

(Unofficial translation)

Foreign and European Policy of the Slovak Republic in 2020

Slovakia in an unstable world

Bratislava 28 of May, 2020

Values and strategic compass of Slovakia

Slovakia is a free, sovereign and democratic state, and our foreign policy seeks primarily to promote the interests of its citizens. Bearing this in mind, we want to deepen good neighbourly relations, maintain friendly relations with members of the international community and act as a reliable and responsible partner on both the European and global stages.

The defining framework of our foreign policy activities is our membership in the European Union and in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). We chose this strategic direction after the restoration of democratic order in 1989, and subsequently the citizens of the Slovak Republic have repeatedly confirmed it in free elections. Membership in the EU and NATO multiplies the possibilities for promoting and defending the interests of the Slovak Republic. Therefore, in both organisations we want to be an engaged and solidary partner and to be actively involved in common solutions that reinforce the stability, security and prosperity of the Euro-Atlantic area.

An expression of this values-based anchoring of Slovak foreign policy is our support for adherence to international law and our interest in maintaining and developing multilateralism. Both at home and abroad, we promote the protection of human rights, fundamental freedoms, the principles of democracy and the rule of law.

The pandemic, which in the first half of 2020 affected Slovakia, will not change our strategic orientation. This was confirmed by the 2020 – 2024 Government Manifesto, as well as the Joint Declaration of the three highest constitutional officials on 9 May 2020.

Slovakia must, however, respond to the consequences that the pandemic has brought for the international political, security and economic environment, but also to questioning of our own values and strategic orientation, which was spreading through disinformation and propaganda even before the outbreak of the pandemic, thus undermining the foreign policy consensus in Slovakia.

Strategic consequences of the pandemic

The pandemic represents a serious challenge for the European project and for the foundations on which post-war **Europe and the world order** have been gradually built. The period before the pandemic has already been marked by weakening of international institutions and international legal frameworks. The current crisis is creating the conditions for accelerated weakening of multilateralism, which is being replaced by growing tensions between great powers pursuing unilateral solutions and by creation of spheres of influence. The related economic crisis as well as the course of the pandemic demonstrate the high level of dependence of countries on global supply chains and at the same time their fragility, resulting in strengthening nationalism and economic protectionism.

The dynamics of **global development** is marked by the confrontation of great powers, with the involvement of both state and non-state actors, with negative consequences for international stability and regional security. Finding an appropriate place for the EU in the growing global competition is a strategic question also for Slovak foreign policy.

The **global economy** in 2020 is now facing a greater recession than that which followed the 2008 financial crisis (the IMF forecasted a 3% decrease in global GDP in 2020). According to the Spring Economic Forecast of the European Commission, the economy of EU countries will be hit by a recession of historical proportions in 2020 (a decrease in the EU27 GDP by 7.4%; the Slovak

economy is expected to decrease by 6.7% in 2020). Although economic forecasts predict renewed GDP growth in the following year, it can be assumed that the recovery will be asymmetric in terms of chronology, geography and sectors.

The **stability** of areas that had already been weakened prior to the pandemic by social, economic or security crises will be especially endangered. Structural problems and stresses in some societies and their economies were abated by the crisis but are expected to deepen after the anti-pandemic measures are lifted. With the continuing negative impacts of the crisis, an increase in tensions at both the intrastate and interstate levels, as well as social unrest, migratory pressures and a weakening of the social cohesion of countries are expected to occur. From the viewpoint of the Slovak Republic and the EU, it is necessary to take these phenomena into account in the nearest European neighbourhood – eastern and southern.

In the first stage, countries tried to cope with the pandemic mainly at the national level. In the subsequent stages, an emphasis on **strengthening international cooperation** is growing. The current crisis has fully exposed the interconnectedness of the world and shown that no one is immune to global problems. Countries were affected regardless of their geographical location, size, economic strength or military power or their form of government. It has not been confirmed that autocratic regimes have shown to be more successful in the fight against the pandemic, on the contrary, many democracies, including Slovakia, have succeeded in fighting the pandemic. Regardless of the scope of success in slowing the spread of the epidemic, the economic consequences will negatively affect the entire world economy. The crisis, however, is also creating opportunities for economic and green transformation, for more efficient management and production processes, and an orientation on sustainable consumption and production, with higher added-value and a lower carbon footprint. It also offers an opportunity for overcoming old animosities and strengthening international cooperation. The ability of states to take advantage of the **reform potential of the crisis** will be, from a political, economic and security point of view, even more crucial for their future development, than merely overcoming a pandemic.

Despite the transnational and global character of the crisis and its consequences, it is necessary to expect efforts to promote unilateral, isolationist solutions. Calls for protectionism, from radical and populist forces and the pressures on the democratic establishment, free trade and integration processes associated with them may continue to grow in democratic and economically developed countries, also in Europe. The key dynamic in the post-pandemic period will likely be related to the relationship between **isolated unilateral solutions and multilateralism**.

Slovakia is a country with objectively limited political, economic and military influence. International cooperation, the functioning of international institutions and respect for international law provide the basic foundations for our security and sovereignty. Our foreign policy influence is strengthened by our membership in international organizations and by the advancement of democracy, stability and prosperity in our neighbourhood. A basic precondition for the success of the export-oriented Slovak economy is preservation of the highest possible degree of freedom of international trade and respecting equality and agreed rules on the global market.

Slovakia will therefore support and contribute to:

- joint solutions within the EU and NATO;
- preserving transatlantic relations and, in particular, building relations between the EU and the USA;

- the development of partnerships and peaceful solutions to disputes in the European neighbourhood;
- strengthening effective multilateralism with a central role of the UN and respect for international law;
- maintaining the openness of international trade and the level playing field among its participants.

A successful Slovakia in a turbulent world

Foreign policy begins in the neighbourhood

Successful foreign policy begins in the immediate neighbourhood. **Good neighbourly cooperation** brings tangible benefits to citizens and is an important contribution to the stability, security and prosperity of our region and of Europe. The effects of the pandemic have only emphasized our interconnectedness with neighbouring countries. Slovakia wants to build firm neighbourly relations free from the burdens of the past and focused on a common European future. At their core will be a common interest in developing our region and safeguarding the practical needs of our citizens. We will build on this through further development of our special relationship with the Czech Republic and close partnerships with Austria, Poland and Hungary, with which we are bound through EU membership.

Ukraine has a unique place in Slovakia's neighbourly relations. A strategic foreign policy interest of Slovakia is to support Ukraine in its free decision to orientate towards the EU and NATO and to assist in its transformation process. The position of the Slovak Republic on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine in its internationally recognized borders remains unchanged.

We also want to effectively use **regional platforms** in the neighborhood cooperation, while **Visegrad cooperation** (V4) will continue to play an important part in the Slovak neighborhood and regional policy. The main criterion of our work in the V4 is the promotion of Slovakia's interests and at the same time its contribution to common European solutions. Slovakia will continue its efforts to build a positive perception of the V4 brand, seek constructive solutions and pragmatic cooperation in areas where we share interests and common positions with Visegrad partners. In particular, it will involve coordinating positions on selected European issues, such as the Cohesion policy, the Common agricultural policy or Enlargement policy. We also continue to be interested in developing practical cooperation in the areas of connectivity, north-south transport and energy interconnections, as well as in the field of security and defence. Slovakia will place emphasis on a positive agenda and we will continue to be interested in the active development of the "V4 +" format. We will use Visegrad cooperation as a useful consultation platform not only to promote common regional interests, but also as a contribution to finding Europe-wide solutions to the challenges facing the European Union.

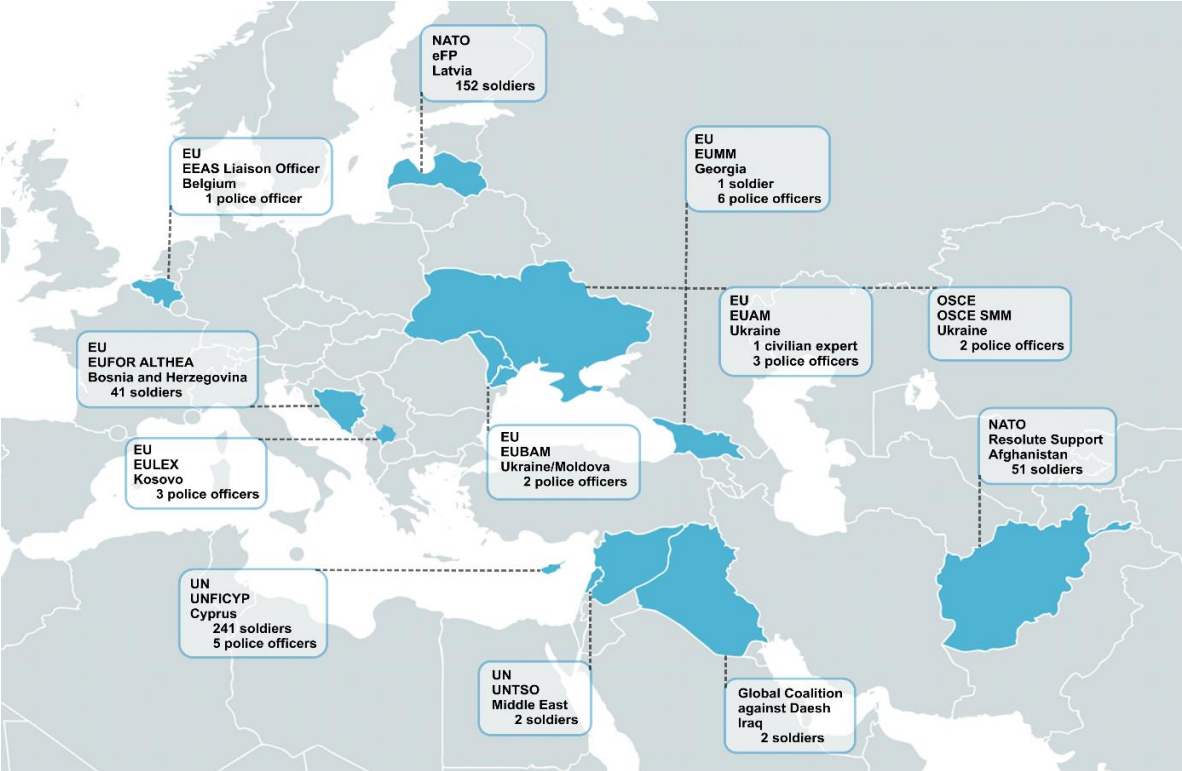
Alongside to the established Visegrad cooperation, we are also interested in the development of the **Slavkov** format, which is gaining new momentum. In recent years, several **new regional formats of cooperation have been initiated** in Central and Eastern Europe. Slovakia supports their contribution to the development and deepening of economic relations and the strengthening of connectivity in the region. We will always consider the extent of our participation in them,

depending on their added value for our region and their impact on the cohesion of European and transatlantic cooperation.

Foreign and European policy based on firm pillars

Membership of the Slovak Republic in the EU and NATO is an expression of Slovakia’s strategic orientation and its values . Our work in these organizations multiplies our foreign policy influence and is a basic pillar for a successful, prosperous and secure Slovakia. The Slovak Republic will further contribute to strengthening of the unity, credibility and ability of both organizations to act. A prerequisite of this is a strong transatlantic link and the building of strategic and mutually beneficial relations between the EU and the USA.

Ensuring the security of the Slovak Republic and its citizens is one of the primary tasks of the state. The Slovak Republic will therefore support the further **adaptation of NATO** to the changed security environment with special regard to new security challenges and threats. Slovakia will continue to increase the share of defence expenditures to the level of 2% of GDP by 2024 and will actively participate in NATO, EU and UN operations, missions and activities. Slovakia will also further contribute to NATO’s Enhanced Forward Presence in the Baltics and participate in training and advisory missions in Iraq and Afghanistan. We will support NATO’s open door policy and the strengthening of cooperation between NATO and the EU, so that their cooperation is as close, effective and smooth as possible on all levels and without unnecessary duplications. In both organizations, we support the reflection of their activities with the aim to improve their internal efficiency and to strengthen their global outreach.



Source: MFEA SR (as of June 11. 2020)

In the area of the EU’s **Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)**, we support the strengthening of capacities and deepening cooperation and efforts in order to reinforce the EU’s capacity to act, its strategic autonomy and its ability to cooperate with partners, while maintaining

NATO as a key pillar of our security and collective defence. Permanent Structured Cooperation – PESCO – where Slovakia leads one and actively participates in five other projects, remains a central initiative of EU Member States in the area of development of military capabilities, harmonization of defence planning, strengthening of operational capabilities of the armed forces and the convergence of defence apparatus and processes. We will also focus on support for competitiveness and innovation in the Slovak defence industry through the European Defence Industrial Development Programme (EDIDP), as well as the future European Defence Fund.

An integral part of strengthening our security is Slovakia's participation in other international fora and the advocacy of multilateral institutional and contractual frameworks for **arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction**. Together with our EU partners, we will focus on the support for international efforts to determine accountability for the use of chemical weapons and oppose efforts to challenge the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Slovakia also carefully monitors further developments regarding the New START agreement and considers the preservation of this agreement beyond 2021 to be an important factor in strengthening international security.

The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic (MFEA) will contribute to strengthening capacities for the fight against **hybrid threats** at the national level and will cooperate to improve the coordination and creation of a national mechanism for the fight against **disinformation**.

Slovakia in a world which needs of more cooperation

Current developments confirm that the **world needs more and not less international cooperation**. **Bilateral partnerships and alliances of the Slovak Republic** stem from our membership in the EU and NATO. Aside from close **ties with neighbouring countries**, the implementation of strategic partnerships with **Germany and France** play an important role. At the same time, we will develop cooperation with other **EU Member States** in the interest of strengthening the unity and ability of the Union to act. Development of relations with the USA, which continues to play an irreplaceable role in ensuring the security of Europe, including Slovakia, is of key importance. The intersection of interests, the defence of common values and the common perception of security challenges, create the basis of our transatlantic alliance, which we want to develop not only in the political and security spheres but also in fields of economy and technology.

At a time of growing geopolitical rivalry, which more and more is demonstrated by competing models of governance, building of bilateral relations with **democratic countries** that share our values of freedom, the protection of human rights and the rule of law is of growing importance, alongside developing close cooperation with EU and NATO Member States.

The development of effective **multilateralism**, which is facing exceptional pressure, is in the strategic interest of the Slovak Republic. We consider the **United Nations** to be the fundamental pillar of multilateral cooperation. As a high priority we consider the strengthening of international institutions, the unified approach of the EU at international fora and efforts for the stronger position for the EU as a global actor in the area of sustainable development in line with the Agenda 2030, environmental and climate protection and digitization. At the regional level, Slovakia will support the strengthening of capacities and effectively using the tools available to the OSCE. We will promote the development of human rights in the world through activities during the third and final year of membership in the **UN Human Rights Council** (2018-2020) as well as in the

Council of Europe, membership in the Media Freedom Coalition and the International Religious Freedom Alliance.

China is at the centre of current geopolitical dynamics, and Slovakia wants to develop bilateral relations with China with an emphasis on economic cooperation and resolution of global problems. The Slovak Republic will approach China in line with the EU policy as an important partner while at the same time an economic and technological competitor and a systemic rival that promotes an alternative model of governance.

In bilateral relations with **Russia**, Slovakia focuses on the development of bilateral cooperation with an emphasis on trade and economy, which has for a long time been disproportionately focused on the energy sector. Slovakia's foreign policy towards Russia will continue to be closely coordinated within the EU and NATO, including the sanctions which have been a consequence of violation of international law by the annexation of Crimea and insufficient progress in implementing the Minsk Agreements.

Slovakia in the European neighbourhood, which is also our neighbourhood

The European Neighbourhood, which is a source of both opportunities and risks for Europe, and thus for Slovakia, requires special attention in Slovakia's foreign policy. This especially applies when fragile socioeconomic and security relations in these regions face the impact of the 2020 pandemic, in addition to traditional systemic problems.

In 2020, we expect the setting of new political priorities and their elaboration into specific goals in relation to **the Eastern Partnership**. The implementation of reforms in partner countries and progress in the areas of rule of law, democracy, human rights and freedoms face challenges. The priority of the Slovak Republic will be to maintain the strategic and ambitious nature of the Eastern Partnership, supported by adequate funding, with strengthened and differentiated bilateral partnership dialogue, emphasis on gradual integration of partners into the EU's internal market and building partners' resilience to both internal and external challenges.

Eastern Partnership countries – Key developments with regards to the EU						
	Ukraine	Georgia	Moldova	Armenia	Azerbaijan	Belarus
VISA REGIME						
Visa facilitation (entry into force)	2014	2011	2011	2014	2014	2020
Visa liberalization (entry into force)	2017	2017	2014			
POLITICAL AGREEMENTS						
Association agreement (entry into force)	2017	2016	2016			
Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (entry into force)				2018		
FREE TRADE AREAS						
DCFTA (entry into force)	2017	2016	2016			

It is in Slovakia's interest that **the Western Balkans** region is stable and prosperous and that EU values and standards are applied. Support for the transformation of the countries of the Western Balkans as a basic prerequisite for meeting their Euro-Atlantic ambitions remains one of the main priorities of Slovak foreign policy. The agreement on modification of the of the procedures of the accession process, the opening of accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia, as well as support worth 3.3 billion euros to combat the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic were all welcomed confirmation of the EU's interest in the region. Slovakia will work on deepening bilateral relations with partners in the region, including development cooperation and humanitarian aid. Slovakia will try to turn the high level of political relations into more intensive economic cooperation and increased trade volumes.

ACCESSION NEGOTIATIONS		
	EU	NATO
Albania	Candidate country since 03/2020 (first chapter to be opened soon)	Member
Bosnia and Hercegovina	Potential candidate country (membership application submitted in 2016)	invited to join the MAP (2010), Reform Programme submitted 2019-2020
Montenegro	Candidate country (out of 35 chapters 32 had been opened, 3 chapters have been provisionally closed)	Member
Kosovo*	Potential candidate country	Potential candidate country
North Macedonia	Candidate country since 03/2020 (first chapter to be opened soon)	Member
Serbia	Candidate country (out of 35 chapters 17 had been opened, 2 chapters have been provisionally closed)	No interest to join
<i>* In line with UNSC Resolution 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence</i>		

The **Middle East and North Africa** is a dynamic and diverse region with many opportunities and challenges for Europe, as well as a neuralgic point of international relations. The primary challenges remain the armed conflicts and the threat of terrorism in Syria, Libya, Yemen, Iraq and Afghanistan, the divergence of views on the Middle East peace process and the future of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in Iran. Slovakia will support the efforts of the international community for a peaceful, just and comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict on the basis of the relevant UNSC resolutions. The effects of the pandemic and climate change have strong potential to deepen existing conflicts in the region with a negative impact on the interests of the EU and the Slovak Republic. The aim of our foreign policy will therefore be to support preventive diplomacy focused on reducing tensions in the region, with the aim of transforming this area from a source of security problems and migratory pressures into an area of a good neighbourhood and pragmatic cooperation. The impetus for Slovak activities in Africa is the intention of the European Commission to elaborate a comprehensive EU strategy for Africa, also with a view to a European Union–Africa summit.

With the goal of implementing the following intentions the MFEA will:

- begin preparation of a new **Security Strategy of the Slovak Republic**;
- support the transformation of candidate countries as a prerequisite for fulfilling the criteria for membership and the continuation of the process of **EU enlargement, as well as NATO's open door policy** and support the ambitious Eastern Partnership agenda beyond 2020;
- support the **strengthening of international institutions** with an emphasis on post-pandemic recovery, the efforts of the UN and regional organizations in preventing conflicts and building a sustainable peace.

Slovakia in Europe affected by unprecedented challenges

After the democratic changes of 1989, Slovakia decided to return to the civilizational, cultural and economic environment of Europe to which it had belonged throughout its history, until being separated from it by the Iron Curtain. The **pro-European orientation** gradually became the dominant element of Slovak foreign policy and found reflection in accession to the European Union, for which it gained the support of the population in a referendum.

The European anchoring of the Slovak Republic is facing unprecedented challenges. Slovakia's pro-European direction has not changed, but the foundations of the European Union itself have come under pressure. Even before 2020, the European project was facing shocks both from inside and outside the Union. A series of crises of the previous decade pointed out several **systemic shortcomings of European integration**. The pandemic revealed weak points and pointed out the vulnerability of the European project, which still remains, however, the best solution for promoting Slovakia's political and economic interests.

Slovakia is one of the most open economies in the Union, as 80% of our exports go to the EU, and as a member of the euro and Schengen areas, we belong to the group of the most integrated EU Member States. We do not see the current crisis only as a threat to the future of European integration, but also as an opportunity to reform it. It is in our vital interest to restore the full **functionality** of political, social and economic relations within the EU, to remove the systemic shortcomings that have led to a recent series of crises threatening the Union's economic integrity, security and stability and to set up EU mechanisms for responding more effectively to new crises.

Recovery of the Union

The most acute challenge is the **removal of barriers** relating to the EU's fundamental freedoms, introduced as a result of anti-pandemic measures, and the **economic recovery** of the EU. For Slovakia, which is one of the most industrialized economies within the EU, this indicates a need to find the correct balance between the scope of state support and maintaining equal **opportunities** on the EU market. In the course of expected efforts for greater regionalization of production processes and thus the achievement of European **sovereignty in strategic areas**, it will be necessary to identify the interests of the Slovak Republic by defining key sectors and building up strategic stocks at the national and European level.

Following the restoration of the functioning of the Union's **internal market** and the **Schengen area**, it will be necessary to complete the Economic and Monetary Union, the Single Market and unblock the reform of the Common European Asylum System.

On 31 January 2020, the **United Kingdom (UK) left the EU**. It was the second largest country in the Union in terms of GDP and the third largest country in terms of population and was thus a key contributor to the European budget and defence capabilities. With the departure of the UK, a transition period began in which an agreement on a new settlement of EU-UK relations is to be reached by 31 December 2020. The UK is now Slovakia's largest trading partner outside the EU and at the same time has the second largest community of our non-EU compatriots. It is therefore in the interest of the Slovak Republic to ensure a proper implementation of the agreement on the UK's withdrawal from the EU, guaranteeing the rights of EU citizens living in the UK, and achieving a bilaterally balanced and ambitious agreement governing trade and economic relations, as well as cooperation on security, foreign and defence policy.

A chance to modernize the Union?

Alongside the “reactive”, the EU needs a **positive agenda** to help it stand its ground in global economic and technological competition. At the beginning of 2020, the European Commission correctly identified two key areas – climate protection and digitalization. Both are acquiring new justification in the current context. And this year's extreme drought demonstrates that the issue of climate change has not gone away and will return with new urgency after the pandemic. The **European Green Deal** can become not only an expression of European environmental responsibility and the attractiveness of the EU, but also one of the tools for building a modern economy, a source of innovation and technological progress, and thus one of the elements of the EU's economic recovery. Through climate diplomacy, Slovakia is actively contributing to the EU as it continues to stand at the forefront of international negotiations on combating climate change and protecting biodiversity. **Digitalization** has also gained special importance in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. On top of its unquestionable importance for shaping Europe's digital future, for developing the economy, connectivity and innovation, data policy and strengthening cyber security, it has become an irreplaceable instrument for ensuring the basic functionality of European companies in communication, education and trade during the pandemic. Whoever controls the digital sphere will also control the functioning of modern society. The security of the digital environment is thus gaining strategic importance along with the economic dimension of digitalization in the run-up to the building of 5G networks and the first considerations on 6G networks.

But the EU is not immune to mistakes either. For a rather long time now a need has been felt to **adapt the Union to the new and rapidly changing geopolitical reality**. In conditions of deepening competition between large powers, the EU must define its own interests and find tools for their effective promotion. It needs to take into consideration traditional alliances and reflect on both traditional and new challenges. This role has both a political and institutional dimension, and the coming Conference on the Future of the EU should provide a space for critical discussions. Slovakia will approach it with the aim of identifying the changes needed to reduce administrative and regulatory burdens in the EU and make its operation more efficient. We will also reject tendencies heading towards the internal erosion of the Union; we will support the maintaining of the Community approach and the principle of subsidiarity, so that decisions respect the interests

of all Member States in a non-discriminatory manner and are approved as effectively and as close to citizens as possible. We will support the strengthening of the rule of law and the observing of the rules by both the Member States and the EU institutions. If the EU is to be a model for other countries, we must first of all observe the rule of law within the EU. Ultimately, our goal will be to strengthen and improve a project that has brought Europe 70 years of stability, peace and prosperity.

All of the mentioned issues meet at the point of **negotiating the new Multiannual Financial Framework**. These will run in parallel with the discussions on EU instruments for future generations. The negotiations will have to find a balance between financing traditional and new policies, addressing the almost 5% budget shortfall due to the UK's exit from the EU, creating a sufficiently ambitious basis for strengthening the EU's global ambitions and contributing to the EU's economic recovery and renewal in reaction to the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, it will be necessary to achieve the mentioned objectives in the context of budgetary constraints due to the economic impact of the pandemic. The correct setting of the EU's Multiannual Financial Framework will therefore fundamentally determine the success of the renewal and transformation of the Union.

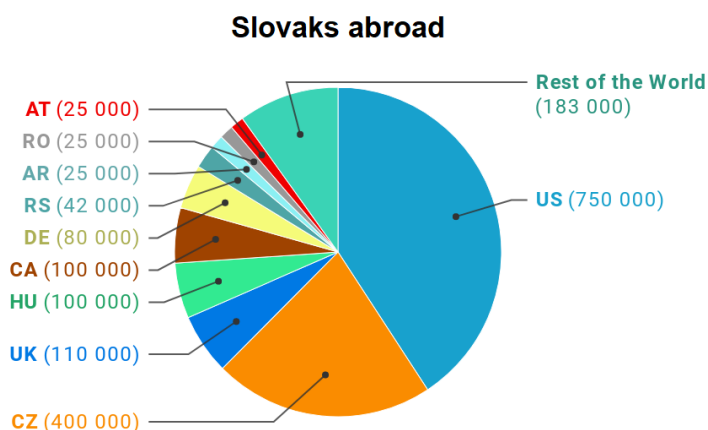
Given the specific character of European policy, which is largely a domestic agenda with a direct impact on our citizens, the Slovak government committed in its government manifesto to strengthen the system of **strategic management of European policies**, including the involvement of the highest political levels. The MFEA, as the coordinator of European affairs, will actively develop inter-ministerial coordination of European affairs. The ownership of European topics, including negotiations on European legislation, lies with the individual ministries. It is expected that the ministries will take an active approach to the European agenda in cooperation with the social stakeholders so that the Slovak Republic continues to act as a full-fledged and active member of the EU.

In order to implement the following intentions the MFEA:

- is preparing a comprehensive document with the aim of defining the position of the Slovak Republic regarding the priority topics of the European agenda for 2020. This document will be submitted to the Committee on European Affairs of the National Council of the Slovak Republic;
- will submit, in cooperation with the Ministry of Finance, a draft of the updated framework position regarding the new elements of the revised draft of the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework, including the programme for the recovery of the Union;
- will present a concept for the implementation of a National Convention on the EU as a supporting platform for the Slovak discussion in the context of the Conference on the Future of Europe.

Active promotion of the interests of the state and its citizens and support for partners abroad

Slovakia helps citizens and compatriots abroad



Source: Office for the Slovaks Living Abroad

The pandemic also changed the perception of crisis management and consular **protection of Slovak citizens**. The repatriation of citizens was the most logistically demanding, expensive and personnel-intensive crisis management operation carried out by the MFEA since the founding of the Slovak Republic. The repatriation to Slovakia of thousands of citizens from all over the world verified the setup of the ministerial crisis management system both at the headquarters and at our embassies and their cooperation with other institutions in the Slovak Republic. The primary challenge remains a further raising of the standards of consular services, including the modernization of its tools, so that they provide services even closer to citizens in terms of their accessibility and user comfort. Additional challenge will be posed by the need for a flexible response of consular services in the post-Brexit period given the large number of Slovak citizens living in the United Kingdom.

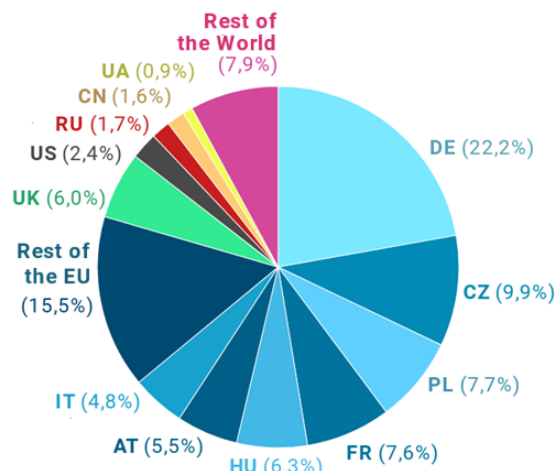
An important element of state policies is the **care for Slovaks living abroad**. Our aim is to continue to create and improve the conditions for an effective policy of the Slovak republic in this field, at all relevant levels: the legislative, institutional and financial, thus reflecting current developments in the Slovak diaspora. The main activities in this legislative period will focus on the **preparation of a new law on Slovaks living abroad**, evaluating the functioning of the Office for Slovaks Living Abroad, as well as the current activities of the Government Council for Compatriots. Along with the key priorities that will continue to include adequate financial support for compatriots and the issuing of a certificate for Slovaks living abroad, we will also focus on new forms of strengthening ties between Slovakia and Slovaks living abroad, for example, in the area of business and scientific research activities.

Slovakia doing business in the world

Slovakia has an export-oriented economy whose success is intricately linked to free trade and the inflow of foreign investment, technology and innovation. Exports of goods and services represent more than 90% of the Slovak GDP. In the first two months of 2020, prior to the pandemic, 88% of Slovak exports went to OECD countries, 80% to the EU and 30% to five neighbouring countries.

The main task of **economic diplomacy** in 2020 will be to support the fastest possible recovery of the Slovak economy and to overcome the crisis caused by the pandemic. The MFEA will coordinate Slovakia's activities within the EU and other cooperation formats (OECD, V4) and continue to deepen cooperation in the EU's internal market and support the restoration of its full potential. We will actively participate in shaping the negotiation mandates of the European Commission so that they reflect the interests of the Slovak Republic. The MFEA will use Slovakia's membership in

Slovak exports by destination, Jan.-Feb. 2020



Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

international economic organizations and its activities in multilateral economic forums to shape new global and regional policies and create a favourable global environment for multilateral economic cooperation. We will use the expertise of the OECD to identify and monitor new developing trends in cross-cutting sectoral policies and their subsequent transformation into better policy-making at the national level. We will support steps aiming at reform of the WTO, which will enable it to adapt to the challenges of the present. We will pay special attention to the unused potential of economic and technological cooperation with the USA, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea and Israel. An important part of the focus of Slovak economic diplomacy will be the territories close to the EU, especially those in the Balkans. In our effort to diversify foreign trade, we will pursue opportunities to enter markets in Asia, Africa and Latin America, by using also the potential of development cooperation. The MFEA will monitor developments within the Three Seas Initiative (3SI) and the 17 + 1 Format, which create opportunities for cooperation, e.g. in infrastructure projects.

The current crisis may also provide an impetus for **transformation of the economy**. Intensive communication with the business and science sectors will therefore be a key part of economic diplomacy. In addition to traditional priorities, such as export diversification, internationalization of Slovak companies and support for the inflow of foreign direct investment, economic diplomacy will focus on new challenges associated with innovation in synergy with the green and digital transformation. Our engagement in international cooperation related to the use of modern technologies that reduce energy, environmental, material and emission demands, which will be also instrumental in the transition to a climate-neutral and green circular economy during the recovery of industries after the current crisis, is not only a necessity but also a great opportunity for Slovakia. We will focus on perspective areas, such as health care, biotechnology, green technologies, data, artificial intelligence, autonomous technologies, intelligent systems, new materials and blockchain. With the aim of effectively using the research and innovation potential of Slovakia, the MFEA will support the cooperation of Slovak and foreign subjects in business perspective areas and to support mapping Slovakia's research and innovation potential. A part of this effort is the **global battle for talent**. Following the stabilization of the pandemic situation, we will contribute to this effort, inter alia, by another phase of expanding outsourcing in data collection and Schengen visas applications

in order to stimulate the mobility of foreigners to the Slovak Republic in the areas of tourism, investment and trade.

Energy security will also remain at the centre of the ministry's focus as a primary prerequisite for favourable economic development of the country.

The MFEA will strengthen the **synergy of joint operation and coordination of foreign economic activities** with close professional cooperation of all involved ministries, primarily the Ministry of Economy. We will carry out an audit of cooperation with ministries and institutions active in the field of economic diplomacy. We will assess the existing network of economic diplomacy and its focus, including innovative forms of performing its mission. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, in cooperation with the Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic, will propose to replace the Government Council for Export and Investment Support with another, less administratively demanding, more efficient and interactive platform and it will invite, the Ministry of Investment, Regional Development and Informatization of the Slovak Republic and other relevant ministries to cooperate within its activities.

Slovakia is helping the world

Development cooperation and humanitarian assistance have gained a new dimension in the current context. The Slovak Republic supports the international community in combating the pandemic and alleviating its serious consequences, and also efforts in the area of prevention. Slovakia has flexibly redirected available resources to help the countries most affected by the pandemic by providing humanitarian aid to the health sector. Together with other EU countries, Slovakia promptly assisted in the Western Balkans and the countries of the Eastern Partnership, particularly in Ukraine, as well as in Africa. The pandemic will also affect the development cooperation in the medium and long term. Slovakia is focusing on helping countries in their efforts to mitigate the socioeconomic and environmental impacts of the pandemic through the use of innovative Slovak solutions applicable in the fight against COVID-19.

Humanitarian aid provided by the Slovak Republic in fight against COVID-19 as of 25 May 2020		
Country	Aid provided	Type of humanitarian aid provided
Montenegro	30 000 EUR	Financial humanitarian aid for the purchase of medical equipment and supplies for two hospitals
Serbia	50 000 EUR	Financial humanitarian aid for the purchase of medical equipment and supplies for one hospital
Moldova	50 000 EUR	Financial humanitarian aid for the purchase of medical equipment and supplies for five hospitals
Ukraine	186 600 EUR	Delivery of medical equipment and supplies and three used emergency medical vehicles
Italy	317 000 EUR	Delivery of medical supplies
Ukraine, Serbia, Ethiopia	298 100 EUR	Call for projects in the field of health
Moldova, Kenya, Georgia, North Macedonia, Ukraine, Kosovo*, Bhutan, Lebanon, Serbia, Ethiopia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iraq	309 100 EUR	Financial contributions provided through Slovak embassies (so-called microgrants) <i>* In line with UNSC Resolution 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence</i>

Slovakia's official development assistance will continue to be a full-fledged tool of our foreign policy and will help to meet its goals. Its implementation will be based on the Medium-Term Strategy for Development Assistance of the Slovak Republic for 2019-2023 and the Bilateral Development Cooperation Guidelines of the Slovak Republic for 2020. The decisive elements for raising the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of the development cooperation system will be the recommendations of OECD Development Assistance Committee. Our goal remains to gradually meet the international commitment of **achieving a 0.33% share of official developmental assistance** (ODA) in gross national income by 2030. In this context, we will also place emphasis on mobilizing private resources and intensifying the involvement of private sector, along with the annual increase in budgetary resources for development cooperation and humanitarian aid. The ongoing task is to increase public awareness of the importance of development cooperation and the visibility of SlovakAid's work both at home and abroad. The MFEA will be assisted in this effort by a long-term partnership with the civic sector. An essential prerequisite for improving the quality of the system of development cooperation is also strengthening the capacities of the Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation and the internal capacities of the MFEA. On the global level, Slovakia will enter into partnerships with other donors, including cooperation with EU institutions within the V4 or the Slavkov formats. We will also focus on effective partnerships with selected international development organizations with the aim of sharing Slovak transformation experience and involving Slovak subjects in the activities of organizations where appropriate.

Slovakia presents itself

A key area of communication of the strategic priorities of foreign and European policy is **strategic communication**, which responds to challenges in the area of dynamic development of new means of spreading information, including targeted disinformation campaigns. Aside from continuing to communicate the priorities and values of the Slovak foreign policy to the public, the MFEA will emphasize the active engagement of state authorities and civil society in joint strategic communication and will strengthen the coordination with like-minded international partners.

Cultural diplomacy plays an important role in building the image of the Slovak Republic abroad. The targeted presentation of Slovak culture and art helps to create a favourable climate for better knowledge and understanding in bilateral relations, thereby achieving foreign policy goals. It is necessary to focus particularly on improving the strategic planning of cultural diplomacy and strengthening the coordination of financial resources for its implementation, in which the MFEA wants to cooperate even more intensively with the Ministry of Culture. Successful cultural diplomacy is not possible without adequate financial resources. We will prepare a strategy of cultural diplomacy that will be the starting point for the preparation of annual framework priorities for the presentation of Slovak art and culture abroad. The pandemic has also brought to the forefront new forms of presentation of art and culture, when Slovak institutes moved their activities into the digital space. At the same time, we believe in returning to traditional forms of presentation of culture and art. We will seek opportunities for engaging in cultural and artistic events with a greater outreach. In 2020, we will also start preparing a flagship project with strong visibility abroad. Cultural diplomacy works in synergy with **public diplomacy**, which communicates with the public by means of project presentations and events. This dialogue will be supported by cooperation with

the non-governmental sector. Anniversaries of significant historical events represent important potential for highlighting the foreign policy priorities and values of the Slovak Republic in both foreign and domestic audiences. In 2020, the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, the 75th anniversary of the founding of the UN, the 140th anniversary of the birth of Milan Rastislav Štefánik and the 20th anniversary of Slovakia's accession to the OECD are just such opportunities. Alongside traditional forms of communication, activities with multimedia content will be more focused on the digital space and social networks. Such a contribution to building a positive perception of Slovakia abroad will be implemented in accordance with the national branding strategy.

In order to realize the following intentions, the MFEA will:

- prepare Economic Diplomacy Guidelines for the period of 2021 - 2025
- perform an audit of the capacities and processes for crisis management in the conditions of the MFEAelaborate, in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture, a short-term (1-3 year) and medium-term (3-5 year) strategy of cultural diplomacy
- initiate the founding of support structures for state coordination of strategic communication with the aim of unified communication of the foreign policies of the Slovak Republic
- prepare a pilot project of cooperation with the so-called new diaspora and professionals working abroad and launch the preparation of a Concept for State Policy of Care for Slovaks Living Abroad for the years 2021 - 2025 and a new Law on Slovaks Living Abroad

KEY INTERNATIONAL EVENTS IN 2020 - OVERVIEW (June-December)

EUROPEAN AFFAIRS		
EU post-crisis recovery	Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027 and the new recovery instrument Next Generation EU	Reaching an agreement by the end of 2020
Future of the EU	Conference on the Future of Europe	To be launched in autumn 2020; duration 2 years
Brexit	Transition Period to secure an agreement on the future EU-UK partnership	Expires on December 31. 2020
The European Green Deal (EGD)	The European Commission (EC) will publish another 17 measures <i>EGD published on 11 Dec 2019</i>	By the end of 2020
Digitalisation	Revision of the Directive on security of network and information systems (NIS); <i>EC published the 5G toolbox on 29 Jan 2020</i>	Q4 2020
	Implementation of 5G (5G spectrum auctions)	Scheduled until June 30. 2020, possible postponement until Dec. 31. 2020
Rule of Law	Launch of the 2020 Rule of Law Report	September 2020
Migration	A New Pact on Migration and Asylum	Tabled in the first half of 2020; final agreement by the end of 2020
TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS		
NATO	NATO reflection process	Results to be presented at the 2021 NATO Summit
USA	United States presidential election	November 3, 2020
GLOBAL ISSUES		
China	22. EU – China Summit	June 2020
	EU – China Summit; adoption of the EU-China Strategic Agenda for Cooperation	September 14, 2020 (Leipzig, Germany) -tbc
Africa	EU – Africa ministerial meeting	September 2020 (tbc)
	EU – AU Summit EU Africa Strategy	October 2020 2. half 2020
Arms Control	Open Skies Treaty	US withdrawal – Nov. 2020
	Negotiations on the extension of the New START Treaty	Treaty expires on Feb 5, 2021

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENTS		
V4	Summit of V4 Prime Ministers, Lednice, Czech Republic	June 11, 2020
	Polish presidency of the V4	July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021
	The first summit of the Presidency	July 3, 2020
	Declaration on the 20. Anniversary of the International Visegrad Fund	June 2020
	Declaration on the 30. Anniversary of the V4	January 2021
Slavkov format (S3)	Beginning of the Austrian presidency; Planned meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of S3 and France	July 1, 2020 tbc
Eastern Partnership (EaP)	Creation of the EaP Summit Declaration on long-term goals beyond 2020	Autumn 2020
Western Balkans	Negotiation mandates for AL and MK	June 2020
	Annual Enlargement Package	Autumn 2020
	Western Balkans Economic and Investment Plan	Autumn 2020
Ukraine	Summit EU - Ukraine	June/July 2020 (tbc)
MULTILATERALISM		
UN	UN General Assembly 75 th Session, Political Declaration adopted at the UN's 75th anniversary	September 2020
G7	Summit hosted by the USA	2020 (tbc)
G20	G20 Leaders' Summit, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia	November 21-22, 2020
OSCE	2020 OSCE Asian Conference – Slovak Chairmanship	By the end of 2020, to be held in South Korea
PEACE PROCESS		
Ukraine	Normandy 4 Summit	tbc
Syria	Geneva Talks	June/July 2020 (tbc)
Libya	Berlin II Talks	tbc
MEPP	Question of partial annexation of the West Bank	After July 1, 2020
	International Peace Conference	tbc, to be held in Geneva
Peace Building	Paris Peace Forum	November 2020
ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY		
OECD	Ministerial Council Meeting	Preliminary scheduled to October 2020
	Selection of new OECD SG	New SG will take office on June 1, 2021
WTO	Selection of new WTO SG	New SG will take office on Sep 1, 2020
Three Seas Initiative	Tallinn Summit	October 18-19, 2020
17 + 1 Format	9. Summit	Autumn 2020 (tbc)