Minister Peter Žiga on a visit to the Russian Federation where he met with President Vladimir Putin and Prime Minister Dmitri Medvedev, 6 June 2019 (Photo: kremlin.ru)

### Russia

A number of bilateral liaisons took place in 2019, culminating in Prime Minister Peter Pellegrini's visit to Russia in June.

These reflected the pragmatic nature of bilateral relations, our mutual interest in maintaining the dynamism – especially in business, commerce and the development of inter-



▲ In 2019 the Western Balkans was a Slovak priority. Miroslav Lajčák visited all the countries in the region and reaffirmed the commitment to providing assistance during the reforms in the region. The photographs show his visits to Serbia, Montenegro, Albania and North Macedonia (Photos: MFEA SR)

personal relations. Cooperation projects were assessed at the 20th meeting of the Intergovernmental Commission for Trade, Economic and Scientific Cooperation in Sochi. Frequent interparliamentary dialogue continued at the highest level, while political consultations continued at the foreign ministry level, and as part of Slovak OSCE Chairmanship. Slovakia's foreign policy towards Russia is closely coordinated within the EU and NATO. EU sanctions against Russia are an ongoing restriction resulting from the lack of progress in implementing the Minsk Agreements.

### Western Balkans

Slovakia's continued interest in the Western Balkans is evident in the number of bilateral and multilateral activities, including the regular meeting of the V4 and Western Balkans foreign ministers held in Bratislava in May 2019 and Minister Miroslav Lajčák's visit to all the Western Balkan partner countries in his role as OSCE Chairperson-in-Office. Insofar as EU enlargement was concerned, 2019 saw the continuation of discussions on opening the accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia. Despite the European Commission's positive recommendation and support from the vast majority of EU member states, including Slovakia, consensus has yet to be achieved on this.

The Prime Minister paid a reciprocal visit to Belgrade in 2019 and signed an agreement on settling Serbia's clearing debt to the Slovak Republic. In addition to supporting North Macedonia's rapid integration into NATO, we provided transformation assistance. The National Convention on the EU is the flagship of this assistance, and in 2019 implementation entered its second phase. We deployed 45 police officers on the North Macedonian border to help prevent illegal migration. We kept up regular political contact with partners in Bosnia and Herzegovina, concentrating on accelerating the reform



▲ Trade, investment and cooperation in science and technology were the main topics of negotiations between the V4 Foreign Ministers and Korea's Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha in Bratislava on 7 June 2019 (Photo: MFEA SR/Tomáš Bokor)

and integration processes in Bosnia and Herzegovina and on improving conditions for Slovak businesses operating in North Macedonia. In relations with Montenegro, Slovakia focused on strengthening professional capacities in public finance management, including direct budget support and developing parliamentary cooperation. Political dialogue with Albania was revived, following cooperation under the OSCE Chairmanship Troika. Several visits took place and, for the first time since diplomatic relations were established, contact activities took place at parliamentary level.



▲ State Secretary František Ružička officially launches the 2nd Annual Asian Weekend in Bratislava. The event was aimed at presenting Asian history, culture, traditions and philosophy, 2 August 2019 (Photo: MFEA SR/Kristína Spišáková)



▲ The Ministry's Business Centre Department has been providing information since 2012 to promote entrepreneurial opportunities in the export of products and services, investments, economic cooperation and the establishment of joint ventures abroad.

# THE FOREIGN SERVICE'S ECONOMIC TOOLS

# 6

In 2019 the emphasis in economic diplomacy was on boosting relations, diversifying export opportunities and tackling the challenges of industry 4.0, digitisation and innovation. Digitisation was the dominant theme of the OECD Ministerial Council Meeting under Slovakia's Presidency. Slovakia is experiencing a labour shortage in some areas, especially information and communication technologies. In response the Ministry developed a project, in cooperation with the European Migration Agency, called the Strategy to Encourage the Return of Slovaks Abroad and New Forms of Cooperation with the Diaspora. The Slovak embassies in London, Dublin and Copenhagen held associated events under the slogan *Work in Slovakia – Good Idea!*

## BILATERAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Our embassies regularly promoted Slovakia's economic potential at seminars, trade fairs and exhibitions. Sector-specific business missions were conducted at home and abroad, organised either to coincide with an official visit by senior officials, or in cooperation with other partners such as the Slovak Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SOPK) and the Slovak Investment and Trade Development Agency (SARIO). It is worth mentioning the business missions to Norway and Iceland, France, Russia, Portugal, Austria, Croatia, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Bulgaria, the UK and Slovenia, and the fourth summit of the Three Seas Initiative.

Good neighbourly relations continued with Ukraine in 2019. The Slovak President and Slovak Minister of Foreign and European Affairs visited Ukraine, discussing labour mobility, among other things. Business missions to the People's Republic of China were organised in relation to Minister Miroslav Lajčák's participation in the Second Forum of the Belt and Road Initiative in Beijing, and in relation to Deputy Prime Minister Richard Raši's participation in the 5th China–CEEC Investment and Trade Expo in Ningbo. There were also missions to Slovakia from Russia, Turkey, China, Indonesia, Japan, Croatia, Italy, Israel and Denmark, and regional bilateral events with Saxony, Wallonia and Republic of Tatarstan. Economic cooperation development was boosted by intergovernmental commission meetings with Croatia, the Czech Republic, Russia, Belarus,

Serbia, India and South Africa and by the 18th Slovak–Polish Economic Forum.

## MULTILATERAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Slovakia would like to see the World Trade Organisation (WTO) being reformed into a strong and fair organisation capable of tackling the challenges of the day. In implementing the Central European Initiative Plan of Action for 2018–2020, the Slovak Republic, and its partners, sought cooperation to boost economic growth while promoting renewable energy sources. Representatives of Slovakia were active in international financial institutions (World Bank, International Monetary Fund, European Investment Bank, International Investment Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the Council of Europe Development Bank), helping to address challenges related to development goals and economic growth, and to identify suitable financial instruments for business support. Minister Miroslav Lajčák's prestigious post as co-chairman of the World Economic Forum's Global Future Council on Europe provided Slovakia with an opportunity to shape new global and regional policies. In 2019 the Ministry issued monthly analyses of global and regional socio-economic trends to provide information about the latest global economic developments.



▲ Slovakia supports economic transformation in non-EU countries as a member of the Central European Initiative (Photo: MFEA SR)



▲ State Secretary Lukáš Parížek at the International Engineering Fair in Brno, Czech Republic, the most important event of its kind in Central Europe. The fair featured presentations from 80 Slovak companies (Photo: MFEA SR)

## DEVELOPING THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY AND INNOVATION

The economic diplomacy performed by the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs is crucial to the internationalisation of science, research and innovation and the promotion of international technology transfer. It promotes Slovakia's innovative and scientific research capacities, helps to raise international awareness of Slovakia's technological competence and supports initiatives aimed at popularising science in Slovakia. In February 2019 the Ministry organised the Digital Coalition annual meeting, a platform for communicating changes in access to digital technologies to help all people acquire the digital skills to ensure they remain productive and employable. In April 2019 our efforts to create a Blockchain Centre of Excellence in Bratislava were reflected in part of a declaration issued in Dubrovnik by the Prime Ministers of Central and Eastern Europe and China (17 + 1).

Our economic diplomacy was also aimed at supporting diversification of the Slovak economy, highlighting the potential opportunities for Slovak companies offered by the European space industry and through cooperation with the European Space Agency. We paid particular attention to collaboration with scientific centres abroad, such as the University of California in Berkeley and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Our economic diplomacy efforts were reinforced in July 2019 when the Slovak Government approved a pilot project by four innovative diplomats under the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for Investment and Informatisation, who were sent to Slovakia's embassies in Israel, the United States, Finland and China.

## SLOVAKIA'S ENERGY SECURITY

In 2019 the field of energy security was dominated by the issues of gas as well as nuclear energy. Working with the Ministry of Economy and other central government bodies, the Ministry helped implement Slovakia's energy policy priorities and achieve our goal to improve the energy security of the Slovak Republic. The European Commission, with input from Slovakia, took the decision to revise the Internal Gas Market Directive, which will be to Slovakia's advantage.



▲ Slovak Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák, Economy Minister Peter Žiga and EU Commissioner Maroš Šefčovič discuss the future of energy in the EU at the 13th Central European Energy Conference, held in Bratislava, 18 November 2019 (Photo: MFEA SR/Tomáš Bokor)

## BUSINESS SERVICES

The Slovak Government Council for the Support of Exports and Investments is a communication and coordination platform for supporting the internationalisation of Slovak businesses. Its aim is to support the implementation of the 2020 strategy for Slovakia’s economic relations abroad and to help Slovak entrepreneurs become more engaged in development cooperation and penetrate third country markets.

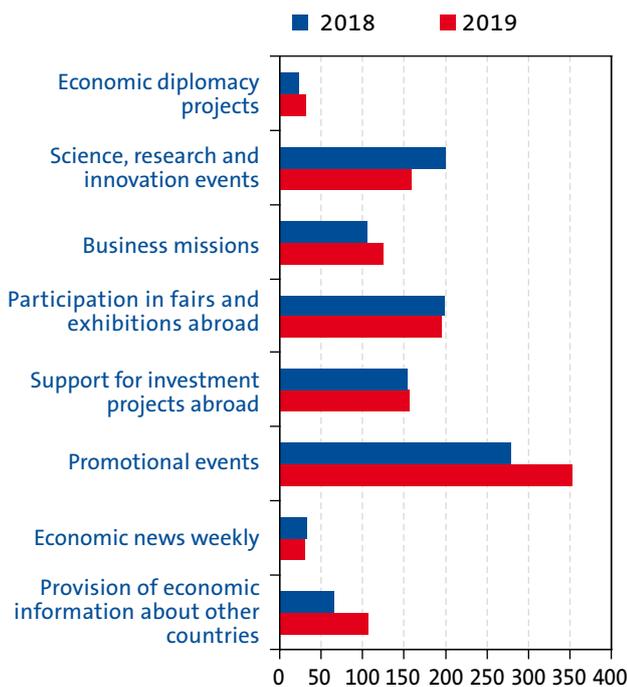
The Ministry provides free business services via a ‘catalogue of services’ agreed with the business community. Business services include support in trade, investment, international cooperation in science, research and innovation, energy and food security, regional and development cooperation. Examples are business missions, promotional professional and cooperation events, international fairs and exhibitions, the work performed by the national contact point for EU twinning projects, annual updates to the business handbook covering all the countries Slovakia has diplomatic relations with and weekly reviews of economic news from abroad.

One important service we provide is our **advisory service**. It provides basic information on political, commercial, economic and business environments abroad and on foreign businesses. It also offers assistance in establishing contacts and launching and operating in foreign markets. Our advisory service also handle enquiries and offers from Slovak exporters seeking partners abroad, new sales markets or business channels.

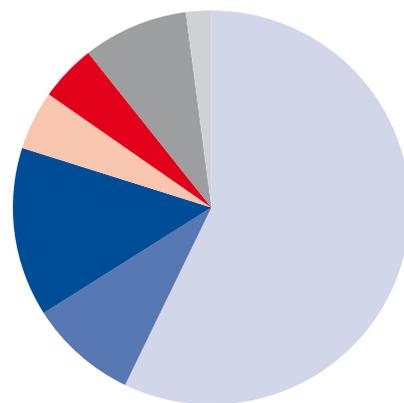


▲ State Secretary Lukáš Parížek meets with Nitra Region businesses as part of Together for Slovakia: From region to world, a series of events that took place in Nitra on 19 June 2019 (Photo: MFEA SR)

The quality and availability of business services is improving. The *Podnikajme v zahraničí* (Doing Business Abroad) portal, the newly created Facebook profile for Slovak Economic Diplomacy and the Economic Diplomacy profile on LinkedIn are all updated daily. We continued our successful export clubs with regional Chambers of Commerce and Industry under the *Spolu pre Slovensko. Z regiónov do sveta* banner (Together for Slovakia: From Region to World). We also rolled out our new Export House in 2019, which provides comprehensive information and advisory services to government institutions facilitating commerce abroad at events such as major trade fairs, exhibitions and conferences under the Ministry banner.



▲ Comparison of number of activities conducted in 2018 and 2019



▲ Economic advisory services were provided for 3,242 companies



Education of Syrian refugees in Shatila Camp, East Beirut, Lebanon (Photo: SAMRS/People in Need, Jan Husár)

# DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AND HUMANITARIAN AID

# 7

In 2019 Slovakia continued to take its responsibilities seriously as both partner and donor, flexibly responding to the needs of developing countries under the SlovakAid brand. These objectives are achieved through the available instruments of official development cooperation and partnerships with traditional donors and international organisations. The Slovak Republic signed a memorandum of understanding with UNICEF and the International Red Cross and a project memorandum with USAID on the joint implementation of the National Convention on the EU project in North Macedonia. Other examples of good practice in identifying development synergies and funding are the development dialogue in partnership with V4 countries, the provision of special assistance in the Western Balkans and the EU Eastern Partnership. These were pursued under the priorities of Slovak OSCE Chairmanship and to achieve capacity building among new donors, such as Bulgaria, as

part of our activities to share experience of building the SlovakAid system.

Ensuring Slovakia makes a specific contribution to resolving the migration and refugee crisis is a long-term challenge, and is now conceptually addressed in the new Medium-term Strategy for Development Cooperation in 2019–2023. Under the Strategy, we have, for example, expanded SlovakAid operations in Eastern Sub-Saharan Africa to support local economic development and thereby prevent the emergence of migration and refugee flows. Following the principle of effective solidarity, V4 discussions were launched on contributions and projects to address the causes of migration in cooperation with our key European partners, Italy and Germany. Projects to improve young people's social conditions and education have been implemented in cooperation with local non-governmental and international partners



▲ The Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation signs an agreement with Self-Help Africa as part of the EU's joint programme with the development organisation in Kenya. It provides for cooperation in the agricultural sector until 2022, through participation in the AgriFI programme in Kenya. The signing took place in Bratislava on 23 August 2019 (Photo: MFEA SR)



▲ Monitoring of the SlovakAid project focused on assistance for small mango farmers in Kenya, part of the AgriFI/KILIMO-VC programme (Photo: SAMRS)



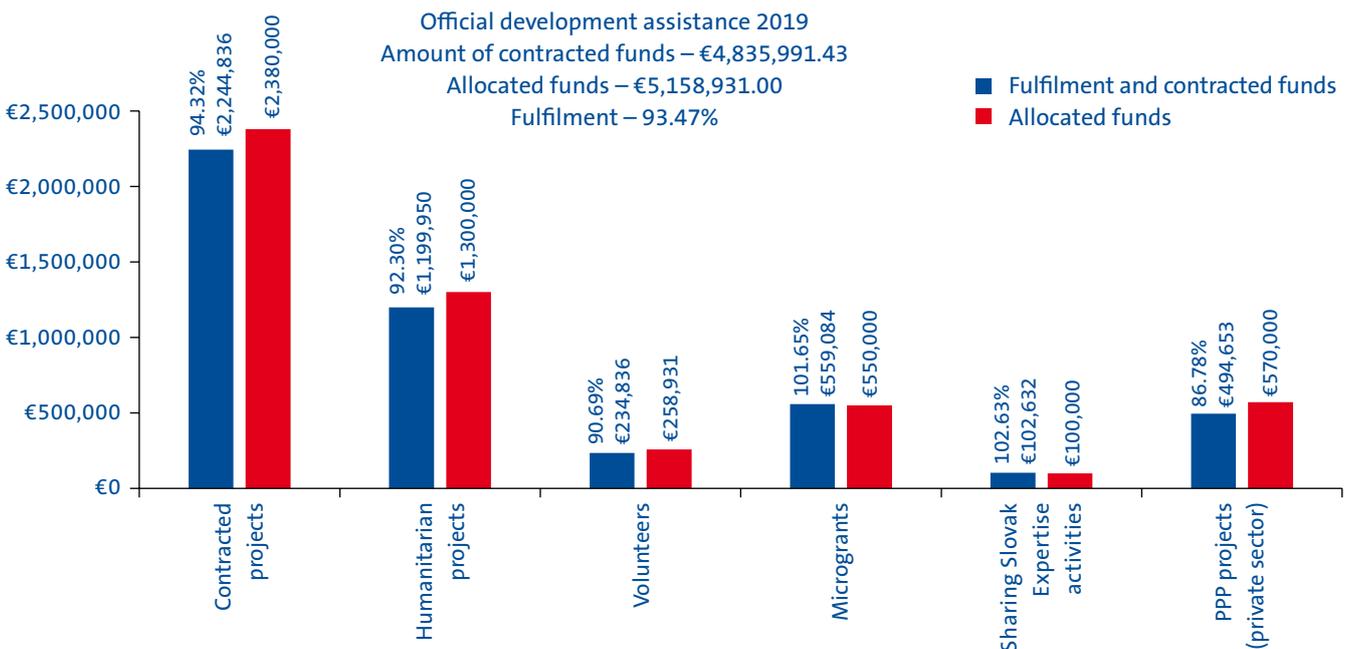
▲ A new information and customer centre was opened in Ceadir-Lunga, Moldova on 4 February 2019 to provide citizens of the city with 'single window' services (Photo: MFEA SR)

in African countries such as Kenya and Ethiopia, as well as in conflict-affected Middle East countries. In 2019 Slovakia provided significant contributions to the EU Facility for Syrian Refugees in Turkey. With the ongoing political, environmental and migration crises, Slovakia promptly responded to requests for financial or material humanitarian aid for countries such as Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Greece, Iran, Mozambique and Venezuela.

Slovakia is involved in joint EU programming aimed at stabilising and strengthening local communities through job creation in the key sector of agriculture. The Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation (SAMRS) is

a contributor to the most important component of the AgriFi Kenya programme, providing €2.5 million under EU Joint Programming in Kenya. The aim is to support small farmers by providing incentives to invest in the agri-food sector.

Under the SlovakAid medium-term strategy and strategic framework, it is our responsibility to actively respond to the challenges of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. For instance, by moving towards enhanced cooperation at the national and international level and building partnerships with civil society and the private sector. On a project basis, the Ministry provided €4.1 million in subsidies to the NGO sector. This year we took the important step



▲ Comparison of allocated and contracted funds for the official development assistance in 2019

of amending the Development Cooperation Act. This provides SlovakAid with a new tool for sharing experience with a variety of Slovak institutions. In 2019 this enabled 111 experts, mainly from the Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership region, to participate in activities worth €100,000. An amendment to the Eximbanka Act (Slovakia's Export-Import Bank) enabled conditions to be set for Slovak exporters to access developing markets through preferential export credits from 1 October 2019.

In order to better finance sustainable development, SlovakAid will continue to support private sector engagement in development cooperation in the coming year by creating synergies between existing facilities and communicating even more with entrepreneurs. In cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), we undertook activities aimed at increasing the involvement of Slovak organisations in EU programmes. SlovakAid supported 11 Business Partnership Programme projects in Kenya, Belarus, Moldova, Ethiopia, Ghana, Macedonia, Mauritius and Ukraine, totalling €494,000 in 2019.

The quality of SlovakAid was mentioned in the OECD/DAC peer review of development cooperation. The results were presented in 2019 and serve as encouragement for Slovakia to continue its efforts to further improve the effectiveness of official development cooperation. This year we continued



▲ Youth environmental awareness campaign, Ukraine (Photo: SAMRS/Jana Čavojská)

to streamline SAMRS by standardising internal processes. SAMRS obtained its quality management certification (ISO 9001:2015) and is continuing the EU Pillar Assessment process. Once successfully completed, this will entitle SAMRS to participate in joint EU projects via delegated cooperation. SAMRS will then become eligible for EU resources and be able to engage in larger projects and international partnerships.



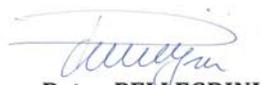
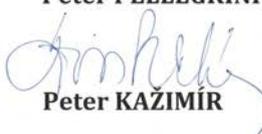
▲ Slovakia delivers another €42,839 worth of humanitarian aid to children in Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan, where SlovakAid has financed the construction of the Abdulhafiz Jalili primary school. Slovakia has also provided 700 school uniforms made in Slovakia, 700 pairs of sneakers and 224 pairs of winter shoes for the pupils. Bratislava, 13 December 2019 (Photo: MFEA SR/Tomáš Bokor)



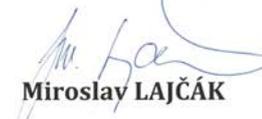
## PAMÄTNÁ LISTINA

Za účasti predsedu vlády SR **J.E. Petra PELLEGRINIHO**,  
ministra zahraničných vecí a európskych záležitostí SR **J.E. Miroslava LAJČÁKA**,  
guvernéra Národnej banky Slovenska **J.E. Petra KAŽIMÍRA**  
a generálnej konzulky SR pani **Ladislavy BEGEČ**  
bola dňa **10. decembra 2019**

slávnostne pokrstená nová budova Generálneho konzulátu SR v New Yorku.

  
**Peter PELLEGRINI**  
  
**Peter KAZIMÍR**



  
**Miroslav LAJČÁK**  
  
**Ladislava BEGEČ**

Generálny konzulát Slovenskej republiky v New Yorku  
167 East 73rd Street, New York, 10021

Opening of the Consulate General in New York. This is the first time since Slovakia became independent that it has its own building in the largest city in the United States to serve its citizens and compatriots

# CONSULAR SERVICE AND COMPATRIOTS

# 8

The main priority of our consular service is to ensure our citizens abroad receive effective protection and affordable, rapid high-quality assistance when resolving problems in emergency and crisis situations. Our consular service also provides prompt up-to-date information and recommendations for those travelling to different parts of the world. Our tried-and-tested 'mobile consular days' continued in countries with large numbers of Slovak citizens, such as the United Kingdom, and in countries with large territories, such as Canada, the United States of America and Australia.

Modernisation of the consular service continued through the extension of electronic consular service modules as part of a national project run by the Ministry to electronise services aimed at protecting Slovak citizens and businesses. This will reduce the time it takes to obtain the required permits from embassies. In November 2019 we began making improvements to the design and functionality of the voluntary pre-travel registration system for those travelling abroad and to the *Svetobežka* (Globetrotter) mobile application, both of which are expected to be operational in the first quarter of 2020.

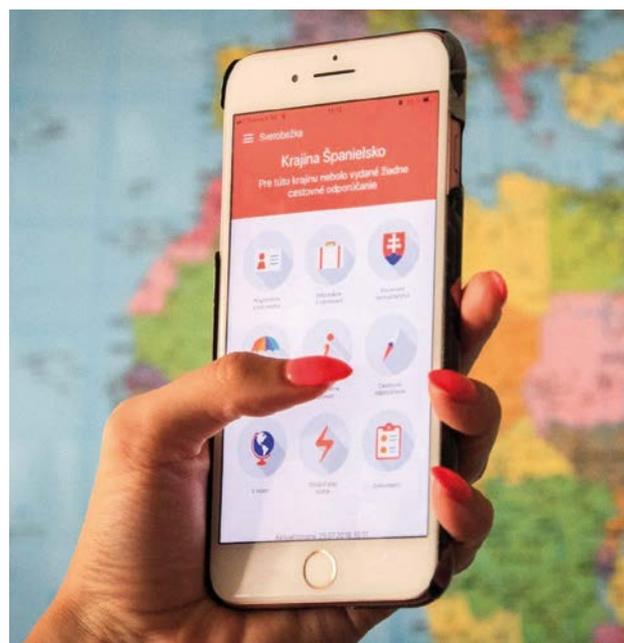
In 2019 third-country citizens requiring visas were able to take full advantage of the ease and availability with which biometric information and Schengen visa applications for the Slovak Republic can be obtained through the 38 visa centres in ten European, Asian and African countries (Belarus, China, Egypt, India, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Palestine, Russia, the United Arab Emirates and Turkey), which led to an increase in the number of visas issued. Visa outsourcing contributes to tourist, business, student and wider civic mobility to the Slovak Republic.

Cooperation was further boosted with the Centre for International Legal Protection of Children and Youth, operated under the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic, resulting in the successful return of children taken abroad without authorisation and the recovery of maintenance payments from abroad. A key success was a case of parental abduction, where two Slovak minors were repatriated almost seven years after being abducted to Egypt. The demand for consular assistance in cases involving the protection of the rights of minors

is growing, and the Ministry now provides a permanent link on its website to raise public awareness and improve prevention. The Ministry also increased its efforts to provide Slovak citizens with information on consular protection and assistance through electronic media outlets and social media networks, especially the Ministry's Facebook page.

## CRISIS MANAGEMENT

The Ministry actively promotes the exchange of experience in creating national emergency and crisis capabilities designed to respond to emergencies and crisis situations. Strengthening NATO–EU cooperation has delivered the expected streamlining in use of shared capabilities. Experience sharing and regular joint exercises have had a positive effect on our existing and emerging national civilian capabilities in different areas of crisis intervention. Cooperation platforms created at NATO and EU level and, as part of wider interna-



▲ Svetobežka is an application for Slovak residents travelling abroad



Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák and Prime Minister Peter Pellegrini dedicate the new building of the Consulate General of the Slovak Republic in New York, 10 December 2019 (Photo: Diana Černáková)



Inauguration of the new Slovakia Visa Application Centre in Bangalore, India. The centre is one of three in India (the others are in New Delhi and Mumbai), 6 June 2019 (Photo: MFEA SR)

tional cooperation, were used in parallel to build transnational capabilities designed to support national efforts and present our capabilities to partners.

The results of our ambitious international activities were transformed into projects as part of our consular crisis management aimed at protecting Slovak and European

#### Comparison of consular activities in 2015–2019

TYPE OF CONSULAR SERVICE/ACTIVITY	Year				
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Consular assistance for Slovak citizens in need	4,079	4,073	3,885	5,490	6,094
Certifications performed at embassies abroad (including translations)	43,669	47,875	51,209	44,029	46,518
Certifications performed by the Ministry's legalisation department	4,359 (of which 745 apostilles)	4,118 (of which 885 apostilles)	5,247 (of which 1,047 apostilles)	4,680 (of which 1,070 apostilles)	3,960 (of which 954 apostilles)
Passport applications	14,430	14,695	15,384	13,856	16,428
Diplomatic and service passports issued	558 + 270	685 + 478	691 + 604	604 + 457	603 + 530
Identity cards issued	1,332	1,081	3,691	3,245	3,660
Driving licences issued	615	618	685	579	543
Registry records and applications	8,087	8,324	8,253	7,779	9,134
Slovak citizenship certificates/confirmations	2,387	2,368	2,418	2,427	2,386
Slovak citizenship applications	71	76	159	136	137
Renouncement of Slovak citizenship	65	140	231	264	235
Criminal record extracts	950	848	1,327	1,533	1,728
Accompanying letters for the transport of physical remains	49	67	63	75	69
Varying types of assistance relating to the death of a Slovak citizen abroad	770	803	826	917	913
Replacement travel documents for Slovak citizens	5,324	5,039	4,447	4,354	4,671
Marriages performed at embassies	32	28	38	34	28
Replies to email requests for information	77,653	86,232	78,625	88,610	101,442
<b>Total number of selected consular actions</b>	<b>164,700</b>	<b>177,548</b>	<b>177,783</b>	<b>179,069</b>	<b>198,166</b>
Visa applications	77,921	64,958	44,540	29,788	32,088
Visa applications on behalf of other states	1,706	1,175	1,406	1,262	1,382
Income from visa fees (EUR)	1,994,227,50	1,576,163,00	1,271,710,66	1,096,867,59	1,080,065,71
Income from consular fees (EUR)	1,507,859,50	1,722,614,50	2,142,302,95	1,921,744,17	1,986,342,10
<b>Total income (EUR)</b>	<b>3,502,087,00</b>	<b>3,298,777,50</b>	<b>3,414,013,61</b>	<b>3,018,611,76</b>	<b>3,066,407,81</b>

Union citizens in third countries. These included a system for the early identification of conflicts, development of a common framework for European Union emergency plans and the provision of consular cooperation in crisis situations. Slovak citizens travelling abroad are better informed and more aware of security and travel issues as a result of the availability of consular and crisis information.

### WORKING WITH COMPATRIOTS IN 2019

The Slovak Republic continued to take an active approach to implementing its National Policy on Slovaks Living Abroad for 2016–2020. The main goal is to develop and build close contacts with compatriot communities and strengthen their relationship to Slovakia. Primary responsibility for this lies with the Office for Slovaks Living Abroad and the ministries represented on the Government Council for Expatriate Issues. Three commissions have been set up under the Office to act as advisory bodies to the head of culture, education, and information and media. They are essential to improving the quality of Slovakia's policy and work in relation to the compatriot community.

In 2019 initial attention was focused on increasing the funding of compatriot activities to reflect the Slovak Government's long-term commitment approved in 2008, with a view to doubling funding in the coming years. The Slovak Government continues to rely on financial support to fund infrastructure projects for Slovak communities abroad.

In 2019 we continued to promote compatriot's linguistic, cultural and national identity in countries where the majority of Slovaks work and live. One such project was the opening of the first Slovak school in Lisbon. Slovaks living abroad were invited to traditional events organised in Slovakia which are popular among compatriots. These include Heritage Day for Slovaks Living Abroad, Compatriot Sunday and Compatriot Courtyard events. Other popular events include Summer Camps held in the Slovak Republic to foster Slovak language skills and help reinforce the national identity of compatriot children and young people.

We value the continued interest of Slovaks living abroad in their mother country, which is reflected in strong demand for Slovak Living Abroad Certificate. They are applied for at the Office for Slovaks Living Abroad, which issued in 2019 a total of 2,092 certificates.



▲ In 2019 the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs continued to deepen relations with Slovaks living abroad with the Slovak Heritage Festival in New Jersey attended by President Zuzana Čaputová and Minister Miroslav Lajčák, Krajanská Nedeľa v Detve (Compatriot Sunday in Detva) and the Day of Slovaks Living Abroad (Photos: MFEA SR/Diana Černáková, Vladimír Linder, Ľudovít Pomíchal)



▲ Anna Kypčo, Slovak language teacher in Finland; Jozef Kabaň, automotive designer based in Germany; and Martin Sedlák, Chief Operating Officer and Board Member of AirBaltic, Latvia's flag carrier, were honoured as the 2019 Goodwill Envoys, 12 December 2019 (Photo: MFEA SR/Tomáš Bokor)

# CULTURAL AND PUBLIC DIPLOMACY



## CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

In 2019 we promoted Slovak art and culture abroad through a range of traditional and contemporary events organised by the Slovak institutes in the V4 countries, France, Germany, Austria, Russia and Italy and by the Slovak embassies. These primarily reflected the Framework Priorities for the Promotion of Slovak Art and Culture Abroad, prepared annually by the Interministerial Working Group of the Ministry of Culture and the Foreign Ministry. In 2019 there were a number of important celebrations of Slovak notables and historical events, many featuring on the UNESCO anniversary calendar. The largest of these were the 100th anniversary of the tragic death of Milan Rastislav Štefánik and the 30th anniversary of the Velvet Revolution. Other priorities included the 70th anniversary of the Slovak Folk Art Collective, the 100th anniversary of Comenius University in Bratislava and the 75th anniversary of the Slovak National Uprising. Exhibitions were held all over the world, many of which were accompanied by

musical performances, discussions or films. The Ministry continued to work with Bratislava City Hall and events were organised with Slovak institutes to help promote Bratislava. Our cultural diplomacy led to an increase in the number of foreign guests.

International cultural cooperation is conducted via a number of cultural platforms. Slovak institutes and embassies also organise multicultural events where the emphasis is on promoting the country's identity under the European Union National Institutes for Culture. The Ministry worked with partners via the Central European Cultural Platform (V4, Austria and Slovenia) and participated in events in Brussels and Minsk under the Austrian and Czech chairmanships. Slovakia will assume the chairmanship in the first half of 2020 and this will be marked by an event in Switzerland devoted to blueprinting, an old fabric printing technique that is becoming fashionable again. Blueprinting is on the UNESCO list of intangible cultural heritage.



The wide scope of cultural diplomacy in 2019 is represented by an exhibition in Taipei of unique folk costumes from the Podpoľanie region, a presentation by Slovak designers at the International Fashion Showcase in London, a Christmas concert given by the Piarissimo Choir in New York and the 15th Slovak New Year's Concert in Brussels (Photos: MFEA SR and the Slovak Fashion Council/Jarka Črepová)



▲ Enchanting Slovakia, an exhibition presented in Ankara, May 2019 (Photo: MFEA SR)

To further efforts to develop bilateral cooperation, the 5th Meeting of the Joint Commission for Cooperation in Slovak and Austrian Culture, Education and Science was held in Bratislava in June 2019, where a protocol was signed for the next five-year period. In the same month, there was a meeting among the Slovak members of the Intergovernmental

Slovak–Ukrainian Commission for National Minorities, Education and Culture to discuss the fulfilment of tasks from the previous meeting. At the end of October 2019, the Implementation Programme for Culture, Education, Sport and Tourism 2020–2024 was the topic of discussion in Seoul at the session of the 2nd Joint Slovak–Korean Commission.



▲ Events in 2019 included the unveiling of a bust of Milan Rastislav Štefánik in Harbin, China; North is Freedom, an exhibition in Ottawa of photographs by Slovak-Canadian photographer Yuri Dojč; a concert by the Žilina State Chamber Orchestra, Lúčnice Choir and soloist Teo Gertl for the M. R. Štefánik Centennial at the Berlin Dome; a fashion show of Blaudruck (blueprinting) by fashion designer Mišeny Juhasz in Berlin (Photos: FAO Harbin, MFEA SR)



▲ Slovak art displayed at the 23rd Annual Sculpture by the Sea in Sydney, in conjunction with the celebration of the 30th anniversary of the Velvet Revolution, October and November 2019 (Photo: MFEA SR)



▲ November grand opening of the 28th Christmas Charity Bazaar by Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák and his wife in Bratislava's Old Market (Photo: MFEA SR/Tomáš Bokor)

Over the year we organised several hundred events around the world. Many were targeted at specific groups, while others at general audiences. We sought to organise events at well-known locations at home and in the host country. We also participated in many large-scale events, including the Livre Paris book fair, and Slovak sculptors showed their works at Sculpture by the Sea, an outdoor exhibition in Australia.

The Christmas Charity Bazaar is another event in which the department of cultural diplomacy engages every year. In 2019 the 28th bazaar was held at the Old Market (Stará tržnica) building in Bratislava. A record number of 40 embassies, international schools and charitable organisations succeeded in raising our first six-figure sum of €106,394.



▲ Roots Deeper Than Walls, a large format painting produced by contemporary Slovak artist Oto Hudec, which was presented to the public in Berlin by Minister Miroslav Lajčák on 9 November 2019. The photographs showcase Slovakia at different events both at home and abroad (Photos: MFEA SR)

## PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

Communicating with the expert and general public at home and abroad is one of the main tools used by public diplomacy to support the implementation of Slovakia's foreign policy priorities. To publicise foreign policy and the work of the public diplomacy department, we produced an information brochure available both in print and electronically. The department's grant mechanism provided non-governmental organisations with the funding to undertake dialogue with the public on the values espoused by Slovakia's foreign policy. As usual, face-to-face meetings with students provided an arena for constructive discussion and the exchange of opinion on current European topics of interest to the Ministry and the young generation. In addition to its more traditional public diplomacy instruments, the department also communicated through more novel digital means and through social networks.

The most important anniversaries celebrated in 2019 represented a great opportunity to promote Slovakia's foreign policy focus and values, and this was exploited to the maximum. Among the most popular activities were the celebrations of the 15th anniversary of Slovakia's accession to the EU and NATO, the 10th anniversary of the euro, the 30th anniversary of the Velvet Revolution, the 75th anniversary



▲ Reception of political science students from the University of Munich, Germany, at the Ministry's headquarters in Bratislava, 7 November 2019 (Photo: MFEA SR)

of the Slovak National Uprising and the 100th anniversary of the death of General Milan Rastislav Štefánik. Social networks were used to inform the public of the legacies of these historical figures and events. In 2019 the diplomacy department expanded its exhibition portfolio to include the promotional projects of *Cesta k roku slobody* (Road to the Year of Freedom), *M. R. Štefánik – človek legenda* (M. R. Štefánik – A Legendary Figure) and *Slovensko v Európskej únii* (Slovakia in the European Union), which were exhibited as part of the department's wide-ranging public and cultural diplomacy events and the numerous activities conducted by the embassies. Commemorative coins and presentational envelopes with postage stamps were produced in commemoration of the death of General Milan Rastislav Štefánik. To celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Velvet Revolution, the diplomacy department continued to build on the successful cooperation between the Slovak embassies and their Czech partners. Slovak OSCE Chairmanships, the V4 and the OECD

**We must not forget**

November 1989 was the beginning of a new era and brought hope to citizens calling for change. We had to come to terms with the Communist era whilst implementing social change. The months and years that followed were a challenging process of fundamental political, economic and social reform. Following the split of the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic, an independent Slovak Republic was established in 1993, and Slovakia is now a firmly established member of the European Union, NATO and other international structures. We take it for granted that we can travel and study freely, express our opinions and vote in democratic elections for the party that best represents our views. But our democracy only exists because of the Velvet Revolution and the people who were not afraid to defy the totalitarian regime, even at the cost of great sacrifice. We must not forget them especially as we are facing the new threat of the return of authoritarian regimes, a concept which belongs firmly in the last century.

**"A nation with no memory will repeat all the bad things it no longer remembers"**  
Peter Žajac, one of the main participants of November '89.

**Havel versus Dubček, or who will become president?**

The Federal Assembly had to elect the new president within two weeks of Gustav Husák's abdication. There were various aspects to consider: power relations (prime minister/ president), nationality (Czech/Slovak) and party membership (Communist/ non-Communist). The main opposition candidates were Václav Havel and Alexander Dubček. The idea of Dubček becoming president was utterly unacceptable to Public Against Violence, he may have symbolized the events of 1988 and was a Slovak, but he was also a Communist. By contrast Havel personified opposition to the Party, was Czech and was not a member of a political party. He was publicly nominated as presidential candidate at a rally on Human Rights Day (10 December). In the end, despite Dubček having become a member, Public Against Violence decided to back Havel. Later, given public opinion in Slovakia it decided to make its support conditional on the new president taking office only up until the free elections in June, which meant that Alexander Dubček, who was popular in Slovakia, could run as president as well. Following an agreement, Alexander Dubček became chairman of the Federal Assembly on 28 December. The following day, 29 December 1989, the assembly unanimously elected Václav Havel as president. Curiously, Havel – a dissident – had been elected by the Communist deputies of the Federal Assembly.

**At last – free and democratic elections**

The events of the revolutionary year of 1989 ended in the election of new political representatives. The elections were held on 8-9 June 1990 and were the first free and democratic elections since the Second World War. A record 90% of voters participated. In Slovakia, the elections were won by Public Against Violence with 30% of the vote, followed by the Christian Democratic Movement on 19% and the Slovak National Party on 14%. The Communist Party of Slovakia received only 13% of the votes and after having been in power for many years found itself part of the opposition. The elections were proof of the political and social changes brought about by the Velvet Revolution, of the triumph of democratic political parties over a single party dictatorship, and ushered new hope into the lives of all Slovak citizens.

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AND EUROPEAN AFFAIRS OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC  
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

▲ An exhibition project, Path to the Year of Freedom.

**Milan Rastislav Štefánik** A Legendary figure 1880-1919

Chronology of the life of M.R. Štefánik

- 1880 - Birth in Blatná
- 1896 - Graduated from the Military Academy in Brno
- 1900 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1905 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1914 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1918 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1919 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1920 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1921 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1922 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1923 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1924 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1925 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1926 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1927 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1928 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1929 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1930 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1931 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1932 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1933 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1934 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1935 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1936 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1937 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1938 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1939 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1940 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1941 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1942 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1943 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1944 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1945 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1946 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1947 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1948 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1949 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1950 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1951 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1952 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1953 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1954 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1955 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1956 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1957 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1958 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1959 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1960 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1961 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1962 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1963 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1964 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1965 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1966 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1967 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1968 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1969 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1970 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1971 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1972 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1973 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1974 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1975 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1976 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1977 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1978 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1979 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1980 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1981 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1982 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1983 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1984 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1985 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1986 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1987 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1988 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1989 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1990 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1991 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1992 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1993 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1994 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1995 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1996 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1997 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1998 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 1999 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 2000 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 2001 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 2002 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 2003 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 2004 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 2005 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 2006 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 2007 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 2008 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 2009 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 2010 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 2011 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 2012 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 2013 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 2014 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 2015 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 2016 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 2017 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 2018 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army
- 2019 - Served in the Austro-Hungarian Army

▲ Milan Rastislav Štefánik – A Legendary Figure



▲ Sport and Slovakia – Good Idea (Photo: MFEA SR)

Ministerial Council presented numerous opportunities for promoting Slovakia and helping develop political relations and build on Slovakia’s positive image abroad as a trustworthy partner.

The diplomacy department fulfilled its goal of coordinating the consistent promotion of Slovakia abroad as a dynamic country of good ideas and a successful European story, and that is an attractive destination for foreign investment, economic relations and tourism. All notable promotional and sporting events abroad were given prominence by linking them to the concepts and narratives associated with the national brand. The diplomacy department continued to further advertise the Dobrý nápad Slovensko/Good Idea Slovakia brand, focusing on actively engaging the departments and state agencies in its activities promoting Slovakia abroad and by awarding dozens more sub-licences to third parties wishing to use the Slovakia brand. There was interest in promoting the brand in conjunction with sports promotions, innovation and publishing activities (books about Slovakia). The success of brand implementation is reflected in the independent FutureBrand Country Index 2019 which ranks 75 of the countries with the highest GDP, according to World Bank figures, on a qualitative basis. Slovakia has risen by 24 places since 2014, and is the only country to have made such significant progress up the ranking, coming in at the 35th strongest national brand. It shows the brand is now well established at all levels of promotion and has great potential.

The Ministry provided the embassies with almost 30,000 publications and materials for promotional purposes. Visitors can borrow special Oculus VR headsets and experience a three-dimensional virtual tour of Slovakia. This is one of the latest methods of promoting the most interesting places and regions in Slovakia to audiences abroad.

The Minister presented its *Goodwill Envoy* awards for the seventh year as part of the diplomacy department’s efforts to develop relations with Slovaks who positively



▲ Slovakia’s presentation at the Europe Day, Brussels, 4 May 2019 (Photo: MFEA SR)

represent the Slovak Republic in the world and whose extraordinary achievements help spread our good name abroad.

The public diplomacy work we conducted in 2019 was indicative of the greater emphasis on soft diplomacy in Slovak foreign policy. More sophisticated tools are used to promote Slovakia’s interests, mainly through a strategic focus on public communication and numerous PR projects embracing a wider genre.



▲ Opening remarks at the presentation of the Goodwill Envoys by Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák in Bratislava on 12 December 2019 (Photo: MFEA SR/Tomáš Bokor)



Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák meets informally with representatives of the non-governmental sector and academic community in Bratislava, 18 December 2019 (Photo: MFEA SR/Tomáš Bokor)

## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND COMBATING DISINFORMATION

In 2019 the Ministry responded to long-term developments in the information and technology environments and to the rise in attempts to destabilise democratic institutions and processes in the EU, including the Slovak Republic, by continuing to engage in proactive communication with the Slovak public via 1. EU membership (#MYSMEEU projects), 2. NATO membership (#MYSMENATO projects), and 3. Slovakia's ties and commitments under the multilateral system of international relations (#MultilateralismMatters projects).

Strategic communication is the Ministry's main tool against disinformation and propaganda and draws on the Slovak Republic's strategic foreign policy documents, the Government's Programme Manifesto and joint statements by the three highest state officials from October 2017 to June 2019. The Ministry is guided by the fourth pillar of strategic communication: the democratic values and principles of Slovak foreign policy and diplomacy.

The Ministry succeeded in initiating a broad interdepartmental political discussion and cooperation with civil society and academia in the fight against disinformation and regarding strategic communication, based on the recommendations in the EU Action Plan against Disinformation. The Ministry represented the Slovak Republic in European and international

networks of strategic communication cooperation, led bilateral cooperation with countries with strong experience in this area and shared important information in interministerial communication. It thus helped to prepare the future legislative framework and the central cross-sectoral coordination mechanism in this area. Thanks to the expert activities of the Ministry, a definition of strategic communication was adopted in September 2019 by the Interdepartmental Terminology Commission of the Security Council of the Slovak Republic.

Under the #MYSMEEU communication programme, the national conventions and other events concerning the need to develop critical thinking and media literacy, the Ministry followed up on activities undertaken in 2017 and 2018. We provided a platform for society-wide discussion and for the creation of national positions on the priorities, challenges and future of the EU. In 2019, in cooperation with the European Parliament Information Office and EC Representation in Bratislava, the Ministry sought to increase participation in European Parliamentary elections through events at universities and secondary schools in Slovak towns and cities. Popular types of public diplomacy activity were used in tandem to communicate effectively with the young generation, including a series of video blogs with well-known opinionmakers and the *Zahraničná politika sa nás týka* (Foreign Policy Affects Us) profile.

2019 was a year of key NATO anniversaries, and under the #WeAreNATO programme the Ministry harnessed these



Exhibition presented in Chisinau, Moldova, to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Velvet Revolution (Photo: MFEA SR)



V4 Football Tournament in Shanghai (Photo: MFEA SR)

to inform the public of NATO values and priorities, how it works and the importance of our membership. In addition to NATO's 70th anniversary, we celebrated Slovakia's 15th anniversary of NATO membership. Communication activities included discussions between high-ranking Slovak and NATO officials and university and high school students. #WeAreNATO information booths were set up at important events such as SIAF 2019.

As part of the new pillar of strategic communication, the Ministry started to focus more on multilateralism, the third direction of foreign policy. The main outputs were information regarding the importance of Slovak OSCE Chairmanship in 2019 and support for the new EU–UN project #MultilateralismMatters. The Ministry was also involved in developing projects to combat extremism and terrorism on the internet.



#MYSMEEU seeks to openly discuss topical issues concerning the European Union in various parts of Slovakia, specifically emphasising Slovakia's future and position within the EU (Photos: MFEA SR/Tomáš Bokor)



MINISTERSTVO  
ZAHRANIČNÝCH VECÍ  
A EURÓPSKÝCH ZÁLEŽITOSTÍ  
SLOVENSKEJ REPUBLIKY



# PROFESSIONAL FOREIGN OFFICE

# 10

## MINISTERIAL REFORMS

The reforms implemented in 2019–2020 period are designed to ensure the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs makes more flexible and efficient use of its human resources, to create tools to facilitate administrative processes and to identify opportunities to improve working conditions for foreign service staff. Under the reforms, expert activities at selected diplomatic missions were strengthened, particularly in economic diplomacy. As part of the professionalisation of the foreign service, great emphasis was put on the quality of staff education. Attention was primarily focused on optimising all areas of education and training.

The reform process will enter its second phase in 2020, which will be focused on internal administrative processes and on reducing bureaucracy. The digitisation of some processes and reforms to the grant scheme are scheduled to be implemented in 2020 as well.

## PRESENCE IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

The success of Slovak diplomacy is also clearly visible representation of the department employees in international organisations (OSCE, UN, Council of Europe) and in EU institutions. In 2019, a total of 11 Slovak diplomats served in senior executive positions in international organisations.

## SLOVAK MISSIONS ABROAD

In 2019, Slovakia had 90 diplomatic missions abroad: 64 embassies, 8 permanent representations at international organisations, 8 consulates general, 1 liaison office, 1 Slovak economic and cultural office and 8 Slovak institutes. Slovakia uses almost two hundred honorary consulates as a supplement to its network of diplomatic missions. A total of 18 new honorary consulates were established in 2019 – 9 in Africa, 6 in Europe and 3 in the Americas. Their activity is primarily focused on promoting the priorities of economic diplomacy, presentations and services for citizens.

### Ministry expenditure in 2019

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

Ministry programmes: .....	167,025,757
<b>Foreign relations</b> .....	<b>164,883,977</b>
of which	
Programme management .....	73,179,518
Gabčíkovo–Nagymaros legal dispute .....	32
Cooperation with third sector.....	118,820
Staff training .....	131,691
Reimbursement of expenditure from Technical Assistance Operational Programme.....	128,086
Economic diplomacy .....	131,427
OSCE Chairmanship.....	7,493,650
Diplomatic representation of Slovakia abroad.....	78,720,453
Cultural representation of Slovakia abroad .....	1,295,432
Staff employed locally abroad .....	3,684,868
<b>National policy on Slovaks living abroad</b> .....	<b>2,141,780</b>
Interministerial programmes:.....	30,778,476
<b>Development cooperation – Ministry</b> .....	<b>7,826,252</b>
<b>Slovakia's contributions to international organisations – Ministry</b> .....	<b>22,952,224</b>
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b> .....	<b>197,804,233</b>



Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák with Slovakia's ambassadors at a regular conference of heads of diplomatic missions held in Bratislava on 1–4 July 2019 (Photo: MFEA SR/Tomáš Bokor)