



**YEARBOOK
OF SLOVAKIA'S
FOREIGN POLICY
2018**

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



BRATISLAVA 2019

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MINISTRY
OF FOREIGN
AND EUROPEAN AFFAIRS
OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

THE YEARBOOK IS PUBLISHED WITH THE KIND
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NOT A PARTICULARLY EXCELLENT YEAR

MIROSLAV LAJČÁK

Now that we live in an age dominated by slogans, rather than arguments, it would be fitting to begin this Yearbook introduction with a short motto. However, it is impossible to characterize a whole year in international affairs in one word. Or even in one sentence. Especially a year such as 2018 was.

In Slovakia 2018 was a year of anniversaries that reminded us of the roots of our statehood as well as the events that undermined it in the course of the twentieth century.

But it was also a year in which a terrible crime reminded us about the strange power of the fateful “8” in our nation’s history and led to civic mobilization. Many important questions about our society were raised.

In international affairs one could describe 2018 as a year in which we went one step forward and two steps backwards. As if a strange uneasiness permeated the whole system of international affairs, dominated by a lack of trust not only in each other, but also in the rules and institutions that we have jointly created to govern international affairs.

Most of us know and understand, or at least instinctively feel, that in an increasingly interconnected world we need to work together to resolve common problems. Yet, we have seen more and more tendencies towards unilateralism, separatism or nationalism.

We all know that conflict prevention is better and more effective than conflict resolution. Yet international politics has recently been predominantly in reaction mode.

Whilst most of us value the rule of law, we have seen numerous instances of the selective application and interpretation of international law, and sometimes its outright violation.

While, from a global perspective, we still live in one of the more peaceful eras of human history, it is sad to see the disarmament regime gradually falling apart and chemical weapons used not only in war-torn Syria, but also on the streets of the United Kingdom.

Paradoxically, if there was one thing that improved significantly last year, it was the economy. Economic performance was booming, unemployment falling. Therefore we cannot even blame this bad mood in international affairs on an economic or financial crisis.

Yet, the unease was there. We suppressed Islamic State to a large extent, but we have been unable to resolve the conflicts in Syria, Yemen or Ukraine. The peace process in the Middle East has stalled. While the situation in North Korea calmed down a bit, one cannot say we have moved significantly forward in 2018, and in Iran, the prospects for a resolution seem even more distant now than a year ago.

To avoid complacency, we should admit it was not a particularly excellent year in Slovakia either. It was a year when our long-term foreign policy consensus seemed a bit shaky. But the reality is clear. The three main pillars of our foreign policy: firm attachment to the EU, security based on NATO membership and strong support for effective multilateralism, have absolutely no viable alternative.

TRIPLE OPPORTUNITY AND TRIPLE RESPONSIBILITY

From the Slovak foreign policy viewpoint it was a year of triple responsibility and triple opportunity – regionally, continentally and globally: in 2018 I had the honour of presiding over the UN General Assembly, we gradually took over the responsibilities associated with our upcoming OSCE presidency and we began our V4 presidency.

As the UNGA President I witnessed the short-termism becoming dominant in political considerations. I tried to counterbalance this trend by focusing on longer term priorities such as peacebuilding, conflict prevention and sustainable development. At all times, and in every aspect of these efforts, I tried to focus on people. Their lives and destinies.

This human-centric approach will be also at the centre of our OSCE presidency efforts, because while conflicts take place between states, nations and nowadays even non-state entities, the victims are always real individuals, their families and communities.

Sadly, in the EU we did not have a particularly good year either. Much of our time has been devoted to the management of Brexit, which unfortunately took a lot of our attention away from substantial issues. Issues such as adjusting our Union to the needs of the digital era, instability in our neighborhood, our common foreign policy course and many more. Instead we spent a lot of time and effort on damage control. Nevertheless, I believe Slovakia was a constructive player in this effort, as we were motivated by two key principles: protecting the interests of Slovakia and the EU, while trying to keep the UK reasonably close to the Union.

In the EU we have been a firm supporter of the euro, including the measures aimed at strengthening the EMU. Likewise, we were staunch supporters of measures aimed at the completion of the internal market, including its expansion into the digital area.

We were equally supportive of Schengen. We are fully aware of the humanitarian, economic, security and political challenges of migration and the objective need to better secure the Schengen borders. But we must find answers to this challenge without sacrificing free movement – one of the bedrocks of our common project.

The situation in NATO also had its ups and downs, but the Brussels summit has reinforced our determination to work together and reconfirmed our commitments made in Wales and Warsaw. As for Slovakia, we even used our budgetary consolidation to step-up our efforts. According to the current budgetary plan, our defence spending should reach 1.73 per cent of GDP in 2019, instead of the originally planned 1.6 per cent in 2020. We remain committed to our obligations on the ground as well – we continued our activities in Iraq and Afghanistan and sent our troops to NATO's enhanced forward presence in the Baltics.

While in our neighborhood we may have different opinions on some issues, we managed to keep our communication channels wide open, which in turn helped us to proceed in our three-layered V4 Presidency approach: promoting unity wherever possible, offering solutions where beneficial, respecting differences where necessary. Our motivation remains threefold – we want to maintain the high standard of our neighborly relations, implement projects aimed at improving the security, prosperity and wellbeing of our citizens and, last but not least, to be part of solutions in the EU, rather than part of its problems.

The key challenge in our neighborhood remained Ukraine – our biggest neighbor facing the biggest challenges. Ukraine is unfortunately not an exception; rather it is an expression of a wider pattern in our eastern neighborhood. The sad truth is that with the 10th anniversary of the Eastern Partnership project approaching, there are not many signs of stabilization in the region. Five out of the six eastern partners are affected by some kind of conflict and the sixth one has been through a bumpy relationship with the EU during the last decade. It is therefore urgent we use the Eastern Partnership's 10th anniversary to rethink our future relationship and come up with innovative suggestions.

At the same time, looking eastwards, there is at least one certainty. While we do not have to agree with all the words and deeds coming from Moscow, one thing is clear – we cannot resolve the situation in Eastern Europe, its numerous conflicts and its future, without Russia. Dialogue with Moscow must remain part of our toolbox.

The year 2019 promises to be a unique opportunity for the Slovak foreign service – besides our traditional political and economic support for the region, we will have one more significant tool in our hands – the OSCE presidency. We want to seize this opportunity and do our utmost to bring about change. At the same time, we are fully aware that no international effort can replace one crucial ingredient – the political will and determination of local leaders. Nevertheless, even if progress is limited, we cannot give up on our duties. The civilians affected by conflicts need and deserve our support. That is why we have put ordinary people and their living conditions at the centre of our attention.

Regarding local ownership and leadership, we were encouraged in 2018 by the exceptional political courage and determination that brought about a long-awaited breakthrough in another traditional priority area of our foreign policy. The resolution of the Macedonian name issue has brought a glimmer of hope to the region of the Western Balkans, where we have been present with our diplomatic support, develop-

ment aid, peacekeepers, reform advice, transformation, integration assistance and more. While we note with regret that an equal level of determination and courage is missing in some other parts of this region, we will remain present and committed, because we believe that the stabilization and integration of the Western Balkans is key to its peace and prosperity and a crucial element in making the whole of Europe a stronger and safer place.

While conflicts, tensions and international disputes dominated the headlines, our diplomatic work was also focused on many less visible, but equally important areas that have a tangible impact in everyday life.

Our development aid and humanitarian assistance have been making further progress in close cooperation with OECD DAC. *SlovakAid* has made a difference in many places in Europe, Asia and Africa. In order to improve our performance in this field, we elaborated a new strategic framework for development aid and humanitarian assistance in 2018 and a new dimension of our activities has been accomplished by signing our first ever development cooperation partnership – with USAID in November 2018.

Responding to the needs of our citizens living, working, studying and traveling abroad, we have been constantly striving to improve the assistance we provide them. Both through our consular services as well as by reforming our crisis management. At headquarters and at our embassies and consulates. As a result, tens of thousands of our citizens received administrative support or urgent help when in need.

Economic diplomacy was an integral part of our economic success last year. Many entrepreneurs, businesses, investors and traders benefited from support and advice provided by our network of economic diplomats. Numerous business delegations forged new trade links both in Slovakia and abroad. The need to explore new avenues in the field of innovation was reflected in the adoption of a pilot project as part of institutionalizing Slovak innovation diplomacy. Being selected to chair the OECD Council in 2019 is evidence of Slovakia's active engagement in economic diplomacy.

Last but not least, special attention was paid to Slovaks living abroad, especially in this year of anniversaries and the many celebrations and commemorations highlighting and strengthening the sense our expat communities have of belonging to our big Slovak family.

WHAT NEXT?

The year 2019 again brings Slovakia a trio of opportunities and responsibilities – in our chairmanships of the OSCE, OECD and the V4. We will do our utmost to fulfil the expectations of our foreign partners who have vested their trust in our diplomatic skills.

Likewise, we will do our best to fulfil the legitimate expectations our citizens and entrepreneurs have when they explore opportunities abroad and seek our assistance in their endeavours.

The international environment will most likely remain fragile and uncertain. One thing is certain though. It will be a special year again, in which we will celebrate the 30th anniversary of our Velvet Revolution and 15th anniversary of joining the EU and NATO.

There is no magic wand or universal recipe for bringing back the optimism and euphoria of those days. All we can probably aspire to next year is hard, patient and diligent work.

Common sense would dictate that we should get back to basics. Start adhering again to the rules and institutional mechanisms we created to guide us in uncertain times. But they can only be effective insofar as we are willing to respect them. Respecting the rules is the key ingredient missing in our current world of unpredictability.

Let's use 2019 to promote multilateralism, regain trust and together improve the mood in international affairs.

I.

THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC
IN THE INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

SLOVAKIA'S EU POLICY IN 2018: BALANCING CORE AND PERIPHERY

ZUZANA GABRIŽOVÁ

True to the tradition that the notable years in Slovakia's history end in the number "eight,"¹ 2018 will also likely be remembered as a significant moment in the country's modern political development. It tested Slovakia's resilience as a country that likes to consider itself as part of the EU's core – both today and in the future. Several decisions solidified Slovakia's position in the core in 2017. One was active participation in the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) in security and defense, while the other was involvement in enhanced cooperation under the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO). However, profound internal challenges were laid bare in early 2018. First of all, the wide-ranging repercussions of the murders of investigative journalist Ján Kuciak and his fiancée Martina Kušnírová showed the failings of state institutions in a new light or rather placed them in the international limelight. Meanwhile, the foreign policy consensus and geopolitical orientation of the governing coalition continued to disintegrate. The political state of play in the Visegrad group countries, especially in Hungary and Poland, further complicated the situation for EU policymakers in Slovakia and the aim to position the region as a constructive player in debates on the future of the EU.

¹ 1918, 1938, 1948, 1968.

REALITY CHECK: SLOVAKIA UNDER EU SCRUTINY

In 2018, Slovakia became the subject of intense European scrutiny, especially in the European Parliament, comparable only to that of the era of former prime minister Vladimír Mečiar. The level of attention was also reminiscent of the moments when the fate of the euro area was at stake owing to the Slovak parliamentary vote of 2011. The murder of Jan Kuciak affected politics, civic life and public opinion in Slovakia. Information directly or indirectly linked to the investigation brought to light the extent of associations between politicians and oligarchs and organized crime. They also spoke volumes on how the influence of oligarchs and politicians over the state law enforcement authorities has provided them with long-term impunity as a systemic default. What followed were the biggest demonstrations in Slovak cities since 1989. Public pressure resulted in a government reshuffle with President Andrej Kiska strongly influencing this process. This did not take place without considerable pushback, with then Prime Minister Robert Fico (Smer-SD) insinuating that President Andrej Kiska had coordinated his criticisms and pressure on the government in the wake of the events with the known financier George Soros. The eventual resignation of Robert Fico (Smer-SD) was preceded by interior minister Robert Kaliňák (Smer-SD) announcing his resignation. Peter Pellegrini took over as the new prime minister. Several weeks and two new interior ministers later, even the police president Tibor Gašpar had left his post. Although these and other developments seemed to be mainly of a domestic nature – they did have a strong European dimension.

Firstly, the murders were strongly perceived in connection with the violent death of Daphne Ceruana Galizia, the Maltese investigative journalist killed in 2017. They demonstrated that the EU can be a place where journalists die while doing their job. Secondly, they drew attention to the content of Ján Kuciak's work, including on a scheme to divert EU agricultural subsidies to the Italian mafia and local political figures, most notably in eastern Slovakia. Thirdly, they showed that shortcomings in the rule of law may be rather less obvious and go unnoticed for longer in some member states than is the case in Poland and Hungary.

As a result, several European parliament monitoring missions visited Slovakia in the course of the year. The first arrived in March, composed of members of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) and the Committee for Budgetary Control (CONT). The delegation led by Ingeborg Gräßle (CONT, EPP) and Claude Moraes (LIBE, S&D) met with a wide range of Slovak officials, who would soon lose their positions, as well as with journalists and NGO representatives. Their findings were put in a report² that was debated in the EP plenary in April. The EP resolution ultimately adopted asked for an international investigative team to work on the death of Ján Kuciak as a matter of urgency.³ This added to the pressure to involve Europol

² "Report on the ad hoc delegation to Slovakia," European Parliament, March 7–9, 2018. Available online: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/140001/Ad%20hoc%20delegation%20to%20Slovakia_report_20180313.pdf (accessed on March 9, 2019).

³ Z. Gabrižová, "Rezolúcia o Slovensku: Európsky parlament „dôrazne odporúča“ medzinárodný vyšetrovací tím," [Resolution on Slovakia: EP strongly recommends international investigation team] *euractiv.sk*, April 16, 2018. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/buducnost-eu/news/rezolucia-o-slovensku-europsky-parlament-dorazne-odporuca-medzinarodny-vysetrovaci-tim/> (accessed on March 9, 2019).

in investigating the murders, which ultimately proved to be very useful in providing analytical and forensic support⁴.

The attention Slovakia was getting in the European Parliament escalated at the political level as well. When the leader of the European People's Party group in the EP, Manfred Weber, demanded that interior minister Robert Kaliňák be removed from office, Slovak MEPs from Smer-SD insinuated that this was political "revenge for Fico's rejection of the refugee allocation quota and his frequent criticism of the EU."⁵ They were clearly speaking to the domestic audience, in much the same way the Fidesz government does whenever it is being challenged at the EU level. Smer-SD MEPs also tried to downplay some of the conclusions from the mission during the European Parliament debate. But besides these rather inconsequential fall-outs, there were several EU policy implications.

Firstly, there was the issue of whether Slovakia's institutions are fit for more intense cooperation on the EU level. Unsurprisingly, law enforcement was identified by the MEPs as the major problem in Slovakia with no high-profile convictions in corruption cases. MEPs also asked about the problem of fraud regarding agricultural subsidies and decided it deserved further looking into. One of the main observations of the EP monitoring mission was that there is a high level of citizen mistrust of state institutions, including the judiciary, police and prosecutors. This could complicate Slovakia's participation in the EPPO, especially when it comes to nominations for this new decentralized body. "Members have raised the perception of the public on the independence of justice system, and in particular the importance of the independence of investigation and prosecution also from the perspective of the selection process for the nominations for EPPO,"⁶ the report reads. The standards of independence and moral integrity required for these nominations to go through at the EU level, where the final decision is made, are very high.

The second implication is that the Slovak case highlighted the need for pan-EU protection of whistle-blowers, who often serve as a source of information for investigative journalists. The relevant legislation has been amended in light of the events in Malta and Slovakia. The argument that investigative journalists themselves need protection equivalent to that for whistle-blowers has also gained relevance. In June, a special monitoring group for the rule of law (ROLMG) was formed under the leadership of MEP Sophie in 't Veld (ALDE). In July a hearing on the protection of journalists was organized by parliament's LIBE Committee.⁷ The participants noted that journalists

⁴ "Saková ocenila 11 zamestnancov Europolu vyšetrojúcich vraždu Jána Kuciaka," [Saková rewarded 11 Europol employees investigating Jan Kuciak's murder] *aktuality.sk*, October 25, 2018. Available online: <https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/635893/sakova-ocenila-11-zamestnancov-europolu-vysetrucich-vrazdu-jana-kuciaka/> (accessed on March 9, 2019)

⁵ Z. Gabrižová, "Smer-SD vidí za kritikou z europarlamentu odplatu za kvóty," [Smer-SD sees revenge for quotas behind the criticism] *euractiv.sk*, March 12, 2018. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/spolocnost/news/smer-vidi-za-kritikou-z-europarlamentu-odplatu-za-kvoty/> (accessed on March 9, 2019)

⁶ "Report on the ad hoc delegation to Slovakia," *op. cit.*

⁷ P. Szalai, "Čelíme nevidanému únosu štátu, povedala novinárka Holcová europoslancom," [We are facing unprecedented state capture, journalist Holcová told MEPs] *euractiv.sk*, July 17, 2018. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/spolocnost/news/celime-nevidanemu-unosu-statu-povedala-novinarka-holcova-europoslancom/> (accessed on March 9, 2019).

often substituted for state institutions in uncovering corruption. On the other hand, they believe solutions lie at the national level, and EU expectations regarding their protection are moderate as its competences in this area are rather weak.

Adding to the already tainted image of Slovakia's state institutions was the media coverage of the alleged Slovak collusion in the abduction of a Vietnamese citizen. According to the German authorities, the Vietnamese secret service kidnapped Trinh Xuan Thanh from Germany and borrowed a Slovak government plane to transport him from Bratislava to Moscow. The case also received international publicity and exacerbated the image of serious failings by the state authorities of an EU member state. The abduction also caught the attention of the follow-up mission of the LIBE Committee in September. The MEPs concluded that Slovak democracy was resilient⁸ and that a genuine effort was being made to investigate the murders. The situation in Slovakia did not call for the Article 7 (TEU) procedure to be launched, said in 't Veld. But she did raise serious concerns regarding the revolving door policy that saw Tibor Gašpar become an advisor to the minister of interior. The last EP visit was a delegation from the CONT Committee in December that looked in detail into the allegations made by Slovak farmers in eastern Slovakia and into the procedures of the Slovak Agricultural Payment Agency (PPA). The delegation put forward a series of recommendations⁹ and some of the documentation acquired in the process by MEPs was forwarded to OLAF for further investigation.

VISEGRAD FOR EUROPE. TOO DYNAMIC?

While clearly Slovakia and even the Czech Republic have problems regarding the overlap between politics, business and crime, Hungary and Poland were perceived as states where there is a substantial and more negative systemic transformation underway based on ideology and/or power. This was accompanied by Warsaw and Budapest taking specific positions on the EU and the way it should be governed which do not always align with those of Slovakia. This posed a clear¹⁰ challenge to Slovakia when it assumed the V4 Presidency starting in July 2018 under the motto Dynamic Visegrad for Europe.

The ambition of the Slovak V4 Presidency was "to achieve a consensus in matters which we can jointly promote in a better way at European level" and (...) "respect-

⁸ P. Szalai, "Europoslanci: Slovensko sa snaží, nebudeme žiadať sankcie," [MEPs: Slovakia is trying hard, we will not ask for sanctions] *euractiv.sk*, September 19, 2018. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/spolocnost/news/europoslanci-slovensko-sa-snazí-nebudeme-ziadat-sankcie/> (accessed on March 9, 2019).

⁹ "Draft report on the fact-finding mission to Slovakia, December 17–19, 2018," European Parliament, January 22, 2019. Available online: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2014_2019/plmrep/COMMITTEES/CONT/DV/2019/01-28/Slovakia_EN.pdf (accessed on March 9, 2019).

¹⁰ Z. Gabrižová, "Štátny tajomník Ružička: Pýtame sa Poľska aj na citlivé otázky," [State Secretary Ružička: We ask Poland sensitive questions as well] *euractiv.sk*, October 24, 2018. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/vonkajsie-vztahy/interview/statny-tajomnik-ruzicka-pytame-sa-polska-aj-na-citlive-otazky/> (accessed on March 9, 2019).

ing differences where it is necessary.”¹¹ Within the EU context this should translate into active participation in the discussions on the future of the EU, with the aim of “strengthening, not weakening the EU (...) and preventing the creation of dividing lines within the EU.” The program foresaw an active role in the discussions on key EU policies: institutional agreements, MFF, future of sectoral policies, Brexit and post-Brexit arrangements, and strong positions on cohesion policy and Common Agricultural Policy.

Slovakia did its best not to take positions on the rule of law debates that Poland and later Hungary had with the EU institutions. At the beginning of February 2018, Robert Fico downplayed the problems in Poland as mere “differing opinions on the organization of justice.” On the same subject he asked rhetorically whether it was “democratic that Spanish police kick a woman and pull her by her hair,” hinting at the incidences in Catalonia relating to the independence referendum.¹²

Procedures under Article 7 (TEU) are ongoing against Poland. There have been several hearings regarding Poland at the General Affairs Council on the changes to the judicial system, but no vote has taken place as to whether this situation constitutes a “clear risk of a serious breach by a member state of the values referred to in Article 2”. In its national position Slovakia repeatedly advocated the “continuation of dialogue,” rather than sanctions, and referred to unspecified progress¹³ achieved so far – an assessment which did not correspond to the view of the European Commission and statements by Commissioner Frans Timmermans who has been more skeptical¹⁴. Slovakia argued that it wanted to “build bridges” and “avoid the impression of double standards being applied, as this weakens the EU.”¹⁵ When the European Parliament launched the Article 7 procedure against Hungary by adopt-

¹¹ “Dynamic Visegrad For Europe. Slovak Presidency of the Visegrad Group,” Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, 2018 Available online: <https://www.mzv.sk/documents/10182/276214/Program+predsedn%C3%ADctva+Slovenskej+republiky+vo+Vyšehradskej+skupine+EN/ba84a58e-6b6a-4ad4-bdd0-3043d687c95b> (accessed on March 9, 2019).

¹² Z. Gabrižová, “Ak príde z EÚ menej peňazí, Fico chce viac voľnosti,” [If there is less money coming from the EU, Fico wants more flexibility] *euractiv.sk*, February 23, 2018. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/buducnost-eu/news/ak-pride-z-eu-menej-penazi-fico-chce-viac-volnosti/> (accessed on March 9, 2019).

¹³ “LP/2018/79 Návrh riadneho predbežného stanoviska k návrhu rozhodnutia Rady o určení jasného rizika vážneho porušenia zásad právneho štátu zo strany Poľskej republiky,” [Draft preliminary position on the draft decision of the Council to determine a clear risk to the rule of law in Poland] *Slov-lex*, 2018. Available online: <https://www.slov-lex.sk/legislativne-procesy/-/SK/dokumenty/LP-2018-79> (accessed on March 9, 2019)

¹⁴ Z. Gabrižová, “Ministri EÚ mali hriung k Poľsku. Bez záveru,” [EU ministers held a hearing on Poland, with no conclusions] *euractiv.sk*, September 19, 2018. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/buducnost-eu/news/ministri-eu-mali-hiring-k-polsku-bez-zaveru/> (accessed on March 9, 2019).

¹⁵ Z. Gabrižová, “Štátny tajomník Ružička: Pýtame sa Poľska aj na citlivé otázky,” [State Secretary Ružička: We ask Poland sensitive questions as well] *euractiv.sk*, October 24, 2018. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/vonkajsie-vztahy/interview/statny-tajomnik-ruzicka-pytame-sa-polska-aj-na-citlive-otazky/> (accessed on March 9, 2019).

ing the report by MEP Judith Sargentini,¹⁶ Slovakia opted for a similar approach as it had in the Polish case.¹⁷

In October, Andrej Danko, Speaker of the Parliament and leader of the junior coalition party, the Slovak National Party (SNS), proposed¹⁸ a parliamentary resolution in support of Poland and Hungary, which materialized in early 2019. The wording was broadly in line with the official position which the Slovak Republic had presented to the Council during discussions on triggering Article 7 in relation to both countries. In Hungary's case, the official position also noted that Hungary had questioned the legality of the vote in the European parliament.¹⁹ More significant than the actual wording of the resolution were Andrej Danko's comments of vocal support for the governments in Hungary and Poland, especially when he said that "the path Poland and Hungary have chosen is also a path for Slovakia."²⁰

CRACKS IN FOREIGN POLICY ORIENTATION DEEPEN

In 2018, the challenges to Slovakia's geopolitical orientation did not diminish in the domestic discourse; rather, they became more pronounced. "The biggest problem with Slovak foreign policy is that its basic orientation is not anchored in the minds of political leaders,"²¹ said the Slovak Foreign Policy Association (SFPA) director Alexander Duleba at the annual foreign policy review conference.

¹⁶ "Report on a proposal calling on the Council to determine, pursuant to Article 7(1) of the Treaty on European Union, the existence of a clear risk of a serious breach by Hungary of the values on which the Union is founded (2017/2131(INL))," European Parliament, 2018. Available online: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-8-2018-0250_EN.html (accessed on March 9, 2019).

¹⁷ "LP/2018/744 Riadne predbežné stanovisko k návrhu rozhodnutia Rady o určení podľa článku 7 ods. 1 Zmluvy o Európskej únii, že existuje jasné riziko vážneho porušenia hodnôt, na ktorých je Únia založená, zo strany Maďarska," [Preliminary position on the draft decision of the Council to determine, pursuant to Article 7(1) of the Treaty on European Union, the existence of a clear risk of a serious breach by Hungary of the values on which the Union is founded] *Slov-lex*, 2018. Available online: <https://www.slov-lex.sk/legislativne-procesy/SK/LP/2018/744> (accessed on March 9, 2019)

¹⁸ "Danko zvažuje parlamentnú rezolúciu, ktorá by označila použitie článku 7 za chybu," [Danko is contemplating a parliamentary resolution that would deem the use of Article 7 a mistake] *euractiv.sk*, October 15, 2018. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/buducnost-eu/news/danko-zvazuje-parlamentnu-rezoluciu-oznacujuucu-pouzitie-clanku-7-za-chybne/> (accessed on March 9, 2019).

¹⁹ The position failed to mention that an analysis by the EP's legal services had deemed the vote legal. The issue is now up to the Court of Justice of the EU to decide.

²⁰ Z. Gabrižová, "Pellegrini nevidí problém v Dankovom uznesení k článku 7," [Pellegrini does not see a problem with Danko's resolution on article 7] *euractiv.sk*, October 19, 2018. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/buducnost-eu/news/pellegrini-nevidi-problem-v-dankovom-uzneseni-k-clanku-7/> (accessed on March 9, 2019).

²¹ Z. Gabrižová, "Duleba: Niektorí politici nie sú lídrami, nasledujú svojho voliča," [Duleba: Some politicians are not leaders, they follow their voters] *euractiv.sk*, April 12, 2018. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/obrana-a-zahranicie/news/duleba-niektorí-politici-nie-su-lidrami-nasleduju-svojho-volica/> (accessed on March 9, 2019).

The problem is reflected in the ongoing issue over the new strategic documents (the Defense Strategy of the Slovak Republic and the Security Strategy of the Slovak Republic) which have still not been passed by parliament despite having been adopted at government level. The reason is opposition from the SNS, especially towards the parts of the Security Strategy that address the worrying shift in actions by the Russian Federation. Another manifestation was the Slovak response to the British request for support and solidarity in the wake of the novichok attack in Salisbury, which the British authorities linked to Russian state actors. Slovakia did not join the other 16 EU countries, including all its neighbors, in expelling Russian diplomats at that time.²²

By the autumn of 2018 it had become more and more obvious that the unprecedented joint declaration by Slovakia's three leading officials in October 2017 on the pro-European and pro-Atlantic orientation of Slovakia would not be renewed. Andrej Danko yet again met with Speaker of the Russian State Duma Vyacheslav Volodin (this time in Turkey), who is still on the EU's sanction list for his part in the preparations for the Russian Federation's annexation of Crimea. Danko, who again criticized the EU's sanctions against Russia, called Volodin a "friend" in a post on social media and expressed the hope that Volodin would soon be able to visit Slovakia. Various representatives, including politicians from SNS's coalition partner Most-Híd,²³ deemed his statements to contradict Slovak foreign policy as outlined in the official government program. Even Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák was unusually blunt: "I want to be clear that I do not understand why the Speaker of Parliament feels the need to show love in a such a way to a person on the sanction lists. It goes beyond the framework that I consider to be the foreign policy line of the Slovak Republic."^{24,25}

The competing geopolitical narratives that have gained prominence in Slovak political discourse in recent years are also mirrored in the public's views. In May, the GLOBSEC Trends 2018 Central Europe: One Region, Different Perspectives²⁶ survey

²² Slovakia did expel one Russian diplomat for espionage in December 2018. For more see: P. Kapitán, L. Krbatová, "Slovensko vyhostilo ruského diplomata. Pre špionáž," [Slovakia expelled a Russian diplomat. For espionage] *Sme*, December 5, 2018. Available online: <https://domov.sme.sk/c/22001544/slovensko-vyhostilo-ruskeho-diplomata-pre-spionaz.html> (accessed on March 9, 2019).

²³ M. Kern, "Koná v rozpore s oficiálnou zahraničnou politikou Slovenska, kritizujú Danku politici Mosta-Híd," [He is acting against Slovakia's official foreign policy, Most-Híd politicians criticize Danko] *DennikN*, October 2, 2018. Available online: <https://dennikn.sk/1256112/kona-v-rozpore-s-oficialnou-zahranicnou-politikou-slovenska-kritizuju-danka-politici-mosta-hid/> (accessed on March 12, 2019).

²⁴ Z. Gabrižová, "Lajčák: So statusmi a selfie Andreja Danko nemôžem súhlasiť," [I cannot agree with Andrej Danko's statuses and selfies] *euractiv.sk*, October 12, 2018. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/vonkajsie-vztahy/news/lajcak-so-statusmi-a-selfie-andreja-danka-nemozem-suhlasit/> (accessed on March 9, 2019).

²⁵ This episode turned out to be just a prelude to a more substantial stand-off between the foreign ministry and the SNS occurring in relation to the adoption of the UN Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) that resulted in Miroslav Lajčák resigning, only for him to take his resignation back a few days later.

²⁶ D. Hajdu, D. Milo, K. Klingova, "Globsec: GLOBSEC Trends 2018 Central Europe: one region, different perspectives," May 11, 2018. Available online: <https://www.globsec.org/publications/globsec-trends-2018-central-europe-one-region-different-perspectives/> (accessed on March 9, 2019).

found that over half of Slovaks prefer the country's geopolitical position to be "somewhere in between East and West." The percentage selecting this option rose from 42 per cent to 56 per cent year-on-year. A clear pro-western orientation was preferred by 21 per cent respondents. The same survey put support for the EU at (66 per cent), in response to the question – how would you vote in a "stay vs leave" referendum? On Russia, the Slovak population was split as well, with 47 per cent disagreeing with the policy of Russian President Vladimir Putin, while 41 per cent approved, the highest percentage among the V4 countries. Also worryingly, Slovaks were less disposed to believe that Russia influenced elections in the EU and were more susceptible to conspiracy theories (53 per cent).

To counter this phenomenon, the Slovak Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs established a strategic communication unit in 2017. This decision was based on the recognition of two basic issues. On one hand, since EU (and NATO) accession, the focus on pro-actively communicating EU and foreign policy generally had weakened.²⁷ One of the problems with communications about the EU in Slovakia had been the focus on the material benefits, including EU money. This approach effectively created a void in the Slovak public's identification with common EU values. The second realization was that the public, or rather public opinion, had become a foreign policy player. In 2018 the communications unit was the contact point for EU activities aimed at safeguarding free and fair European elections from foreign, especially Russian, interference. It is responsible for implementing the Action plan against disinformation adopted by the EU in December 2018.²⁸

One of the other activities of the newly established unit was the organization of the National Convention on the EU, a series of events under the #MYSMEÚ brand. The aim of the tour of various Slovak university cities was to animate a "critical discussion with citizens about the EU based on real facts." Secondly, the #MYSMEEU Roadshow was part of the aim proposed by French President Emmanuel Macron to contribute to the EU-wide citizens dialogues. While France is used to these kinds of structured public consultations and discussions that provide real input, input gathering has been limited in Slovakia. This series of events remains the most substantial public diplomacy endeavor organized in Slovakia for the general public and with the participation of high-level ministry officials. The debates provided a platform for presenting the basic rationale of Slovakia's EU membership. This is illustrated in the reaction of former state secretary Ivan Korčok at the event in Martin, when replying to a question asking why he had said that the high approval rate for Putin among the Slovak public and the low level of support for a pro-western orientation was a reason for concern. "I don't understand what is inspirational about Vladimir Putin." (...) Korčok said. "Maybe it

²⁷ L. Yar, "Vyplňanie prázdneho priestoru: Strategická komunikácia po slovensky," [Strategic communication in Slovak] *euractiv.sk*, April 10, 2018. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/zahranicie-a-bezpecnost/news/vyplnane-prazdneho-priestoru-strategicka-komunikacia-po-slovensky/> (accessed on March 9, 2019).

²⁸ "Joint Communication Action Plan against Disinformation," European Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, December 5, 2018. Available online: https://cdn1-eeas.fpfis.tech.ec.europa.eu/cdn/farfuture/lpM1X9RnuE28GrR78F7yFA0Htkjii4Tz-KMvXoSg5Bn0/mtime:1544008849/sites/eeas/files/action_plan_against_disinformation.pdf (accessed on March 9, 2019)

sounds controversial, but the EU and NATO are the West, not in a geographical sense, but based on how these countries want to organize their lives," how they govern their countries and what opportunities they provide for their citizens.²⁹

"LESS FAVORABLE" IS THE NEW NORMAL

The focus on material benefits may quite rightly be considered insufficient justification of Slovakia's EU membership. However, the fact remains that public investment is heavily dependent on the European structural and investment funds. The Commission's proposed Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2021–2027 was therefore highly anticipated in Slovakia in 2018. Some of the changes had been communicated beforehand, which is why Slovakia's initial spontaneous reaction was relief that the cuts were not more substantial. This was quickly replaced by a more pragmatic evaluation of the proposal as "relatively unfavorable."³⁰ Slovakia remains a net beneficiary, but will see a smaller national envelope than the current one, which was a record allocation for Slovakia.

The Commission opted for a higher budget for a smaller post-Brexit EU.³¹ It had to factor in the ambitions of the European Parliament regarding the size of the new budget, new challenges, the cautious willingness of some countries to contribute more in the wake of Brexit, but also the fiscally conscious net contributor countries. New chapters for migration and border protection have been introduced. The new concept of own resources, a highly controversial notion being pushed by the European Parliament, has also been included.³² Another significant change the EC proposed was a stronger link to the European semester and €25 billion for structural reforms in member states.

As expected, the cohesion chapter has been reduced by 7 per cent, and the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) by 5 per cent. A GDP indicator will be used to distribute 80 per cent of the funds, and 20 per cent will be allocated using a mix of indicators like youth unemployment, low education levels, climate change and refugee integration. Both cohesion policy and CAP will be accompanied by larger spending flexibility

²⁹ Z. Gabrižová, "MYSMEEÚ Martin: Západ by sme mali prestať chápať geograficky," [WEAREEU Martin: We should stop understanding the West in geographical terms] *euractiv.sk*, May 18, 2018. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/buducnost-eu/news/mysmeeu-martin-zapad-by-sme-mali-prestat-chapat-geograficky/> (accessed on March 9, 2019).

³⁰ "LP/2018/301 Riadne predbežné stanovisko k Návrhu nariadenia Rady, ktorým sa stanovuje viacročný finančný rámec na roky 2021 až 2027," [Preliminary position on the draft Council Regulation establishing the MFF for 2021-2027] *Slov-lex*, 2018. Available online: <https://www.slov-lex.sk/legislativne-procesy/-/SK/dokumenty/LP-2018-301> (accessed on March 10, 2019).

³¹ M. Koreň, "Európska komisia predstavila návrh nového dlhodobého rozpočtu: Viac peňazí pre menšiu EÚ," [EC presented draft new long-term budget: More money for a smaller EU] *euractiv.sk*, May 2, 2018. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/buducnost-eu/news/europska-komisia-predstavila-navrh-noveho-dlhodobeho-rozpocetu-viac-penazi-pre-mensiu-eu/> (accessed on March 10, 2019).

³² The proposed own resources include part of the revenues from the Emissions Trading System, the rate applied to the new Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base, a national contribution calculated according to the amount of non-recycled plastic packaging waste – together worth €22 billion annually, 12 per cent of the EU budget.

for member states. The cuts will affect 14 countries, but are likely to be felt in the V4 region especially, given the rate of economic growth and part of the resources being channeled to the regions affected by migration. Slovakia will receive 22 per cent less compared to the previous period (€11.8 billion down from €15.1 billion).³³

To prove that it is a constructive partner and to lead by example, Slovakia has been indicating its willingness to increase its contribution to the EU budget as a larger budget is a "key precondition for ensuring the right balance between long-term EU policies and new challenges."³⁴ Slovakia hosted the Friends of Cohesion summit on November 29, where a common declaration was adopted: "The degree of political ambition should shape the content and magnitude of the MFF, and not vice versa."³⁵ The text called for the strengthening of the role of cohesion and agricultural policy in the next MFF and "appropriate implementation rules, friendly for final beneficiaries." This is especially important for Slovakia as by the end of 2018, only about 22 per cent of the 2014–2020 allocation had been drawn down.³⁶ The level of co-financing is also an issue, with Slovakia together with other Eastern European countries defending the 85 per cent rate (that was introduced as a crisis mitigation measure) as opposed to the proposed 70 per cent which is the level it was at in 2007–2013. Slovakia's reservations grew as it also deemed the updated distribution criteria to be "less favorable". Its position on the own resources proposal remained highly cautious. The Ministry of Finance believed the new proposed environmental taxes were "financially unfavorable."³⁷ Slovakia also considers the proposed return to the N+2 rule (allowing the drawing down of funds to be completed two years after the programming period has ended) to be

³³ M. Koreň, "Dlhodobý rozpočet Únie: Komisia chce Slovensku zoškrtat eurofondy o vyše tri miliardy eur," [Long-term EU budget: Commission wants to cut EU funds for Slovakia by 3 billion euros] *euractiv.sk*, May 29, 2018. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/ekonomika-a-euro/news/dlhodoby-rozpocet-unie-komisia-chce-slovensku-zoskrta-eurofondy-o-vyse-tri-miliardy-eur/> (accessed on March 10, 2019).

³⁴ E. Zgut et al.: "Post 2020 EU budget: Visegrad is closing ranks, but exceptions apply," *visegradinfo.eu*, July 26, 2018. Available online: <http://visegradinfo.eu/index.php/80-articles/570-post-2020-eu-budget-visegrad-is-closing-ranks-but-exceptions-apply> (accessed on March 10, 2019).

³⁵ "Friends of cohesion joint declaration on the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021–2027," *politico.eu*, November 29, 2018. Available online: https://www.politico.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Friends-of-Cohesion-Joint-Declaration-on-the-MFF-2021-2027.pdf?utm_source=POLITICO.EU&utm_campaign=3632132704-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_11_29_05_20&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_10959edeb5-3632132704-189693517 (accessed on March 10, 2019).

³⁶ "Výročná správa o členstve Slovenskej republiky v Európskej únii – hodnotenie a aktuálne priority vyplývajúce z Pracovného programu Európskej komisie," [Annual report on the Slovak Republic's membership of the EU] Government of the Slovak Republic, 2019. Available online: <http://www.rokovania.sk/Rokovanie.aspx/BodRokovaniaDetail?idMaterial=28195> (accessed on March 10, 2019).

³⁷ M. Koreň, V. Pokorná, "Slovensko by „za istých okolností“ mohlo podporiť nové vlastné zdroje rozpočtu EÚ," [Slovakia could "under certain circumstances" support the proposed own resources in the EU budget] July 2, 2018. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/ekonomika-a-euro/news/slovensko-by-za-istych-okolnosti-mohlo-podporit-nove-vlastne-zdroje-rozpocetu-eu/> (accessed on March 10, 2019); "LP/2018/430 Riadne predbežné stanovisko k návrhu rozhodnutia Rady o systéme vlastných zdrojov Európskej únie," [Preliminary position on the draft Council decision on the EU's system of own resources] *Slov-lex*. 2018. Available online: <https://www.slov-lex.sk/legislativne-procesy/-/SK/dokumenty/LP-2018-430> (accessed on March 10, 2019).

insufficient, and pushed for N+3, given the repeated delayed absorption of funds at the beginning of the period.³⁸

As regards CAP, besides the overall cuts and slow pace at which direct payments are being levelled, the capping of direct payments for large farms has also been perceived as an unwanted development.³⁹ The definition of what constitutes a farmer was met with reservation as was the allocation of a larger portion of resources for environmental measures. "The farmers will have to deliver more public goods for less money, that is not fair," said minister for agricultural and rural development Gabriela Matečná.

The "Reform Delivery Tool" that was supposed to redirect part of the cohesion funds to support structural reforms has not won over the hearts of MEPs, or Slovakia for that matter. Besides the default resistance to the cohesion cuts, Slovakia was initially cautious about whether those resources would not come under shared management but would become the sole responsibility of the European Commission. Then it backtracked a little with the ministry of finance saying publicly: "It is in the EU's and Slovakia's interest for the EU to undertake structural reforms supporting the sustainable economic growth and prosperity."⁴⁰

The euro area budget is a whole other chapter. Slovakia was inclined to think it should fulfil a stabilizing function.⁴¹ According to the Slovak finance ministry the aim of the euro area budget should be to ensure fiscal stabilization against macroeconomic shocks. "The absence of individual monetary policy in the monetary union should be compensated by a stabilization at the transnational level in case of major shocks." This function could be especially beneficial to small and open economies, where responsible fiscal policy is not necessarily sufficient protection against external shocks, the ministry added. It also acknowledged that the stabilization function could be provided not only by the euro area budget, but also by the mechanism for protecting investment or the unemployment guarantee scheme.⁴² The December European Council poured cold water over this plan leaving competitiveness and convergence as the only functions of the euro area budget. Slovakia is in full agreement with the European Stabilization Mechanism (ESM) reform, which will give it the function of a joint resolution mecha-

³⁸ M. Koreň, "Slovensko vďaka eurofondom píše úspešný príbeh, vyhlásil eurokomisár Oettinger," [Slovakia has turned herself into a success story thanks to EU funds, says commissioner Oettinger], June 18, 2018. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/ekonomika-a-euro/news/slovensko-vdaka-eurofondom-pise-uspesny-pribeh-vyhlasil-eurokomisar-oettinger/> (accessed on March 10, 2019).

³⁹ "Matečná: Ministri poľnohospodárstva EÚ majú výhrady k agropolitike po roku 2020", [EU ministers of agriculture have reservations about post-2020 agropolity] *TASR*, June 19, 2018. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/ekonomika-a-euro/news/matecna-ministri-polnohospodarstva-eu-maju-vyhrady-k-agropolitike-po-roku-2020/> (accessed on March 10, 2019).

⁴⁰ M. Koreň, "Slovensko zatiaľ nemá jasné stanovisko k 22-miliardovému fondu na podporu reforiem," [Slovakia does not have a clear position on the 22 billion fund for reform support] *euractiv.sk*, June 7, 2018. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/ekonomika-a-euro/news/slovensko-zatial-nema-jasne-stanovisko-k-22-miliardovemu-fondu-na-podporu-reforiem/> (accessed on March 10, 2019).

⁴¹ M. Koreň, "Ministerstvo financií: Rozpočet eurozóny by mal plniť stabilizačnú funkciu," [Ministry of Finance: The Eurozone budget should have a stabilization function] *euractiv.sk*, June 23, 2018. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/ekonomika-a-euro/news/ministerstvo-finacii-rozpocet-eurozony-by-mal-plnit-stabilizacnu-funkciu/> (accessed on March 10, 2019).

⁴² *Ibid*

nism for failing banks. Slovakia also supported a stronger role for ESM in evaluating the financial fitness of countries asking for assistance. This is currently the prerogative of the Commission.

One of the most controversial elements of the next MFF package is the “rule of law conditionality”⁴³ proposed by the European Commission and approved by the European Parliament. Under the proposed regulation it would be possible to suspend payments from the EU funds if a member state shows generalized deficiencies in respecting the rule of law. In its preliminary official position⁴⁴ Slovakia claimed it was not categorically against it, but it did voice several legal and political reservations. The first concerns the definition of “rule of law” and what would qualify as a “deficiency” in this respect. The fear is that these terms will be interpreted too widely and ambiguously. Slovakia also argued that the legal basis of this regulation had been wrongly identified; it is more of a rule of law mechanism than a budgetary measure. It also asked for clarification with regard to the Article 7 procedure as it feels the proposed mechanism circumvents Article 7. Slovakia also proposed several specific changes to the mechanism. Firstly, a simple qualified majority should replace the reverse qualified majority for final decisions in this area. That would, of course, give the member states much more control over the whole process. Interestingly the wording of the Slovak national position on the mechanism was adjusted during the inter-institutional review process. The original text referred to “sanction mechanism” and “sanctions” which does not correspond to the terms used in the draft regulation. This was later substituted by “prevention mechanism” and “measures.” The reason was “The goal is not to sanction, but to protect the budget and the effects should be preventative (...). From the legal terminology point of view the word ‘sanction’ cannot be a synonym for ‘measure.’”⁴⁵ This proposal does not require unanimity as the MFF as a whole does; it is independent of the budget framework, and is approved using an ordinary legislative procedure in the Council by qualified majority vote. Hungary and Poland strongly opposed this measure. Forming a blocking minority could pose a challenge in this case. Given that the budget negotiations overlap with a dispute between the EU and Poland and Hungary, possibly also Romania, these countries may end up being in a tough bargaining position.

⁴³ “Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the protection of the Union’s budget in case of generalised deficiencies as regards the rule of law in the Member States,” European Commission, May 2, 2018. Available online: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/protection-union-budget-rule-law-may2018_en.pdf (accessed on March 10, 2019).

⁴⁴ Z. Gabrižová, Právny štát: “Slovensko si sankcie vie predstaviť, má však pripomienky,” [Rule of law: Slovakia does not rule out sanctions, but has reservations] *euractiv.sk*, May 23, 2018. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/spolocnost/news/pravny-stat-slovensko-si-sankcie-vie-predstavit-ma-vsak-pripomienky/> (accessed on March 10, 2019).

⁴⁵ “LP/2018/300 Riadne predbežné stanovisko k Návrhu nariadenia Európskeho parlamentu a Rady o ochrane rozpočtu Únie v prípade všeobecných nedostatkov v oblasti dodržiavania zásady právneho štátu v členských štátoch,” [Preliminary position on the draft Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the protection of the Union’s budget in case of generalized deficiencies as regards the rule of law in the member states], *Slov-lex*, 2018. Available online: <https://www.slov-lex.sk/legislativne-procesy/-/SK/dokumenty/LP-2018-300> (accessed on March 10, 2019).

MIGRATION: LURKING IN THE BACKGROUND

This position is not helped by the fact that no consensus has been found on reforming the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). European migration policies were not as politically salient a topic in 2018 as they were in 2015 or 2016. The notable exception, however, was the debate about the Migration Compact (GCM) which falls under the UN Framework. While the majority of EU member states backed the document, Slovakia, together with nine other EU countries, backtracked on adopting it. Slovakia's foreign minister, Miroslav Lajčák, who had a personal investment in the negotiation of the document in his capacity as president of the UN General Assembly threatened to resign over the issue, which he did initially, but later retracted.

Meanwhile, the legislative work on the CEAS reform that comprises seven legislative proposals was also lacking in substantial progress, partly because the proposals are closely connected. Meanwhile, the most sensitive point of any reform – the Dublin system – also remained politically stuck. Slovakia, backed by the V4 countries, as well as others, continued to resist any form of compulsory relocation and burden sharing. Slovakia warned that “solidarity needs to be perceived in wider sense and in balance to the principle of responsibility.”⁴⁶ Therefore, the conclusions of the June European Council⁴⁷ were seen as a victory as they stated that any relocation or settlement of asylum seekers should only be done on a voluntary basis. The frustration of some countries was apparent in the words of Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel who said that EU countries that show no solidarity in the management of migration should reconsider their place in the Schengen area. “This opinion is supported by an increasing amount of people around the table,” he said after the December European Council.⁴⁸ Although, Michel was also speaking under domestic pressure (his government was also shaken by the debate about the GCM), his words certainly played into a certain line of thinking in the European Council. On the other hand, Slovakia has attempted to compensate by contributing personnel to Frontex, the mission of European Asylum Support Office in Italy, Greece and Cyprus and on a bilateral basis to Serbia and Macedonia as well. Besides the personnel it has also contributed financially to the EU Emergency Trust fund for Africa aimed mainly at boosting Libyan capacities for managing migration.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ “Výročná správa o členstve Slovenskej republiky v Európskej únii – hodnotenie a aktuálne priority vyplývajúce z Pracovného programu Európskej komisie,” [Annual report on the Slovak Republic's membership of the EU] Government of the Slovak Republic, 2019. Available online: <http://www.rokovania.sk/Rokovanie.aspx/BodRokovaniaDetail?idMaterial=28195> (accessed on March 10, 2019).

⁴⁷ “European Council conclusions, 28 June 2018.” Available online: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2018/06/29/20180628-euco-conclusions-final/> (accessed on March 10, 2019).

⁴⁸ G. Gotev, “Belgický premiér: Krajiny V4 by už nemali byť v Schengene,” [Belgian PM: V4 countries should no longer be part of Schengen] *euractiv.sk*, December 17, 2018. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/buducnost-eu/news/belgicky-premier-krajiny-v4-by-uz-nemali-byt-v-schengene/> (accessed on March 10, 2019).

⁴⁹ “Slovensko na riadenie migračných tokov vyčleňuje osem miliónov eur,” [Slovakia will allocate 8 million euros to the management of migration flows], *euractiv.sk*, February 21, 2018. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/sekcie/news/slovensko-na-riadenie-migracnych-tokov-vyclenuje-osem-milionov-eur/> (accessed on March 10, 2019).

Last year also saw the launch of the debate on strengthening Frontex (European Border and Coast Guard) to a permanent capacity of 10,000 (by 2027) personnel, along with uniforms, executive competencies, resources, analytical, planning and command structures. The capacities and competencies immediately became the subject of heated debate. Slovakia supported the overall goal to safeguard Europe's external borders and for a greater role for Frontex in the policy on returning migrants. It later became cautious, especially after Poland and the Czech Republic voiced concerns that more resources for Frontex would mean less on cohesion. This was accompanied by a general fear of losing sovereignty.⁵⁰

While society has become extremely wary about migration in general, the economic reality has forced the government to take minimal pragmatic steps and facilitate economic migration in economic sectors where labor shortages became critical. The limited legislative changes eased the lengthy and administratively complex procedures the private sector has to go through to show there are specific job vacancies. The Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Family made it clear that this was not a paradigm shift in migration policy but simply a remedy for an acute situation and that the aim was to "replace these workers with Slovak employees as soon as possible."⁵¹

INSTITUTIONAL DEBATES: NO BLANK CHECKS

Only a few weeks before the European elections in 2019, the Romanian city of Sibiu will host the European Council that is to provide the platform for a substantial debate on the future of the EU. One of the issues to be discussed is the proposed move from unanimous voting to qualified majority voting (QMV) in the Council. This will be considered particularly in relation to policies on foreign affairs, taxation and social matters. There is no official position for the time being, but statements have pointed out that although more effective decision-making would be an added value, the risks associated with QMV may outweigh the theoretical gains. There is unease over the idea that sensitive decisions adopted by QMV could fail at the implementation stage. In other words, if a sensitive decision were to be taken in this way, there might be a repetition of the scenario with the refugee quotas – countries that do not agree with it, such as Slovakia, would simply refuse to implement it.⁵²

In the words of State Secretary of the Foreign Ministry František Ružička:

⁵⁰ "Poľsko a Česká republika: Silnejší Frontex nám uberie z eurofondov," [Poland and Czech Republic: A stronger Frontex will take from our cohesion funds] *euractiv.sk*, October 16, 2018. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/spolocnost/news/polsko-a-ceska-republika-silnejši-frontex-nám-uberie-z-eurofondov/> (accessed on March 10, 2019).

⁵¹ "Ondruš: V niektorých okresoch potrebujeme na trhu práce cudzincov," [Ondruš: In some regions we will need foreigners workers] *euractiv.sk*, April 27, 2018. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/ekonomika-a-euro/news/ondrus-v-niektorých-okresoch-potrebujeme-na-trhu-prace-cudzincov/> (accessed on March 10, 2019).

⁵² Z. Gabrižová, "Hlasovanie kvalifikovanou väčšinou? Na Slovensku sme na to citliví," [Qualified majority voting? Sensitive issue for Slovakia] *euractiv.sk*, September 14, 2018. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/buducnost-eu/news/hlasovanie-kvalifikovanou-vecšinou-na-slovensku-sme-na-to-citlivi/> (accessed on March 10, 2019).

The qualified majority mustn't create the feeling that the voting does not respect everyone's sensitivities. The member states should feel comfortable with this type of voting and should agree with it politically so the voting is accepted. As is the case with the citizens and voters in the member states.⁵³

As regards the QMV in relation to tax policies the finance ministry acknowledges that the debate on tax issues is in effect paralyzed for the moment, but it would not go as far as to support the proposal.

Next year will be defined by, among other things, decisions about who will occupy the EU's top positions in the new institutional cycle. In the case of the European Commission, much will depend on the extent to which the Spitzencandidate process will be repeated. In February 2018 the European Parliament supported this process as the only way of filling the post. The member states are set to oppose the plan this time around. "The countries want substantially more influence", Robert Fico said after the February European Council. He also added that the Spitzencandidate process was so complicated as to be beyond comprehension.⁵⁴ The plan under which the seats left vacant in the European Parliament after Brexit could be filled by a pan-European vote through a transnational list in the European elections was rejected by parliament itself with Slovak MEPs almost unanimously against.⁵⁵

⁵³ Z. Gabrižová, "Štátny tajomník Ružička: Pýtame sa Poľska aj na citlivé otázky," [State Secretary Ružička: We ask Poland sensitive questions as well] *euractiv.sk*, October 24, 2018. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/vonkajsie-vztahy/interview/statny-tajomnik-ruzicka-pytame-sa-polska-aj-na-citlive-otazky/> (accessed on March 10, 2019).

⁵⁴ Z. Gabrižová, "Ak príde z EÚ menej peňazí, Fico chce viac voľnosti," [If there is less money coming from the EU, Fico wants more flexibility] *euractiv.sk*, February 23, 2018. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/buducnost-eu/news/ak-pride-z-eu-menej-penazi-fico-chce-viac-volnosti/> (accessed on March 10, 2019).

⁵⁵ Z. Gabrižová, "Nadnárodnú európsku kandidátku nechcú ani v Smere-SD," [Smer-SD does not support transnational list] *euractiv.sk*, February 6, 2018. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/slovensko-v-ep/news/nadnarodnu-eurokandidatku-nehcu-ani-v-smere-sd/> (accessed on March 10, 2019).

2018: DOING WELL, BUT NO PLAN B

MARTIN VLACHYNSKÝ

The year 2018 started with a dip and ended with a dip. While the first encouraged investors to buy, the second sowed fear. With fiscal difficulties in France and Italy, Brexit plans going round in circles and a headstrong president in the US, recession became a popular topic of discussion in late 2018. Meanwhile, Slovakia's economic policy suggested there was little to worry about in the future.

JANUARY

"This is not a recovery anymore, it's an expansion. This is not about exiting the crisis, it's about preparing for the next one."¹ These words pronounced in mid-January by Benoit Coeure, member of the Executive Board of the European Central Bank (recorded by Bloomberg columnist Ferdinando Giugliano) could not be a better symbol of the expectations, hopes and confusion of 2018 in Europe. They were uttered around the time the European Central Bank (ECB) refused to provide "important evidence" to the EU's Court of Auditors examining its management of the banking crisis.² Even without the evidence, the auditor's report³ criticized the ECB's inability to see indications of

¹ F. Giugliano's Twitter account, January 18, 2018. Available online: <https://twitter.com/FerdiGiugliano/status/954001603039780864> (accessed on January 18, 2018).

² "ECB withheld information on 'flawed' bank supervision," *EU Observer*, January 16, 2018, <https://euobserver.com/institutional/140566> (accessed on January 18, 2018).

³ "Special report no 02/2018: The operational efficiency of the ECB's crisis management for banks," European Court of Auditors. Available online: <https://www.eca.europa.eu/en/Pages/DocItem.aspx?did=44556> (accessed on January 10, 2019).

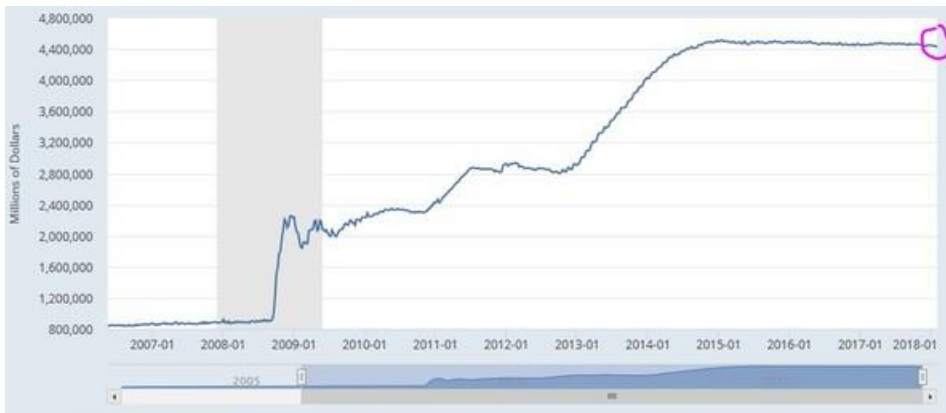
future problems with the banks and to adopt countermeasures. This is an important point considering the ECB should already be “preparing for the next one.”

There were some market warnings. The cryptocurrency market was expected to blow, with close to zero impact on the non-crypto economy. However, stock markets began falling at the beginning of year as well, losing 4 per cent in one day. But it is around bonds rather than stocks that fears of a crisis igniting have been gathering for some time now. The junk bond market experienced its worst sell-off in a year⁴. The drops were triggered by new, positive data on US wage growth⁵, which fueled expectations of further rate rises by the Fed to control inflation.

US ten-year bond yields hit 2.8 per cent and three-year bond yields 2.9 per cent, a nine-year record. At the same time, some European households (including Slovak ones) were able to obtain mortgage rates of well below 2 per cent. Pressure on the ECB to start following the Fed was growing.

The Fed not only started to increase its interest rate much sooner than the ECB, but it also started cutting the size of its balance sheet. In the past decade the Fed’s balance sheet has grown to \$4.4 trillion. Although it grew quickly, bonds were selling much more slowly. The Fed was careful to sell only \$22 billion dollars worth during the week preceding the January stock market slump.

Figure 1. All federal reserve banks: total assets



Source: Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System (US)

⁴ “Junk-bond selloff erodes investor optimism,” Bloomberg, February 2, 2018. Available online: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-02-02/junk-bond-rout-erodes-investor-optimism-as-credit-tailwinds-fade> (accessed on February 2, 2018).

⁵ “US job numbers and wage growth are up – but inequality is also on the rise,” *The Guardian*, February 2, 2018. Available online: <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2018/feb/02/us-job-numbers-and-wage-growth-are-up-but-inequality-is-also-on-the-rise> (accessed on February 2, 2018).

(Very) slowly but surely, the Fed has been creating some breathing space for any future monetary actions. What about the ECB? Benoit Coeure gave an even more depressing speech in early February:

Without further reforms, the next crisis may well force the ECB to test the limits of its mandate. Depending on the nature of the next crisis, policy action might require taking short-term rates much deeper into negative territory. Or it might require purchases of assets that are riskier than public or corporate debt. Or it may draw us dangerously close to monetary financing of governments. As things stand today, and given member states' still limited fiscal policy space, even a small downturn could create large economic and social costs. It could, once again, test the cohesiveness of the currency union. Unless the euro area finds a way to change direction, to reform itself and to regain space for active macroeconomic policy, the same fractures we saw in 2012 could reappear and widen when the next downturn comes.⁶

It is worth reminding ourselves that Jürgen Stark's resignation from the ECB in the late summer of 2011 was seen as German resistance to the unprecedented steps the ECB was taking to prop up Greece and other eurozone states during the fiscal crisis. In the meantime these steps have become standard. Would the more conservative economists on the ECB's board have accepted even more unprecedented monetary policy steps? It is difficult to say because the eurozone has changed since 2011, and so too has Germany.

After months of negotiations and after the potential "Jamaica" coalition failed to become reality, the CDU/CSU and the SPD reached a consensus at the end of January and formed a new German government in February. Legendary finance minister Wolfgang Schäuble was replaced by SPD candidate Olaf Scholz. Despite belonging to the more conservative wing of the Social Democrats that believes in "more solidarity in the Euro zone,"⁷ he is a much more dovish version of Schäuble.

FEBRUARY

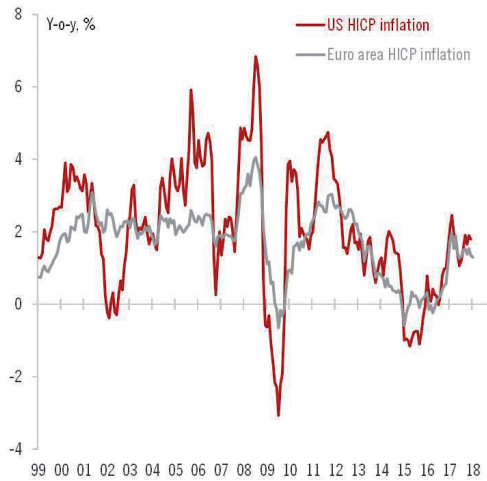
In February, the markets were once again surprised by the data. As Global Macro Strategist Frederik Ducrozet pointed out in this chart, the culprit was January's price inflation in the US, which hit 2.1 per cent instead of the expected 2 per cent⁸, while producer prices indicated 2.7 per cent growth instead of 2.4 per cent growth.

⁶ "The euro area's three lines of defence," European Central Bank, February 2, 2018. Available online: <https://www.ecb.europa.eu/press/key/date/2018/html/ecb.sp180202.en.html> (accessed on February 2, 2018).

⁷ An interview with Germany's Finance Minister Olaf Scholz, *The Economist*, July 12, 2018.

⁸ "Markets nervous again as US inflation unexpectedly spikes higher – as it happened," *The Guardian*, February 14, 2018. Available online: <https://www.theguardian.com/business/live/2018/feb/14/markets-calm-ahead-of-us-inflation-data-and-imfs-uk-report-business-live> (accessed on February 14, 2018).

Figure 2. US/eurozone HICP inflation

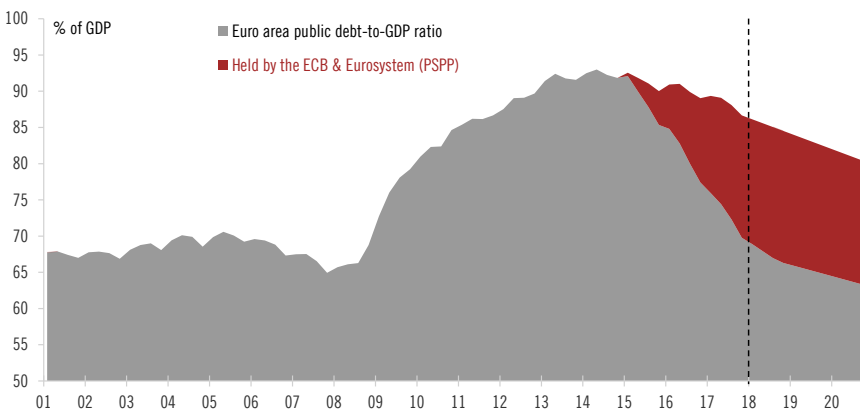


Source: Frederik Ducrozet’s Twitter <https://twitter.com/fwred/status/963771069659320320> (accessed on January 10, 2019).

Europe, or at least some EU member countries, was not lagging far behind. Inflation in Slovakia grew from 1.9 per cent in December to 2.4 per cent in January 2018. The data again led some to wonder when the ECB was going to ease its push on the monetary gas pedal.

The ECB’s involvement in government financing was becoming alarming: in early 2018 the ECB had held around 20 per cent of euro area government debt.⁹

Figure 3. Eurozone government debt ratio including ECB QE holdings



Source: Pictet WM – AA&MR, Eurostat (using QE projections and extrapolating the 2017 trend for debt)

⁹ “Europe chart of the week – public debt,” PICTET, April 27, 2018. Available online: <https://perspectives.pictet.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/2018-04-20-Europe-Chart-of-the-week-Debt-and-QE.pdf> (accessed on April 27, 2018).

Less than half of Finnish government bonds, one-third of Dutch ones and just over 10 per cent of German government bonds were held by private investors. The remainder were held either by the ECB, or foreign central banks.

Figure 4. Bond free float for selected economies (estimated % share of outstanding central government bonds held by private sector)



Source: IMF and ECB calculations. Available online: https://www.ecb.europa.eu/pub/pdf/annex/ecb.sp180223_annex.en.pdf?b9cb1dfdc12ba6650a4dcba9795f1a0a (accessed on January 19, 2019).

Notes: The free float is constructed by subtracting from outstanding central government bonds the bond holdings of foreign central banks and of the Eurosystem under the PSPP. Non-monetary policy portfolios are not considered. Foreign exchange holdings are taken from the IMF's COFER and CPIS survey, where the assumption is made that unallocated reserves are distributed similar to allocated reserves and that 80 per cent of total reserves are invested in central government bonds. This follows a methodology proposed by Arslanalp, S. and T. Tsuda (2012), "Tracking Global Demand for Advanced Economy Sovereign Debt," IMF Working Paper, WP 12/284. Last observation: September 2017.

When such a dominant buyer starts to back away from the market, it may generate shockwaves. The lack of German *bunds* is especially disturbing, since their yield serves as a benchmark for other Eurozone bonds – and without a market, there can be no price creation.

Some officials have been unimpressed and believe that private investors will be able to gradually replace the ECB on the markets. Peter Praet, ECB, said:

As we progress towards a sustained adjustment in the path of inflation and approach the time when net purchases will gradually come to an end, the residual monetary support needed to assist the economy in its transition to a new normal will increasingly come from forward guidance on our policy rates.¹⁰

¹⁰ "The persistence and signalling power of central bank asset purchase programmes," European Central Bank, February 23, 2018. Available online: <https://www.ecb.europa.eu/press/key/date/2018/html/ecb.sp180223.en.html> (accessed on February 23, 2018).

Not only are the member states in constant need of revenues, Brexit is poised to make a hole in the EU budget. There are two ways (and combinations) of dealing with this: either spending has to be cut, or revenues must be raised. Official discussions have tended towards the latter. Numerous proposals for securing additional revenue sources have been suggested – higher national contributions, visa fees, a plastic bag tax¹¹ and seigniorage transfer from the ECB to the EU's budget.¹² Opposition has mainly come from independent analysts, media and institutions. Pieter Cleppe from Open Europe is an example: "Making the bloc more expensive isn't just a blow to its finances, but its reputation."¹³

MARCH

To make sure talks about a potential global crisis did not die too early, in early March US president Donald Trump announced his plan to introduce 25 per cent duty on steel imports and 10 per cent duty on aluminum imports.¹⁴ Donald Trump tweeted: "trade wars are good and easy to win!"¹⁵ Unfortunately, trade wars are more like the Vietnam War – nobody really wins and all they bring is destruction.

APRIL

With the German post-election impasse gone and forgotten, the Italian one was heating up in April. For some years now Italy has been the most important country to watch in relation to a new crisis developing. Its inconclusive March elections with not one, but two Eurosceptic parties (the Five Star Movement and Lega Nord) in a strong position, and the delay in forming the government made the situation in the country even more fragile.

¹¹ "Cuts, plastic tax and visa fees: how Brussels will plug its €15bn Brexit budget gap," *Independent Ireland*, February 13, 2018. Available online: <https://www.independent.ie/business/brexit/cuts-plastic-tax-and-visa-fees-how-brussels-will-plug-its-15bn-brexit-budget-gap-36597513.html> (accessed on February 13, 2018).

¹² "A new, modern Multiannual Financial Framework for a European Union that delivers efficiently on its priorities post-2020," European Commission, February 14, 2018. Available online: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/communication-new-modern-multiannual-financial-framework_en.pdf (accessed on February 14, 2018).

¹³ "Europe needs to slash its budget to survive," *Politico*, January 10, 2018. Available online: <https://www.politico.eu/article/eu-budget-jean-claude-juncker-gdp-europe-needs-to-slash-its-budget-to-survive/> (January 10, 2018).

¹⁴ "Trump blasted at home and abroad for plan to impose steel, aluminum tariffs," *Politico*, March 1, 2018. Available online: <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/03/01/trump-steel-tariffs-432143> (accessed on March 1, 2018).

¹⁵ "Donald Trump Twitter," March 2, 2018. Available online: <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/969525362580484098> (accessed on March 2, 2018).

MAY

The European Commission unveiled its draft budget for 2021–2027 in early May. It contained no surprises. The size of the budget remains more or less the same, while the population is expected to fall by 13 per cent because of Brexit. “More money for a smaller Union” became the official vision of the new budget.¹⁶ The EU was not afraid to demand more taxpayer money.

The budget even mentions a 3 per cent call rate to be applied to the new Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base, confirming that tax harmonization in the EU is mainly about raising additional revenues by taxing more. Will there be any cuts? The ineffective Common Agricultural Policy will be cut by only 5 per cent – and even that enraged the French ministry of agriculture.¹⁷

Paying for all the giveaways from the EU budget requires a strong economy. While the US economy had 105 months of continuous growth (an additional 16 months would make it the longest uninterrupted growth record in US economic history), the signals emanating from the EU statistics are more mixed. HICP inflation, excluding food and energy, was 0.7 per cent in April, again less than expected.¹⁸ The ECB still faces the dilemma of whether to ease the stimulus.

As the Commission is not a big fan of cutting the EU budget, it is difficult to motivate national governments. The new Italian government had barely formed when some of the grim post-election predictions came true. Both the Five Star Movement and the Lega Nord wanted to pursue their election promises, including massive additional spending (reversing the pension reform, introducing a guaranteed income) and tax cuts. It is almost as if the two parties were living in an alternative dimension in which Italy's debt did not amount to 132 per cent of its GDP and it was not experiencing 15 years of economic stagnation. But the most preposterous step was Italy asking the ECB to forgive €250 billion of Italy's public debt. Later they backtracked, asking that the debt held by the ECB should not be counted as part of Italy's total debt. Other ideas included special treasuries, which would equal standard money and would be accepted by the public sector – a de facto parallel Italian currency. While this may sound like cheap political talk, these ideas may resurface one day if the situation gets worse.

Italexit was discussed too, but with much less enthusiasm than before the election. The *Washington Post* even speculated that the less aggressive tone was not part of the Italexit strategy:

The first rule of leaving the euro is you don't talk about leaving the euro.
That's because, if you do, you'll not only alienate the vast majority of

¹⁶ “Commission wants bigger budget for smaller EU,” *Politico*, May 2, 2018. Available online: <https://www.politico.eu/article/european-commission-proposes-eu-budget-cap-multiannual-financial-framework-guenther-oettinger/> (accessed on May 2, 2018).

¹⁷ “EU budget: Brussels unveils plans for higher spending on defence and border control,” *Independent*, May 2, 2018. Available online: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/eu-budget-defence-border-control-migrant-crisis-european-commission-a8333061.html> (accessed on May 2, 2018).

¹⁸ “Economic developments in the euro area,” European Central Bank, May 7, 2018. Available online: <https://www.ecb.europa.eu/press/key/date/2018/html/ecb.sp180507.en.html> (accessed on May 7, 2018).

voters who all want to stay in the common currency, but you'll also be blamed for the resulting bank run that will cripple your economy.¹⁹

The market soon reacted. While Italian 10-year bonds usually yield below 2 per cent and had not reached 3 per cent since 2014, they quickly rose to over 3 per cent at the end of May, while *bund* (German bonds) yields remained at around 0.5 per cent.

JUNE

While Italy was becoming more of a worry because of its new government, Greece was being celebrated. With the last €15 billion payment, the official help provided to Greece came to an end. Despite the ten year depression which had erased almost one third of its economic wealth, led to unemployment of over 20 per cent and a public debt of 180 per cent of GDP, Greece was officially celebrated as a success.²⁰ In contrast, the IMF had admitted back in 2016 that:

The International Monetary Fund's top staff misled their own board, made a series of calamitous misjudgments in Greece, became euphoric cheerleaders for the euro project, ignored warning signs of impending crisis, and collectively failed to grasp an elemental concept of currency theory.²¹

In other words, Greece (at least in terms of its public finance) has supposedly been left to take care of itself since the summer of 2018. There is some optimism – most Greek assets have lost so much value (since 2010 real estate has dropped 40 per cent in Athens for example²²) they may represent an interesting investment opportunity for global investors. Wages fell, the bureaucracy improved (though Greece does not perform well in the Doing Business rankings) and, most importantly, the once far-left government has a tight grip on the structural budget surplus.

A decade ago, the Greeks were 40 per cent richer than the Slovaks. Today, they share a similar level of GDP per capita. The Portuguese, but also the “Easterners” – the Czechs, Estonians and Slovenians, have overtaken Greece. Having reached the bottom

¹⁹ “Italy’s populists say they don’t want to leave the euro. Their actions say otherwise,” *Washington Post*, May 23, 2018. Available online: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2018/05/23/italys-populists-say-they-dont-want-to-leave-the-euro-their-actions-say-otherwise> (accessed on May 23, 2018).

²⁰ “Eurogroup statement on Greece of 22 June 2018,” European Council, June 22, 2018. Available online: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2018/06/22/eurogroup-statement-on-greece-22-june-2018> (accessed on June 22, 2018).

²¹ “IMF admits disastrous love affair with the euro and apologises for the immolation of Greece,” *The Telegraph*, July 29, 2016. Available online: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2016/07/28/imf-admits-disastrous-love-affair-with-euro-apologises-for-the-i/> (accessed on July 29, 2018).

²² “Grécky dlh vyplatia vnuci,” [The Greek debt will be paid by our grandsons] *Hospodárske noviny*, July 15, 2018. Available online: <https://komentare.hnonline.sk/komentare/1779102-grecky-dlh-vyplatia-vnuci> (accessed on July 15 2018).

there is hope the economy should be able to grow. However, there are still hidden dangers. More than a third of the country's loans are delinquent. Some capital controls are still in place, with the 2015 bank run very much in recent memory.

Greece was forgiven part of its debt – via further extended maturities. A large portion of Greek loan repayments will be interest-only until 2032. With a €15 billion cash buffer, this gives Greece a decade, or more, of breathing space. What will happen then? Greece will experience a generational shift and its problems will have to be faced by the children and grandchildren of the architects of today's deals.

JULY AND AUGUST

Turkey has been in the news in recent years mainly because of its government's "flexible" approach to human rights. But in terms of its economy, Turkey was viewed as an emerging regional, if not global, economic power. This image was seriously damaged during the summer of 2018 and other worries about its global economic dawn have emerged.

Inflation or currency problems are not unusual in emerging economies. But the attitude of the Turkish president was unusual. The Turkish president told Bloomberg that cutting interest rates would lower inflation. "The lower the interest rate is, the lower inflation will be," he said.²³

Not only that, Erdogan also maintained a tight grip on the central bank, making himself (or his family members) responsible for fiscal policy.²⁴ It did not help; indeed it had the opposite effect – inflation soared in late summer of 2018, hitting 100 per cent, and the Turkish lira collapsed, losing half its value against the US dollar within a few months.

The economic situation in Turkey matters because the country has an external debt of US\$ 500 billion.²⁵ Combined with the falling value of the currency, debt servicing costs have been growing quickly. With several European banks (especially Italian ones) exposed to Turkish debt, economy developments could represent a mini stress test for them. Turkey was then joined by economic troublemakers like Argentina and Brazil (not to mention terminally ill Venezuela) to form a potential "emerging markets storm." The storm, partially defused in late 2018, has carried its explosive potential into 2019.

²³ "NeoFisherism in Turkey," *TheMoneyIllusion*, May 15, 2018. Available online: <http://www.themoneyillusion.com/neofisherism-in-turkey/> (accessed on May 15 2018).

²⁴ "Erdogan expands clout over central bank, as he promised," *Bloomberg*, July 10, 2018. Available online: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-07-10/erdogan-gives-himself-power-to-appoint-central-bank-governor> (accessed on July 10, 2018).

²⁵ R. Napier, "Turkey will be the largest EM default of all time," *ZeroHedge*, August 13, 2018. Available online: <https://www.zerohedge.com/news/2018-08-13/russell-napier-turkey-will-be-largest-em-default-all-time> (accessed on July 15 2018).

SEPTEMBER

September 2018 marked the official 10th anniversary of the global financial crisis. The Fed celebrated by hiking the interest rate again, to 2–2.25 per cent.²⁶ This was another friendly poke at its European counterpart, which kept its rate unchanged. Despite the rise, the real interest rate (accounting for inflation) was still negative. Even in the US there was no consensus on tightening monetary policy– the previous chairman of the Fed (replaced by Jerome Powell in February) urged the central bank to adopt “lower-for-longer” as its official motto on interest rates, following serious downturns.²⁷

Ten years after the Lehman Brothers crisis, there are a number of potential reasons for the US and the world to fear the next global crisis. My colleague Juraj Karpíš has identified at least 10 reasons.²⁸ The key ones include:

1. Student loans in the US – by far the fastest growing subpart of debt in the US, also has the highest level of delinquency.
2. Corporate debt and stock exchanges – low interest rates have encouraged companies to leverage and to use these funds for share buybacks, pushing share values higher. Higher interest rates could break this mechanism.
3. Chinese super-bubble – fear of a potential economic slowdown²⁹ has driven the Chinese political establishment to fuel the huge economy with extensive stimuli. As usual, one can only take a wild guess at the true state of the Dragon.
4. Eurozone public debts – quantitative easing pushed public bond yields way down. How will they react to QE tapering? Will all eurozone members be able to find investors, if the ECB is not the biggest one?

OCTOBER

On October 19, 1987, a Monday, and so subsequently known as Black Monday, stock markets around the world crashed. The crash began in Hong Kong and spread west to Europe, hitting the United States after other markets had already sustained significant declines. The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell a staggering 22.61 per cent.

²⁶ “Federal Reserve issues FOMC statement,” September 26, 2018. Available online: <https://www.federalreserve.gov/newsevents/pressreleases/monetary20180926a.htm> (accessed on July 15 2018).

²⁷ “Yellen: Fed should commit to future ‘booms’ to make up for major busts,” *Reuters*, September 14, 2018. Available online: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-fed-yellen-idUSKCN1LU23T> (accessed on September 15, 2018).

²⁸ “Od strachu sa poserú. Ďalšia kríza a cenzúra peňazí – Issue #69, Zlé peniaze, dobrý život,” [They will crap their pants from fear. Another crisis and money censorship – Issue #69, Bad money, good life] October 2, 2018. Available online: <https://www.getrevue.co/profile/Juraj-Karpis/issues/od-strachu-sa-poseru-dalsia-kriza-a-cenzura-penazi-issue-69-133816> (accessed on October 2, 2018).

²⁹ “China slowdown deepens on trade tensions and weak credit growth,” *Bloomberg*, June 27, 2018. Available online: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-06-27/china-succumbs-to-slowdown-as-trade-and-debt-curb-drag-on-growth> (accessed on June 27, 2018).

Twenty-one years later, an imminent stock price decline has once again become the talk of the day. At the beginning of October, the biggest stock indexes in the US entered into a slow, but steady, decline which continued for the rest of the year. The main question is whether this is a long-needed correction, or the next crisis knocking at the door.

Stock prices are correlated with interest rates, since interest rates provide a benchmark for stock investors. Rising interest rates in the US give good reason for a price correction, disregarding any other fundamentals of the economy. Black Monday is an example of a situation in which even a massive stock exchange drop is not reflected in the real economy in the form of a recession. Gold prices, which serve as a "fear indicator," did not experience any large fluctuations either.

What did change was the Yield Curve. Or more specifically, the US bond yield curve. The difference between short term and long term bond yields (curve steepness) is a good predictor of "trouble." The smaller the difference between short and long term yields, the bigger the trouble signaled. Insufficient liquidity results in short yields being higher than long yields, thus inverting the curve. The difference between the two shrank throughout 2018, coming very close to zero at the end of the year.³⁰ There is no silver bullet to predicting the next crisis, and that includes the yield curve.³¹ But the inversion of yields signals that not everything is normal in the economy.

Like for example the fact that the Central Bank of Japan has bought assets worth over 100 per cent of the country's GDP, or that it owns over 75 per cent of the ETF market³² (Exchange traded funds – passive asset portfolios, usually consisting of stocks), making its balance sheet by far the biggest (compared to the size of the economy) of any central bank in the world.

The rift between Italy and the EU kept growing. Italy's draft budget ignored the fiscal rules of the eurozone. In October, the Italian government announced its deficit would increase in 2019 (to 2.4 per cent GDP), breaking the previous government's commitment to decrease it to 0.8 per cent in 2019.³³ Austrian PM Sebastian Kurz tweeted³⁴ that he could not understand the draft budget and had no intention of paying for the populist promises of other politicians. Other European politicians followed.

The yield spread on Italian bonds went over 3 per cent and the situation started to look grim, with the Italian government standing their ground. And they stood firm, since it was difficult to criticize Italy when France had planned an even bigger deficit (2.8 per cent of GDP). In the last 10 years, France has always had a higher deficit than Italy.

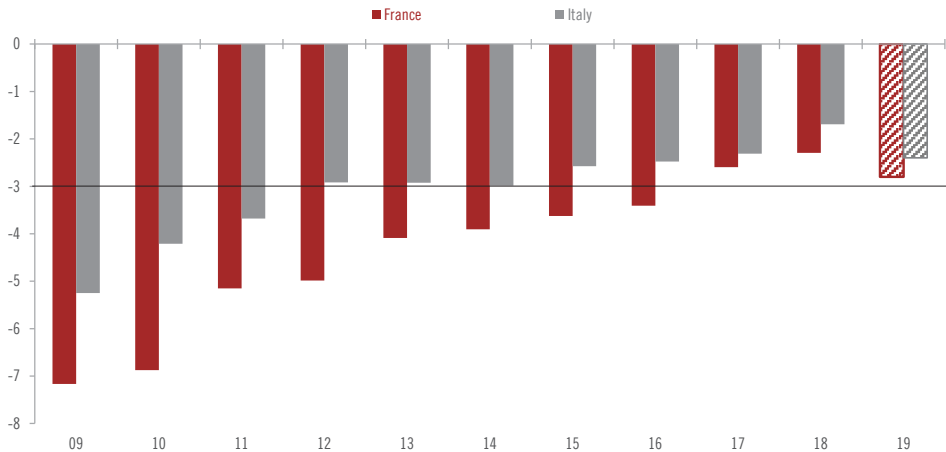
³⁰ "10-year treasury constant maturity minus 2-year treasury constant maturity (T10Y2Y)," FRED. Available online: <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/graph/?g=m9Fh> (accessed on January 10, 2019).

³¹ "Ignore the highly anticipated yield curve inversion," *Seeking Alpha*, January 9, 2018. Available online: <https://seekingalpha.com/article/4232305-ignore-highly-anticipated-yield-curve-inversion> (accessed on January 9, 2018).

³² "Bank of Japan's hoard of assets is now bigger than the economy," *Bloomberg*, November 13, 2018. Available online: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-11-13/bank-of-japan-s-hoard-of-assets-is-now-bigger-than-the-economy> (accessed on November 13, 2018).

³³ "Italy's new fiscal plans: the options of the European Commission," *Bruegel*, October 18, 2018. Available online: <http://bruegel.org/2018/10/italys-new-fiscal-plans-the-options-of-the-european-commission> (accessed on June 27, 2018).

³⁴ Sebastian Kurz Twitter, October 8, 2018. Available online: <https://twitter.com/sebastiankurz/status/1052936115693518849> (accessed on October 8, 2018).

Figure 5. France versus Italy: government budget balance (% of GDP)

Source: PWM – AA&MR, AMECO

The European Commission rejected Italy's 2019 budget in an unprecedented decision on Tuesday (23 October), after the government in Rome failed to give a substantial response to the executive's allegations of a breach of EU law.

NOVEMBER – DECEMBER

The end of the year looked worrying for the global economy. A potential trade war in the USA–EU–China triangle was being perpetually re-ignited just to be deflected at the last moment. Italy stood firm on its budget proposal, angering a number of member states and scaring investors. In France, President Macron's reform plans hit the hard wall of street protests, leaving the budget in an even worse shape than the Italian one. In December, the tables turned when Italy admitted defeat and agreed to change its budget plan to avoid the EU launching a disciplinary procedure against Rome. The deficit was lowered from 2.4 per cent of GDP to 2.04 per cent of GDP.³⁵ Meanwhile, the likely French deficit rose to 3.4 per cent in 2019, after President Macron backtracked on his tax rise plans, leaving an additional €10 billion hole in the budget.³⁶

The difference between US dollar and euro monetary policies grew wider, as the Fed continued to hike interest rates and dilute its balance sheet, while the ECB kept its quantitative easing program running. These two courses began to converge once again in December. On December 12th, the ECB announced an end – or rather a temporary halt – to the quantitative easing program. The ECB has spent €2.6 trillion (\$3 trillion)

³⁵ "Italy's Conte admits defeat on budget, presents new plan to EU," *Euractiv*, December 13, 2018. Available online: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/economic-governance/news/italys-conte-admits-defeat-on-budget-presents-new-plan-to-eu/> (accessed on December 13, 2018).

³⁶ "French budget deficit seen at 3.4 percent of GDP next year," *Reuters*, December 16, 2018. Available online: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-france-eu-budget/french-budget-deficit-seen-at-3-4-percent-of-gdp-next-year-idUSKBN1OF09Z> (accessed on December 16, 2018).

over almost four years buying up mostly government but also corporate debt, asset-backed securities and covered bonds.³⁷

The decision was far from being a 180-degree turn. The ECB balance sheet is supposed to remain stable for now, since maturing assets will continue to be reinvested. More importantly, the interest rates remain unchanged for the time being.

The main driver of the ECB decision may not have been the difference between the US and the EU, but rather the differences inside the EU. Some member states have not only been experiencing steady rates of solid growth, but also rising levels of inflation and total debt.

Slovakia is one of these countries. Economically speaking, 2018 was its best year in a decade. The unemployment rate hit record lows month after month. Budget revenues were almost a billion euros higher than planned the year before, and the budget for 2019 is the first to have a planned zero deficit.

Yet, there are reasons for caution. One is the rising debt level. The National Bank of Slovakia tightened the mortgage rules throughout 2018, but with record low interest rates, the level of households indebtedness is rising.

For six consecutive years, the level of household debt has been the fastest growing in the EU.³⁸ One reason for this may be the low starting point (10 years ago Slovakia had the lowest household debt compared to GDP in the EU)³⁹. However, Slovak households do not hold many assets to offset the debt (and a lot of their wealth is locked up in real estate). The level of debt overtook the level of deposits in 2018 and the financial assets of Slovak households are growing more slower than their debts. This is not a worrying sign in a strong economy where nominal wages have been growing 6 per cent or more per annum and unemployment is at a record low. But the tide may turn, and it may turn even faster in a small economy – as Slovaks learnt in 2009.

2018 was also the year in which long-standing Finance Minister Peter Kažimír announced his decision to leave politics and stand for selection as the new head of the central bank. While under his leadership the budget was steered (after substantial delays) towards a zero deficit, his success was achieved mainly thanks to tax hikes and the introduction of new taxes. Since 2012, when he became finance minister, 20 new taxes or tax rises have been introduced. Public expenditures have gone from €27 billion to a planned €37 billion in 2019. Not a single important reform has been realized: in education, justice, public health care or public administration. This is obviously not the fault of the finance minister, but of the government as a whole, which

³⁷ "RPT-GRAPHIC-The life and times of ECB quantitative easing, 2015-18," *Reuters*, December 13, 2018. Available online: <https://www.reuters.com/article/eurozone-ecb-qe/rpt-graphic-the-life-and-times-of-ecb-quantitative-easing-2015-18-idUSL8N1YH4KO> (accessed on December 13, 2018).

³⁸ "Slovensko je jedinou krajinou regiónu s vyššími úvermi ako úsporami domácností," [Slovakia is the only country in the region with higher loans than household savings] October 26, 2018. Available online: <https://www.investujeme.sk/clanky/slovensko-je-jedinou-krajinou-regionu-s-vyssimi-uvermi-ako-usporami-domacnosti/> (accessed on October 26, 2018).

³⁹ "Úverové hody na Slovensku (november 2018)," [Loan rates in Slovakia, November 2018] Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic, November 2018. Available online: <https://www.finance.gov.sk/sk/financie/institut-financnej-politiky/publikacie-ifp/komentare/21-uverove-hody-slovensku-november-2018.html> (accessed on December 13, 2018).

has been led by the same main party since 2012. The additional revenues incurred during the good times have already been spent.

The situation in Slovakia kind of reflects the global economic situation in 2018 – doing well, but no plan B for events which may not be so far off. Or rather, that lurk in front of our eyes.

DECARBONIZATION OF THE SLOVAK ECONOMY: WHO WILL PAY FOR A GREEN SLOVAKIA?¹

PAVOL SZALAI

Slovakia faces having to significantly reduce industry and heating emissions. The funds that are to be provided under the EU Emissions Trading System² may help. A carbon tax is another option in the game, but the private sector is against it.

Slovakia is on track to meet its climate commitments for 2020 and 2030. According to the conclusions of a report by the International Energy Agency (IEA) on the Slovak energy sector from November 2018:³ “the positive outlook is partly thanks to the Slovak government’s proactive policy support, but also to emission targets that were set rather low initially.”

¹ A first version of this article was published by the author in Slovak at EURACTIV.sk: “Dekarbonizácia slovenskej ekonomiky: Kto zaplatí za zelené Slovensko?” [Decarbonisation of the Slovak Economy: who will pay for a green Slovakia?] *euractiv.sk*, December 6, 2018. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/klima/linksdossier/dekarbonizacia-slovenskej-ekonomiky-kto-zaplata-za-zelene-slovensko/> (accessed on March 1, 2019).

² For more see the European Commission website. Available online: https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/ets_en (accessed on March 1, 2019).

³ *Energy Policies of IEA Countries: Slovak Republic 2018 Review*. International Energy Agency, November 2018. Available online: <https://webstore.iea.org/energy-policies-of-iea-countries-slovak-republic-2018-review> (accessed on March 1, 2019).

Following this report, Slovakia made another significant step in this direction. In December 2018, the government approved the phase-out of subsidies for the extraction of lignite in the Horná Nitra region by 2023.⁴

However, it is not self-evident that the country's emissions reductions targets will be met – either in the medium or the long term. In November 2018, the European Commission proposed that the European economy should become “climate neutral” by 2050, which means net zero emissions.⁵

Slovakia's current slow pace may be felt after 2030. Although the Slovak electricity industry has a weak carbon footprint in European terms thanks to its reliance on nuclear energy and hydropower, fossil fuels – coal and natural gas – are still widely used in heating and industry.

NATIONAL AND EUROPEAN STRATEGIES

Slovakia will be developing its position on the long-term European climate strategy in the coming months. It will soon also be deciding how it will approach emissions reduction over the next few decades. The Slovak Republic will set out its commitments and how it is going to achieve them in its National Energy and Climate Plan looking ahead to 2030. The Ministry of Economy will send the final version to the Commission by the end of this year.

The Ministry's spokesperson Maroš Stano outlined the relevant policies: “The key documents relating to energy are the Energy Policy of the Slovak Republic (which sets out the main objectives and priorities of the energy sector up to 2035) and the Economic Policy Strategy of the Slovak Republic up to 2030. The climate plan is based on the approved National Strategy for the Sustainable Development of the Slovak Republic and the draft Environmental Strategy of the Slovak Republic up to 2030.”⁶

The plan will also take account of a study on the low-carbon economy that is to form the basis of a low-carbon strategy and to be presented by the Ministry of Environment in the coming months. The action plan for the transformation of the Horná Nitra coal region, which is the responsibility of the deputy prime minister for investment and informatization, will serve as another input, formally or informally. The ministerial documents still have to be approved by the government.

According to a spokesperson of the Ministry of Economy “the key strategic objective (of the National Energy and Climate Plan) is in particular ... sustainable economic growth and a sustainable energy supply based on ensuring a safe and reliable supply of energy at optimal cost and the efficient use of energy under stringent environmen-

⁴ “Vláda schválila koniec dotovania ťažby uhlia na hornej Nitre v roku 2023,” [Government approved the phase-of subsidized coal extraction in Horná Nitra by 2023] *Denník N*, December 12, 2018. Available online: <https://dennikn.sk/1323561/vlada-schvalila-koniec-dotovania-tazby-uhlia-na-hornej-nitre-v-roku-2023/> (accessed on March 1, 2019).

⁵ “The Commission calls for a climate neutral Europe by 2050,” European Commission, November 28, 2018. Available online: https://ec.europa.eu/clima/news/commission-calls-climate-neutral-europe-2050_en (accessed on March 1, 2019).

⁶ Unless otherwise stipulated, the quotes used in this article were given to EURACTIV.sk and are included in the original piece in Slovak mentioned in the footnote 1.

tal protections.” He also added that the “goals and priorities have been established in line with the EU-determined objectives and to reflect the capacities of the Slovak national economy.”

The Commission is developing a final version of the 2050 long-term emission reduction strategy, which will draw on the 27 National Energy and Climate Plans. The European Union will present it in 2020, as its contribution to implementing the Paris Agreement on climate.

EMISSIONS TRADING AND CARBON TAX

The cost of decarbonization is in part quantified and paid for through the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS), the federalized emissions reduction tool used in energy and industry. In order to increase the price of the allowances and thus reduce the incentive to pollute, the European institutions have agreed to reform the ETS. The price of one ton of carbon rose to €20–25 in 2018 and should continue rising in the next decade as a result of the reform.

In addition, some countries are introducing a carbon tax based on the “polluter pays” principle, which will cover non-ETS sectors – other industries, heating and cooling, agriculture and transport. However, this tax has to be Europe-wide for it to be really effective in the Single European Market. There have been calls for the introduction of a European carbon tax, by France for example, a country with a nuclear-based energy mix like that in Slovakia, but French industry is less carbon-intensive than Slovak industry. In Slovakia, basically the only sector taxed outside the ETS is road transport (in the form of an excise tax on combustion fuels⁷).

In the next few years, Slovakia will have to decide how the revenues from the ETS auctions should be redistributed to cover the cost of decarbonization. In particular, it will have to decide how it will use the derogation mechanism – the free allocation of allowances to selected sectors in exchange for a commitment to implement green (decarbonization) projects equal in value to the allocated allowances. Slovakia will also have to determine whether it will make the decisions on the specific projects or whether this will be done at the pan-European level. The Modernization Fund⁸ that is being prepared, which will be subject to EU decision-making, is to be financed out of the revenues from the sale of part of the allowances. These revenues will cover green projects in the member states. The government also faces the dilemma of whether to introduce a broad carbon tax. For example, in the Environmental Strategy of the Slovak Republic up to 2030,⁹ which was endorsed by the government, it was suggested that a “budget-neutral carbon tax” should be considered.

⁷ *Energy Policies of IEA Countries: Slovak Republic 2018 Review*, op. cit.

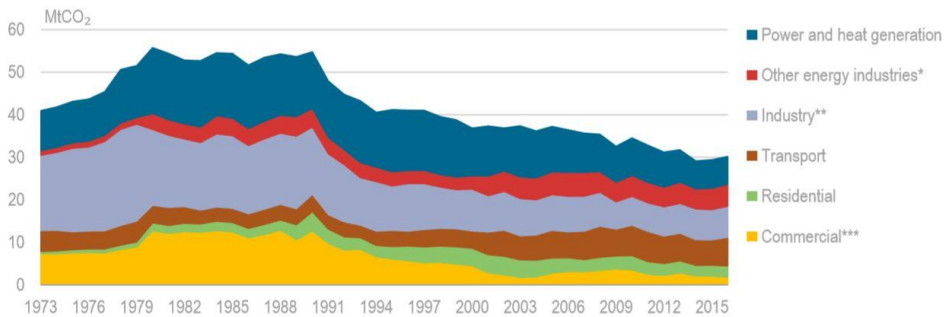
⁸ For more see the European Commission website. Available online: https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/ets/revision_en (accessed on March 1, 2019).

⁹ *Zelenšie Slovensko: Stratégia environmentálnej politiky Slovenskej republiky do roku 2030*. [A Greener Slovakia: Environmental Strategy of the Slovak Republic up to 2030] Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic, February 2019. Available online: http://www.minzp.sk/files/iep/03_vlastny_material_envirostrategia2030_def.pdf (accessed on March 1, 2019).

Slovak emissions dominated by industry

Slovakia released 41.1 million tons of CO₂ equivalent emissions into the atmosphere in 2016. Total emissions dropped by 45 per cent between 1990 and 2016. By comparison, in the European Union emissions decreased by 22 per cent over the same period. In Slovakia, emissions decreased in all sectors – except transport.¹⁰

Figure 1. Energy-related CO₂ emissions by sector, 1973–2016



**Other energy industries* includes emissions from blast furnaces, oil refineries, coke ovens, oil and gas extraction and coal mines.

***Industry* includes CO₂ emissions from combustion at construction and manufacturing industries.

*** *Commercial* includes commercial and public services, agriculture/forestry, and fishing.

Source: IEA (2018a forthcoming), *CO₂ Emissions from Fuel Combustion 2018*, www.iea.org/statistics/.

The biggest polluter in Slovakia is industry (24.2 per cent of emissions), followed by transport (22.4 per cent) and electricity and heat production (17 per cent). The remaining less than 40 percent is produced by other industries, as well as household and private-sector energy consumption. “Iron and steel production accounts for over half of industrial emissions, and this mostly comes from the U.S. Steel Košice plant, the largest point source in the country.”¹¹

EMISSION TARGETS FOR 2020 AND 2030

The European legislation stipulates that by 2020 Europe-wide greenhouse gas emissions must decline by 20 per cent compared to the 1990 reference figure. The European Commission’s estimates show that they should decline substantially more than that. For 2030, there is a Europe-wide 40 per cent target agreed in 2014. However, if the

¹⁰ *Energy Policies of IEA Countries: Slovak Republic 2018 Review*, op. cit.

¹¹ *Ibid*

Union achieves the 2030 targets on renewables and energy efficiency decided last year, total emissions should be reduced by 45 per cent from 1990 onwards.¹²

Table 1. Legally binding emission targets

	European Union	Slovakia
Total emissions 1990–2030	40%	N/A
Emissions in ETS 2005–2030	43%	N/A
Outside ETS 2005–2030	30%	12%

Under the 2015 Paris Agreement, the European Union committed to cut its emissions by 43 per cent in ETS sectors and by 30 per cent in non-ETS sectors between 2005 and 2030.

Slovakia has specific commitments that relate only to non-ETS sectors, as the ETS is an EU mechanism. By 2020, Slovak emissions in non-ETS sectors could increase by 13 percent but by 2030 these should have fallen by 12 per cent (compared to the 2005 figure). However, it is estimated that by 2020 they will actually have decreased by 23 per cent. Thus, Slovakia is already fulfilling its commitments in non-ETS sectors. That means that Slovak emissions can either be increased or pollution credits can be sold to other countries.

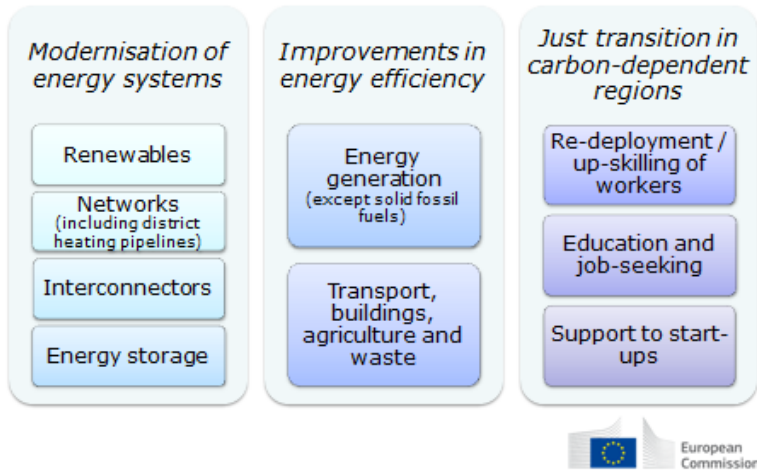
The Slovak Republic has generated significant revenues from the sale of ETS allowances. Between 2012 and 2016, such sales brought in between €12 and €85 million a year – depending on the market price of the emission allowances. Slovenské elektrárne estimate that in 2021–2030, Slovakia will be able to sell 83 million tons of CO₂ for €2.1 billion.

From 2021, in addition to funding from national revenues from the ETS auctions, Slovakia will also have access to the Modernization Fund and to the derogation mechanism. Polluters will be able to access both, allowing them to recover part of the money spent on allowances (Modernization Fund) or not pay at all (derogation mechanism).

According to estimates by the consulting firm Eclareon, Slovak entities will have access to approximately €475 million of the Modernization Fund in 2021–2027. In addition, in 2021–2030, they will have access to 40 per cent allowances under the derogation mechanism, which is equivalent to 33 million tons of CO₂ worth €830 million. Given that in Slovakia, the Modernization Fund will probably be enlarged by the value of the derogation mechanism, its funds will be boosted from €475 million to €1.3 billion in 2021–2030.

These calculations are based on the price of €25 per ton of CO₂. However, thanks to the recent ETS reform, the allowance prices should be significantly higher.

¹² “A Clean Planet for all: A European strategic long-term vision for a prosperous, modern, competitive and climate neutral economy,” European Commission, November 2018. Available online: https://ec.europa.eu/clima/sites/clima/files/docs/pages/com_2018_733_en.pdf (accessed on March 1, 2019).

Figure 2. Priority investments: at least 70 per cent of the Modernization Fund

Lívia Vašáková, Head of the Economic Analysis Section at the Representation of the European Commission to Slovakia, has also pointed out that the ETS directive introduces a new Innovation Fund,¹³ which is designed to support low-energy innovations in the energy sector (in particular renewable sources), in industry and in carbon or energy storage.

Carbon storage is important for emission capture technologies in sectors where carbon emissions will not be completely eliminated in the next few decades, for example in steel production. In turn, the development of energy storage is essential for the use of weather-dependent renewable resources such as wind turbines or photovoltaic panels.

Lívia Vašáková stated that, "The fund will have about €10 billion (at €20 per ton of CO₂) and will be implemented at pan-European level. This fund will support demonstration projects of innovative technologies leading to significant emission reductions or prevention, both in green energy production and in industrial processes or products substituting carbon-intensive products."

The Innovation Fund will support investments of up to 60 per cent of the eligible costs. It is anticipated that the first call for proposals will take place in 2020. As Mrs Vašáková added, "it is important that each country drafts a well-designed and widely consulted National Energy and Climate Plan that will contain a strategic outlook and prioritize investment aimed at decarbonizing the country's economy. In Slovakia there is significant potential to do so in every segment, mainly in industry, transport and heat supply."

¹³ For more see the European Commission website. Available online: https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/ets/revision_en (accessed on March 1, 2019).

CARBON TAXING BEYOND ETS

Although the ETS applies to large polluters, it does not cover all the energy and industry sectors.

In September, the OECD published an analysis¹⁴ showing that ETS or other forms of tax apply to 70 per cent of industry emissions in Slovakia. These emissions are generated during the production process in the steel and chemical technology industries.

However, the remaining 30 per cent of industry emissions are not taxed – for example, car production requires a lot of energy. Some residential sector heating is not subject to a carbon tax. As the Slovak Heat Producers Association recently pointed out, only some of its customers contribute to the ETS – 500–600 thousand out of 1.8 million customers.¹⁵ The remaining customers do not use heat generated by sources large enough to be covered by the ETS.

However, the OECD recommends that Slovakia focus on industry rather than households. This is where the share of untaxed emissions is the largest – 30 per cent. In the power sector the amount of emissions not covered by a carbon tax amounts to 0 per cent (thanks to the ETS), in transport (where excise taxes apply) it is 4 per cent and in the residential sector it is 10 per cent (also subject to excise taxes) and private sectors are tax-free.¹⁶

Table 2. Share of emissions priced and average price signals from tax and ETS, Slovak Republic

	CO ₂ emissions by sector (in t CO ₂)	Tax		ETS		Overlap of tax and ETS ⁵	Emissions not priced by tax or ETS
		Average price (in EUR/tCO ₂)	Share of emissions priced	Average price (in EUR/tCO ₂)	Share of emissions priced		
Agriculture & Fishing	351	112.6	82%	0.0	0%	0%	18%
Electricity	2 978	3.9	100%	7.2	89%	89%	0%
Industry	20 951	20.3	54%	7.2	46%	30%	30%
Offroad transport	562	49.0	100%	7.2	100%	100%	0%
Residential & Commercial	4 927	20.1	90%	7.2	0%	0%	10%
Road transport	6 175	162.8	96%	0.0	0%	0%	4%
Total⁴	35 945	37.6	71%	2.6	36%	27%	20%

Access the data for all 41 countries: <http://oe.cd/emissionsdata>

⁴Total average prices are weighted by the share of emissions in each sector that is priced in the country.

⁵Tax and ETS can apply to the same emissions base. The overlap describes the percentage of emissions in a sector that is priced by both tax and ETS.

The Environmental Strategy of the Slovak Republic up to 2030 discusses the introduction of a fiscally neutral carbon tax.

¹⁴ *Revenue from environmentally related taxes in the Slovak Republic*. OECD, September 26, 2016. Available online: <https://www.oecd.org/tax/tax-policy/environmental-tax-profile-slovak-republic.pdf> (accessed on March 1, 2019).

¹⁵ "Slovenskí teplári volajú po uhlíkovej dani," [Slovak heat producers call for a carbon tax] *EURACTIV.sk*, September 27, 2018. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/energetika/news/slovenski-teplari-volaju-po-uhlikovej-dani/> (accessed on March 1, 2019).

¹⁶ *Revenue from environmentally related taxes in the Slovak Republic*, op. cit.

PRIORITIES OF SLOVAK STAKEHOLDERS

What do domestic players think Slovakia's decarbonization priorities should be?

According to State Secretary at the Ministry of Environment Norbert Kurilla, the decarbonization of the energy sector is clearly inevitable. He explains, that "even if we were to change road transport by 2030 and only use electric vehicles, the production of the electricity required would have to be low-carbon or carbon-free to have a positive impact on reducing greenhouse gas emissions."

The Ministry of Economy also places great emphasis on "modernizing energy facilities and changing the fuel base." The ministry's spokesman Maroš Stano stated, "Building a low-carbon economy is a long-term priority in Slovak Energy Policy. Supportive financial programs are designed to accelerate the transition to a low-carbon energy sector, with coal being replaced by another primary energy source. The programs support the introduction of renewable energy sources into the energy mix of electricity and heat producers with the aim of decarbonizing the energy sector."

As electricity is now largely produced from low-carbon sources, the ministry wants to focus more on the heating and cooling sectors.

Opposition MP Karol Galek from the political party Sloboda a Solidarita [Freedom and Solidarity] thinks that all sectors should independently assess their potential, but subsequent strategies must then be linked: "No sector has priority, since none exists in a vacuum." He also points out that although the National Energy and Climate Plan was drafted by the Ministry of Economy, all stakeholders must acknowledge their respective roles and make pledges. He added, "First and foremost, however, in all areas we should focus on maximizing energy efficiency, which is still in its beginnings in Slovakia, and on comprehensively assessing the potential of domestic carbon-free energy production."

Chairman of the Board of Directors for Buildings for the Future Peter Robl emphasized that the National Plan must be drawn up in close cooperation with other relevant ministries as well as with all stakeholders and that "Slovakia does not need another formal strategy. We need the government and the parliament to fully support the National Energy and Climate plan."

INDUSTRIES WANT ACCESS TO ETS FUNDS

Miroslav Kiral'varga, Vice-President of US Steel Košice and President of the Republic Employers' Union, points out that industry is the driving force of the Slovak economy. He stated "therefore, the Slovak government should make considerable efforts to meet the ambitious objectives of the EU and the Paris Agreement, in particular by supporting the transformation of industries and that must go hand in hand with energy decarbonisation."

However, he warned that the transition to low-carbon production would be very demanding for industry both in terms of energy consumption and required investments. Therefore, the Vice-President of the Košice plant expects the government to give Slovak industry maximum access to investment mechanisms and funds at European level.

Kiráľvarga said “After all, funds for this purpose come from revenues from emission allowance auctions, so they are *de facto* our resources. It is important that they are returned fully to industry to co-finance the modernization of energy systems or production technologies.” He then added “like at the European level, the national plans must also include analyses of energy needs and the complexity of the transformation.”

The Managing Director of the Slovak Gas and Oil Association Ján Klepáč expects “an ambitious, realistic and economically efficient plan for the complete elimination of the use of solid fuels – coal in power plants and central heating systems, as well as coal and wood in old unecological solid fuel boilers.”

Klepáč underlined that if Slovakia were to replace its solid fuels with renewable sources or natural gas, it would have one of the cleanest energy sectors in the EU. Accordingly, the Commission should look for the potential in greater use of renewables in other countries where solid fuels are used more.

“There the deployment of renewable resources and decarbonisation will be much more cost-effective,” Klepáč said and added, however, that the potential for Slovak decarbonization was probably much greater in transport than in the energy sector.

ENVIRONMENT PROTECTORS: POLLUTER PAYS

Like Kurilla and Klepáč, Juraj Melichár considers the energy sector to be most important. He thinks a precise and quantified answer should be provided by a study of a low-carbon economy being conducted by the Environment Ministry which will form the basis of Slovakia's low-carbon strategy up to 2050.

Melichár who is the National Public Finance Coordinator for the Friends of the Earth-CEPA and CEE Bankwatch Networks argues the National Energy and Climate Plan should have several priorities.

The first is energy efficiency. Second, the economy should be decarbonized through the promotion of renewable energy sources, taking into account their sustainability, especially in relation to biomass. Melichár also calls for “systematic and increased support for municipalities, communities and households” that use solar energy and heat pumps. He thinks the “comprehensive decentralization of the Slovak energy sector and support for prosumers” (small energy producers who consume the energy they produce) is also important. However, ending coal mining by 2021 and the overall use of coal in Slovakia by 2023 are also considered a priority.

Finally, he advocates fair funding for energy transformation based on the polluter-pays principle. He has in mind, in particular, the profits generated by state-funded polluters and the almost complete lack of environmental taxation in the Slovak Republic.

EXPERT OPINIONS FROM THE V4

What do foreign experts say? Barbora Vondrušková, Public Affairs Project Manager at the Czech company ČEZ, claims that cost efficiency should be a priority for decar-

bonization in the Visegrad Group. Moreover the greenhouse gas emission reductions targets should reflect time and budgetary constraints.

The ETS Modernization Fund has relatively well defined priority areas: energy efficiency and renewable resources. But as Vondrušková pointed out “the transformation has to be well balanced and paced in such a way as to avoid unnecessary cost fluctuations and energy prices.”

Director of the Polish NGO Forum Energii Joanna Maćkowiak-Pandera believes that heating is the best candidate for decarbonization in the V4. “Urban heating in Poland is in need of a rapid modernization,” said Maćkowiak-Pandera, who was previously Deputy State Secretary at the Polish Environment Ministry. She thinks EU cohesion funding may no longer be available for this purpose after 2030. She also points out that due to climate change, heating systems will need to be adapted for cooling.

She considers it “self-evident” that investments should be made in renewable resources since it will be the cheapest source of energy by 2050 if not earlier.

As far as the Modernization Fund and the derogation scheme are concerned, Maćkowiak-Pandera thinks they should be directed mainly at improving energy efficiency in buildings, “given the range of needs and high priority of this task.” In her view, this is a cost-effective method of reducing emissions.

The other priorities should be the modernization of small urban heating systems, support for citizens who are worried about paying heating bills, and also for electromobility. Maćkowiak-Pandera added, “Although it will take a long time for [the progressive deployment of] electric cars to improve air quality, it is worth creating opportunities for their development.”

Commenting on the introduction of a carbon tax, Maćkowiak-Pandera said that it was essential to tax resources that generate high emissions. “We have to count external costs where polluters are a source of pollution for entire communities. She added, they do not include them in total costs. In this sense, tax is the right way to find balance.”

DEBATING THE CARBON TAX

Vondrušková from ČEZ agreed that a carbon tax should be introduced “alongside the ETS.”

Vašáková from the European Commission stated that there was a range of options that can be used in state policies to influence the investment decisions made by companies or individuals. Vašáková said “These tools will play an extremely important role in the mix of policies that member states will be introducing to ensure the environmental and economic sustainability of the transition to a low-carbon economy.”

Norbert Kurilla, State Secretary at the Slovak Ministry of Environment confirmed that “The introduction of a carbon tax to complement the ETS and set the price of carbon is one of the options we are analyzing.”

The Ministry of Economy did not comment on the carbon tax. Spokesman Stano said “The global process of decarbonisation will require considerable funding. Therefore, it will be necessary to involve all market participants in financing the cost of

decarbonisation: private companies, households, but also the state. At the same time, decarbonisation measures have to be cofunded by EU funds.”

Peter Robl and Juraj Melichár openly called for a carbon tax.

Robl from Buildings for the Future said “We are in favor of introducing environmental taxes. Slovakia has long been criticized for their absence. Public resources should be used to the extent necessary to decarbonize/modernize – to incentivize investment or to use the best available technologies.”

Melichár from Friends of the Earth–CEPA was “in favor of introducing a carbon tax and, in general, the consistent application of the polluter pays principle.”

He argued, “In Slovakia, we have a number of huge polluters, such as U.S. Steel, Slovnaft, Hornonitrianske bane Prievidza and so on, who have net annual profits in millions or hundreds of millions of euros and still receive various forms of public finance support.” Melichár stated, “Their impacts on the environment as well as on society in general are not sufficiently factored into their production costs. This is about privatizing profits and socializing losses.”

In contrast, the opposition MP, Vice President of the U.S. Steel Košice and President of the Slovak Gas and Oil Union opposed another Slovak or intra-European carbon tax.

MP Karol Galek stated that “The carbon market is a more suitable tool for achieving greenhouse gas reductions than a carbon tax. It would only have a further negative impact on the end prices of goods and services for European consumers.”

Kiráľvarga, Vice-President of U.S. Steel Košice and President of the Republic Employers’ Union of U.S. Steel was only willing to discuss a carbon tax in the context of domestic production if it was to replace the ETS. “However, if they were put in place in parallel and thus imposed another burden on the ETS installations, they would result in a *de facto* double burden (taxation), which we strongly disagree with.”

He explained that the breakthrough technologies and innovations needed to decarbonize the industry would require huge investment costs: “The investments companies make will not be sufficient and a substantial public funding contribution is therefore necessary.”

CARBON TAX AT THE UNION BORDER?

However, Kiráľvarga could imagine a carbon tax being collected at the borders of the European market. “If a carbon tax is applied to imports into the EU that do not meet European environmental standards – regardless of the form – we would welcome and support it. It would equalise the cost burden of European and non-European producers and thus ensure a level playing field in this area.” In Slovakia a carbon tax has also been discussed in connection with heating. Klepáč, the Head of the Slovak Oil and Gas Association pointed out that the bulk of central heating production was owned by the state. “Hence, decarbonisation is actually just a management decision by the state itself. The same applies to subsidies for the production of electricity from domestic coal, also a political decision for the state.”

According to Klepáč, the situation was different only for households using old boilers that cause pollution in Slovakia. “There is a need to set up a subsidy program to

replace these boilers with low-emission models. It is, however, necessary to allocate subsidies such that these households, usually the poorer ones, will actually be able to get rid of solid fuel heating."

In relation to a carbon tax on emissions that do not fall under the ETS, Klepáč called for the problem of PM10 and PM2.5 pollutants in Slovakia to be addressed. "If a potential carbon tax prioritized local wood-burning heaters even more to the detriment of environmentally friendly natural gas heating, it would certainly lead to a further deterioration of air quality in residential areas." Klepáč emphasized that five thousand people die prematurely in Slovakia every year due to poor air quality. He explained that a potential carbon tax would lead to a bigger difference in the price of firewood and the price of natural gas, causing a further increase in the number of households burning solid fuels, especially wood, and a further deterioration in air quality. Klepáč concluded that if environmental taxes are to be reformed a more comprehensive approach should be adopted that takes into account the production of particulate matter as well as greenhouse gases.

SLOVAK SECURITY AND DEFENSE POLICY IN 2018

TOMÁŠ ČIŽIK

The year 2018 was not a calm one in world affairs. The post-Cold War international order is becoming more unstable, potentially threatening global peace and security, perhaps irreversibly. Geopolitics has become relevant once again, having adopted a new face. The great powers now compete and use hybrid warfare and political interference to achieve their political goals.

The main events that challenged international security in 2018 may be summarized as:

1. the United States withdrawing from the Iran Nuclear Treaty;
2. the announcement of the creation of a new US military brand – Space Force;
3. the meeting between Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin in Helsinki just a few days before the NATO Summit. The US did not present a clear agenda and it was up to Putin to lead the way in the summit. Donald Trump announced that the US would withdraw from the INF Nuclear Treaty;
4. Brexit – Theresa May is still struggling to work out an agreement with the EU;
5. in September, Russia conducted its largest military exercise – Vostok 2018 – involving 300,000 soldiers. NATO condemned the exercise as a rehearsal for large-scale conflict.
6. in June, the foreign ministers of France, Germany, Ukraine and Russia met in Berlin within the Normandy Format and discussed the implementation of the ceasefire in eastern Ukraine and the deployment of a UN peacekeeping mission in the region;
7. a trade war between the United States and China was triggered in July 2018, when the United States imposed higher tariffs on Chinese goods and China retaliated in the same way;

8. in November 2018, an international incident occurred, when Russian forces seized three Ukrainian vessels in the Sea of Azov, triggering a new dispute between Russia and Ukraine. Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko declared 30 days of “martial law” in the areas bordering the Russian Federation.

To summarize, the international security situation is volatile. Great powers (Russia, China and Iran) are using unconventional warfare to achieve their strategic goals. The United States is becoming more and more isolationist and its withdrawal from the INF Treaty and Iran Nuclear Treaty certainly did not improve international security.

Slovakia, as part of the international community, had to take these events into consideration, in relation to its security and defense policy and its foreign policy commitments. Moreover, Slovakia’s strategies had still not been approved by the National Council (parliament), due to the inability of the Slovak government to reach a consensus. There were even suggestions the strategies could be rewritten. So, Slovakia is still using its strategies from 2005, which are now outdated and do not reflect the current situation in international relations. The main problem is that unlike all the countries in Slovakia’s neighborhood, who approved their security strategies right after the Russian annexation of Crimea, five years on Slovakia is still not able to reach a consensus on the wording, mainly due to internal political struggles and the ambiguous policies of some political parties (Slovenská národná strana and Ľudová strana Naše Slovensko). This situation could potentially influence Slovakia’s reputation as a reliable partner in the eyes of our Allies. Nonetheless, Slovakia is actively contributing to NATO and EU operations.

SECURITY AND DEFENSE STRATEGIES

Before turning to analyze Slovak security and defense policy, I will first briefly look at the strategies themselves. For the purposes of this article, I will be referring to the strategies that were approved by the Government of the Slovak Republic on October 4, 2017.¹

As mentioned above, there were some attempts to re-write the strategies. The main conflict that sparked a new round of discussions about the security strategy was started by the Slovak National Party (Slovenská národná strana, SNS). Their leaders disagreed with the statement that Russia represents a threat to Slovakia. The MP Jaroslav Paška (SNS) even said on the Radio show *Sobotné dialógy* (September 22, 2018) that the Slovak security strategy had been written abroad.² Minister of Foreign

¹ For the full text (in Slovak) of the security and defense strategies see the website of the Government of the Slovak Republic: “Návrh Bezpečnostnej stratégie Slovenskej republiky,” [Security Strategy of the Slovak Republic] Government of the Slovak Republic, 2017. Available online: <http://www.rokovania.sk/Rokovanie.aspx/BodRokovaniaDetail?idMaterial=26912> (accessed on February 12, 2019) and “Návrh Obrannej stratégie Slovenskej republiky,” [Defense Strategy of the Slovak Republic] Government of the Slovak Republic, 2017. Available online: <http://www.rokovania.sk/Rokovanie.aspx/BodRokovaniaDetail?idMaterial=26914> (accessed on February 12, 2019).

² “Komentár Zuzany Keppelovej – Jaroslav Paška v ríši pochybností,” [Commentary of Zuzana Kepplová – Jaroslav Paška in the realm of doubts] *Sme*, September 22, 2018. Available online: <https://komentare.sme.sk/c/20920284/jaroslav-paska-v-risi-pochynosti.html> (accessed on February 04, 2019).

Affairs Miroslav Lajčák stated that the “security strategy is a document which was created by the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs and whoever argues it was written abroad by a foreign foundation is just lying.” He also stated that the “security strategy is a document which reflects the security environment and which defends Slovak security interests and needs.”³ The leader of Most-Híd, one of the governing coalition parties, Béla Bugár stated that his party would block any attempts to re-write the strategies. Prime Minister Peter Pellegrini stated that the “strategy was approved by the government, so the government is bound by them, regardless of the approval of the parliament.”⁴ The prime minister also stated that the country know where its Allies were and where Slovakia should be fulfilling its commitments.

According to the Security Strategy of the Slovak Republic the primary objectives of security policy are (§6a-g):

respect for the fundamental principles and norms of international law, the security and stability of the Euro-Atlantic area, the security and stability of the broader EU and NATO neighborhood, the ability to promote Slovak security interests in the international environment, the maintenance of state security and defense guarantees, the improvement of state resilience towards security threats and the development of the economic, material and environmental security and stability of Slovakia.⁵

It is acknowledged in the strategy that the security environment has dramatically and significantly deteriorated. That environment is affected by interconnecting internal and external factors, and it is difficult to predict future scenarios. “Crisis situations can emerge without any warning, and therefore any reaction by the international community may not be immediate.” In the strategy (§54), Slovakia commits itself to actively participating in shaping the security environment in cooperation with allies and partners. It also states that the security of the Euro-Atlantic area is indivisible. Paragraph 56 relates solely to NATO, and there Slovakia commits itself to strengthening collective security within NATO and supporting its transformation and adaptation to new security threats and challenges, including by reinforcing NATO’s eastern flank. Moreover, Slovakia will contribute to the territorial defense of NATO member and partner states, as well as to NATO missions and operations outside NATO territory. Slovakia (§57) will support European integration and has the ambition to participate in enhancing security cooperation in the areas of security and defense. Slovakia will also contribute to the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy as laid out in the Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy.⁶ Moreover, in the Defense Strategy of the Slovak Republic it is stated that (§38) Slovakia considers NATO to be the key forum for collec-

³ “Lajčák: Bezpečnostná stratégia je vyvážený document, ktorý vznikol na ministerstve,” *Sme*. January 9, 2019. Available online: <https://domov.sme.sk/c/22024686/lajcak-bezpecnostna-strategia-je-vyvazeny-dokument-ktory-vznikol-na-ministerstve.html> (accessed on February 4, 2019).

⁴ *Ibid*

⁵ “Návrh Bezpečnostnej stratégie Slovenskej republiky,” *op. cit.*

⁶ “Shared vision, common action: a stronger Europe. A global strategy for the European Union’s foreign and security policy,” European Union, June 2016. Available online: https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/a_global_strategy_for_the_european_unions_foreign_and_security_policy-_june_2016.pdf (accessed on March 14, 2019).

tive security, while partnerships with other NATO member states are in its vital security interests.⁷ The cornerstones of Slovakia's security are its membership of international organizations, mainly the EU and NATO. Paragraph 9 of the Security Strategy stresses that "Slovakia has a negative perception of the weakening of the abilities of the UN and OSCE to prevent and stabilize conflicts and crises." However, the role of the UN and OSCE are mentioned only very vaguely and the main emphasis is on NATO and the EU. In the Defense Strategy two main areas of interest for Slovakia are highlighted – the Euro-Atlantic area (§6b) and the broader NATO and EU neighborhood (§6c) which is the main source of security threats and need to be monitored – specifically regarding Ukraine, the Western Balkans and the Middle East. The strategies highlight the need for further enlargement of the EU and NATO to prevent future crises and conflicts. Below I will describe Slovakia's active participation in NATO and EU missions and operations, and the importance of NATO and EU to Slovakia's security.

NATO AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

As mentioned in the previous section, NATO and the EU are the main pillars of Slovakia's security. One of the main events in 2018 was the NATO Summit in Brussels, at which five main topics were discussed – deterrence and defense; project stability; NATO–EU cooperation; modernization and defense spending. The summit confirmed the strong position of the Allies against "Russia's aggressive actions, including the threat and use of force to attain political goals, challenge the Alliance and are undermining Euro-Atlantic security and the rules-based international order."⁸ NATO will also

continue to respond to the deteriorated security environment by enhancing our deterrence and defense posture, including by a forward presence in the eastern part of the Alliance. We have also suspended all practical civilian and military cooperation between NATO and Russia, while remaining open to political dialogue.⁹

At the summit the NATO Readiness Initiative (4x30) – by 2020 – was launched, with the Allies committing to having 30 battalions, 30 air squadrons and 30 naval combat vessels capable of being deployed within 30 days. Slovakia is already contributing to the Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP) in Latvia, where 152 Slovak soldiers are deployed (in the second half of 2018).

Slovakia also participated in the largest NATO military exercise since the end of the Cold War, Trident Juncture 2018, which took place in Norway (October 28–November 23, 2018).¹⁰ The Trident Juncture exercise tested the Allies' abilities to defend their populations and territories, deter potential adversaries and cooperate with NATO partners

⁷ "Návrh Obrannej stratégie Slovenskej republiky," op. cit.

⁸ "Brussels Summit Declaration," NATO, July 11–12, 2018. Available online: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_156624.htm (accessed on March 8, 2019).

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ "Trident Juncture 2018," NATO. Available online: <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/157833.htm> (accessed on March 8, 2019).

under the Article 5 scenario. Slovakia contributed five soldiers who participated in the planning and coordination of intelligence activities, target identification and logistics of aerial operations in Italy. Another four soldiers performed specific tasks related to land and air operations planning and management and protection of forces and health support for operations in Norway.¹¹ However, the participation of nine Slovak soldiers in the biggest NATO exercise cannot be seen as sufficient.

In 2018, Slovakia continued to promote NATO's core values under the WeAreNATO initiative. This initiative consists mainly of videos (and public debates) promoting the role of NATO in our everyday security. The videos are disseminated through social media and are mainly targeted at the younger audience which is still developing its opinions about NATO. The main aim of the initiative is to counter negative narrative and disinformation campaigns about NATO and to improve general knowledge on NATO among the general population. Slovak perceptions of NATO are still divided and uncertain (see Figure 2 in the section on "Slovakia and hybrid warfare").

The PESCO Initiative is the EU's response to the worsening security situation in its neighborhood (Syria, Libya, Ukraine, Middle East, etc.). However, moves to strengthen the defense cooperation of EU member states were accelerated by political developments in the United States (Donald Trump cast doubt on the role of NATO and collective defence on several occasions) and the United Kingdom (the main reason is Brexit). PESCO is a tool for EU member states to better plan and develop their defense capabilities.¹²

In March 2018, EU defense ministers met in Brussels and approved 17 military projects, which are to take place under the PESCO initiative. They discussed preparations for training missions in Mali, Somalia and the Central African Republic.¹³ Ministers also discussed deepening cooperation between NATO and the EU. One approved military project within PESCO is a Slovak project called EuroArtillery. Another successful project concerns common training and exercises, operation sphere and shared capabilities, which will be crucial to future cooperation between the EU member states' armies.

Slovakia plays an active role in PESCO. Slovakia is coordinating the EuroArtillery project and is participating in a further eight projects (as an observer state in two of them).¹⁴ PESCO is an initiative through which Slovakia can integrate more deeply into

¹¹ "Slovensko sa zapojí do najväčšieho vojenského cvičenia NATO Trident Juncture 2018," [Slovakia will join the biggest military exercise NATO Trident Juncture 2018] Ministry of Defense of the Slovak Republic, October 10, 2018. Available online: <https://www.mod.gov.sk/42901-sk/slovensko-sa-zapoji-do-najvacsieho-vojenskeho-cvicenia-nato-trident-juncture-2018/> (accessed on March 9, 2019).

¹² For more information about PESCO see its website: <https://pesco.europa.eu/> (accessed on March 13, 2019).

¹³ "Ministri obrany schválili prvé záväzné predpisy a projekty pre PESCO," [Defense ministers approved first commitments and projects for PESCO] *Euroactiv.sk*. March 6, 2018. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/obrana-a-zahranicie/news/ministri-obrany-schvalili-prve-zavazne-predpisy-a-projekty-pre-pesco/> (accessed on February 10, 2019).

¹⁴ "Ministri obrany a zahraničných vecí členských štátov EÚ potvrdili v Bruseli realizáciu novej vlny projektov PESCO," [EU member states' defense and foreign affairs ministers confirmed the implementation of the first PESCO projects in Brussels] Ministry of Defense of the Slovak Republic, November 19, 2018. Available online: <https://www.mod.gov.sk/43148-sk/ministri-obrany-a-zahranicnych-veci-clenskych-statov-eu-potvrdili-v-bruseli-realizaciu-novej-vlny-projektov-pesco/> (accessed on March 13, 2019).

EU structures, and by actively participating and contributing to this initiative it is clear that Slovakia is willing to do so.

SLOVAKIA AND FOREIGN OPERATIONS

Slovakia is very active in international operations, despite being a small country with limited resources. According to the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs in 2018¹⁵ Slovakia participated in 15 crisis management missions: six EU missions (EUFOR ALTHEA – Bosnia and Herzegovina, EULEX – Kosovo, EUAM – Ukraine, EUBAM – Moldova and Ukraine, EUMM – Georgia, European External Action Service – EEAS), one OSCE mission (Ukraine), three NATO missions (Resolute Support – Afghanistan, NATO Training and Capacity Building mission in Iraq, NATO in Baltics – Latvia) and three UN missions (UNFICYP – Cyprus, UNTSO – Middle East, UNSTAMIH – Haiti. It deployed 250 personnel in UN missions (250 soldiers and 6 policemen), 195 personnel in NATO missions (all military personnel), 67 personnel in EU missions (55 soldiers and 12 policemen), and one policeman in an OSCE mission.

Slovakia's participation in these missions and operations confirms that, as indicated in the strategies, Slovakia will be actively contributing to the territorial defense and security of its partners and allies. Moreover, these operations are comprehensive in scope, with all missions focusing on monitoring, training missions or the rule of law. Participating in operations abroad also provides Slovakia and the Slovak Armed Forces with the unique opportunity to increase interoperability with allies and partners, as well as to gain new experience which will, in the end, improve the quality of the Armed Forces. In addition, Slovakia's participation in operations abroad could be framed as activities supporting international stability and security, as stated in the strategies. Given its limited resources, Slovakia has always participated in multinational operations and never relied on the unilateral use of military force. It is important to note that Slovakia is currently undergoing a massive modernization of its military hardware (jet fighters, armored personnel carriers, radars, helicopters, etc.), in order to replace outdated technical equipment with modern versions and to reduce Slovakia's dependence on Russian spare parts. However, on February 20, 2019, the government approved a decision to extend the servicing of its MiG-29s to the year 2023, which will cost at least €120 million. This decision was criticized by security experts and opposition parties.

DEFENSE SPENDING AND MODERNIZATION

As mentioned in the previous section, the EU and NATO represent the main pillars of Slovakia's security and economic development, and Slovakia is willing to actively contribute to international security. Therefore, Slovakia is committed to increasing its defense spending and to modernizing its Armed Forces. According to the Security

¹⁵ Based on preliminary data from the *Annual Report of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic 2018*, forthcoming.

Strategy of the Slovak Republic (§78), Slovakia will increase its defense spending to 1.6 per cent of GDP by 2020 and to 2 per cent by 2024.

In 2018, Slovakia spent 1.20 per cent of GDP (€1,085 billion) on defense, 21.05 per cent of this sum was allocated to equipment expenditure.¹⁶ According to the Ministry of Finance,¹⁷ in 2019, Slovakia will spend 1.73 per cent of GDP on defense. That means total defense spending will rise to €1.66 billion (€581 million more than in 2018). Based on the previous data, Slovakia is fulfilling its commitment to spend 2 per cent of GDP on defense by 2024.

“The long-term underfunding of the Slovak Armed Forces means that most military equipment is obsolete and in poor condition and needs to be modernized, including jet fighters, armored personnel carriers and military radars.”¹⁸

Overall, Slovakia will spend about €6.5 billion by 2030 on modernizing its military. In 2015, Slovakia signed an agreement with the United States to acquire nine new UH-60M Black Hawk helicopters. Slovakia has also already acquired two C-27J Spartan aircraft. In 2017, the Slovak government approved the release of €1.2 billion for the purchase of 81 8x8 armored vehicles and 404 4x4 multipurpose vehicles. Slovakia will also acquire 14 new jet fighters F-16 Block 70/72 from the United States for €1.589 billion.¹⁹ There is no doubt that modernization expenses will be included in the overall defense spending in order to reach the 2 per cent threshold. From the mid-term perspective, Slovak defense spending will gradually increase up to 2 per cent.

Due to the changed security environment, Slovakia is now focusing mainly on developing its capabilities for territorial defense because of the imminent security threat in its close neighborhood. However, Slovakia is actively contributing to international crisis management operations, and is therefore also developing its capabilities for operations abroad. Slovakia will never have the necessary resources and capabilities for complex operations, thus it is logical for Slovakia to focus on specific capabilities that could support the international efforts of its allies and partners.

According to the NATO Defense Planning Capability Review 2017/2018 – the Slovak Republic,²⁰ Slovakia's strategic plans and priorities are not clear and Slovakia's planned acquisition of new jet fighters could potentially divert critical resources “from the development of the heavy infantry brigade and other CS and CSS capabilities.” In addition, the NATO review stresses that the acquisition of the jet fighters “diverts appropriate funding from the delivery of interoperability across its [Slovakia's] forces.” It also criticizes the fact that the acquisition of the heavy brigade will be not be sufficient to fulfil the NATO

¹⁶ “Defence expenditure of NATO countries (2011–2018),” NATO, July 10, 2018. Available online: https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2018_07/20180709_180710-pr2018-91-en.pdf (accessed on March 8, 2019).

¹⁷ See [Rozpočet.sk](http://www.rozpocet.sk), the website of the Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic 2019. Available online: <http://www.rozpocet.sk/web/#/prehľad> (accessed on March 8, 2019).

¹⁸ T. Čížik, “New trends of post-Soviet heritage? Slovak security policy in 2018,” *European Security & Defence* Vol. 3, 2018.

¹⁹ “Slovensko nakúpi americké stíhačky F-16,” [Slovakia will purchase American F-16s] *Trend.sk*, August 11, 2018. Available online: <https://www.etrend.sk/ekonomika/slovensko-nakupi-americke-stihacky-f-16.html> (accessed on February 6, 2019).

²⁰ Posted on the Facebook profile of Martin Dubéci, member of the political party *Progresívne Slovensko* on August 9, 2018. Available online <https://www.facebook.com/mdubeci/posts/10155790676639103> (accessed on February 8, 2019).

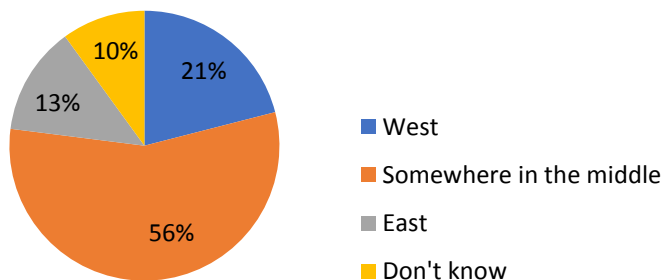
Capability Target requirement adopted in 2017. Slovakia was also criticized for the lack of quality SOF capabilities – “SOF units are not provided with air assets for training, generating operational shortfalls in the insertion and extraction of forces,” so Slovakia has usually had to request that its Allies provide these capabilities for SOF units. The NATO review also criticizes Slovakia’s defense spending, mainly the threshold of spending 20 per cent on modernization – “Years of underfunding, and indecision in taking procurement decisions, have left the Slovak Republic with a significant challenge to modernize its Armed Forces.”

SLOVAKIA AND HYBRID WARFARE

The main security challenge for Slovakia remains Russia’s hybrid warfare – which is predominantly information warfare aimed at trying to influence Slovakia’s foreign policy orientation. People are being influenced by disinformation campaigns and so there is an increasing possibility that foreign policy may change in the future. The public’s perceptions of Slovakia’s foreign policy orientation are concerning. According to GLOBSEC²¹ (2018), 21 per cent of Slovaks favored a Western orientation, 13 per cent favored an Eastern orientation, but 56 per cent of Slovaks thought Slovakia belongs “somewhere in the middle”. In the same research, 37 per cent of Slovaks believed that NATO was a “good thing”, while 21 per cent believed that NATO was a “bad thing.” On the question “How would you vote in a referendum?,” 50 per cent of Slovaks would vote to “Stay in NATO,” but 31 per cent would vote to “Leave NATO.” Perceptions of the EU were slightly better, but still among the worst of the V4 countries – 53 per cent of Slovaks perceived the EU as a “good thing” and only 13 per cent perceived the EU as a “bad thing,” while 66 per cent of Slovaks would vote “to stay in the EU” in a referendum and 22 per cent of Slovaks would vote to “Leave the EU”.

Figure 1. Slovak foreign policy orientation – public opinion poll (based on Globsec Trends 2018 data)

Where Slovakia belongs:



²¹ D. Milo, K. Klingová, D. Hajdu, “Globsec Trends 2018 – Central Europe: one region, different perspectives,” Globsec Policy Institute, 2018. Available online: <https://www.globsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/GLOBSEC-Trends-2018.pdf> (accessed on February 8, 2019).

Figure 2. Slovak perceptions of NATO – public opinion poll (based on Globsec Trends 2018 data)

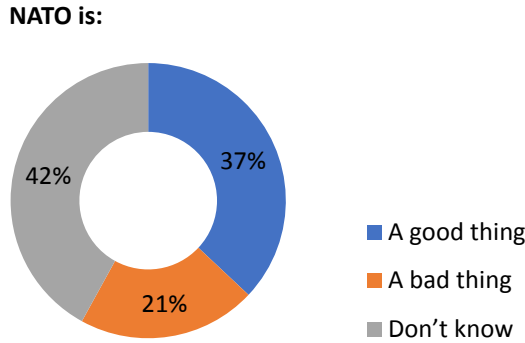
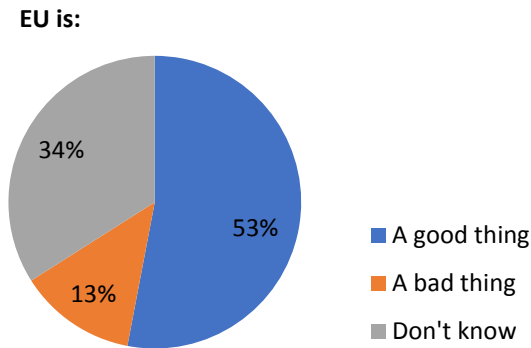


Figure 3. Slovak perceptions of the EU – public opinion poll (based on Globsec Trends 2018 data)



Despite the efforts of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, NGOs and activists, disinformation campaigns are more influential as can be seen from the research above. However, it should be noted that the fight against disinformation in Slovakia has become more coordinated than in previous years. The STRATCOM team at the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs is doing great work actively commenting on topical issues and organizing educational events for the general public.

CONCLUSION

From the security policy point of view Slovakia is a relevant and committed partner and ally, one that is willing to contribute to international peace and security. The strategies acknowledge the fact that the security environment has changed dramatically, and

that the international community is facing new threats and challenges which could manifest at any time without warning. These threats and challenges will not be purely conventional, thus it is necessary to develop new capabilities and improve civilian resilience not only to improve the country's security but also to improve and enhance the security of all allies and partners. However, the fact is that Slovakia is the last country in the region that still has to approve its new strategies; the currently valid strategies were approved in 2005.

The main problem with Slovak foreign and security policy is that it is ambiguous and unpredictable. The strategies are highly-rated by all security experts in Slovakia, because they clearly state Slovakia's pro-western orientation and civilizational orientation. On the other hand, there are many politicians who openly criticize the EU and NATO, who are openly pro-Russian and who promote policies that are against Slovak national interests. In 2004 Slovakia became part of the EU and NATO family and therefore Slovakia should behave as a full-member of this family and contribute to mutual security and defense. Slovakia's membership of the EU and NATO have brought economic prosperity and security guarantees. From a long-term perspective it is in Slovakia's vital interests that remains a member of these organizations and cooperates with its allies and partners, mainly in the current security environment, which is full of disinformation campaigns and fake news, aimed primarily at creating chaos in the minds of citizens and undermining their trust in democratic and European institutions.

II.

**PRIORITIES OF SLOVAKIA'S
FOREIGN POLICY**

WHEN PRAGMATISM WINS: SLOVAKIA IN THE VISEGRAD GROUP

TOMÁŠ STRÁŽAY

On July 1, 2019, Slovakia assumed its fifth presidency of the Visegrad Group. Independent observers might have noticed that Slovakia has chosen a different approach to the V4 from Hungary in its V4 presidency in 2017/2018. While the Hungarian presidency had an extraordinarily high number of activities and glamorous events – including fireworks in Budapest on the anniversary of the Visegrad Group – Slovakia’s take has been more modest. This is far from being the only difference in the approaches of the two countries towards Visegrad cooperation. This chapter therefore begins by pointing out the different views of Visegrad cooperation in the four V4 capitals. It then assesses the previous Hungarian and Slovak V4 presidencies from a comparative perspective, while pointing out the most important priorities of each. Subsequently, it summarizes the reasons why Visegrad cooperation remains important to Slovakia. Finally, in the concluding part it outlines some ideas on the future development of the V4.

DIFFERENCES IN VIEWS

The flexible format of V4 cooperation, with its characteristically loose institutionalization, allows the V4 countries to concentrate on issues of joint interest, while avoiding potentially conflicting themes. In other words, V4 is more like an “a la carte” restaurant than a canteen with a set menu. This also allows the V4 countries to occupy different positions on issues of strategic interest, including the future model of European integration. In this particular case, Hungary and Poland, but also the Czech Republic, are

more inclined toward a future model that would strengthen the role of the sovereign states in the EU, while Slovakia favors deeper integration. Nevertheless, the V4 has never been a coherent bloc that speaks with one voice nor an integrationist structure defined by strict membership rules. The differences characterize the V4 as much as the commonalities and that has always been the case.

In light of the above, it should come as no surprise to discover that the V4 countries also differ in their views of the V4.

Hungary considers the V4 to be the most important format of regional cooperation. The V4 is a basis for coalition building and an important instrument for fulfilling its foreign and European policy goals. V4+ is used to establish partnerships with countries in the broader Central European region, and that is seen as a priority for Hungary, but also beyond. The 2017/2018 Hungarian V4 Presidency highlighted the role of Hungary as a global actor, so partnerships with non-European, and sometimes unconventional, partners were promoted by Budapest.

The Polish perspective is different. Poland is the biggest V4 country, so the “equal rights, equal contribution” principle of the V4 sometimes does not reflect Warsaw’s ambitions, putting it on the same level as its smaller V4 partners. Nevertheless, Poland’s commitment to the (broader) region of Central Europe cannot be overlooked. The Visegrad Group is therefore used instrumentally by Warsaw to pursue its goals, while it benefits from other formats of regional cooperation as well. Recently the Three Seas Initiative comprising 12 EU member states has been given priority in Polish foreign policy thinking. While the Weimar Triangle, consisting of Poland, France and Germany, which at least symbolically puts Warsaw on the same level as Paris and Berlin (heavy weights in European politics) is on the back burner.

The Czech Republic differs again. At first glance one may have the impression that the current Czech government only needs Visegrad cooperation so it can articulate issues to its domestic audience, as is the case with the migration crisis and redistribution quotas. But, relations with Slovakia and Poland are of strategic importance to the Czech Republic, so the V4 format is used as an instrument to maintain regular dialogue with them and for bilateral relations. To a certain extent the Czech Republic also uses the V4 to strengthen its influence within the Slavkov Triangle, another regional format Prague actively participates in. And vice versa – its engagement in the Slavkov Triangle is supposed to strengthen the Czech (but also the Slovak) position in the V4.

Last but not least, Slovakia has a different view too. Slovakia finds itself in the position of trying to balance existing partnerships with its V4 neighbors on the one hand, and pursuing a pro-active approach to deepening EU integration on the other. Although V4 membership is informal, given the flexible nature of Visegrad cooperation, it is considered a strategic priority of Slovakia’s foreign and European policy and the V4 is seen as the most important regional initiative. However, being a member of the eurozone and the government’s pro-integrationist approach set Slovakia apart from the other three V4 countries. For this reason Slovakia’s most important task has been – and will remain – striking a balance between these two positions.¹

¹ See also T. Strážay, “Towards a dynamic sustainability: some reflections on Slovakia’s V4 Presidency in 2018–2019,” *International Issues & Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs* Vol. XXVII, No. 1–2, 2018, pp. 54–62.

REFLECTIONS ON THE TWO PRESIDENCIES

HUNGARIAN PRESIDENCY

In the first half of 2018 Hungary still held the V4 presidency. As with any other presidency, there is a great deal of continuity between each of the country's presidencies, especially when it comes to the sectoral agenda.

However, presidencies can differ in the issues they emphasize. The slogan of the Hungarian 2017–2018 V4 Presidency – V4 connects – is quite telling: the V4 was presented as the tie binding the V4 countries (Regional Visegrad), EU members and neighboring countries (European Visegrad), as well as non-European countries (Global Visegrad). The V4 was presented as the most effective regional initiative not only in the region, but in the EU as a whole, aspiring for a role on the global scene. The fourth dimension – Digital Visegrad – was about improving the V4's reputation as an emerging innovator, with an outreach that was broader than just the regional level.² The connection between the presidency program and the crucial role that Budapest assigns to V4 is obvious. The “one for all, all for one” musketeer slogan of the presidency demonstrated the importance of the V4 brand to the current Hungarian government. Nonetheless, the fact is that, besides the well-functioning sectoral cooperation, the V4 had acquired a strong political dimension even before the Hungarian V4 Presidency. With the prime ministers becoming the driving actors of Visegrad cooperation – instead of the more diplomatic foreign ministers – partners in the EU began identifying the V4 with their political messages, especially when it comes to the issue of migrants and migration crisis. With a developing parliamentary dimension of V4 cooperation, the political messaging is becoming even stronger.

All in all, the Hungarian V4 Presidency brought tangible results in many areas. In the search for alternative solutions to the migration crisis – other than the mandatory redistribution quotas, still unacceptable to all V4 governments – the Hungarian V4 Presidency highlighted the issue of security and border protection.³ The V4 countries also agreed to contribute €35 million to the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, mainly aimed at Libya. Following the “equal rights, equal contribution,” rule, each V4 country is contributing €8.75 million.⁴ In fact this makes the V4 countries the leading per capita contributors to the fund in the EU.

In relation to EU policies, the V4 countries started discussing the future Multiannual Financial Framework and the future of cohesion policy under the Hungarian V4 Presidency. Consultations were held in both the V4 and V4+ formats, the latter including for instance Croatia.⁵ Other issues discussed included agriculture, especially

² “V4 connects. Presidency Programme.” Available online: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/documents/presidency-programs> (accessed on February 27, 2019).

³ See, for instance, the “Joint declaration of ministers of interior,” Budapest, June 26, 2018. Available online: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/2018/joint-declaration-of> (accessed on February 27, 2019).

⁴ “V4 statement on the future of Europe,” Budapest, January 26, 2018. Available online: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/2018/v4-statement-on-the> (accessed on February 27, 2018).

⁵ “Joint statement of the Visegrad Group and Croatia on the cohesion policy,” Budapest, February 2, 2018. Available online: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/2018/joint-statement-of-the-180329> (accessed on February 27, 2019).

in relation to the Commission Communication on the Future of Food and Farming⁶; security and defense, particularly in relation to preparations for the Brussels NATO Summit and EU–NATO cooperation⁷; and transport infrastructure, with particular attention being paid to the idea of developing a high speed railway connecting the V4 capitals.

Another important aspect characterizing the Hungarian V4 Presidency was the focus on raising competitiveness, economic coordination, advancing the digitalization of the economy and fostering cooperation in technology and innovation.⁸ The latter also included non-V4 partners – particular importance was given to the launch of the V4+Israel innovation training program. The development of V4+Israel cooperation was one of the highlights of the Hungarian V4 Presidency regarding the “Global Visegrad” section. The enhancement of V4+USA dialog was another highlight, and the presidency introduced completely new global partners to the V4+ format, including Australia, Central Asia, the Pacific Alliance and the African Union.⁹ Whether increasing the outreach of the V4+ instrument to involve such a large number of remote stakeholder was justified will be tested in the future.

SLOVAK PRESIDENCY

Compared to the Hungarian V4 Presidency, the Slovak presidency has just three priorities, all beginning with the letter “s”: a strong Europe, security and smart solutions.¹⁰ Significantly less attention is paid to the global aspirations of the V4, while the presidency aims to use the V4+ format for developing cooperation with European and regional partners, and to develop existing partnerships instead of creating new ones.

The emphasis on the European dimension gives the presidency a strongly Slovak flavor.

For some time now Slovakia has declared its wish to belong to the “core” of European integration and support solutions that strengthen the EU and deepen cooperation. The aim is also to promote a “positive” agenda at the EU level and act as a “constructive and relevant” player in the EU. This is why a Dynamic Visegrad for Europe was the

⁶ “Joint declaration of the ministers of agriculture of the Visegrad Group (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia) and Croatia on the Commission communication on the future of food and farming,” Budapest, January 25, 2018. Available online: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/2018/joint-declaration-of-the> (accessed on February 27, 2019).

⁷ “Joint communiqué of the Visegrad Group ministers of defence,” Budapest, March 27, 2019. Available online: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/2018/joint-communiqué-of-the-180329> (accessed on February 27, 2019).

⁸ “Joint declaration of the ministers of economic affairs of the Visegrad Group countries on the future of economic cooperation,” Budapest, April 19, 2018. Available online: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/2018/joint-declaration-of-the-180423-1> (accessed on February 27, 2019).

⁹ “Achievements of the 2017/18 Hungarian Presidency of the Visegrad Group.” Available online: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/documents/annual-reports> (accessed on February 27, 2019).

¹⁰ “Dynamic Visegrad for Europe. Slovak Presidency 2018/19 of the Visegrad Group.” Available online: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/documents/presidency-programs> (accessed on February 27, 2019).

chosen slogan for the 2019 presidency.¹¹ Envisaged differences in positions on different issues are explained as being a legitimate and natural part of a democratic European discussion.¹² At the same time, the program indicates there has been no relinquishing on the ambition to strengthen the internal dynamics and cohesion of the V4 – but this is to be done solely within the EU. It clearly states that “the V4 represents a platform for pragmatic cooperation and is not an alternative to the EU.”¹³ Also the meeting with the German chancellor Angela Merkel was expected to be a demonstration of the pro-integration course of Slovakia's presidency.¹⁴

Under Slovakia's presidency the Visegrad Group agenda centers on the key interests of the V4 countries: preserving the EU's single market, preventing dividing lines from emerging, maintaining the unity of the EU during the Brexit negotiations, but also strengthening the role of national parliaments.¹⁵ It should come as no surprise that, in terms of EU policies, the continuation of cohesion policy is stressed. The V4 countries are naturally interested in the future shape of the EU Multiannual Financial Framework. Equally unsurprising is the fact that cohesion policy has been discussed in the broader (V4+) regional format.¹⁶ In this respect, we should also mention the Bratislava Friends of Cohesion summit.¹⁷ The future shape of cohesion policy and its instruments have also been a focal point at the ministries, with the transport ministries playing an important role.¹⁸

In the Presidency Program, migration is mentioned as an issue that will resonate “strongly in all its aspects during the Slovak Presidency.”¹⁹ From the Slovak point of view, the V4 seeks to contribute constructively to the debate at the EU level, while aiming to adopt only “specific measures” that bring long-term solutions. Clear continuity

¹¹ Four years ago, the slogan was similar – “Dynamic Visegrad for Europe and beyond.” At that time Slovakia clearly had some global ambitions for the Visegrad Group.

¹² In this context the preamble of the Presidency Program clearly notes that the presidency is about “promoting unity wherever it is possible, offering solutions where it is beneficial and respecting differences where it is necessary.” See “Dynamic Visegrad for Europe. Slovak Presidency 2018/19 of the Visegrad Group,” op. cit.

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ The V4+Germany prime ministerial summit was organized only in the second half of Slovakia's presidency, in February 2019. A joint meeting with French President Macron was not organized in the V4+ format, as E. Macron visited only Slovakia and the Czech Republic on his bilateral visits.

¹⁵ “Dynamic Visegrad for Europe. Slovak Presidency 2018/19 of the Visegrad Group,” op. cit.

¹⁶ “Joint statement discussed by the Visegrad Group, Bulgaria and Croatia,” Bratislava, October 24, 2018. Available online: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/2018/joint-statement> (accessed on February 27, 2019).

¹⁷ See “Friends of cohesion Joint declaration on the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021–2027,” Bratislava, November 29, 2018. Available online: https://www.politico.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Friends-of-Cohesion-Joint-Declaration-on-the-MFF-2021-2027.pdf?utm_source=POLITICO.EU&utm_campaign=3632132704-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_11_29_05_20&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_10959edeb5-3632132704-189693517 (accessed on February 27, 2019).

¹⁸ “Joint declaration of ministers responsible for transport, development and EU funds concerning the future of transport financing in the 2021–2027 financial perspective,” October 5, 2018. Available online: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/2018/joint-declaration-of-181213> (accessed on February 27, 2019).

¹⁹ “Dynamic Visegrad for Europe. Slovak Presidency 2018/19 of the Visegrad Group,” op. cit.

with the Hungarian V4 Presidency can be found in the statement that the V4 countries are committed to securing the external borders of the EU and interested in preserving/restoring the Schengen system. The program also explicitly mentions resistance to accepting mandatory refugee redistribution quotas. The emphasis is on changing the situation in third countries, which is also related to developing and implementing the Migration Crisis Reaction Mechanism.²⁰ Regulation of the European Border and Coast Guard, together with the coordination of deployments in the Western Balkans, were discussed at the October meeting of interior ministers in Bratislava, where a joint declaration was adopted.²¹

Substantial continuity with the Hungarian presidency can be found in the digital agenda. Digitalization and the focus on smart solutions are crucial elements for strengthening the competitiveness of V4 countries and the region as a whole. Although this area has been prioritized in several joint statements and declarations, the target is a moving one that requires the implementation of more projects. Another problem is that the taxation of the digital economy has not fully reflected the advantages created by the spread of technology so far, and this is why the V4 countries support the adoption of the Digital Service Tax at the EU level.²²

WHY IS SLOVAKIA STILL INTERESTED IN V4?

Slovakia's V4 Presidency is not the only reason why Bratislava continues to be actively involved in cooperation with the other V4 countries. Slovakia is naturally interested in its Visegrad neighbors, due to its geographical position at the very heart of Central Europe, and because it is the only V4 country to share a border with each of the other V4 countries.

Slovakia had a unique and very positive experience with the V4 when the country lagged behind its V4 neighbors in the integration processes. After the change of government in 1998 Slovakia enjoyed the close support of the other V4 countries in the NATO and EU accession processes. This support was manifest in concrete actions and though Slovakia did not manage to join NATO in 1999 it was successful in joining the EU together with its V4 neighbors in 2004.

The economic aspects need to be taken into consideration, too. Besides the fact that all four countries had to undergo similar processes of economic transition, they also share approximately the same level of economic development. The importance of V4 neighbors to the Slovak economy is demonstrated in the fact that combined trade with the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland is higher than bilateral trade between

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ "Joint declaration of the ministers of interior," Bratislava, October 16, 2018. Available online: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/2018/joint-declaration-of-the-190107> (accessed on February 27, 2019).

²² See also "Joint declaration of V4 finance ministers on the taxation of digital economy," High Tatras, October 5, 2018. Available online: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/2018/joint-declaration-of-v4> (accessed on February 27, 2019).

Slovakia and its biggest trade partner, Germany.²³ Trade between Slovakia and Hungary is, for instance, higher than that between Slovakia and Austria, not to mention the Czech Republic, which remains Slovakia's second most important trade partner.²⁴ Trade with Poland has also been steadily increasing and is higher than bilateral trade with France or Russia. It should also be underlined that Slovakia and the other three V4 countries share the German/North European approach to the EU's economic model.

Perhaps the most important reason for staying is that Slovakia has a long track record of cooperation with its Visegrad partners. Although the V4 countries have not always spoken with one voice, one cannot neglect the fact that the V4 countries share common positions on a number of EU-related issues. This means that Slovakia, as the smallest V4 state, can effectively pursue its interests through the V4 regional format at the EU level. The common position of the V4 countries on the migration crisis and the redistribution quotas is far from being the only binding issue, though it has been the most commented upon. As mentioned in the previous section, the V4 countries also share the same views on cohesion policy and its importance to the EU and the European project. Other sectors where their interests merge include security and defense, energy and climate policy, as well as transport. They have been supportive of EU enlargement policy and have advocated an EU perspective for the Western Balkans. All of them can also be considered promoters of the Eastern dimension of European Neighborhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership project.

The list of reasons why Slovakia should remain deeply interested in Visegrad cooperation would be incomplete without mentioning that Bratislava is the seat of the only standing V4 institution – the International Visegrad Fund (IVF). The fund plays a crucial role in enhancing the cohesion of the Visegrad Group and raising awareness of Visegrad cooperation. Also thanks to the IVF grant schemes partners from other Visegrad countries remain the first choice for many think tanks, civil society organizations and academic institutions in Slovakia.

SOME IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE: VISEGRAD AS A CONTINUING PROJECT

The task for Slovakia is to maintain a strategic balance between its interests in Visegrad cooperation on the one hand and its pro-active approach to deepening the EU integration process on the other.

²³ "Celkový dovoz a celkový vývoz podľa kontinentov a ekonomických zoskupení krajín," [Total imports and total exports by continent and economic country cluster] Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic. Available online: [http://statdat.statistics.sk/cognosex/cgi-bin/cognos.cgi?b_action=cognosViewer&ui.action=run&ui.object=storeID\(%22110B2CB52FFF44B319DA31F65A3FFE155%22\)&ui.name=Celkov%C3%BD%20dovoz%20a%20celkov%C3%BD%20v%C3%BDvoz%20pod%C4%BEa%20kontinentov%20a%20ekonomick%C3%BDch%20zoskupen%C3%AD%20kraj%C3%ADn%20v%20roku%202014%20%5Bzo0002ms%5D&run.outputFormat=&run.prompt=true&cv.header=false&ui.backURL=%2Fcognosex%2Fcps4%2Fportlets%2Fcommon%2Fclose.html&run.outputLocale=sk](http://statdat.statistics.sk/cognosex/cgi-bin/cognos.cgi?b_action=cognosViewer&ui.action=run&ui.object=storeID(%22110B2CB52FFF44B319DA31F65A3FFE155%22)&ui.name=Celkov%C3%BD%20dovoz%20a%20celkov%C3%BD%20v%C3%BDvoz%20pod%C4%BEa%20kontinentov%20a%20ekonomick%C3%BDch%20zoskupen%C3%AD%20kraj%C3%ADn%20v%20roku%202014%20%5Bzo0002ms%5D&run.outputFormat=&run.prompt=true&cv.header=false&ui.backURL=%2Fcognosex%2Fcps4%2Fportlets%2Fcommon%2Fclose.html&run.outputLocale=sk) (accessed on September 12, 2018).

²⁴ *Ibid*

Following this logic, it is not surprising that the current Slovak V4 Presidency has not set any really ambitious goals, but rather aims to maintain cooperation in those areas where the V4 country positions overlap.

Although the V4 remains the most important format of regional cooperation for Slovakia, Bratislava takes an active part in a number of other regional groupings, such as the Slavkov Triangle, Bucharest Nine or Three Seas Initiative. Since none of these is based on an exclusive membership, Slovakia can benefit from participating in all of them and exploit the synergy effect to its own benefit, but also to the region's benefit. This was not an issue in the past, when the V4 was more or less the only regional initiative worth investing energy in.

One of the important preconditions for maintaining the balance between Slovakia's interest in the V4 and its pro-integrationist approach is the weak institutionalization and flexibility of Visegrad cooperation. Flexibility is not only the V4's working strategy; it is also its survival strategy. The flexible format of cooperation allows the V4 countries to occupy different positions in some areas and concentrate on those where they can find common ground. Deeper institutionalization would kill this advantage. The institutionalization of the V4 beyond the International Visegrad Fund would in addition introduce more difficulties into the mechanism of cooperation, simply because formal institutional structures make the adoption of common (legally binding) decisions significantly more difficult to achieve.

The political aspects of cooperation should be considered, too. One aspect of the problem is that maintaining a wide domestic consensus on European and foreign policy priorities as defined following EU and NATO accession has become a challenge for all the V4 countries, including Slovakia. The second is that, though the domestic policies and issues of the V4 countries are not discussed at V4 level, they do have an impact on Visegrad cooperation. In this regard, the regional consensus on at least the fundamental aspects of the future development of the V4 should perhaps be reconfirmed.

WESTERN BALKANS – A LOST YEAR OR A USEFUL YEAR?

JÚLIUS LŐRINCZ

The Western Balkans have traditionally been a focal point of Slovak foreign policy interests and activities. They represent a chapter in the strategies and goals of external relations that have been shaped within a specific historical context, and through social, cultural and economic contact with the nations living in the neighborhood of Central and Southeastern Europe, and with whom we often share similar destinies.

Today that context is mainly about building a secure, peaceful, prosperous and integrated Europe as part of the Euro-Atlantic structures. Slovakia and the Western Balkans occupy different places and play different roles in this process, but they are connected by their common desire to belong to the modernizing plank of society, overcoming the legacy of the recent past, and its sometimes dramatic and even tragic consequences, especially in the military conflicts of the 1990s when Yugoslavia collapsed.

It is understandable, therefore, that compared to the leaders of other countries, especially in Western Europe, Slovakia's political leaders are more sensitive to events connected with the EU integration efforts of the Western Balkan countries and to the obstacles stemming from Balkan and/or wider European policy. This sensitivity was manifested in, for example, the words of Slovak Prime Minister Peter Pellegrini, who, following the June 2018 European Council meeting, pointed out that it was not right for the European Union to justify its hesitation on enlargement in the Western Balkans by pointing to its own internal problems and instability:

If we just endlessly tell them the prospect is there but they have to implement the reforms, we will be opening up chapters with them but not indicating that if they fulfil them they really will become members, that is not the right approach.

He was disappointed at the failure to include a specific date of entry for Montenegro and Serbia in the statement by the EU member states, and at Albania's and Macedonia's membership prospects clouding over.¹

The truth is that views differ on how important and motivating it is to set and refer to EU accession dates, and Slovakia has its own experiences of the accession process. Eduard Kukan, a Slovak MEP and long-standing supporter of the Union's enlargement process, and not just in the Western Balkans, who now chairs the EU–Serbia Delegation of the EU parliament, says that talking about an accurate date is not the best thing, but it's still a type of motivation.²

DIFFERENT ASSESSMENTS

What kind of a year was 2018 for the Western Balkans? While Kukan says he could easily call it “the year of the Balkans,” others refer to it as “a lost year.” Kukan was Slovak Foreign Minister for many years and thinks – and it appears he is not the only one – that it was successful in that the most important European institutions all devoted more attention to the region than they had previously. He sees particularly value in the fact that the EU, together with Bulgaria as the presidency country in the first half of the year, attempted to advance the issue. Fifteen years after the 2003 Thessaloniki summit on the EU and the Balkans (at which the EU enlargement process in Southeastern Europe was launched), the EU organized a similar summit in Sofia, despite it being clear that ambitions would fall short. And it is to these unsatisfactory outcomes that analysts and observers refer, expressing their not unreasonable skepticism.³

¹ L. Yar, “Macedónci a Albánci si musia na otvorenie prístupových rokování počkať ďalší rok,” [Macedonians and Albanians have to wait another year for accession talks to open] *EURACTIV*, June 28, 2018. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/rozsirena-eu/news/macedonci-a-albanci-si-musia-na-otvorenie-pristupovych-rokovani-pockat-dalsi-rok/> (accessed on January 30, 2019).

² According to Kukan, the overall context of the enlargement dynamics is more serious: “If, after the dates are announced, specific actions and projects do not follow, the consequences for the countries will be very negative.” In a more detailed interview for *euractiv.sk*, he mentioned among other things that “in the negotiations with our colleagues in the Balkans, we drew attention to the great opportunity to make progress on enlargement and make use of what has been set up by the European institutions. However, if specific projects do not follow now, the response will be worse.” He urged EU High Representative Federica Mogherini to engage more rapidly because the “silence has led to a kind of stillness and in the Western Balkans that tends to lead dramatic events. Promoting enlargement will become more and more difficult and it takes just one country to block it, and it is over. So it is essential that our colleagues from the Balkans help us. We should all try harder.” See L. Yar, “Kukan: Primitívna zaťatosť nás v zahraničí iba zhadzuje,” [Kukan: Primitive stubbornness only brings us down abroad] *EURACTIV*, January 7, 2019. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/rozsirovanie/interview/kukan-primitivna-zatatosť-nas-v-zahranici-iba-zhadzuje/> (accessed on January 30, 2019).

³ On their behalf, I will quote Croatian analyst Augustine Palokaj, who has been closely watching the enlargement process in the Western Balkans and in Brussels for many years: “It was a year that was pompously declared to be the year of a bi turnaround in the European Union enlargement process, but 2018 is ending as another lost year.” See A. Palokaj, “Zašto 2018. nije bila godina preokreta u proširenju EU,” [Why 2018 was not a year of turnaround in EU enlargement] *Jutarnji.hr*, November 28, 2018, Available online: <https://www.jutarnji.hr/komentari/zasto-2018-nije-bila-godina-preokreta-u-prosirenju-eu/8106767/> (accessed on January 30, 2019).

Kukan backs this up by saying that no significant progress has been made in the countries (Serbia, Montenegro) with whom accession negotiations have already started; that accession negotiations have not begun with countries who already have membership candidate status (Albania, Macedonia); that Bosnia and Herzegovina has made no real progress on its path to candidate status; and that Kosovo has not achieved visa liberalization and nor is it in a position to apply for candidate status.

But all this was within grasp when 2018 was being planned in the Western Balkans. In the last quarter of 2017, the EU member states had begun developing a joint strategy for the Western Balkans. Then, on February 6, 2018, the European Commission approved its comprehensive strategy, entitled "A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans." It stressed, "This firm, merit-based prospect of EU membership for the Western Balkans is in the Union's very own political, security and economic interest. It is a geostrategic investment in a stable, strong and united Europe based on common values." Slovak foreign policy reiterated this premise and the ministry highlighted it on all the occasions in 2018 when EU enlargement came up.⁴

The strategy consisted of six flagship initiatives focusing on specific areas of common interest, such as EU and Western Balkan cooperation, and strengthening the areas of transformation. Fulfilling them is crucial to the EU integration of the Western Balkan countries, especially concerning rule of law, security and migration, socio-economic development, transport and energy interconnections, the digital agenda, reconciliation and good neighborhood relations. In these areas, specific measures have been planned for 2018 through to 2020.

These days, the European Union is undoubtedly the Western Balkans' most important donor and investor, as well as political partner. It is also the largest trading partner of this region with total annual trading of around €46 billion. Obviously, sufficient funding is needed to implement the Western Balkans strategy and to support the smooth transition to membership. The European Commission has proposed to gradually increase funding from the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) by 2020, provided that the reallocation of funds under existing packages allows it. Pre-accession assistance of €1.07 billion was envisaged for the Western Balkans for 2018, which would add up to nearly €9 billion in 2007–2017.⁵

⁴ "Strategy for the Western Balkans: EU sets out new flagship initiatives and support for the reform-driven region," Strasburg, European Commission Press Release, February 6, 2018. Available online: europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-18-561_en.pdf (accessed on January 30, 2019).

⁵ "Komisia predstavila stratégiu pre západný Balkán. Má byť geostrategickou investíciou," [The Commission unveiled its strategy for the Western Balkans. It is to be a geostrategic investment] *EURACTIV*, February 7, 2018. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/obrana-a-zahranicie/news/komisia-predstavila-strategiu-pre-zapadny-balkan-ma-byt-geostrategickou-investiciou/> (accessed on January 30, 2019).

SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS

Slovakia both welcomed and supported the European Commission's strategy on enlargement prospects for the Western Balkans and for greater EU engagement in that part of the world. In this context, and in a special statement, the Foreign Ministry stressed that EU enlargement, through the fulfilment of the established criteria, was a strategic investment in a secure, stable and united European Union based on shared values. The Foreign Ministry's position also welcomed the real impetus the strategy provided for the more effective implementation of the necessary reforms in the candidate and potential candidate countries and for solutions to be found to the regional and bilateral challenges.⁶

The Slovak Republic was among the most ambitious of those involved in drafting the document. This was evident in the fact that Slovakia and eleven other European Union member states proposed that Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo, Macedonia and Serbia should participate in the European Union policy-making process prior to joining the EU. According to Reuters and *EURACTIV*, in this Slovakia was joined by the Czech Republic, Estonia, Ireland, Lithuania, Latvia, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Austria, Slovenia and Italy. Unfortunately, it remained an initiative, and there was no real effort to see it through.⁷

MACRON'S BRAKE

In the Sofia summit documents the situation in the Western Balkans and cooperation with EU member states attracted a great deal of attention, but the term "enlargement" was used very carefully in the summit conclusions. A warning signal had earlier been emitted by French President Emmanuel Macron, when he stated there was no time to speed up enlargement and that it was not the moment to mention dates, because the EU had failed to make its own necessary internal reforms. Commentators who prefer to resort to more emotional language when characterizing events did not hesitate to talk about Macron's "knife-in-the-back" for the organizers of the EU–Western Balkans Summit in Sofia.⁸

⁶ The MFA's statement on the strategy: "The strategy proposes measures improve the rule of law, democracy and reinforcing economic output as well as in improving implementation of EU standards in the Western Balkans. [...] Slovakia supports the initiative that the EU stated a time horizon of the possible entrance of the candidate countries into the EU if they meet the membership criteria. With increased efforts made by the candidates and the EU, the first countries or a single country could be ready for EU membership in 2025." See "Statement by the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic on the publication of the strategy of the European Commission for the Western Balkans and its European prospect," Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, February 6, 2018. Available online: https://www.mzv.sk/sl/web/en/news/current_issues/-/asset_publisher/lrJ2tDuQdEKp/content/vyhlasenie-mzvaez-sr-k-zverejneniu-strategie-europskej-komisie-pre-zapadny-balkan-a-jeho-europsku-perspektivu/10182?p_p_auth=swhDnKH4&_101_IN-STANCE_lrJ2tDuQdEKp_redirect=%2Fsl%2Fweb%2Fen (accessed on January 30, 2019).

⁷ "Komisia predstavila stratégiu pre západný Balkán. Má byť geostrategickou investíciou," op. cit.

⁸ A. Palokaj, op. cit.

The problem is not just that 2018 did not bring about a more positive turn in events regarding EU enlargement in Southeastern Europe – except for the tremendous agreement between Macedonia and Greece – but that 2019 will prove even more complicated. The European Parliament elections are on the horizon, and both the extreme right and extreme left are expected to do well. Neither are inclined to favor enlargement. But even the main mainstream groups are not overly enthused by this idea and will be even less so when facing pressure from extremist political parties. This could lead to the EU's enlargement agenda becoming less of a priority and accentuate internal problems, pointing to the urgency of solving them. The Western Balkans are far from being foremost, yet European Commission leaders blew cold air on European integration with their February 2018 strategy, "A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans." Nonetheless, the European Commission declared that it was aware of the seriousness of the situation in the Western Balkans, emphasizing that the region's European future "is a geostrategic investment in a stable, strong and united Europe based on common values."

ENLARGEMENT AND SLOVAKIA

EU enlargement into Southeastern Europe's geographic, political, economic and cultural space was undoubtedly the leitmotif of Slovak foreign policy on the Western Balkans, but also in a well wider European sense as well. This was evident at multi-lateral fora and in bilateral contact. Despite the absence of Minister Miroslav Lajčák during the first half of the year when he was fully engaged as president of the UN General Assembly, the state secretaries – particularly Ivan Korčok, but also Lukáš Parížek in bilateral relations – put a great deal of effort into actively promoting the Western Balkans in Slovak foreign policy. We should not overlook the good work of the ambassadors in the Western Balkan capitals. The Slovak embassy in Sarajevo, the NATO contact-point embassy for Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the embassy in Skopje all played an important role in gaining a good picture of the overall situation on the ground at a time when Macedonia was embroiled in turbulent domestic politics and its negotiations with Greece.

Slovakia's representatives also played an important role at the regular informal meetings of the EU foreign affairs ministers, held in the Gymnich format and organized by the member state holding the Council of the EU presidency. In 2018 it was the turn of Bulgaria, in Sofia on February 15, 2018. At that meeting, State Secretary Korčok pointed out that unless we (the member states and the EU as a whole) engage wholeheartedly in this area, other players will do it instead.⁹

⁹ "We must be pro-active and visible in the Western Balkans. However, we expect that also leaders of the region will very actively communicate to their citizens what the EU has already been doing for them today. The fact that the EU is the biggest investor and trade partner, as well as the entity providing these countries with the assistance valued at hundreds of millions of euros cannot be ignored," I. Korčok said. He pointed out that not all member states share the same view on EU enlargement. However, it is important that a few days before "Sofia Gymnich" the European Commission adopted an aforementioned strategy for the Western Balkans. As Korčok said "the

Miroslav Lajčák raised the issue of the Western Balkans at several EU Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) sessions in the last quarter of the year. At the meeting on October 15, 2018, he encouraged the other ministers to address the issue and the Western Balkans in more detail at an upcoming session. He said that the EU should play a more active role in the region and take responsibility for meeting commitments to the Western Balkan countries in the accession process, especially if they put in some hard work. In other words, the fact the Balkan countries are interested in EU enlargement should not be overlooked. He stated that “Slovakia supports reform the efforts and accession negotiations of the Western Balkan countries in line with their European prospects.” At the same time, he pointed out that there was still the potential for tension and stagnation in the region, so the EU must continue to be strongly committed.¹⁰

The organizers of the World Economic Forum in Geneva begun the tradition of holding government meetings with the Balkan region. The goal is to exchange views and share experiences of development in the region, and to look at how the foreign partners can work together to solve the region’s problems. Minister Lajčák took the opportunity to explain to the forum that “the countries of the Western Balkans are an integral part of the European space and share its future, including various opportunities and challenges.” He drew attention to some aspects of current developments both within the region and the EU, and called for a spirit of mutual cooperation and solutions that will benefit all actors. He said that preparing for EU membership, including the single market, is a demanding process requiring a lot of effort and responsibility. All countries aspiring to membership of the elite European club must first meet their commitments. Otherwise becoming a member of the “big Brussels family” is unthinkable. On the other hand, as Miroslav Lajčák stressed in Geneva, if the Western Balkan countries do not become EU members, then the enlargement process cannot be considered a success.¹¹

TWO MAIN TASKS

The European Commission’s regular assessments of the role played by member states are an important reflection Slovakia’s bilateral relations with its partners from the Western Balkans. The assessment was published in April 2018, and the Ministry clearly

newly adopted Strategy attests to the fact that the enlargement process is alive.” See “Korčok at Gymnich: ‘EU must invest in the future of the Western Balkans,’” Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, February 15, 2018. Available online: https://www.mzv.sk/web/en/news/current_issues/-/asset_publisher/lrJ2tDuQdEKp/content/i-korcok-na-gymnichu-eu-musi-investovat-do-buducnosti-zapadneho-balkanu-/10182 (accessed on January 30, 2019).

¹⁰ “Lajčák calls upon EU foreign ministers to discuss the Western Balkans,” Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, October 15, 2018. Available online: https://www.mzv.sk/web/en/news/slovak_republic_and_eu/-/asset_publisher/69SSsvqFCd2a/content/m-lajcak-vyzval-ministrov-eu-na-rokovania-o-zapadnom-balkane/10182 (accessed on January 30, 2019).

¹¹ “Minister Lajčák discusses the Western Balkans in Geneva,” Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, October 2, 2018. Available online: https://www.mzv.sk/web/en/ministry/minister/activities/-/asset_publisher/nNnVuDsSsgB1/content/minister-lajcak-diskutoval-v-zeneve-o-zapadnom-balkane/10182 (accessed on January 30, 2019).

welcomed it. The Prespa agreement between Macedonia and Greece, which had raised optimism in the Western Balkans in the summer, had not yet been agreed, but the EC enlargement package, as the assessment is frequently called, was good news. This enthusiasm was dampened by the European Council's decision in June to postpone the prospect of accession negotiations being opened with Albania and Macedonia for another year (until summer 2019). But even that is not guaranteed; there has been skepticism over the EU enlargement process, and it is particularly widespread in Western Europe, especially in "official places" in France, Denmark and the Netherlands.

Nonetheless in April Slovakia's Foreign Ministry "welcomed the recommendation to open the EU accession negotiations with Macedonia and Albania. We see the accession negotiations as part of the process of modernization and reform in these countries and trust the European Council will come to an early decision on opening them."¹²

From this emerged two main tasks for Slovak foreign policy: First, in bilateral relations with Western Balkan partners, to plan and implement activities in continued support of the reforms and integration processes; second, to widen the scope, in talks with EU member states and in preparing the joint position, for understanding the importance and urgency of the enlargement process in Southeastern Europe.

Relations between Slovakia and **Serbia** are close and relatively strong in some areas. And in many, they are very constructive and productive. This was confirmed in March 2018 at a lively meeting with State Secretary Korčok in Belgrade, much of which was focused on the process of Serbia's EU integration. The talks centered around the key issues of this process. Korčok stated that progress in chapters 23 and 24 of the accession negotiations on the rule of law and judiciary would be the focal point of EU interest, as would the question of Kosovo. Korčok expressed his belief that Serbia is interested in finding a solution acceptable to both Belgrade and Pristina. But it was not just about chapters: there has to be the clear political will to do something about it. As he stressed, Slovakia and the EU cannot and do not want to dictate to Belgrade concerning the form the legally binding document on normalizing relations with Kosovo should take. But he made it clear to Serbian partners that Serbia could not become an EU member without Serbia-Kosovo relations having first been resolved.

The talks with Serbian Prime Minister Ana Brnabić focused on economic cooperation, and above all opening up the Serbian market to Slovak companies. The volume of mutual trade has been rising steadily, but there are still opportunities to be grasped. In 2017, bilateral trade turnover reached a ten-year high, mainly the result of Serbian companies supplying the Slovak automotive industry. Slovakia invested €2 million in Serbia, predominantly on projects relating to renewable energy sources, electricity distribution and environmental protection. In 2018, several projects were planned to

¹² More broadly, including in relation to the Western Balkans as a whole, he stated: "We believe that the of the European Commission will help further stimulate reform endeavours of the countries that wish to become full-fledged members of the EU. The Slovak Republic shall take these reports into consideration when planning its activities in the spirit of up-till-now support of reform and integration processes. This also applies to discussions among the member states on the European Union level and reaching a joint position. See "Statement of Foreign Affairs Ministry on publication of European Commission's enlargement package," Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, April 17, 2018. Available online: https://www.mzv.sk/web/en/news/detail/-/asset_publisher/oLViwP07vPxv/content/vyhlasenie-mzvaez-sr-k-zverejneniu-rozsirovacieho-balicka-europskej-komisie/10182?p_auth=ZY4BVZWo (accessed on January 30, 2019).

support bilateral R&D collaboration and innovation. There are also opportunities to increase cooperation in infrastructure and energy.

State Secretary Lukáš Parížek met with his Serbian counterpart Nemanja Stevanović. They discussed, among other things, the fact that Serbia has the largest number of people of foreign-born Slovaks, while more than 13,000 Serbians work in Slovakia. It is therefore in the interests of both countries to protect the labor market from illegal practices and to regularly share information on economic diplomacy and employment promotion.¹³

One could say that even after 12 years of independence, **Montenegro** continues to enjoy special relations with the Slovak Republic. State Secretary Ivan Korčok was keenly aware of this when, as head of Slovak diplomacy, he held talks with Montenegro's leaders in Podgorica in February 2018. Montenegro has been a NATO member for over a year and is also ahead of the remaining Western Balkan countries in the EU integration process, as it has the largest number of open negotiation chapters, almost all of them. However, it has only succeeded in closing three so far. Montenegro has been harmonizing its foreign policy with the EU, and successfully developing regional cooperation and neighborhood relations. Like other Western Balkan countries, Montenegro should not have a problem with chapters 23 and 24 of the accession process, on rule of law and judicial reform. This was the subject of Ivan Korčok's discussions with Prime Minister Duško Marković, alongside the fight against organized crime and support for media freedoms.¹⁴

Similar issues were on the agenda of the September 13th meeting in Bratislava, where the newly appointed Montenegrin ambassador to the Slovak Republic, Željko Perović, presented his credentials to State Secretary Lukáš Parížek. They both expressed their willingness to continue extending cooperation, particularly economic cooperation, as this lags behind the well-developed political relations. Parížek confirmed that Slovakia will continue to support Montenegro on its path to EU integration, by sharing Slovakia's reform experience and know-how from its EU integration process.¹⁵

¹³ "Lukáš Parížek: Slovensko a Srbsko spája záujem o spoločné investície, inovácie a ochranu pracovného trhu," [Lukáš Parížek: Slovakia and Serbia share an interest in joint investment, innovation and labor market protection] Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, October 22, 2018. Available online: https://www.mzv.sk/aktuality/detail/-/asset_publisher/lw1ppvnScIPx/content/lukas-parizek-slovensko-a-srbsko-spaja-zaujem-o-spolocne-investicie-inovacie-a-ochranu-pracovneho-trhu?p_p_auth=wcgp1PPk&_101_INSTANCE_lw1ppvnScIPx_redirect=%2Faktuality%2Fvsetky_spravy%3Frok%3D2018%26mesiac%3D9%26strana%3D2 (accessed on January 30, 2019).

¹⁴ "Korčok: 'Montenegro has all the prerequisites to meet the challenges vis-à-vis euro integration process and to reach the expectations of its citizens,'" Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, February 20, 2018. Available online: https://www.mzv.sk/web/en/news/current_issues/-/asset_publisher/lrJ2tDuQdEKp/content/i-korcok-cierna-hora-ma-vsetky-predpoklady-zhostit-sa-vyziev-eurointegracneho-procesu-a-naplnt-tak-ocakavania-svojich-obcanov-/10182 (accessed on January 30, 2019).

¹⁵ "New ambassador of Montenegro presents copies of his credentials," Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, September 13, 2018. Available online: https://www.mzv.sk/web/en/news/detail/-/asset_publisher/oLViwP07vPvx/content/novy-velvyslanec-ciernej-hory-odovzdal-kopie-poverovacich-listin/10182?p_p_auth=lx2JhLRq (accessed on January 30, 2019).

SUCCESS OF THE REGION AS A WHOLE

Macedonia experienced some key moments in 2018, and one could say that South-eastern Europe did too. The 27-year-long dispute between Macedonia and neighboring Greece over the name of the country was finally solved in 2018. Athens had struggled to come to terms with the fact that Macedonia basically shared the same name as the northern part of Greece. Macedonia had been forced to use the official name, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), in international events. Several states, including Slovakia, had recognized Macedonia's constitutional name (Republic of Macedonia), but Greece had vetoed Macedonia's efforts to join NATO under the name Macedonia, approved in a referendum. It also prevented the launch of accession talks on the country's EU membership. It was not until Macedonia's coalition government was formed, led by Zoran Zaev following the parliamentary elections in the turbulent months of 2016–2017 and the subsequent conciliatory attitude of the Greek coalition government led by Alexis Tsipras that the ice was broken.

The complicated negotiations led, in June 2018, to the signing of an agreement at Lake Prespa, thereby ending the years of conflict between the two neighbors. During a difficult ratification process, the agreement was ratified by the Macedonian and Greek parliaments and Greece's northern neighbor is now known as the Republic of North Macedonia. Greece also recognized Macedonian national identity and the identity of the Macedonian language as part of the agreement.⁷ The agreement is also guarantee of Macedonia's NATO membership.

North Macedonia's EU accession negotiations should begin in 2019 – the country has been a candidate for membership for several years, but the Greek boycott prevented any movement on this.¹⁶

Another significant event for Slovak foreign policy in Macedonia was the official launch, in November 2017, of the National Convention on the EU in Macedonia. Macedonia thus became the fifth Western Balkan country in which the Slovak Foreign Policy Association has initiated a nation-wide dialogue between the government and non-governmental organizations (civil society, businesses, associations, academics etc) with substantial support from SlovakAid and USAID. The goals of the National Convention, successfully put into action in 2018, are to involve the wider expert public from all sections of society in the creation of national policies and positions relating to European integration, and to share Slovak know-how on the political, economic and social transformation. It is also about creating a long-term, reliable information

¹⁶ In one of its positions on these events the Ministry stated: "The agreement is not only a significant step towards the definitive termination of the bilateral dispute but it also represents an important signal for the region and other areas of the world that it is possible to solve in peace even complicated issues with a historic burden through an agreement if there is a real interest and will by both partners." See "Statement of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic on the agreement achieved between Greece and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on its name," Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, June 13, 2018. Available online: https://www.mzv.sk/web/ateny-en/detail/-/asset_publisher/XptbLMYwZmJ6/content/vyhlasenie-mzvaez-sr-k-dohode-medzi-greckom-a-byvalou-juhoslavanskou-republikou-macedonsko-o-nazve-krajiny/10182?p_auth=JUfttvvO&_101_INSTANCE_XptbLMYwZmJ6_redirect=%2Fweb%2Fateny-en (accessed on January 30, 2019).

source on the EU for all sections of society. The project was officially launched by Ivan Korčok, who also expressed his support for the new Macedonian government in its efforts to return to the integration path by providing assistance in the form of Slovak experiences of the accession processes.

Albania is another Western Balkan country that is performing well in the EU integration process. In March 2018, State Secretary Korčok discussed the issues and tasks relating to this process with Albania's leaders. They valued the assistance the Slovak Republic is providing to Albania in the reform implementation, in particular, the sharing of Slovakia's experiences of the EU integration process. During the talks, they also discussed deepening bilateral relations and opportunities for further developing mutual economic cooperation, including tourism. They also talked about the new European Commission Strategy for the Western Balkans. They agreed that it basically gives partners in the region the opportunity to be well-prepared by time the EU is ready for them.¹⁷

Ivan Korčok also visited the headquarters of the Western Balkans Fund (WBF), which is modeled on the International Visegrad Fund, and was launched in 2017 with tremendous support from the V4 countries. Gjergj Murra, WBF Executive Director, stated that the WBF is currently evaluating the first grant applications for 351 projects submitted by almost 1,300 partners. The fund will support the best projects in the Western Balkan countries to the tune of almost a quarter of a million euros.¹⁸

The quality of Slovak–Albanian contact was evident in State Secretary Lukáš Pařízek receiving Artemis Dralo, Deputy Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania, at the beginning of February 2019. The main topic of discussion was OSCE cooperation, with both parties interested in coordinating activities during Slovakia's 2019 OSCE Presidency. This, in turn, will also apply to Albania's 2020 OSCE Presidency. As Special Representative for Slovakia's OSCE Presidency, Pařízek offered to share with his Albanian partner experiences of the demanding preparations for holding the presidency of this prestigious international organization.¹⁹

For **Bosnia and Herzegovina** 2018 turned out to be a sad tale. Not insofar as relations between ordinary citizens are concerned, but at the political level, where its leaders have proved unable to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the European Union in the enlargement process. It took Bosnia and Herzegovina a long

¹⁷ Ivan Korčok also said: "EU enlargement is not a one-way street; it is in our common interest that we strengthen the stability of the Western Balkans and find the right balance between the expectations on one side and the ability to implement the necessary changes on the other side." See "Korčok in Tirana: 'EU enlargement is not a one-way street, it is in our common interest that we strengthen stability in the Western Balkans,'" Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, March 7, 2018. Available online: https://www.mzv.sk/web/en/news/detail/-/asset_publisher/oLViwP07vPxv/content/i-korcok-v-tirane-rozsirovanie-eu-nie-je-jednosmerna-ulica-je-v-nasom-spolocnom-zaujme-aby-sme-upevnili-stabilitu-na-zapadnom-balkane-/10182?p_p_auth=IMlI2lhC (accessed on January 30, 2019).

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ "Slovakia and Albania to intensify cooperation on several levels," Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, February 4, 2019. Available online: https://www.mzv.sk/web/en/news/current_issues/-/asset_publisher/lrJ2tDuQdEKp/content/slovensko-a-albansko-zintenzivnia-spolupracu-na-viacerych-urovniach/10182?p_p_auth=6LJKYao7&_101_INSTANCE_lrJ2t-DuQdEKp_redirect=%2Fweb%2Fen (accessed on February 4, 2019).

time to complete the EU questionnaire that all potential candidate countries for EU membership have to answer. They even had difficulty responding to one of the basic questions on the number of inhabitants. It took them almost four years to agree on the results of the first census to be conducted (in 2013) following the war that took place in the first half of the 1990s. Three of Bosnia and Herzegovina's statistical agencies – one federal and one from each entity – failed to agree on the methodology. Finally, using internationally recognized criteria, they concluded that 3,531,159 people live in Bosnia and Herzegovina (over half a million less than before the war).²⁰

Hope was invested in the parliamentary elections of early October 2018 but nothing changed. In the five months since then, they have been unable to establish a single legislative or executive body. They have succeeded in establishing the tripartite presidency – comprising a Bosnian, a Serb and a Croat – which is basically the collective head of state – but even that does not meet on a regular basis.

In a statement the Slovak Foreign Ministry welcomed the peaceful atmosphere in which the general elections were held. It also agreed with the OSCE/ODIHR Observation Mission's assessment that the elections had been a regular contest, albeit characterized by the continued division along ethnic lines.²¹

In this atmosphere, Minister Miroslav Lajčák attempted to exert an influence on the leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina. While on a working visit to Brussels he held talks with Milorad Dodik, Chairman of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Presidency. Minister Lajčák pointed out that as soon as the country's legislature and executive bodies were established, they would be able to start adopting measures and taking the necessary decisions to improve the lives of citizens and pursue their integration ambitions.²²

In keeping with its long-term engagement in the Western Balkans region and as part of its foreign policy priority of stabilization and integration, the Slovak Republic, is prepared to continue helping Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Relations between Slovakia and **Kosovo** did not undergo any formal changes in 2018, and Slovak diplomacy will approach the Kosovo issue rationally and realistically. The Belgrade Embassy Office in Pristina maintains and develops contact with local representatives. For example, taking advantage of its presidency of the Visegrad Group,

²⁰ "Rezultati popisa: U BiH živi 3.531.159 stanovnika," [Census results: BaH has 3,531,159 inhabitants] *Radio Free Europe*, June 30, 2016. Available online: <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/27830422.html> (accessed on January 30, 2019).

²¹ But some desire remained unfulfilled: "The ministry believes the legislative and executive bodies representing all the constituent nationalities at the state and entity levels will be formed as soon as possible and the elected representatives will start solving the challenges the country is facing within a constructive atmosphere and without undue delay, including intensifying the reform and integration processes." See "Statement of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic on the general elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina (October 10, 2018)," Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, October 10, 2018. Available online: https://www.mzv.sk/web/en/news/current_issues/-/asset_publisher/lrJ2tDuQdEKp/content/vyhlasenie-mzvaez-sr-k-vseobecny-m-vollbam-v-bosne-a-hercegovine-7-10-2018-/10182?p_auth=4jJ6xML7 (accessed on January 30, 2019).

²² "Miroslav Lajčák meets with Milorad Dodik, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina," Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, January 29, 2019. Available online: https://www.mzv.sk/web/en/news/detail/-/asset_publisher/oLViwP07vPxv/content/miroslav-lajcak-rokoval-predsedaucim-predsednictva-bosny-a-hercegoviny-miloradom-dodikom/10182?p_auth=UqDdjGE2 (accessed on January 30, 2019).

Slovakia organized events in this context. In July 2018, a working lunch was arranged for the embassy heads of the V4 countries in Kosovo, with the participation of Kosovo Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj and head of the Pristina team for the Belgrade–Pristina dialogue, Avni Arifi. The event was aimed at promoting the priorities of the Slovak V4 Presidency, including, of course, the Western Balkan region, regional cooperation and EU enlargement. It was also a good opportunity to discuss the current political situation, the EU prospects of the Western Balkans and the dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade. The event was followed by an informative meeting on project applications to the Western Balkans Fund (WBF). The fund is aimed at projects concerning regional cooperation and strengthening regional cohesion in the Western Balkans, particularly in the fields of cultural, scientific and educational cooperation, the development of youth contacts as well as sustainable development.²³

At the end of the year, however, the Foreign Ministry issued a critical official statement expressing concern that the Kosovo parliament had, despite repeated calls by NATO and the EU for restraint, passed a law transforming the Kosovo Security Forces into military forces. The Slovak Foreign Ministry strongly condemned the decision.²⁴

CONCLUSIONS

While 2018 was not a year in which a breakthrough was achieved in the Western Balkans, it should not be written off completely. One of the three most pressing issues affecting the EU enlargement process in the region was resolved – the 27-year-long dispute between Greece and Macedonia over the official name of the former Yugoslav republic. The implementation of the Prespa agreement brought the Greek–Macedonian conflict to an end – or at least the most damaging part that was blocking the continued “Europeanization” of the Balkans. Of course, it is entirely possible that prejudices, myths and nationalist intolerance will continue to be part of life. Especially when exter-

²³ “Working lunch dedicated to the priorities of the Slovak V4 Presidency,” Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, July 16, 2018. Available online https://www.mzv.sk/web/en/news/detail/-/asset_publisher/oLViwP07vPxv/content/pracovny-obed-venovany-prioritam-slovenskeho-predsednictva-vo-v4/10182 (accessed on January 30, 2019).

²⁴ The Ministry shares the NATO and EU position that “such a decision can only be adopted in accordance with the legal framework of Kosovo and through an inclusive and transparent process. The Slovak Republic does not consider this decision to have been taken within the spirit of the ongoing dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, and aimed at normalizing relations, but as one that contributes to increasing tensions in the region and makes mutual reconciliation difficult. We therefore call on the Kosovo side to exercise restraint, and we expect Pristina to comply with the agreements adopted in Brussels in March 2013. Slovakia would like to see the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina being relaunched with a view to concluding a comprehensive legally binding agreement on the normalization of relations.: See “Vyhlásenie MZVaEZ SR k prijatiu zákonov orgánmi Kosova o transformácii Kosovských bezpečnostných síl na armádu,” [Statement by the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic on the adoption of laws by the Kosovo authorities to transform the Kosovo Security Forces into an army] Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, December 14, 2018. Available online: https://www.mzv.sk/aktuality/rss/rss-zoznamy/-/asset_publisher/9BNBrxv9s4iR/content/id/3500187 (accessed on January 30, 2019).

nal powers sense an opportunity to promote their power interests through them, as seen in the Russian interference in Montenegro, but also in the Macedonian–Greek relationship. Nonetheless, it is important that Greece and Macedonia become NATO allies and perhaps also find a future in the EU.

Bosnia and Herzegovina cannot remain the EU's abandoned orphan, as it sometimes seems. It is especially true in Bosnia's case that if Europe (including the Slovak Republic) is not there, someone else will be. As there is no single state conception in Bosnia and Herzegovina, this complicates partner relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina. Nonetheless, the only route to stability and prosperity is through building on this partnership.

As far as relations between Serbia and Kosovo are concerned, Slovak pressure to resolve this issue urgently is very positive, despite the unequal relationship stemming from fact that Slovakia does not recognize Kosovo's autonomy. It is positive because it clearly indicates to our Serbian partners that Serbia cannot join the EU until Serbia–Kosovo relations have been resolved. To this end, a legally binding document normalizing relations with Kosovo will have to be concluded. Kosovo cannot achieve this goal by taking ill-considered actions that block the dialogue and deepen distrust, even hostility, between the two nations.

In light of the ideas that began emerging in 2018 on how Kosovo–Serbian relations could be resolved through the exchange of territory and attempts to create monoethnic territories, it is worth remembering recent experiences. The single most rational decision to be made in all the blood and chaos of the breakup of the former Yugoslavia, especially by the international community, was to stick to the principle that the borders of the Western Balkans could not be rewritten. It is based on this that the 2005 Kosovo Status directive (the United States, Russia, Germany, United Kingdom, France and Italy), and supported by the European Union and NATO, has never been broken. It set out the three basic points of the Kosovo solution:

1. No return to the pre-1999 status (i.e. Kosovo cannot be part of Serbia);
2. No partition of Kosovo and;
3. No union of Kosovo with any other or part of another state.²⁵

It is still the case that playing with the idea that the complex internal problems of a society, relations between states, the unhealed wounds from the tragic war, and the pathway to a better future can be resolved by changing the status quo, including realigning state borders is utterly irresponsible. Logic and recent experience, especially in the Western Balkans, tell us that this could not be achieved without a descent into violence or conflict. It would mean opening Pandora's Box with all the unpredictable dangerous consequences that entails, not just for the region itself but for the whole of Europe. That this was the position taken in 2018 by Slovak foreign policy is testimony of its maturity and professionalism (not of primitive and dilettante imitators).

²⁵ "EU treba spriječiti ideje o podjeli država na Zapadnom Balkanu," [The EU must drop the idea of partitioning states in the Western Balkans] *Jutarnji list*, February 2017. Available online: <http://www.jutarnji.hr/komentari/eu-treba-sprjeciti-ideje-o-podjeli-drzava-na-zapadnom-balkanu/5604503/> (accessed on January 30, 2019).

CONTRADICTORY MESSAGES OF SLOVAKIA'S EASTERN POLICY IN 2018

JURAJ MARUŠIAK

The trends that emerged after Ukraine's "Revolution of Dignity" and the annexation of Crimea in 2014 which led to the deep crisis in relations between the West and Russia were again a key factor in Slovakia's Eastern Policy in 2018. Relations with Russia, and subsequently Ukraine, remain a strong dividing line within Slovak society. As proposed by President Andrej Kiska, in October 2017, Slovakia's three highest officials – President A. Kiska, Prime Minister Robert Fico and Speaker of the National Council Andrej Danko adopted a common declaration on the country's common priorities in the EU and NATO. It stated "unequivocally continuing in a pro-European and pro-Atlantic direction is in the strategic interest of the Slovak Republic." They stressed their desire to improve the security of citizens "by implementing the updated Security Strategy, Defense Strategy, and Military Strategy of the Slovak Republic" and that this would "support Slovakia's future inside the core of European integration."¹

However, it was precisely the "Russian issue" that was one of the key reasons this declaration was not followed through. In practice, instead of the wider consensus on foreign policy issues proclaimed in October 2017, what we saw in 2018 was domestic political conflicts over political relations with the former USSR countries, especially the Russian Federation. Alexander Duleba, in his article "The Janus face of Slovakia's

¹ See "Declaration by the President, Speaker and Prime Minister on the EU and NATO," Official website of the President of the Slovak Republic, October 23, 2017. Available online: <https://www.prezident.sk/en/article/vyhlasenie-prezidenta-predsedu-narodnej-rady-a-predsedu-vlady-k-eu-a-nato/> (accessed on February 1, 2019).

foreign policy in 2017,"² described the discrepancies between the desire to fulfil the commitments stemming from EU and NATO membership and the wish to preserve close and friendly relations with the Russian Federation. In 2018, this description applied to Slovakia's Eastern Policy as well.

The domestic discourse regarding relations with the Russian Federation has been influenced by the political crisis that emerged in Slovakia following the assassination of journalist Ján Kuciak and his fiancée Martina Kušnírová in February 2018. The "Russian issue" was also in evidence during the campaigns for the presidential elections on March 16, 2019. Economic issues played an important role in shaping Eastern Policy as well.

RUSSIAN ISSUE IN POLITICIANS' STATEMENTS

In 2018, there were no high-level official visits between Slovakia and the Russian Federation. A policy of "several faces" had been evident in national approaches towards Russia, and this trend became even more apparent than it had been in 2017. Alongside the consistent Euro-Atlantic approach maintained by President Andrej Kiska, the foreign ministry followed an approach that was in line with official EU policy. This was despite a desire to maintain the right atmosphere in bilateral contacts with Russia. A similar line was adopted by the new government of Peter Pellegrini, who had replaced Robert Fico as prime minister on March 22, 2018, in response to the civil protests following the assassination of journalist Ján Kuciak and his fiancée. Pellegrini's approach has been much more moderate than that of his predecessor, but nonetheless he has continued in the same vein, expressing criticism of the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation, whilst also being critical of the sanctions policy the EU adopted against Russia. Pellegrini stressed Slovakia's pro-European direction, but also emphasized the negative economic effects of the sanctions for Slovakia, but he did not go into detail.³

A contradictory approach was pursued by Speaker of Parliament Andrej Danko and leader of the Slovenská národná strana [Slovak National Party, SNS], one of the parties in the ruling coalition. He and his party opposed EU policy towards the Russian Federation and maintained close contacts with Speaker of the State Duma of the Russian Federation Vyacheslav Volodin. His party even pressured for the basis of Slovak foreign policy to change, by blocking the adoption of crucial security policy documents – Slovakia's Security Strategy and Defense Strategy.

Finally, opposition to the long-term priorities of Slovak foreign policy and, conversely, open support for Russia's policy on Ukraine can be found in the behavior of independent MP Peter Marček who went to Crimea on a visit which was described

² A. Duleba, "The Janus face of Slovakia's foreign policy in 2017," in P. Brezáni, ed., *Yearbook of Slovakia's Foreign Policy 2017*. Bratislava: Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association, 2018, pp. 71–85. Available online: http://www.sfpa.sk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Rocenka_2017_web985.pdf (accessed on February 20, 2019).

³ "Slovensko je proeurópsky orientované, no má právo na názor, tvrdí Pellegrini," [Slovakia is pro-European, but has the right to an opinion, says Pellegrini] *Pravda*, October 10, 2018. Available online: <https://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/487483-slovensko-je-proeurópsky-a-proatlanticky-orientovane-no-ma-pravo-na-nazor-tvrdi-pellegrini/> (accessed on February 20, 2019).

as a “delegation of Slovakia’s MPs to the Ukrainian peninsula of Crimea.” Crimea was occupied and annexed by the Russian Federation in 2014; a unilateral step that has not been recognized by Slovakia nor by the other EU member states.

President Andrej Kiska viewed the Russian Federation as a threat to international peace. At the Globsec conference, he referred in his opening speech to an “unscrupulous, aggressive and arrogant politics,” and warned against turning a blind eye to the use of chemical weapons against civilians in Syria and to the activities of Russian spies in many countries, including Slovakia: “We are confronted by propaganda and hoaxes in the attack against our society and we don’t even bother to find out who is the source. We already know,” Kiska appealed for the EU member states to work together to resolve Nord Stream 2. He indirectly accused Germany of pursuing “purely selfish economic interests at the expense of stability and prosperity of our immediate neighborhood.” President Kiska thought Nord Stream 2 sent a signal to Russia: “how short sighted we are in our policies.”⁴ Kiska again stressed the arguments for not implementing Nord Stream 2, stating it was “a political and not an economic project,” when President of France Emmanuel Macron paid an official visit to Bratislava in October 2018.⁵ Andrej Kiska is an unambiguous supporter of the Euro-Atlantic dimension of Slovak politics; he was also the strongest advocate of Slovakia’s economic interests. The planned Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline would bypass the transit countries of Ukraine and Slovakia in supplying Russian gas to Western Europe.

Foreign ministry representatives continued to pursue the EU’s common foreign policy priorities. They followed the EU’s line of “critical dialogue” with the Russian Federation, and in preparations for Slovakia’s 2019 Chairmanship of the Organization of Security and Co-operation in Europe. Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák paid a visit to Kyiv and Moscow as part of “shuttle diplomacy” on October 9, 2018. His meeting with his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov was about improving the living conditions of the inhabitants in eastern Ukraine affected by the military conflict and about helping bring about a peaceful solution. In addition to discussing the situation in the Western Balkans, Syria, Iraq, the Middle East and the Korean peninsula, and reforming the United Nations, Lajčák brought up the case of Oleh Sentsov, the Ukrainian film director from Crimea sentenced by the Russian Federation to 20 years imprisonment for alleged terrorism despite the lack of any direct criminal evidence. O. Sentsov went on hunger strike for more than 100 days. Lajčák called for him to be released. At a lecture on being awarded an honorable doctorate by MGIMO University in Moscow (Moscow State Institute of International Relations), he stressed the importance of multilateralism as a diplomatic tool for avoiding international conflicts.⁶

⁴ “Kiska at Globsec: unscrupulous politics undermine our democracies,” Official website of the President of the Slovak Republic, May 17, 2018. Available online: <https://www.prezident.sk/en/article/kiska-na-globsecu-bezohladnost-podryva-demokraciu/> (accessed on February 19, 2019).

⁵ “President Kiska received French President Macron,” Official website of the President of the Slovak Republic, October 26, 2018. Available online: <https://www.prezident.sk/en/article/kiska-prijal-francuzskeho-prezidenta-macrona-hovorili-o-spolocnej-europe/> (accessed on February 19, 2019).

⁶ “Miroslav Lajčák rokoval so Sergejom Lavrovom,” [Miroslav Lajčák meets with Sergei Lavrov] Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, October 9, 2018. Available online: https://www.mzv.sk/aktuality/detail/-/asset_publisher/lw1ppvnScIPx/content/miroslav-lajcak-rokoval-so-sergejom-lavrovom?p_auth=M5FUptXI (accessed on February 19, 2019).

State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs Ivan Korčok also conveyed Slovakia's interest in maintaining good bilateral relations with the Russian Federation. Nonetheless, during a visit by Russia's First Deputy Foreign Minister, Vladimir Titov, on January 23, 2018 he underlined the divergence in perceptions of several international issues, including the conflict in eastern Ukraine. He appealed to both sides to adhere to the provisions of the Minsk Agreements. He backed the common position of the EU member states regarding EU enlargement in the Western Balkan states, a process that the Russian Federation is trying to slow down or even stop. Korčok was clear that enlargement "is not a threat to anybody" and will lead to "stabilization and reforms in these countries."⁷ At a North Atlantic Council meeting he stressed "there is no reason to change NATO's policy towards Russia," of "deterrence and dialogue," as the Russian Federation had not changed its course.⁸

The differences in the approaches of President Kiska and former prime minister Fico became apparent during the Victory over Fascism Day celebrations on May 8, 2018. Kiska was in Makov (Žilina region) stressing the European dimension of the Victory over Fascism in 1945, while Fico at Slavín, a monument to fallen Soviet soldiers in Bratislava, declared he refused to participate in "the anti-Russian madness that is spreading like a cancer across the whole world without any proof."⁹ The chairman of Slovakia's European Affairs Parliamentary Committee, Ľuboš Blaha (Smer-SD [Direction-Social Democracy]), adopted a similar tone when speaking about Russia during the plenary session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in January 2018. He rejected the idea that the Russian Federation was an enemy, instead blaming Russia and Ukraine equally for the violence in eastern Ukraine. He condemned the sanctions policy against Russia and Russophobia.¹⁰

Andrej Danko continued to maintain close contacts with the speaker of the State Duma, Vyacheslav Volodin, who is on the list of Russian politicians targeted by the personal sanctions introduced by the EU in 2014. In June 2018 he was the only parliamentary speaker from an EU member state to participate in the International Forum for the Development of Parliamentarism meeting. In October 2018 he had a bilateral

⁷ "Štátny tajomník I. Korčok s prvým námestníkom ministra zahraničných vecí Ruskej federácie V. Titovom o perspektívach rozvoja vzťahov EÚ a Ruska," [State Secretary I. Korčok with First Deputy Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation V. Titov] Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, January 1, 2018. Available online: https://www.mzv.sk/ministerstvo/detail/-/asset_publisher/lw1ppvnScIPx/content/statny-tajomnik-i-korcok-s-prvym-namestnikom-ministra-zahranicnych-veci-ruskej-federacie-v-titovom-o-perspektivach-rozvoja-vztahov-eu-a-ruska?p_p_auth=jA5qhOAG (accessed on February 19, 2019).

⁸ "Korčok at the North Atlantic Council: 'There is no reason to change NATO's policy towards Russia, expressed as both deterrence and dialogue,'" Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, April 4, 2018. Available online: https://www.mzv.sk/web/en/news/current_issues/-/asset_publisher/lrJ2tDuQdEKp/content/i-korcok-nie-je-dovod-meniť-politiku-nato-voci-rusku-vyjadrenu-v-kombinácii-odstrasovania-a-dialogu-/10182 (accessed on February 19, 2019).

⁹ "Slovakia celebrates WWII anniversary with tributes and controversy," *Slovak Spectator*, May 9, 2018. Available online: <https://spectator.sme.sk/c/20821766/slovakia-celebrates-anniversary-of-wwii-with-tributes-as-well-as-controversy.html> (accessed on February 19, 2019).

¹⁰ "2018 Ordinary session. Report. Fourth sitting," Council of Europe, January 23, 2018. Available online: <http://assembly.coe.int/Documents/Records/2018/E/1801231530E.htm> (accessed on February 19, 2019).

meeting with Volodin at the Eurasian Summit of Parliamentary Speakers. After the meeting he called for the allegedly “pointless” sanctions to be abolished and expressed his wish to invite Volodin to Bratislava.¹¹

This overview shows the high degree of continuity in perceptions of the Russian Federation among Slovakia's leading politicians. In particular, the leaders of two of the coalition parties – Smer-SD and SNS – continued to criticize the EU's common approach to the Russian Federation. However, the fact that A. Danko has maintained contact with V. Volodin is a violation of EU policy and so goes beyond mere political rhetoric. The politicians who have emphasized the need for friendly relations with the Russian Federation frequently ignore Russia's gestures which contradict friendly relations with Slovakia. This applies to some articles published in the Russian media regarding the 50th anniversary of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968. It also applies to an article published by Alexander Vedrussov in the Russian pro-governmental daily newspaper *Izvestia* which described the Prague Spring, an attempt to democratize the Soviet model of socialism, as the first “color coup” inspired by the USA. He repeated the lie that the invasion took place at the request of Alexander Dubček, then first secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.¹² Another defense of the Soviet invasion was published by the press-agency *RIA*, part of the state-owned media holding Russia Today.¹³

RUSSIA AS A MATTER OF DOMESTIC POLITICAL CONFLICT

However, despite the clear Euro-Atlantic stance of President Kiska and the pro-European stance of the foreign ministry, Slovakia's reaction to the Skripal case was symptomatic of the Janus face of Slovakia's Eastern Policy. According to the official investigation in the United Kingdom, Sergei Skripal, a former collaborator from Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB), and his daughter Julia were poisoned by Novichok, a chemical agent, in Salisbury on March 4, 2018. UK Prime Minister Theresa May accused Russia's Secret Service GRU (Main Directorate of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation) of being behind the chemical attack. In response, 23 Russian diplomats were expelled from the UK.

Twenty-one EU member states, the USA and Ukraine demonstrated solidarity with the UK and expelled Russian diplomats. Slovakia was among a minority of EU member countries that did not take such action, together with Austria, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Greece and Malta. Slovakia decided to adopt a more moderate response,

¹¹ “Danko chce koniec sankcií v čase, keď pribudli dôkazy, že Rusi vedú vojnu proti Západu,” [Danko wants the sanctions to end at a time when there is evidence that the Russians are leading a war against the West], *DennikN*, October 8, 2018. Available online: <https://dennikn.sk/1254719/danko-chce-koniec-sankcii-v-case-ked-pribudli-dokazy-ze-rusi-vedu-vojnju-proti-zapadu/> (accessed on February 19, 2019).

¹² “Вспомнить всё,” [Remember everything] *Izvestia*, August 21, 2018. Available online: <https://iz.ru/779769/aleksandr-vedrussov/vspomnit-vse> (accessed on February 19, 2019).

¹³ “Пражская весна и ‘Влтава-666’: было ли это ошибкой Москвы,” [Prague Spring and ‘Vltava-666’: was it Moscow's mistake?] *Ria Novosti*, August 21, 2018. Available online: <https://ria.ru/20180821/1526840281.html> (accessed on February 19, 2019).

recalling its ambassador Peter Priputen from Moscow. A similar step was undertaken by Luxemburg, Malta and Portugal.¹⁴ On March 27, 2018 State Secretary of the Foreign Ministry Lukáš Parížek summoned Ambassador of the Russian Federation Alexei Fedotov to discuss the use of Novichok on UK territory and called it a “straightforward violation of international law.”¹⁵ Paradoxically, Hungary, the V4 state with the closest relations to Russian Federation, decided to expel its Russian diplomat. Therefore, Slovakia was the only V4 country not to follow the majority of EU member states.

The decision not to expel Russian diplomats shows how much Slovakia's political elites, including the ruling coalition, are divided on relations with Russia. The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs followed the position of two of the coalition parties – Smer–SD (mainly the party leader Robert Fico) and the SNS, who argued against it based on Slovakia's desire to maintain good relations with Russia and her sovereign decision-making powers. By contrast, the chair of the Slovak Foreign Affairs Parliamentary Committee Katarína Cséfalvayová (Most-Híd, Bridge) indirectly criticized the behavior of the other coalition partners as “ambiguous.” She insisted Slovakia adopt a similar position to the other V4 countries.¹⁶ Slovakia's moderate response provoked criticism among the opposition parties (namely Sloboda a solidarita [Freedom and Solidarity, SAS] and Obyčajní ľudia a nezávislé osobnosti [Ordinary People and Independent Personalities, OĽaNO]) and President Andrej Kiska, who raised the issue at one of Slovakia's Security Council sessions. During meetings with the new Prime Minister, Peter Pellegrini, and State Secretary Parížek he stressed the need to maintain a principled and clear position.¹⁷ According to some experts, like the director of the Slovak Security Policy Institute, Jaroslav Naď, the decision not to expel any of the Russian diplomats present in Slovakia was a missed opportunity to remove Russian security service personnel, who allegedly account for around 30–40 per cent of Russian Federation diplomatic personnel at the embassy and consulate in Slovakia.¹⁸

¹⁴ A. Wróbel, “Who's expelling Russian diplomats (and who isn't),” *Politico*, March 26, 2018.

¹⁵ “Russian ambassador with State Secretary L. Parizek on Salisbury incident,” Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, March 27, 2018. Available online: https://www.mzv.sk/web/en/news/current_issues/-/asset_publisher/lrj2tDuQdEKp/content/rusky-velvyslanec-u-statneho-tajomnika-l-parizka-kvoli-incidentu-v-salisbury/10182?_101_INSTANCE_lrj2tDuQdEKp_redirect=%2Fweb%2Fen%2Fnews%3Frok%3D2018%26mesiac%3D2%26strana%3D1 (accessed on February 19, 2019).

¹⁶ “Slovensko stiahne veľvyslanca z Moskvy. Nestačí to, hovorí aj prezident Kiska,” [Slovakia pulls its ambassador from Moscow. It's not enough, says President Kiska] *DennikN*, March 28, 2018. Available online: <https://dennikn.sk/1079087/slovensko-stiahne-velvyslanca-z-moskvy-vyhostit-ruskych-diplomatov-sa-nechysta/> (accessed on February 19, 2019).

¹⁷ “President Kiska asked about the non-expulsion of Russian diplomats,” Official website of the President of the Slovak Republic, March 27, 2018. Available online: <https://www.prezident.sk/en/article/prezident-prijal-lukasa-parizeka/> (accessed on February 19, 2019).

¹⁸ “Bezpečnostný expert: Na Slovensku je asi desať ruských špiónov diplomatov,” [Security expert: There are about ten Russian spy diplomats in Slovakia] *Trend*, April 6, 2018. Available online: <https://www.etrend.sk/trend-archiv/rok-2018/cislo-14/bezpecnostny-expert-na-slovensku-je-asi-desat-ruskych-spionov-diplomatov.html> (accessed on February 19, 2019).

Although the foreign ministry announced a decision to expel one Russian diplomat in November 2018, who had reportedly been engaged in espionage,¹⁹ Slovakia's reaction to the Skripal case is not only indicative of the deep split between the ruling coalition and the opposition, but also of the lack of consensus within the ruling coalition regarding relations with Russia. The sovereignty argument is reminiscent of the arguments made by Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán when describing the EU as a threat to national independence.

Another case revealing the Janus face of Slovakia's Eastern Policy concerned a trip by unaffiliated MP Peter Marček (former member of the Sme Rodina [We Are Family] faction) to Crimea in August 2018. Crimea was occupied and annexed by the Russian Federation in 2014. The Russian Federation's claim that Crimea is now part of the Russian Federation has not been recognized by any EU member state, including Slovakia, and the EU imposed economic and political sanctions on the occupied territory. Peter Marček's case is odd in that he maintains close relations with the ruling coalition, often voting with coalition MPs. Back in November 2017, after Andrej Danko had delivered his speech in the State Duma, Marček announced he would raise the question of officially recognizing the annexation of Crimea in parliament. His arguments followed Russia's narrative on the legality of the referendum in 2014 as well as on Khrushchev's arbitrary decision in 1954 that Crimea should come under Soviet Ukraine rather than Soviet Russia. He sought support among MPs from Smer-SD, the SNS and Ľudová strana – Naše Slovensko ([Kotleba – People's Party Our Slovakia] ĽSNS). However, even members of Marián Kotleba's party did not support Marček's initiative, despite having used the same argument in the past. He garnered indirect support from Chairman of the European Affairs Parliamentary Committee Ľuboš Blaha, who underlined the historical and ethnic proximity of Crimea to Russia and his desire for good relations with Russia.²⁰

Marček's trip to occupied Crimea was initially announced as an "official delegation" of the Slovak parliament based on an invitation by Chairman of the Board of the Yalta Economic Forum Andrei Nazarov. However, Marček was the only MP to attend. Initially another unaffiliated MP, Martina Šimkovičová (also a former member of the Sme rodina faction), was also supposed to attend, but ultimately no other parliamentarian would accompany him. Marček went despite the protests of the Ukrainian Ambassador Yuriy Mushka.²¹

What was particularly odd about Marček's trip was that he was accompanied not only by a couple of Slovak businessmen, but also by the former deputy head of the Slovak Intelligence Service Igor Cibula. At the press conference in Crimea, Cibula was introduced as an advisor to the Slovak prime minister. The Slovak government's

¹⁹ "Slovakia expels Russian diplomat, says engaged in espionage," *Reuters*, December 5, 2018. Available online: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-slovakia-russia-espionage/slovakia-expels-russian-diplomat-says-engaged-in-espionage-idUSKBN1O413P> (accessed on February 19, 2019).

²⁰ "Poslanec Marček chce, aby Slovensko uznalo anexiu Krymu. Inšpiroval ho aj Danko," [MP Marček wants Slovakia to recognize the annexation of the Crimea. Danko also inspired him] *Aktuality.sk*, November 28, 2017. Available online: <https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/542318/poslanec-marcek-chce-aby-slovensko-uznalo-anexiu-krymu-inspiroval-ho-aj-danko/> (accessed on February 19, 2019).

²¹ "Slovak MPs' plan to visit Crime triggers controversy," *Radio Slovak International*, July 20, 2018. Available online: <https://enrsi.rtv.slovakia.sk/articles/news/170095/slovak-mps-plan-to-visit-crimea-triggers-controversy> (accessed on February 19, 2019).

response was surprisingly moderate, however, denying only that Cibula had been there officially. No other steps followed, despite Marček stating on the trip that he considered Crimea to be part of Russia. The “delegation” led by Marček met with Crimean Prime Minister Sergei Aksyonov and the head of the Night Wolves motorcycle club, Alexander Zhaldostanov, who propagates the politics of Russian President Vladimir Putin. Marček signed an agreement concerning the establishment of the so called European–Crimean Chamber of Commerce, symbolically registered in the Bratislava-based Hotel Krym (Slovak for Crimea).²² Subsequently, this private visit, initially labelled as a “delegation of Slovak MPs,” was used by some media in the Russian Federation to suggest that Slovak MPs had recognized Crimea as part of the Russian Federation.²³ Thus, Marček joined the other European politicians, mainly from far right parties (for example MEP Nicolas Bay, Secretary General of Marie Le Pen’s National Rally; UKIP MEP Bill Etheridge; Yavor Notev, Deputy Chairman of the Bulgarian National Assembly, member of the far right United Patriots Grouping led by Volen Sidorov); and some from far left MEPs (MEP Jaromír Kohlíček from the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia) who have also stated they recognize the unilateral border change in the Russian Federation.²⁴

The reaction of Slovakia’s coalition parties merely confirms the premise about the Janus face of Slovakia’s Eastern Policy. Only Most–Híd openly criticized Marček’s trip. The members of the Foreign Affairs Parliamentary Committee approved the proposal by its chairwoman Katarína Cséfalvayová (Most–Híd) not to recognize the results of the illegal referendum in Crimea in March 2014. They stated that “incorporating the peninsula into the Russian Federation violated the basic principles of international law and undermined the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine.” The MPs rejected “any indications that the visit by official representatives of the Slovak Republic legitimates the occupation and annexation of Crimea.”²⁵ However, the members of the two other coalition parties – Smer–SD and the SNS – did not attend the committee session. Subsequently, the SNS accused Cséfalvayová of violating the coalition agreement and called on her to resign, while Andrej Danko, the party leader, even voiced the idea of Most–Híd having to leave the coalition.²⁶ Thereby, expressing indirect support for the activities of P. Marček.

²² “MP Marček’s trip to Crimea has no results,” *Slovak Spectator*, August 8, 2018. Available online: <https://spectator.sme.sk/c/20887827/mp-marceks-trip-to-crimea-has-no-results.html> (accessed on February 19, 2019).

²³ “Slovaks recognise Crimea part of Russia,” *Pravda.Ru*, August 2, 2018. Available online: http://www.pravdareport.com/news/world/141335-slovak_crimea/ (accessed on February 19, 2019).

²⁴ O. Budnyk, “Crimean travellers: who visits occupied peninsula and why?” *Ukrinform*, August 10, 2018. Available online: <https://www.ukrinform.net/rubric-politics/2515623-crimean-travelers-who-visits-occupied-peninsula-and-why.html> (accessed on February 19, 2019).

²⁵ 103. Uznesenie Zahraničného výboru Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky z 8. augusta 2018, [103rd Resolution of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National Council of the Slovak Republic of August 8, 2018] National Council of the Slovak Republic, No. 1463/2018. Available online: <https://www.nrsr.sk/web/Dynamic/DocumentPreview.aspx?WFTID=NRDK&MasterID=266108> (accessed on February 19, 2019).

²⁶ “SNS žiada odchod K. Cséfalvayovej, hovorí o porušení koalície zmluvy,” [SNS demanding Cséfalvayová resign and saying the coalition agreement has been violated] *Teraz.sk*, August 8, 2018. Available online: <http://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/sns-ziada-odchod-k-csefalvayovej-hovori/341576-clanok.html> (accessed on February 19, 2019).

Finally, evidence for just how much the Russian issue is becoming a dividing line in Slovak society and between politicians is found in Slovakia's new strategic security documents. The Program of the Government of the Slovak Republic 2016–2020 stipulated that a new Defense Strategy of the Slovak Republic and Security Strategy of the Slovak Republic would be drawn up.²⁷

These were adopted by the Slovak government in October 2017; however, in summer 2018 members of the Slovak National Party criticized them. They objected to the Security Strategy on the grounds that they disagreed with the description of developments in Crimea in 2014 as a “particularly worrying violation of the basic principles and norms of international law... based on the illegitimate and illegal referendum in Crimea and Sevastopol” and accusing the Russian Federation of “taking part in fomenting and sustaining the armed conflict.”²⁸ The SNS disagreed with the Defense Strategy as it contained the following statement “malicious strategic propaganda, including disinformation activities, has the potential to polarize society, disrupt the political system, weaken the confidence of citizens in the democratic and legal state, their will to defend it, and question the importance of NATO membership in the EU and the EU.” According to the Slovak National Party, the two strategies portrayed the Russian Federation as an enemy, and so they blocked parliamentary approval.²⁹ The opposition parties, especially the SaS and OĽaNO, backed the defense and security strategies; in fact the SaS brought them before parliament. However, due to objections from the SNS, the documents were not debated by MPs.

The SNS even claimed the strategies had been drafted by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace based in Washington. Due to SNS pressure, neither of the strategic documents was adopted in 2018, despite backing from Minister Lajčák and Most-Híd, who were not willing to alter them.³⁰ Prime Minister Pellegrini stressed that the government was obliged to approve both documents.³¹

However, these political declarations do not alter the fact that Slovakia has not adjusted its key strategic documents to reflect present-day challenges and the commitments arising from EU and NATO membership. In reality, the main dividing line

²⁷ “Programové vyhlásenie vlády SR na roky 2016 – 2020,” [Slovakia's Government Program for 2016–2020] Government Office of the Slovak Republic, 2016. Available online: <https://www.vlada.gov.sk//programove-vyhlasenie-vlady-sr-na-roky-2016-2020/> (accessed on February 19, 2019).

²⁸ “Návrh Bezpečnostnej stratégie Slovenskej republiky,” [Draft Security Strategy of the Slovak Republic] Government Office of the Slovak Republic, 2017. Available online: <http://www.rokovania.sk/Rokovanie.aspx/BodRokovaniaDetail?idMaterial=26912> (accessed on February 19, 2019).

²⁹ “SNS blokuje prijatie dokumentov, ktoré označujú Putinovo Rusko za hrozbu,” [SNS blocking adoption of documents labeling Putin's Russia a threat] *DennikN*, June 30, 2018. Available online: <https://dennikn.sk/1166628/sns-blokuje-prijatie-dokumentov-ktore-oznacuju-putinovo-rusko-za-hrozbu/> (accessed on February 19, 2019).

³⁰ “Lajčák krotí SNS. Bezpečnostnú stratégiu kvôli Rusku meniť nebude,” [Lajčák restrains SNS. He won't change Security Strategy because of Russia] *DennikN*, December 11, 2018. Available online: <https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/650431/lajcak-kroti-sns-bezpecnostnu-strategiu-kvoli-rusku-menit-nebude/> (accessed on February 19, 2019).

³¹ “Bugár nechce vyhovieť Dankovi. Bezpečnostná stratégia sa prerábať nebude,” [Bugár doesn't want to indulge Danko. Security Strategy will not be redrafted] *Trend*, January 7, 2019. Available online: <https://www.etrend.sk/ekonomika/bugar-nechce-vyhoviet-dankovi-bezpecnostna-strategia-sa-prerabat-nebude.html> (accessed on February 19, 2019).

in Slovakia's politics does not run between the coalition and the opposition; the split within the coalition is more apparent, with Most-Híd advocating a policy consistent with that of the EU and NATO, and Smer-SD and SNS distancing themselves from it.

The Slovak government continued to work with NATO members within NATO's enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) and in April 2018 approved the deployment of 152 Slovak soldiers to Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Poland in readiness for a rapid and effective response to potential security threats from the east. This also shows that the main differences in the approaches to the Russian Federation are symbolic and rhetorical. Nonetheless, the blocking of parliament's adoption of these key security documents undermines Slovakia's national security and is damaging to the country's image in the eyes of its allies.

However, the Russian issue has relevant to domestic political discourse at society level. The first reason for this is found in public attitudes to the EU and NATO. According to a public opinion poll conducted by Focus on April 24–30, 2018, EU membership is supported by 74.7 per cent of the population, while by 22.3 per cent have a negative attitude (8 per cent disagree completely, while 14.3 per cent disagree somewhat with EU membership). The most pro-European voters tend to support the center-right opposition parties SaS and OĽaNO, with the most negative attitude being expressed by voters of the LSNS.³²

However, according to a public opinion poll conducted by the Bratislava-based Institute for Public Affairs (IVO) in June 2017, Slovakia's NATO membership attracts ignorantly more criticism – 36.3 per cent of Slovak citizens are critical, and only 58.2 per cent of the population perceive it in positive terms.³³

Another reason for the divided opinions is probably the declining, but still persistent post-communist nostalgia among some Slovak citizens. Research by Focus and the Conservative Institute of Milan Rastislav Štefánik in Bratislava on April 24–30, 2018 shows that 42.6 per cent of Slovak citizens (mainly voters of coalition parties Smer-SD and the SNS) say life before the political changes in 1989 was better than it is today. Only by 32.1 per cent of respondents shared the opposite view.³⁴

³² "Názor verejnosti na členstvo Slovenska v EÚ – apríl 2018," [Public opinion on Slovakia's EU membership – April 2018], Focus Research Agency, May 9, 2018. Available online: http://www.focus-research.sk/files/246_Suhlas%20s%20clenstvom%20SR%20v%20EU_april%202018.pdf (accessed on March 8, 2019).

³³ "Prieskum: väčšina Slovákov podporuje členstvo krajiny v EÚ a NATO, dokonca aj voliči Kotlebu," [Public opinion poll: most Slovaks support EU and NATO membership, even Kotleba voters] *Hospodárskej noviny*, June 30, 2017. Available online: <https://slovensko.hnonline.sk/988620-prieskum-vacsina-slovakov-podporuje-clenstvo-krajiny-v-eu-a-nato-dokonca-aj-volici-kotlebu> (accessed on March 8, 2019).

³⁴ O. Dostál R. Potočár, P. Gonda, "Viac ľudí preferuje život v socializme pred súčasnosťou" [More people think life was better under socialism than today], Konzervatívny inštitút Milana Rastislava Štefánika [Conservative Institute of Milan Rastislav Štefánik], May 11, 2018. Available online: <http://www.konzervativizmus.sk/print.php?6185> (accessed on March 8, 2018).

SLOVAKIA AND UKRAINE

In 2018, bilateral relations between Slovakia and its largest neighbor Ukraine were overshadowed by relations with the Russian Federation. Political contacts were maintained at the working level, mainly between President A. Kiska and his Ukrainian counterpart Petro Poroshenko. They met twice in 2018, once at the 73rd session of the UN General Assembly on September 25th, and then during Kiska's working visit to Kyiv on November 23rd–24th, where he attended the commemorations in honor of the victims of the Holodomor (the 1932–1933 famine orchestrated by the Soviet authorities to force the peasants to join the state-controlled collective farms). In their meetings and phone calls they discussed the issue of cooperation on the bilateral and multilateral levels, focusing on the situation in eastern Ukraine and the territorial integrity of Ukraine in the context of the aggression by the Russian Federation. The Slovak president expressed his concern at the situation regarding Ukrainian film director Oleh Sentsov.³⁵

Minister Lajčák paid an official visit to Ukraine on October 4th–5th as part of preparations for Slovakia's Chairmanship of the OSCE. He had talks with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine Pavel Klimkin and with President P. Poroshenko and Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine Andriy Parubiy. This was Lajčák's first official visit once his presidency of the UN General Assembly had come to an end. He underlined Slovakia's unconditional support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, as well as Slovakia's commitment to helping with Ukraine's reforms. The discussions concerned bilateral economic relations, energy security issues and the gas supply from Russia in the context of the construction of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline. He announced that the legal situation of eastern Ukraine was the priority of Slovakia's OSCE Chairmanship. During his visit to Kharkiv he unveiled Slovakia's aim to establish a fourth honorary consulate there. When visiting FED Kharkiv, a high-tech company producing components for the aviation and space industries, he discussed potential investments in Slovakia.³⁶

Slovakia, together with other EU member states, backed Ukraine during the escalation of the situation in the Kerch Strait in November 2018, when the Russian navy blocked the access of the Ukrainian navy to the Sea of Azov and captured 24 Ukrainian sailors. The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs stressed that Slovakia's position was that it would not recognize the annexation of Crimea and would support the sovereignty of Ukraine and its territorial integrity within internationally recognized borders. Slovakia called upon the Russian Federation to allow free access through the

³⁵ "Kiska expresses concern to Poroshenko about Sentsov's condition," Official website of the President of the Slovak Republic, August 24, 2018. Available online: <https://www.prezident.sk/en/article/kiska-sa-u-porosenka-zaujimal-o-stav-sencova/> (accessed on February 19, 2019).

³⁶ "Minister Miroslav Lajčák navštívil Charkov," [Minister Lajčák visited Kharkiv] Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, October 5, 2018. Available online: http://www.mzv.sk/cestovanie_a_konzularne_info/detail/-/asset_publisher/lw1ppvnScIPx/content/minister-miroslav-lajcak-navstivil-charkov?_101_INSTANCE_lw1ppvnScIPx_redirect=%2Fcestovanie_a_konzularne_info%2Fdetail%2F-%2Fasset_publisher%2Fw1ppvnScIPx%2Fcontent%2Fukrajina%3FdisplayMode%3D1%26amp%3Bamp%3Bstrana%3D2%26amp%3Bstrana%3D3%26strana%3D4 (accessed on February 19, 2019).

Kerch Strait and to the Ukrainian ports on the Sea of Azov Sea in accordance with international law.³⁷

ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF SLOVAKIA'S EASTERN POLICY IN 2018

The most important event in bilateral economic relations between Slovakia and the Russian Federation was the 19th session of the Intergovernmental Commission for Economic and Scientific and Technical Cooperation between the Slovak Republic and the Russian Federation on October 24, 2018. Minister of the Economy Peter Žiga and Russian Minister of Industry and Trade Denis Manturov, who co-chair the commission, underlined the positive growth in bilateral trade: in 2017 turnover increased by 20 per cent, mostly due to the rise in oil prices and the stabilization of Russia's currency. In 2017 the number of Russian tourists visiting Slovakia increased by 22 per cent. Žiga and Manturov stressed Slovakia's potential as a gateway to the EU.³⁸ In fact, between January and October 2018 it was only Slovak imports from the Russian Federation that saw an increase (from €2,748.3 million to €3,334.2 million, an increase of 21.3 per cent over the same period in 2017), while Slovak exports to Russia remained at the same level (€1,272.4 million in January–October 2017 and €1,282.7 million in January–October 2018). During the same period, imports to Slovakia increased by 7.6 per cent and exports from Slovakia by 7.2 per cent.³⁹ The optimistic statements regarding bilateral trade were therefore overdone, at least on the Slovak side.

Bilateral trade with Ukraine in 2018 was also positive. Imports from Ukraine increased from €519.1 million (January–October 2017) to €580.4 million in the same period in 2018, an increase of 11.8 per cent. However, Slovakia's exports to Ukraine fell from €400.1 million to €380 million, a decrease of 5 per cent over the same period⁴⁰. In the

³⁷ "Statement of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic on the escalation of the situation in the Kerch Strait," Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, November 26, 2018. Available online: https://www.mzv.sk/web/en/news/detail/-/asset_publisher/oLVivP07vPxx/content/vyhlasenie-mzvaez-sr-k-eskalacii-situacie-v-kerckskom-prielive/10182?_101_INSTANCE_oLVivP07vPxx_redirect=%2Fweb%2Fen%2Fnews%2Fdetail%2F-%2Fasset_publisher%2FMzvResourcesWeb%2Fjs%2Fmzv%3Fstrana%3D74 (accessed on February 19, 2019).

³⁸ "Informácia o priebehu a výsledkoch 19. zasadnutia Medzivládnej komisie pre hospodársku a vedecko-technickú spoluprácu medzi Slovenskou republikou a Ruskou federáciou v dňoch 15. – 16. októbra 2018 v Tatranskej Lomnici a Návrh vykonávacieho protokolu," [Information on the results of the 19th session of the Intergovernmental Committee for economic and scientific and technological cooperation between Slovakia and Russia on October 15–16, 2018 and the Draft Implementation Protocol] Government Office of the Slovak Republic, October 15–16, 2018. Available online: <http://www.rokovania.sk/File.aspx/ViewDocumentHtml/Mater-Dokum-222803?prefixFile=m> (accessed on February 19, 2019).

³⁹ "Zahraničný obchod SR – január až október 2018 (a rovnaké obdobie roku 2017)," [Slovak Foreign trade – January–October 2018 (and same period in 2017)] Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic, 2018. Available online: <https://www.economy.gov.sk/uploads/files/Nbz9KDTU.pdf> (accessed on February 19, 2019).

⁴⁰ *Ibid*

first ten months of 2018 Slovakia's trade deficit with Ukraine was €200.4 million, so Slovakia should be breathing fresh air into its bilateral contacts.

Prime Minister Peter Pellegrini, Finance Minister Peter Kažimír and Economy Minister Economy Peter Žiga visited Azerbaijan on November 16, 2018 to discuss economic issues, above all. It was the first visit to Baku by a Slovak prime minister since the two countries gained independence. They held meetings with President of Azerbaijan İlham Aliyev, Prime Minister Novruz Mammadov, Deputy Prime Minister with responsibility for Investments Ali Akhmadov, Minister of Economy Shakhin Mustafayev and business representatives. They expressed an interest in establishing the Intergovernmental Commission of Economic Cooperation and a Slovak embassy in Baku.⁴¹

CONCLUSIONS

In 2018, Slovakia sent out contradictory messages regarding its Eastern Policy, not only to Slovak citizens, but also to her allies and political partners in Eastern Europe. On one hand Slovakia repeatedly stressed its support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, but at the same time, the Slovak National Party – a member of the coalition government – called for the suspension of Katarína Cséfalvayová, Chairwoman of the Foreign Affairs Parliamentary Committee who criticized MP Peter Marček for visiting Russian-occupied Crimea and for his statements calling for Crimea to be recognized as part of Russia. On the one hand Slovakia expressed a desire to strengthen European integration, and yet its prime ministers criticized the EU sanctions imposed on the Russian Federation, while another governing coalition partner blocked the adoption of key strategies that reflected the changing role of Russia in Slovakia's direct neighborhood.

Following the political crisis in February–March 2018 after the assassination of the journalist Ján Kuciak and his fiancée, the Slovak National Party exerted itself within the governing coalition and non-affiliated MPs like Peter Marček and Martina Šimkovičová lent informal support to the government. Consequently, the SNS has been increasing its influence both in domestic affairs and in foreign and security policy, especially regarding relations with the Russian Federation. The Russian issue is a dividing line in Slovak society that has gradually emerged following the political changes in Ukraine in 2014 and the Russian annexation of the Ukrainian province of Crimea. In 2017–2018 the party's importance increased, as Speaker of the National Council of the Slovak Republic Danko established close contact with Speaker of the State Duma of Russian Federation Vyacheslav Volodin. However, this dividing line does not reflect the divide between the coalition and opposition, but crosses the political spectrum. Relations

⁴¹ "Oficiálna návšteva predsedu vlády Slovenskej republiky Petra Pellegriniho v Azerbajdžanskej republike," [Official visit of the Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic Peter Pellegrini to the Republic of Azerbaijan] Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, November 16, 2018. Available online: https://www.mzv.sk/cestovanie_a_konzularne_info/detail/-/asset_publisher/lw1ppvnScIPx/content/oficialna-navsteva-predsedu-vlady-slovenskej-republiky-petra-pellegriniho-v-azerbajdzanskej-republike?_101_INSTANCE_lw1ppvnScIPx_redirect=%2Fcestovanie_a_konzularne_info%2Fdetail%2F-%2Fasset_publisher%2Flw1ppvnScIPx%2Fcontent%2Fazerbajdzanska-republika%3FdisplayMode%3D1 (accessed on February 19, 2019).

with the Russian Federation have become an issue of conflict within the ruling coalition, mainly between the pro-Russian Slovak National Party and pro-EU Most-Híd. The main coalition partner, Smer-SD, seeks to balance both partners, but on many issues attracting the public's attention, they adopt a line close to that of the SNS. In 2018, the clear Euro-Atlantic course was followed mainly by President Andrej Kiska, the center-right opposition and governing coalition party Most-Híd. But, some statements by Slovak politicians, like that of P. Žiga declaring in Tatranská Lomnica that Slovakia is Russia's gateway to the EU, are reminiscent of the geopolitical illusions of certain Slovak political figures in the second half of the 1990s.

Compared to the situation in 2017, by 2018 the domestic political conflict over relations with the Russian Federation had already gone beyond mere rhetoric, with pressure from the Slovak National Party leading to the government's inability to bring the draft Security Strategy and Defense Strategy before parliament, the two strategic documents that set out the principles of Slovak security policy. This indicates that the key principles of the foreign policy consensus established during the pre-accession period of 1999–2004 are now in dispute.

III.

SLOVAKIA'S FOREIGN POLICY TOOLS

SLOVAK DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION IN 2018

JAKUB ŠIMEK

Slovak development cooperation is intended to improve the prosperity of the global community, and ensure that humanity has a positive impact on our planet in the long-term. According to IATI data, between 2012 and 2017 Slovakia engaged in 1,800 activities as part of its official development assistance (ODA).¹ That is an average of 300 activities or projects per year. In 2017 Slovakia followed through on 484 financial commitments, according to SlovakDev.² These included the provision of multilateral and bilateral ODA, as well as covering the administration costs of 18 different actors providing Slovak ODA.

This analysis aims to assess the current trends in development cooperation and opportunities to improve the effectiveness of Slovak ODA in terms of *social impact value*, *learning value*, and the *signaling value* of the “Good Idea Slovakia” brand.

¹ “International Aid Transparency Initiative” data available online: <https://www.iatiregistry.org/publisher/slovakaid> (accessed on February 17, 2019).

² For more see the SlovakDev portal. Available online: <http://www.slovakdev.sk/en/pages/open-data> (accessed on February 17, 2019).

SLOVAK ODA AS SEEN THROUGH EXTERNAL BENCHMARKS

Slovakia came 28th in the Good Country Index 2018 (GCI),³ ahead of Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary⁴. Interestingly, this was a major improvement on the previous year when Slovakia ranked 48th. Indexes, such as the GCI, have their limitations and are slow to reflect the reality. They often analyze data that are two or three years old. But they can provide good external benchmarks that allow us to compare our performance on multiple dimensions with other countries and identify current and future trends.

In the Commitment to Development Index 2018⁵ produced by the Center for Global Development, Slovakia is ranked 20th out of 29 donor countries and members of the OECD DAC⁶. The Czech Republic was directly above Slovakia, and Hungary and Poland below. We ranked 22nd on the Aid component of the CDI index alone. Both the Czech Republic and Poland were ahead of us. But compared to last time, we improved three positions on the Aid component (from 25th to 22nd).

In the SDG Index 2018 we ranked 24th out of 156 countries.⁷ Czech Republic ranked 13th, while Hungary came 26th, and Poland 32nd. According to the latest index report no country has increased development cooperation spending.

Slovakia is among the 40 richest countries in the world in terms of GDP per capita. All the indexes where we rank significantly higher than our income levels would suggest (e.g. below 30) indicate the “value for money” that our society and policies can achieve. This means our society can produce better outcomes, both nationally and internationally, than our current level of economic development would suggest.

Looking closer at ODA and the Commitment to Development Index, we can see we could achieve better results if we increased the level of ODA spending to meet the 0.33 GNI target, reduced the bureaucracy associated with ODA, and opened it up more to applicants from third countries (untied aid).

But our development cooperation seems to be a bottleneck to performance on the other indexes mentioned above, like the Good Country Index and the SDG Index, as well as others. For example, in the 2019 Climate Change Performance Index Slovakia comes 26th overall, but 44th in “international policy.”

³ The *Good Country Index* assesses the overall positive contribution countries make towards the global commons and the global community, relative to population size. Prosperity and Equality is one of the seven categories. Slovakia ranks 88th in this category; the low ranking is mainly a reflection of the small volume of development assistance.

⁴ The *Good Country Index* is produced by Simon Anholt. Available online: <https://www.goodcountryindex.org/results> (accessed on February 17, 2019).

⁵ The *Commitment to Development Index* assesses the 29 donor countries belonging to the OECD club of Development Assistance Committee who promise to maintain high standards in ODA in terms of equal partnerships and participation of recipient countries, open access to funding (untied aid), transparency and effectiveness.

⁶ “Commitment to Development Index 2018,” The Center for Global Development, 2018. Available online: <https://www.cgdev.org/commitment-development-index-2018> (accessed on February 17, 2019).

⁷ The 2018 SDG Index 2018 was published by Bertelsmann Stiftung. Available online: <http://sdg-index.org/reports/2018/> (accessed on February 17, 2019). The SDG Index puts equal weight on all 17 Global Goals and evaluates a country’s performance on SDG targets and their indicators given the data available.

Some of these indexes are imprecise and do not reflect the latest developments, but there is a pattern and it tells us that Slovak official development cooperation could be improved and that this would also improve the Slovakia brand and international perceptions.

The value of ODA can be divided into at least three parts:

1. The *signaling value* of our commitment to development reflects whether we reach or exceed our targets. The concept of signaling originates from biology and holds that an expensive signal is a reliable signal. Therefore, simply signing treaty (a cheap signal) is not enough; we have to show that in relation to the treaty we have long-term and increasingly ambitious commitments. This general point can be extended to other policies, such as defense spending.
2. The ecological or social *impact value* of demonstrably effective interventions. This refers to whether Slovak ODA has saved a certain number of lives, as estimated in Quality Adjusted Life Years (QALY) for instance, achieved perhaps by distributing anti-malaria bed nets. It also applies to ODA leading to the creation of quality jobs (measured as Full Time Equivalent) in low and medium income countries, which would otherwise not exist (counterfactual impact) or to Slovak ODA helping a certain area or percentage of the population to connect to renewable energy sources such as solar panels (and thus speed up electrification within a certain timeframe).
3. The *learning value* of ODA can be enhanced by investing in social innovations and learning from failure. Transparent reporting on ODA through the use of open data standards, such as the International Aid Transparency Initiative is another example. *Learning value* can be increased by investing small (optimal) amounts of money and time in innovative projects led by great teams. This strategy helps to achieve anti-fragility or optionality for investors or donors. In the business world the methodologies to achieve this are Rapid Prototyping, Sprint, Lean Startup and Lean Impact.

But the main point is that “research is the opposite of development,” so in the *research phase* small amounts should be invested into many prototypes so as to achieve the maximum rate of learning. In the *development phase* the focus is on perfecting and scaling the prototype that “won the hearts of customers” and succeeds in changing their behavior. For example, the most valuable companies are those that provide products that we use not just daily, but on an hourly basis (whether for good or bad).

CURRENT TRENDS INFLUENCING DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

The shrinking of civil society is accelerating as governments around the world impose tighter controls on domestic civil society organizations and foreign funding, while shifting the focus to greater cooperation with the business sector in delivering development strategies.

But we can view civil society in the broader sense of a community of all active citizens, regardless of whether they come from civil society organizations, the corporate sector, or work as state bureaucrats or academic researchers.

There is a growing focus on the *effective delivery* of development cooperation and on demonstrating its social impact and on investing in social innovations. There are at least three reasons for this:

The first reason is *climate change*. The general public and climate scientists are demanding much more radical solutions to the catastrophic risk of extreme and irreversible climate change. And there are some indications that we have maybe only a decade or two left before irreversible climate change occurs.

The second reason is the growing unease at *migration* from low and middle income countries into high income countries in the West. Memories of 2015, when Europe saw an influx of people on the move, still loom large. There is a sense that we need to invest heavily in reskilling and upskilling young people, especially in Africa, to slow the trend of migration and make the countries of origin more resilient to climate change and less prone to violence and political unrest.

The third reason is the general push towards *prioritizing* cost-effective solutions in the donor community, influenced in part by the Effective Altruism movement. And there is growing understanding that we need to prioritize cost-effective solutions in order to deliver the ambitious Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2030.⁸ The World Bank recently published a paper on prioritizing SDGs on the basis of how networked the goals are; it also recommended prioritizing infrastructure, energy and sanitation.⁹

SLOVAK ODA IN THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

Slovakia adopted the Agenda 2030 strategy for the external environment (ODA, foreign policy) in 2017, and in 2018 made major progress in developing national priorities and drafting the internal SDG strategy in a participatory and effective manner.

The internal SDG strategy will be adopted in 2019. While the external SDG strategy is immediately more relevant to development cooperation, the internal and national SDG strategy will shape our ODA in the long-term.

Because we are a small country with limited resources, our ODA is primarily focused on soft projects, including know-how transfer, as opposed to hard infrastructure projects. So the *Good Idea Slovakia* country brand indicates that we are a place where social innovations are born in one decade and drive effective know-how transfer through ODA in the next decade(s).

For example, Finland is inspiring because of their education reforms from the 1960s and the rise of Nokia and Angry Birds. Similarly, the Slovakia brand is based on the fact that we are a young country that has managed to successfully build our institutions and integrate within the EU and NATO, develop our economy, and become an honest broker with expertise in, for instance, security sector reform.

⁸ "Post-2015 Consensus," The Copenhagen Consensus Center, 2015. The ranking of SDG targets according to cost-benefit estimates. Available online: <https://www.copenhagenconsensus.com/post-2015-consensus> (accessed on February 21, 2019).

⁹ M. H. El-Maghrabi et al., "Sustainable development goals diagnostics, an application of network theory and complexity measures to set country priorities," *Policy Research Working Paper 8481*, Vol. 1, Washington, DC: World Bank, 2018. Available online: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/270771529500170694/pdf/WPS8481.pdf> (accessed on February 21, 2019).

The “black swan” event in 2018 of the double murder of an investigative journalist Ján Kuciak and his fiancée Martina Kušnírová will probably shape both Slovakia’s future, and our perception abroad, for long to come. If we manage to come through this period as a stronger and more effective democracy, we could be an example to others, especially on financial transparency, global tax justice and the global fight against organized crime.

In the same way, if our domestic SDG strategy succeeds in lifting poorer regions and marginalized communities out of generational and near-extreme poverty, we will be able to capitalize on this in sharing our ODA and know-how in the long-term and inspire even the richest countries to adopt our solutions to assist their marginalized communities.

By adopting this attitude, we can view the two major problems facing us – corruption and generational poverty – as opportunities to adopt effective solutions and “moonshots” – radical social innovations that could solve a great number of these problems – and thereby drive our ODA and the Slovakia brand for decades to come.

AGENDA 2030 AND POLICY COHERENCE

Two major events influenced Slovak development cooperation in 2018. The OECD DAC Peer Review took place at the beginning of the year, five years after we became a member of this group of 29 donors. And secondly Slovakia presented its voluntary national review on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2030 in May to the UN High Level Political Forum in New York.

Prior to the voluntary national review, there was an intensive participative process in which the six national priorities for our *internal SDG strategy* were identified by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic for Investments and Informatization (DPMO).

In New York, the DPMO presented our internal SDG strategy, the six national priorities, and achievements through the view of three generations – a young and talented Roma student and volunteer, a female social entrepreneur in the circular economy, and an older professor well-known for his humanitarian and development work abroad.¹⁰

The six national priorities are:

1. Education for a decent life
2. Transition to a sustainable knowledge economy in the face of demographic and global changes
3. Poverty reduction and social inclusion
4. Sustainable settlements, regions and country in the context of climate change
5. Rule of law, good governance and security
6. Good Health

¹⁰ See articles (in Slovak) posted on the website of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic for Investments and Informatization. Available online: <https://www.vicpremier.gov.sk/sekcie/investicie/agenda-2030/aktuality/index.html> (accessed on February 21, 2019)

These six priorities serve as the basis of the “Vision and strategy for the development of Slovakia by 2030” currently being finalized at the DPMO. The strategy will be divided into three integrated development plans, and the aim is to identify the key systemic changes that will enable Slovakia to meet the SDG targets. For example, transforming our economy into a more sustainable and less energy intensive one, while concentrating on closing the loops and reusing and recycling materials in the circular economy.

Last year, 2017, the external SDG strategy was adopted. It combines the comparative advantage of Slovak ODA in terms of transition experience with the opportunities provided by the Agenda 2030 and Global Goals. The strategy was developed by the foreign ministry in 2016. There is a certain level of continuity between this external environment strategy and the six national priorities presented at the UN.

The OECD has a strong focus on policy coherence for sustainable development (PCSD). Last year, it published country profiles and described actions taken by Slovakia in this area.¹¹ They are divided up according to eight principles of policy coherence. Slovakia is active in all eight areas, for example, through working groups that involve analysts from the ministries and civil society actors. The two principles where the biggest progress is needed are: addressing *policy effects* (spill-overs, externalities) and *policy integration* (trade-offs, compromises, bringing together the social, ecological and economical objectives of various policy actors and “future generations”).

Policy coherence is probably the most consequential area of development cooperation. The idea of coherence is to make a conscious effort to prioritize more sustainable solutions and reconcile the trade-offs between various national and international policy objectives, actors and economic sectors. It is also about focusing on inter-generational timeframes and long-term horizons. That means dealing with the spill-overs and externalities of those policies and actions.

NEW MID-TERM ODA STRATEGY FOR 2019–2023

Slovak development cooperation was launched in 2003, and in 2013 we became members of the club of donors, OECD DAC.

In the mid-term ODA strategy for 2014–2018 we focused on three areas:

1. sharing transition experience and know-how from the EU accession,
2. poverty reduction, and
3. support for fragile countries in conflict.

Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák, in his foreword to the new mid-term strategy for 2019–2023, stressed the importance of re-identifying our comparative advantage¹²

¹¹ See “Country profiles: institutional mechanisms for PCSD,” OECD. Available online: <http://www.oecd.org/governance/pcsd/pcsd-country-profiles.htm> (accessed on February 20, 2019).

¹² “Strednodobá stratégia rozvojovej spolupráce SR na roky 2019 – 2023,” [Medium-term strategy for Slovak development cooperation in 2019–2023], Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, 2019, p. 4. Available online: https://www.slovakaid.sk/sites/default/files/pouzivatelia/Sabina%20Slim%C3%A1kov%C3%A1/strednodoba_strategia_rozvojovej_spoluprace_sr_2019-2023.pdf (accessed on February 21, 2019).

given that our transition experience may become less relevant, as the Western Balkan and Eastern Partnership countries make progress towards EU integration. He mentioned examples such as effective governance reform, effective public finance, raising prosperity and public participation, as well as creating a resilient society in the face of global challenges. Minister Lajčák thus echoed the recommendation in the recent OECD DAC Peer Review 2018 that we should focus on searching for a new comparative advantage.¹³

Minister Lajčák also talked of the failure to adopt new strategies for global education, policy coherence for sustainable development and multilateral ODA. He mentioned the need to reflect the OECD DAC recommendations and focus on results-based management, reducing involvement in countries such as Belarus and Afghanistan, and adopting a regional approach to the Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

The regional approach means that, for example Kenya, a program country with a Slovak Embassy, would serve as a hub for projects in East Africa and neighboring countries. The focus on LDCs means that there should be a conscious and focused effort at becoming more active in low income countries and fragile countries. One reason for this is that Kenya is becoming a lower middle income country. Georgia and Moldova, the other two program countries are middle income countries. But there is a need to go beyond national income averages and focus on the regions and even urban districts that are worse-off. For example, it would be logistically much simpler to support the construction of a school or a startup hub in a big city such as Nairobi, and in a good neighborhood. But there are vast regional differences, and some parts of Kenya, for example close to the Somali border, are too risky and fragile to operate in. But the aim could be to strike a balance between these two extremes.

The fact that all program countries are democracies and can serve as regional hubs in the new regional approach is important for policy coherence and reducing the unintended risk of strengthening authoritarian governments. It would be wise to have a principle that the ODA program countries should have a certain level of freedom and democratic legitimacy as this would reduce fragility and various financial and political risks. These countries could then serve as hubs and partners in, for instance, trilateral cooperation with LDCs and fragile states that are far riskier to engage in directly. Economic development should not be decoupled from good governance, freedoms and democracy. The BRICS paradigm and making Ethiopia a development posterchild on the basis of its high GDP growth and a few other indicators now seem outdated. Because it is not just growth that has to be considered, but also the increased economic and institutional fragility related to the risk of famine for example.

The plan is to adopt a new strategy for humanitarian aid in 2019. This multilateral ODA strategy will be based on transparent principles. Progress has been made on policy coherence with the creation of the Government Council for Agenda 2030 within the Deputy Prime Minister's Office for Investments and Informatization.

Another step is to continue participating in the joint programming of ODA at the EU level. The Slovak development agency has promised to improve its processes and

¹³ *OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews: Slovak Republic 2019*. OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews, Paris: OECD Publishing, 2019. Available online: https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/oecd-development-co-operation-peer-reviews-slovak-republic-2019_9789264312326-en#page55 (accessed on February 21, 2019).

requirements. The agency will also be able to administer EU funds thanks to the EU Pillar Assessment process.

The mid-term ODA strategy is accompanied by the Country Strategic Papers for the program countries of Kenya, Moldova and Georgia. The new mid-term strategy has sectorial priorities that are coherent with the six national priorities for Agenda 2030 adopted in 2018 in the participatory process led by the DPMO. The mid-term ODA strategy is also based on the SDG strategy for the external environment, prepared by the foreign ministry and adopted in 2017. It has four pillars: People and State, Prosperity, Environment, Partnership for Development.

Slovak ODA will continue to be focused on sharing our transition know-how obtained when we built our own independent and democratic institutions and on helping our development partners to cope with climate change and migration. Coherence with both the internal and external SDG strategies is thus clearly indicated in the new mid-term ODA strategy. The guiding principles of the new Slovak ODA strategy include a focus on the effectiveness of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation. This includes principles of local ownership, participation and coherence with the national strategies of development partners and the strategies of result-based management and aid transparency. Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD) will be further advanced by strengthening the process of coordination at the level of the Government Council for Agenda 2030, which will gain new PCSD-related competences in 2019.

The joint EU ODA programing is discussed as a separate instrument in the mid-term strategy. The AidWatch Report 2018 referred to Slovakia as one of three Central European countries that participate more in the EU Trust Funds; the other two are Poland and the Czech Republic.¹⁴

A relatively new instrument, framework contracts and related “bloc grants,” appeared for the first time in the previous mid-term strategy, and features in this new one as well. However, it has only been piloted once and not for projects abroad. This is despite it having been part of the strategy for five years. The “bloc grant” has been tried only once in relation to setting up a consortium of NGOs to map out the global education progress in Slovakia. The NDGO Platform and its members have been advocating the use of framework contracts for years, as an attempt to make development cooperation more predictable and with a long-term program focus as opposed to short term projects. The renewed attention to framework contracts also relates to one of the recommendations in the recent OECD DAC Peer Review – to narrow the focus of our ODA and to reduce the number of activities.

As mentioned above, this is an important positive development, but needs to be approached with caution so as to improve anti-fragility (rather than exacerbate the fragility of ODA in terms of risks). A few big programs may appear to be more effective in terms of administration, but at the same time, they are inherently more fragile in terms of the risk of failure. Anti-fragility could be improved by allowing the leading organizations (framework contract holders) to *do re-granting* down multiple levels.

¹⁴ “CONCORD AidWatch 2018. EU AID: A broken ladder?,” Concord, 2018. Available online: https://concordeurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/CONCORD_AidWatch_Report_2018_web.pdf (accessed on February 21, 2019).

There is a need to distinguish again between a focus on social innovation that requires *research*, rapid prototyping and thus small investments and many trials and failures (learning value) and the *development* and scaling of already proven solutions (social impact value). This is based on the idea mentioned above regarding R&D that “research is fundamentally different and opposed to development.” It is based on the work of Nassim Taleb and his lecture on Antifragility to the National Science Foundation.¹⁵

MULTILATERAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

The OECD DAC Peer Review published in February 2019 stressed in its summary report that Slovakia donates to 50 multilateral organizations without much transparency on how these allocations are made. The Center for Global Development in their Commitment for Development Index 2018 stated that in 2017 Slovakia had the highest percentage of multilateral ODA as part of total ODA of all the 29 OECD DAC members, at 76 per cent. Some 80 per cent of multilateral development cooperation is directed towards EU budget and EU funds (EDF).

Within multilateral cooperation there is an important partnership with the UNDP that dates back to the beginnings of Slovak ODA. The finance ministry, which is responsible for multilateral ODA, cooperates on various programs with the UNDP, aimed at supporting open data and financial innovations in the Western Balkans and supporting greater involvement of Slovak entrepreneurs in development cooperation through *Rozvojmajstri*.

The SlovakDev portal gives separate data for bilateral and multilateral ODA. If we look at the total aid outflows in 2017, there are 484 items (payments). A combination of multilateral and bilateral aid and administration costs. If we order these by size of payment, the €846,950 contribution to the UNDP is in the top ten biggest annual outlays for ODA. The first bilateral project contribution appears on page 8, and is almost 10 times smaller, at €91,472. The biggest overall contributions for 2017 are to the EU budget for ODA (€50,740,000), to the EDF (€12,603,016), to the EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey (two payments totaling €9,240,848), to the IVF (€2 million) and to the EIB's Economic Resilience Initiative (€2 million).

An important SlovakAid project that has multilateral ODA aspects is the EU Trust Fund pilot project that brings together the V4 countries in Kenya and focuses on the Fair Trade cashew nuts business and creating an effective supply chain from small farmers to international markets.

¹⁵ Nassim Taleb's lecture on “Antifragility to the National Science Foundation.” Available online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=omsYJBMolJU> (accessed on February 21, 2019).

THE SEARCH FOR GREATER INTEGRATION AND COHERENCE IN MULTILATERAL ODA

ODA contributions appear to be divided between multilateral and bilateral ODA at a ratio close to 80/20. Slovak ODA has the highest multilateral component in the OECD DAC. Some of the multilateral ODA is partially tied to Slovak entities, mostly via informational asymmetry and efforts to attract the Slovak private sector and develop its ability to bid successfully in international development finance tenders. Fully tied multilateral ODA, available only to the Slovak private sector, relates to IIB financed projects in Cuba, Vietnam and Mongolia.

The unanswered question is how much Slovak actors should expect to gain in return for our multilateral ODA investments, in terms of participation in development projects, capacity building, business opportunities and so on. The logic behind development assistance should be primarily altruistic, meaning that the “public use of reason” should prevail over the private interests of Slovak actors and the “private use of reason.”

But there is no need to be especially strict on this: a balance of perhaps 80–90 per cent of multilateral ODA that is unconditionally altruistic and untied and the remaining part going to building capacity and increasing future options for Slovak actors may well be satisfactory. At the current levels of ODA spending, the annual goal could be for €10 million to be utilized to increase the capacity of Slovak actors through multilateral ODA. Again this capacity can be viewed in terms of increasing *social impact value*, *learning value* and *signaling value* directly tied to Slovak companies, CSOs, academia and other institutions that help build the Good Idea Slovakia brand.

BILATERAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

The Slovak development agency is responsible for organizing bilateral ODA calls for proposals and monitoring the projects allocated to Slovak organizations. In 2018 there were three separate rounds of calls for proposals.¹⁶

The call for proposals regarding volunteers attracted 74 applications, 32 of which were approved, mostly to Kenya. In 2017 a comparable number of 36 proposals was approved for volunteering projects. This instrument is one of the least bureaucratic and most flexible of the SlovakAid instruments. It also serves as a tool for global education and the promotion of Slovak ODA. It can be used to further motivate and inspire young people to create new projects and organizations once they return from volunteering. Thus this instrument can be expanded and used as the beginning of the pipeline and funnel approach which would lead to bigger projects and new innovative organizations in the future.

Of the projects submitted as part of the call for bigger development projects, 17 were approved by SlovakAid in 2018 and a further six were approved followed amendments. In total the number of approved projects for 2018 was 23, and a similar number, 22 projects, was not approved. The calls for proposals are divided up by region. Four

¹⁶ The list of SlovakAid approved and rejected project proposals is available online (in Slovak): <http://www.slovakaid.sk/sk/schvalene-neschvalene-ziadosti/2018> (accessed on February 21, 2019).

projects were approved for Kenya, on education and vocational training. In Moldova three projects were approved, two on water management and one on active citizenship. Five projects were approved for the Western Balkans and five projects in the Eastern Partnership countries, mostly relating to good governance, active citizenship and “hard projects” such as energy and sanitation. Three projects were approved in global education and only two on private sector partnerships. One project was approved for Afghanistan, cooperation in higher education.

Regarding humanitarian aid, two projects were approved for South Sudan, and five for Syria. SlovakAid also co-financed three EU projects, two in global education and one in Georgia, and supported one project on capacity building for civil society through the NDGO Platform, and another on policy coherence. From this third separate round of calls for proposals, a similar number (around half) of projects were rejected (nine).

To increase the quality and competitiveness of the projects a pipeline or funnel approach could be used, where at the beginning there are hundreds of small volunteer projects and small grants. In the middle there are tens of bigger projects and towards the end we get into single figures of consortia with framework contracts focusing on specific regions and sectors.

GLOBAL (CITIZENSHIP) EDUCATION

In 2018 Global Education Network Europe (GENE), SlovakAid and the Slovak NDGO Platform (MVRO) collaborated within a consortium of other NGOs to implement a project surveying global education in Slovakia. One of the outcomes was the finding that various actors, such as preschools, see global education as environmental education, which has a strong tradition. The issues of global interdependences and migration tend to be neglected by other actors as well, such as company CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) activities.

Global education could be the beginning and also the end of the virtuous circle of improving our ODA and involve sending young volunteers and, for instance, corporate expert volunteers abroad. These volunteers could then share their experiences with the Slovak public, create their own follow up projects and inspire others to do the same.

A WIN-WIN FOR CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR?

Both bilateral and multilateral ODA aim to support Slovak subjects and increase their capacity to assist abroad and represent Slovakia as the “Good Idea” country. Therefore, it would be too simplistic to paint a picture of a zero-sum game: multilateral versus bilateral ODA, or private sector versus civil society. Bottlenecks clearly exist in both sectors and may be the result of the vicious circle of insufficient institutional funding and insufficient capacity to implement big projects. Or the bottleneck could be caused by an invisible policy (daily limits on expert fees, limits on indirect costs?), or too much bureaucratization, or low trust and interaction between stakeholders.

What would be a positive sum, or win-win scenario? One can imagine a funnel approach where a pipeline of talent and innovative organizations is gradually built and expanded, through modalities in which relatively small grants are awarded, with a light bureaucratic touch, to many actors.

Other modalities could be volunteers and expert volunteers, scholarships, small grants and contracts of €5,000 to €10,000. And later on these partnerships could be used to explore joint projects with partners in developing countries through start-up grants of €10,000–50,000. These could then be turned into yet bigger projects financed by regular SlovakAid grants of €50,000–250,000. The biggest grants would be framework agreements lasting more than two years and perhaps of more than €500,000, and would fund organizations that would lead consortia and attempt a holistic approach towards a particular region.

Most of these modalities are currently in place and the plan to introduce framework contracts was again mentioned in the new mid-term ODA strategy and was part of the previous one. Nonetheless, the foreign ministry and SlovakAid agency should keep attempting to identify the causes of bottlenecks, in accordance within the theory of constraints, and investigate which policies or strategies are blocking the funnel or pipeline of Slovak expertise. The funnel or pipeline will contain many volunteers, including corporate ones, at the beginning, followed by many startup initiatives (non-profit and for-profit) in the middle, and end with portfolios of integrated programs and long-term framework contracts that scale previously successful initiatives.

The OECD has suggested that Slovak ODA would do better to support fewer actors with bigger projects and be more strategic, perhaps aiming to implement long-term framework agreements, exceeding the current two year limit. However, if those few projects turn out to be “white elephants,” as can be the case with big infrastructure projects, then Slovak ODA would become very fragile as there would be a risk of these big projects failing. The above mentioned approach could involve the creation of a “portfolio of portfolios” – maybe having a few key players with framework agreements that distribute further grants down the various levels.

But the idea should be to clearly distinguish between the innovation (research) of new solutions (small grants to many starting projects) and the scaling (development) of already proven solutions (big grants for a few programs). To reduce fragility, Slovak ODA could support many small and innovative projects using small amounts of money, and then give increasingly bigger grants to already proven solutions that can be scaled to other areas to create social business spin-offs. Here multilateral cooperation could again enter the cycle and offer various tools for their further expansion through multilateral banks and development finance institutions.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Both Slovakia and Slovak ODA had a turbulent year in 2018 with big changes. There were major “black swan events” in domestic politics that will shape development cooperation for years to come.

We can create world class expertise for decades to come if we succeed in coming out of this experience stronger. We could contribute to solving the issues of organ-

ized crime and generational poverty, tackling them in an innovative and productive manner.

The anniversary of the recent tragic event in 2018, the double murder of Ján Kuciak and Martina Kušnírová, provides impetus to focus more closely on fighting global organized crime and issues relating to Agenda 2030 – financial transparency and global tax justice.

Last year our domestic performance in sanitation coverage and student outcomes deteriorated, according to the SDG Index. It seems likely that our declining education performance is in part connected to generational poverty.

So there is a clear challenge ahead in these two areas of global organized crime/financial transparency and in tackling Slovakia's generational poverty and (near) extreme poverty. At the same time these two topics, if handled well and innovatively, could become our greatest assets for sharing know-how and innovation, not just with developing countries, but also with developed ones.

Global financial transparency and generational poverty are problems faced by developed and developing countries alike and so are unifying topics that embody the spirit of SDGs as universal goals. Equally, they are our biggest challenges or bottlenecks to performance across various indexes and indicators.

The new 2019–2023 ODA strategy has already incorporated various recommendations from the recent OECD DAC Peer Review. The new strategy is also consistent with the internal and external Agenda 2030 priorities. There is also a clear element of soul searching for a new comparative advantage that would lead Slovak ODA into the next decade and beyond its current focus on transition experience.

UPDATE PRIORITIES REGULARLY BASED ON THE NEWLY AVAILABLE INFORMATION AND TOOLS

In order to improve our development cooperation, the foreign ministry as the owner of the external Agenda 2030 strategy and the DPMO as the owner of the internal strategy could look at regularly prioritizing effective solutions for selected priorities and SDG targets. This could be done in a couple of ways. The Copenhagen Consensus Center has produced a ranking of SDG targets according to their cost-benefit estimates. For example, greater financial transparency, early childhood education and fighting malnutrition, malaria and smoking are considered to be highly effective solutions in the SDG strategy, at home and abroad.

Another way of prioritizing specific SDG targets is to look at how interconnected and co-dependent they are, as demonstrated in the recent World Bank research based on network theory and complexity theory. The areas of sanitation and energy infrastructure seem to be the most interconnected and thus affect the achievement of other targets. Slovakia could develop a brand new industry, for example a *space industry* in a broad sense, based on smart materials and smart circular economy solutions that could bring off-grid energy and healthy housing to the billions currently living in generational poverty or near-extreme poverty. Something like the Ecocapsule, a Slovak innovation, but more affordable and with modular architecture constructed out of recycled materials.

The third way to prioritize is to look at bottlenecks or the weakest chain links from the perspective of policies, unwritten rules, mindsets and frameworks. So the question

is, what policy or mindset could be blocking our pursuit of systemic positive change? Conflicting dynamics and attempts to imitate current trends could be a problem on a very abstract level.

One example could be that we are trying to signal that we are trendy by investing in the latest fashion, such as blockchain solutions or testing a universal basic income (UBI). If we look beyond the short-term trends we may be able to see the long-term patterns. If most people want to move to the big cities, then the UBI might just end up inflating property prices and rents. But it could be effective and slow urbanization if used to support rural areas or regions in industrial decline and attract more people to relocate there.

Changing the mindset and making a clear distinction between generational poverty and temporary poverty could reduce the rivalry between the majority population and the minority populations, such as marginalized Roma, at home and abroad. Going beyond a zero-sum mentality and conflict-generating or redistributive solutions could lead to UBI being transformed into something like a universal learning scholarship or universal basic scholarship. That could support both young and old, as well as mid-career professionals, in their efforts to continue learning new things, teaching them to others and creating new projects, products and startups, through effective collaboration in teams and communities based around similar interests and values. What kind of bottleneck could be hampering this type of innovation? It is usually an invisible policy or mindset that is hard to spot (e.g. a regulation against re-granting or giving scholarships, administrative cost bottlenecks or a lack of trust among actors).

DISTINGUISH BETWEEN RAPID PROTOTYPING AND SCALING EFFORTS

The SlovakAid agency could also invest numerous small amounts in many innovative research projects designed to produce social innovations. By definition a project that is aimed at generating social innovation must include a research phase that is not just separate from, but also the opposite of the development phase (scaling a franchise or improving the quality of an established product). Small projects that focus on the rapid prototyping of social innovations can exploit instruments such as volunteer projects, small grants, startup partnerships, and global education. (And perhaps some new ones, like extending small grants and scholarships to Slovak actors.) In this way a broad funnel or pipeline could be created, from many small innovations to a few big proven programs, and thus the most successful innovations could be scaled. Think of M-Pesa, originally supported by the DFID to improve microfinance, but which has had a major impact on banking generally in the past decade.

Various ODA actors can also aim to scale already proven solutions through large and long-term investments, perhaps using *framework contracts* and *bloc grants* for periods longer than two years. Proven innovative solutions could be further supported by regular development grants, and later by framework contracts and, for example, export support.

CLOSING ALL THE LOOPS

We should ensure that negative externalities are reduced and “all the loops closed” by a greater focus on reducing the carbon footprint through innovative circular economy solutions based on clean technology and renewable energy. These could be brought

together in an effort to support the nascent “space industry” in a very broad sense, both in Slovakia and abroad. This area is also called Hard Tech. It involves using smart materials and solutions such as biomimicry to reimagine transport, infrastructure, housing, food production and clean energy. This could then be extended further to smart “charter cities” with novel governance and consensus mechanisms.

On a yet higher level of abstraction, *closing all the loops* also means reducing unintended negative consequences through the greater participation and ownership of local actors in ODA, by having “skin in the game.” This can be achieved through greater interaction between donors and implementers in the field, through open data and transparency, and by adopting long-term future horizons through policy coherence.

Here the focus on sustainability alone is probably not sufficient and we need to support solutions that not only reduce the negative impact, but that turn humanity into a net positive actor in relation to the environment and the planet (for example, there is a company called BioCarbon Engineering which wants to use drones to plant more trees than are cut down annually by human beings).

The negative unintended externalities of our foreign policy and ODA can be reduced through closer cooperation with democratic actors, rather than with authoritarian ones. For example, we could select program countries on the basis of their democratic and governance performance. Of course, the ultimate goal should be to support the least developed countries and fragile countries. But it can be done through a regional approach and through partner countries, regional leaders, that have comparatively higher levels of freedom of expression and governance performance. This would mean that if for example Central Asia was an ODA region of interest in the future, Kyrgyzstan would be the ideal program country. Similarly, it is much better to have Kenya as a program country, than for example Ethiopia, which is much more authoritarian.

IV.

ANNEXES

A CHRONOLOGY OF IMPORTANT EVENTS IN SLOVAK FOREIGN POLICY IN 2018

January 1 The Slovak Republic assumes the OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) Troika Chairmanship together with Italy and Austria. State Secretary Parížek is appointed Special Representative for Slovakia's OSCE Chairmanship.

January 17 State Secretary Lukáš Parížek launches Slovakia's OSCE Chairmanship in Forum for Security Co-operation. Slovakia will chair the Forum for the first trimester of 2018, until the end of the Easter recess. The State Secretary emphasized that one of Slovakia's priorities is to facilitate and further the work on modernizing the Vienna Document, which lies at the heart of the OSCE's set of confidence and security-building measures.

January 23 State Secretary Ivan Korčok receives Vladimir Titov, Russia's First Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs. They assess developments in bilateral cooperation and exchange views on prospects for developing EU-Russian relations, stating the need to broaden and improve the dialogue.

January 26 Prime Minister Robert Fico attends the Visegrad Group summit in Budapest to discuss migration and border control.

January 29 State Secretary Parížek attends the OSCE International Conference on Anti-Semitism in Rome, and underlines the Slovak government's zero tolerance policy in preventing and combating anti-Semitism.

February 19 President Kiska meets with his Austrian counterpart Alexander van der Bellen. They discuss the mutual relationship and the position of the Visegrad Four. They attend the official opening ceremony of TRAM, a joint Austrian-Slovak cultural project.

Prepared by Lucia Hanusinová of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association, based on data from the websites of the President of the Slovak Republic, the Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic, National Council of the Slovak Republic, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, and the Ministry of Defence of the Slovak Republic.

March 1–2 Speaker of the National Council of the Slovak Republic Andrej Danko takes part in the Speakers of the Visegrad Group Parliaments meeting in Budapest.

March 2 Christophe Deloire, Secretary-General of Reporters without Borders (RSF) attends a march in tribute to the murdered investigative journalist Ján Kuciak and his fiancée Martina Kušnírová. President Andrej Kiska also attends.

March 6 State Secretary Korčok meets with President of Albania Ilir Meta to discuss current issues related to Albania's EU integration process.

March 6 Slovakia's EuroArtillery Indirect Fire Support project becomes reality. In Brussels, the EU defence ministers approve the initial list of 17 collaborative projects on security and defence under Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO).

March 23 President Andrej Kiska appoints Peter Pellegrini as prime minister following Robert Fico's resignation, and also appoints the remaining members of the new cabinet.

March 28 Minister Lajčák receives the British ambassador in relation to the Skripal case. Slovakia condemns the chemical agent attack on Sergej Skripal and his daughter as an unacceptable violation of international agreements and calls upon Moscow to cooperate fully and rule out suspicion of it being behind the attack.

April 10 President Kiska pays an official visit to the Republic of Korea to talk about economic relations. This is the first official visit by the Slovak head of state to Korea, one of Slovakia's most important economic partners outside Europe.

April 11 Minister Lajčák and Prime Minister Pellegrini attend the 18th Annual Review Conference on Slovak Foreign and European Policy in 2017, organized by the Slovak Foreign Policy Association in cooperation with the Ministry. The discussion panel themes were 25 years of foreign policy in an independent Slovakia, foreign policy priorities, and tools and communication.

April 13 State Secretary Parížek and the Ministry's Special Representative for Slovakia's OSCE Chairmanship visits the Donbas region in Ukraine as part of Slovakia's preparations for its chairmanship.

April 18 The murder of investigative journalist Ján Kuciak and his fiancée, Martina Kušnírová, is to be investigated by a joint independent investigation team with the involvement of Europol. Ján Kuciak, a 27-year-old investigative reporter, and his fiancée, Martina Kušnírová, had been shot at their home in Veľká Mača on February 21, 2018. The murder was "probably" related to Kuciak's work. He had been reporting on shady financing and tax evasion in companies connected to well-known Slovak oligarchs and businessmen, many of them linked to the governing party.

April 18–19 A Slovak parliamentary delegation led by Speaker of the National Council of the Slovak Republic Danko visit the Federal Republic of Germany for a two-day working visit.

April 24 Speaker of the National Council of the Slovak Republic Danko addresses the Conference of Speakers of the European Union Parliaments in Tallinn.

May 2 Prime Minister Pellegrini pays a working visit to the Federal Republic of Germany. Pellegrini meets with German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier and the German Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel.

May 3 The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs summons Vietnamese Ambassador Minh Trong Duong to explain allegations concerning the abduction of a citizen of Vietnam from Germany by Vietnamese authorities, allegedly via the Slovak Republic.

May 11 State Secretary Korčok represents Slovakia at the Foreign Affairs Ministerial Meeting in Cape Sounio, Greece, organized by Nikos Kotzias, Greece's Minister of Foreign Affairs. The discussion focuses on the future of the EU, enlargement and energy security.

May 16 Slovak personnel are to perform duties in Latvia as part of NATO's enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) from the second half of the year. Parliament approves a proposal to deploy two six-month rotations, each containing up to 152 soldiers on active duty.

May 17 Prime Minister Pellegrini meets French President Emmanuel Macron at the EU-Western Balkans summit in Sofia to talk about current bilateral relations.

May 24 State Secretary Korčok has talks with Wess Mitchell, Assistant Secretary of the US State Department. The focus is on the current level of bilateral relations, cooperation in defence, current developments in the Central European and EU regions as well as other international political issues, including trade relations, Iran, and developments in the Middle East.

May 26 President Kiska visits Georgia to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the declaration of the first Democratic Republic of Georgia. In his speech, he assures Georgia of Slovak support for Georgia's efforts to join the EU and the NATO. The President opens a trilateral economic forum in Tbilisi along with the presidents of Georgia and Poland, attended by a business delegation.

June 5 State Secretary Parížek holds talks at the US State Department and the Department of Defence in Washington, DC, where they discuss key issues relating to the modernization of the Slovak Armed Forces.

June 7 Speaker of the National Council of the Slovak Republic Danko pays an official visit to the Republic of Serbia. He addresses the plenary session of the National Assembly of Serbia and meets with all three state leaders.

June 8 President Andrej Kiska attends the Bucharest Nine (B9) format in Warsaw, declaring on behalf of Slovakia that the government has committed to "reach a defence budget of two per cent of our GDP by 2024."

June 19 A Slovak delegation led by State Secretary Korčok attends a V4+NB8 meeting between the V4 foreign affairs ministers and five Nordic and three Baltic states in Stockholm.

July 1 The Slovak Republic assumes its fifth presidency of the Visegrad Group (V4).

July 1 Speaker of Parliament Danko heads a delegation of the National Council of the Slovak Republic on a working visit to Israel. He meets Speaker of the Knesset Yuli Yoel Edelstein and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

July 6 Prime Minister Pellegrini attends the summit of China-Central and Eastern European Cooperation in Sofia (16 + 1).

July 11–12 President Kiska and State Secretary Korčok attend the NATO Leaders Summit in Brussels. The NATO summit is testimony of the power of the Alliance for countries on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, despite differences in opinion on contributions to collective defence.

July 17 State Secretary Parížek holds interministerial consultations in Moscow and presents our Russian partners with two important ratification documents.

July 19 At a meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council and the representatives of all participating and partner states, State Secretary and Special Representative for Slovakia's OSCE Chairmanship Parížek presents Slovakia's priority areas in advance of Slovakia assuming the OSCE Chairmanship on January 1, 2019.

August 7 The Ministry provides €50,000 of financial humanitarian to Greece to ameliorate the impact of the disastrous wildfires that broke out on July 23rd claiming a high number of fatalities and causing significant material damage.

August 15 The Slovak Republic dispatches a convoy of humanitarian aid to Mosul in Iraq. The humanitarian assistance is worth over €212,000 and was funded by the SlovakAid.

September 12 The Ministry concludes its fourth partnership for effective solutions in development cooperation geared towards sustainable development as part of the UN Development Program (UNDP).

September 13 František Ružička becomes the new state secretary.

September 17 Minister Lajčák, President of the 72nd session of the UN General Assembly, hands over to his successor, María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés of Ecuador. Under his presidency great achievements have been made, such as the agreement on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration – the first intergovernmental agreement to cover the wide-ranging dimensions of international migration in a holistic and comprehensive manner.

September 17–18 President Kiska attends a meeting of the Three Seas Initiative in Bucharest. The aim is to achieve real progress in extending transport, energy and digital interconnections – connecting Europe via roads and railways as well as gas pipelines to further unite Europe. Kiska states that the objective is to diversify natural gas so Slovakia need no longer rely on Russia.

September 19 State Secretary Parížek holds negotiations with Vasyl Bodnar, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs in Ukraine.

September 21 Minister Lajčák holds talks with high-level OSCE representative Martin Sajdik, Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office in Ukraine and the Trilateral Contact Group; Ertugrul Apakan, Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine; and Marcel Peško, Director of the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre. This is an important working meeting prior to Slovakia assuming the OSCE Chairmanship next year.

September 23–25 Speaker of Parliament Danko heads a delegation of the National Council of the Slovak Republic on a three-day working visit to Greece. He meets with President Prokypis Pavlopoulos and Speaker of Parliament Nikolaos Voutsis.

September 24 Minister Lajčák delivers his keynote speech in Washington DC at the 10th CEPA Strategy Forum, "Winning the 21st Century – Allied Strength and Solidarity."

September 25 Minister Lajčák and President Kiska attend the opening of the general debate of the 73rd session of the UN General Assembly.

September 26 Minister Lajčák attends a speech given by President Andrej Kiska as part of the General Debate of the 73rd session of the UN General Assembly, and meets with António Guterres, UN Secretary-General. He also holds a series of meetings with several partners.

September 27 Minister Lajčák criticizes his Vietnamese partner over the abduction of Trinh Xuan Than from Germany. Minister Lajčák strongly condemns the act as a serious violation of international law and gross abuse of the Schengen system that has had a negative impact on Slovak-Vietnamese relations.

September 27 Minister Lajčák, accompanied by Robert Ondrejcsák, State Secretary of the Ministry of Defence, meets with Wess Mitchell, the United States Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs. They discuss bilateral relations, including cooperation in defence, the Slovak Presidency of the Visegrad Group, and Slovakia's preparations for the 2019 OSCE Chairmanship.

October 2 Minister Lajčák attends the informal high-level Dialogue on the Western Balkans in Geneva.

October 2 Minister Lajčák addresses a conference marking the 25th anniversary of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association and of foreign policy in an independent Slovakia.

October 2 State Secretary Ružička meets with the ambassadors of France, Italy, Poland and Ireland. These informal meetings are aimed at establishing personal contacts and continuing the good level of European cooperation.

October 4 Minister Lajčák meets with his counterpart Pavlo Klimkin. He is also received by Petro Poroshenko, President of Ukraine, and Andriy Parubiy, Speaker of Parliament.

October 8 State Secretary Ružička attends the 3rd Session of the Regional Forum of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) in Barcelona, Spain.

October 8–10 Speaker of Parliament Danko attends the summit of Speakers of Eurasian Country Parliaments in Turkey. Economic cooperation, environment and long-term sustainable development in Europe and Asia are high on the agenda. Danko participates in discussions on three main panels and holds bilateral talks.

October 10 Minister Lajčák pays an official visit to Ireland. He speaks with Simon Coveney, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, and also visits the border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

October 11 Minister Lajčák and Vice-President of the European Commission Maroš Šefčovič discuss current European issues under the banner "EU in 2018: Can Europe be successful after the elections for the European Parliament?"

October 12 Minister Miroslav Lajčák holds discussions with George Tsereteli, President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. They focus on the preparations and priorities of Slovakia's upcoming OSCE Chairmanship.

October 16 Minister Lajčák meets with Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary-General of the Council of Europe, on an official visit to the Slovak Republic. They discussed current developments in the Council of Europe and the Parliamentary Assembly.

October 17 Prime Minister Pellegrini arrives for an EU Summit at Europa, the EU Council headquarters in Brussels. The current state of the Brexit talks are the main item on the summit agenda.

October 25 Minister Lajčák attends the roundtable discussions of the World Investment Forum of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in Geneva.

October 25–26 Minister Lajčák and State Secretary Parížek, and Ministry special representative for Slovakia's OSCE chairmanship attend the Mediterranean Contact Group (MCG) conference in Malaga. The aim is to seek opportunities for more effective and active cooperation between OSCE member states and their Mediterranean partners.

October 26 President Kiska receives French President Emmanuel Macron on his first official visit to Slovakia. Both presidents agree that relations between Slovakia and France are very warm and friendly. President Macron also meets Prime Minister Pellegrini. France is an important ally of Slovakia, both as an investor and a business partner.

October 31 Minister Lajčák visits Minsk – by special invitation – to take part in a two-day meeting of the Munich Security Conference Core Group to discuss key issues of political, security and economic relations in Eastern Europe and Central Asia as well as relations between East and West.

November 5–6 Minister Lajčák takes part in Geneva Peace Week. “Building Peace in a Turbulent World“ is the topic of the expert seminars and discussions.

November 6 Minister Lajčák receives Michel Barnier, EU Chief Negotiator for the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland Exiting the European Union. The partners discuss the current state-of-play in the Brexit negotiations.

November 7–9 State Secretary Parížek visits Moldova. The visit is a reflection of Slovakia's desire for a stable and democratic Moldova, and more broadly, a prospering Eastern neighbourhood of the European Union.

November 9 Minister Lajčák receives a delegation of key OSCE representatives with responsibility for developments in the South Caucasus region.

November 9 State Secretary Ružička leads the regular meeting of the Interministerial Brexit Coordination Group, attended by state secretaries.

November 10–12 Minister Lajčák takes part in the 10th Global Future Councils meeting organized by the World Economic Forum. He co-chairs the Group for the Future of Europe within the council.

November 12 State Secretary Ružička attends a meeting of the General Affairs Council and the General Affairs Council (Article 50) in Brussels. Michel Barnier, European Chief Negotiator, gives an update on the current state of negotiations with the United Kingdom and the next steps to be taken.

November 12 Prime Minister Pellegrini pays official visits to Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan to hold talks with government officials there, mainly on strengthening economic and trade cooperation with Slovakia.

November 14 Speaker of Parliament Danko addresses the Czech parliament. Wednesday's session is devoted to the 100th anniversary of the first session of the Czecho-Slovak Revolutionary National Assembly.

November 14 Minister Lajčák signs a bilateral Memorandum of Understanding between the US administration acting through the USAID Development Agency and the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic.

November 14 Minister Lajčák engages in talks with his US counterpart Michael R. Pompeo, in Washington D.C. The ministers discussed a wide range of foreign policy and security issues being debated not only in Europe but also on the American political scene.

November 19 Minister Lajčák attended an extraordinary session of the General Affairs Council (GAC) in the EU27 format under Article 50. The GAC was called by the UK government to discuss the wording of the Withdrawal Agreement on the UK leaving the EU.

November 19 Minister Lajčák holds talks in Brussels with Federica Mogherini, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, in advance of the Foreign Affairs Council. They focus on Slovakia's upcoming OSCE Chairmanship.

November 18–20 The Slovak Foreign Policy Association holds its 12th annual Central European Energy Conference (CEEC). Topics include investments in the energy sector, transformation of coal-intensive regions, energy market design, innovation and smart solutions in the energy sector, and air quality.

November 21 Prime Minister Pellegrini pays an official visit to Italy and meets with his counterpart Giuseppe Conte in Rome. They discuss migration and the possibility of temporary resettling migrants in Slovakia.

November 23–24 President Andrej Kiska pays a working visit to Ukraine accompanied by State Secretary Ružička. State Secretary Ružička presents the IOSU (International Organization for Support of Ukraine) with a humanitarian gift of €125,000, at the Embassy of the Slovak Republic in Kyiv, with Slovak President Kiska in attendance.

November 26 Minister Lajčák meets his counterpart Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu in Istanbul during an official visit to Turkey. The talks focus on Slovakia's OSCE Chairmanship.

November 27 Minister Lajčák holds talks with his counterpart Heiko Maas in Berlin. They sign the Action Plan for Enhanced Dialogue between the two countries, which will create a structured framework for regular expert dialogue between the ministries.

November 29 Minister Lajčák, representing Slovakia, which holds the current Visegrad Group Presidency, hosts Tomáš Petříček, his counterpart in the Czech Republic, Jacek Czaputowicz, his counterpart in Poland, and Péter Szijjártó, his counterpart in Hungary. The parties agree on the purposes and strict allocation of the joint contribution of the V4 countries and the European Commission to the EU Trust Fund for Africa.

November 30 The Head Office of the Ecumenical Pastoral Service of the Slovak Armed Forces, working in cooperation with the Armed Forces and the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (SlovakAid), arranges and delivers the 6th humanitarian aid consignment, worth nearly €40,000, to the residents of Visegrad County (Serbia) and Una-Sana Canton (Bosnia and Herzegovina).

December 3 Speaker of Parliament Danko pays an official visit to Austria and meets with his counterpart Wolfgang Sobotka in Vienna. Danko and Sobotka discuss interparliamentary relations within bilateral, regional and European contexts.

December 4 State Secretary Ružička represents Slovakia at the regular autumn NATO foreign affairs ministerial meeting. State Secretary Ružička conveys Slovakia's concerns on events regarding Ukraine and Russia and calls for a de-escalation in tensions as soon as possible and for the peaceful resolution of the conflict in the Sea of Azov and Kerch Strait.

December 4 Slovakia sends 42 soldiers and military police officers to Iraq as part of a NATO non-combat mission in cooperation with the US and Italian Armed Forces. Their tasks will be to train and advise Iraqi military personnel and to reform the local defence and security institutions.

December 6–7 Minister Lajčák and State Secretary Parížek represent Slovakia at the 25th Ministerial Session of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Italy symbolically hands over the OSCE chairmanship to Slovakia, which assumes the chairmanship on January 1, 2019.

December 10 Minister Lajčák takes part in a regular meeting of the EU Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) in Brussels. Politically, the most significant discussion at the meeting concerns the current situation regarding the Sea of Azov and the Russian military attack on Ukrainian ships in Kerch Strait, on November 25, 2018.

December 12 Minister Lajčák meets US Deputy Secretary of State John J. Sullivan. They discuss debate the current state of bilateral cooperation, with an emphasis on defence and security issues.

December 13 Minister Lajčák meets French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian in Paris to talk about current bilateral issues as well as recent international developments.

December 14 The Slovak Republic provides financial humanitarian aid of €27,000 to Afghanistan. This is Slovakia's 7th humanitarian consignment for the Afghan people who have suffered the longest war.

December 13–14 President Kiska pays a working visit to Italy and meets with Italian President Sergio Mattarelo. They discuss topics related to Euroscepticism and the upcoming parliamentary elections as well as ways of dealing with extremist parties.

December 14 President Kiska has a formal audience with Pope Francis in the Vatican. He presents the pope with four Christmas decorations made by members of socially disadvantaged groups.

December 17 Minister Lajčák meets with his UK counterpart, Jeremy Hunt, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs; David Lidington, Minister for the Cabinet Office and Chancellor; and Alan Duncan, Minister of State for Europe. The main topics are Slovakia's Chairmanship of the OSCE and current developments regarding Brexit.

December 18 Minister Lajčák holds talks with the OSCE Secretary-General, Thomas Greminger in Bratislava. They discuss a broad range of issues relating to the execution of the chairmanship, including working closely with the organization's secretariat.

December 20 Minister Lajčák receives Christian Danielsson, Director-General of the European Commission for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations. They talk about post-election developments in Bosnia and Hercegovina and the current situation in the Western Balkans.

December 20 Minister Miroslav Lajčák launches his book *People Come First: A Reflection on the 72nd UN General Assembly Session* [Ľudia na prvom mieste – reflexia 72. zasadnutia Valného zhromaždenia OSN] summing up his year holding this important position.

TREATIES, AGREEMENTS, CONVENTIONS PUBLISHED IN 2018

PRESIDENTIAL TREATIES AND AGREEMENTS

1. Agreement between the Slovak Republic and United Arab Emirates on support and reciprocal protection of investments
(New York, September 22, 2016, published under No. 25/2018 Z. z.)
2. Agreement between the Slovak Republic and the Islamic Republic of Iran on avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income
(Teheran, January 19, 2016, published under No. 122/2018 Z. z.)
3. Agreement between the Slovak Republic and the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia on avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income
(Addis Ababa, October 1, 2016, published under No. 123/2018 Z. z.)
4. Agreement between the Slovak Republic and United Arab Emirates on air services
(Abu Dhabi, November 19, 2015, published under No. 235/2018 Z. z.)
5. Changes and amendments to Agreement between the Slovak Republic and Australia on avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income (announcement No. 157/2000 Z. z.)
(published under No. 408/2018 Z. z.)
6. Changes and amendments to Agreement between the Government of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and the Government of the Republic of France on avoidance of double taxation with respect to taxes on income (notice No. 73/1975 Zb.)
(published under No. 405/2018 Z. z.)
7. Changes and amendments to Agreement between the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and Japan on avoidance of double taxation with respect to taxes on income (notice No. 46/1979 Zb.)
(published under No. 406/2018 Z. z.)

8. Changes and amendments to Agreement between the Slovak Republic and the Republic of Lithuania on avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income and property (notice No.756/2002 Z. z.)
(published under No. 407/2018 Z. z.)
9. Changes and amendments to Agreement between the Slovak Republic and the Republic of Poland on avoidance of double taxation with respect to taxes on income and property and Protocol to the Agreement (notice No. 95/1996 Z. z.) as well as the changes and amendments to the Protocol between the Slovak Republic and the Republic of Poland changing and amending the Agreement between the Slovak Republic and the Republic of Poland on avoidance of double taxation with respect to taxes on income and property (notice No. 212/2014 Z. z.)
(published under No. 409/2018 Z. z.)
10. Changes and amendments to Agreement between the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and Republic of Austria on avoidance of double taxation with respect to taxes on income and property (notice No. 48/1979 Zb.)
(published under No. 410/2018 Z. z.)
11. Changes and amendments to Agreement between the Slovak Republic and the Republic of Slovenia on avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income and property (announcement No. 386/2004 Z. z.)
(published under No. 411/2018 Z. z.)
12. Changes and amendments to Agreement between the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic and the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland on avoidance of double taxation with respect to taxes on income and property (announcement No. 89/1992 Zb.)
(published under No. 412/2018 Z. z.)
13. Changes and amendments to Agreement between the Slovak Republic and Federal Republic of Yugoslavia on avoidance of double taxation with respect to taxes on income and property (published under No. 269/2002 Z. z.) in relations to the Republic of Serbia
(published under No. 413/2018 Z. z.)
14. Changes and amendments to Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Government of the State of Israel on avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income and property (published under No. 327/2000 Z. z.)
(published under No. 414/2018 Z. z.)

GOVERNMENTAL TREATIES AND AGREEMENTS

1. Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Government of Hungary on the operation, maintenance and reconstruction of road border bridges and sections of border crossings at the joint state
(Budapest, September 14, 2017, published under No. 120/2018 Z. z.)
2. Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Government of the State of Kuwait on economic and technical cooperation
(Bratislava, February 28, 2017, published under No. 143/2018 Z. z.)

3. Agreement between the Government of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and the Government of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen concerning the abolition of visas for nationals of contracting states on official business
(Aden, September 14, 1981, published under No. 45/1982 Zb.)
(suspended implementation of the Agreement as of June 19, 2018 published under No. 202/2018)
4. Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Government of the Italian Republic on cooperation in the field of culture, education and science
(Bratislava, July 3, 2015, published under No. 227/2018 Z. z.)
5. Protocol amending and prolonging the Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Government of the United States of America on scientific and technological cooperation
(Bratislava, July 12, 2018, published under No. 229/2018 Z. z.)
6. Amendment No. 1 to Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Government of Hungary on construction of the road bridge on river Ipel' and related objects on joint border between towns of Chľaba and Ipolydamásd, signed on February 27, 2012
(Komárno, June 28, 2018, published under No. 336/2018 Z. z.)
7. Cooperation agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Government of United Mexican States in the field of education, youth, sport and culture
(Mexico, November 21, 2017, published under No. 257/2018 Z. z.)
8. Agreement between the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and the United Mexican States on cultural cooperation
(Mexico, August 9, 1968, published under No. 113/1970 Zb.)
expired, published under No. 257/2018 Z. z.

MINISTERIAL TREATIES AND AGREEMENTS

1. Cooperation Program between the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research of the Republic of Moldova
(Chisinau, September 20, 2017, published under No. 6/2018 Z. z.)
2. Agreement between the Ministry of Defense of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Defense of the Czech Republic on implementation of the Agreement on cooperation on mutual protection of airspace
(Bratislava, January 5, 2018, published under No. 28/2018 Z. z.)
3. Cooperation Program between the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Croatia for 2018–2022
(Zagreb, January 19, 2018, published under No. 48/2018 Z. z.)
4. Agreement between the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands on visa representations (exchange of notes, November 30, 2017 and December 14, 2017, published under No. 27/2018 Z. z.)

5. Amendment to the Agreement between the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary on mutual visa representations
(exchange of notes, January 25, 2018 and February 23, 2018, published under No. 75/2018 Z. z.)
6. Cooperation Program between the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation for 2018–2022
(Bratislava, March 22, 2018, published under No. 179/2018 Z. z.)
7. Agreement between the Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Finance of the Czech Republic on automatic exchange of information in the field of the value added tax
(Štrba, October 5, 2018, published under No. 304/2018 Z. z.)

MULTILATERAL TREATIES AND AGREEMENTS

1. Convention on jurisdiction, applicable law, recognition, enforcement and co-operation in respect of parental responsibility and measures for the protection of children
(The Hague, October 19, 1996, published under No. 7/2018 Z. z. – convention party – Republic of Cuba since December 1, 2017)
2. The activation of the ICC's jurisdiction over the crime of aggression since July 17, 2018
(December 14, 2017, published under No. 79/2018 Z. z.)
3. Euro-Mediterranean Aviation Agreement between the European Community and its member states, of the one part, and the Kingdom of Morocco, of the other part
(Brussels, December 12, 2006, published under No. 80/2018 Z. z.)
4. Framework Agreement on partnership and cooperation between the European Union and its member states of the one part and the Republic of the Philippines of the other part
(Brussels, February 17, 2011, published under No. 104/2018 Z. z.)
5. Framework Agreement on partnership and cooperation between the European Union and its member states of the one part and Mongolia of the other part
(Brussels, September 28, 2011, published under No. 105/2018 Z. z.)
6. Agreement establishing the European Molecular Biology Laboratory
(Geneva, May 10, 1973, published under No. 119/2018 Z. z.)
7. Multilateral Agreement between the European Community and its member states, the Republic of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Bulgaria, the Republic of Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Republic of Iceland, the Republic of Montenegro, the Kingdom of Norway, Romania, the Republic of Serbia and the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo on the establishment of a European Common Aviation Area
(Luxembourg, June 9, 2006, published under No. 121/2018 Z. z.)
8. Protocol on amendment of the Agreement establishing the International Investment Bank and its statutes
(Havana, May 8, 2014, published under No. 238/2018 Z. z.)

9. The Nagoya – Kuala Lumpur Supplementary Protocol on liability and redress to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety
(Nagoya, October 15, 2010, published under No. 144/2018 Z. z.)
10. Amendments to the Regulations under the Patent Cooperation Treaty
(Geneva, October 11, 2017, published under No. 180/2018 Z. z.)
19. Convention on jurisdiction, applicable law, recognition, enforcement and co-operation in respect of parental responsibility and measures for the protection of children
(The Hague, October 19, 1996, published under No. 240/2018 – convention party – Republic of Honduras since August 1, 2018)
11. Protocol to eliminate illicit trade in tobacco products
(Seoul, November 12, 2012, published under No. 255/2018 Z. z.)
12. Changes to Implementing Regulations of the European Patent Convention
(Munich, December 13, 2017, published under No. 254/2018 Z. z.)
13. Changes to Fees Regulation to the European Patent Convention)
(Munich, December 13, 2017, published under No. 255/2018 Z. z.)
14. Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and its member states, of the one part, and the Republic of Iraq, of the other part
(Brussels, November 14, 2011, published under No. 276/2018 Z. z.)
15. Agreement between the European Union and its member states, of the one part, and Iceland, of the other part, concerning Iceland’s participation in the joint fulfilment of the commitments of the European Union, its member states and Iceland for the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
(Brussels, February 25, 2015, published under No. 316/2018 Z. z.)
16. Maritime Labour Convention, 2006
(Geneva, February 23, 2006, published under No. 319/2018 Z. z.)
17. Multilateral Convention to implement Tax Treaty related measures to prevent base erosion and profit shifting
(Paris, November 24, 2016, published under No. 339/2018 Z. z.)
18. The Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer
(Kigali, October 15, 2016, published under No. 340/2018 Z. z.)

STRUCTURE OF THE STATE ADMINISTRATION AUTHORITIES ACTING IN INTERNATIONAL AND EUROPEAN AFFAIRS IN 2018

AS OF FEBRUARY 2019

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Middle East and Africa Department

Head of the Department: Pavol Ivan, tel.: 02/5978 3460, pavol.ivan@mzv.sk

Directorate General for European Affairs

Director General: Alexander Micovčín, tel.: 02/5978 3501, alexander.micovcin@mzv.sk

European Law Division

Head of the Division: Peter Lysina, tel.: 02/5978 3505, peter.lysina@mzv.sk

Department for General Affairs and Relations with EU Institutions European Coordination Unit

Head of the Department: Mária Malová, tel.: 02/5978 3580, maria.malova@mzv.sk

Second Territorial European Department

Head of the Department: Jozef Adamec tel.: 02/5978 3540, jozef.adamec@mzv.sk

Department of European policies 1

Head of the Department: Katarína Jurisová, tel.: 02/5978 3511, katarina.jurisovala@mzv.sk

Department of European Policies 2

Head of the Department: Jaroslav Auxt, tel.: 02/5978 3560, jaroslav.auxt@mzv.sk

Directorate General for Economic Cooperation

Director General: Dušan Matulay, tel.: 02/5978 3801, dusan.matulay@mzv.sk

Global Policies Division

Head of the Division: Milan Lajčiak, tel.: 02/5978 3830, milan.lajciak@mzv.sk

Economic Diplomacy Department 1

Economic Diplomacy Department 2

Head of the Department: Viktor Borecký, tel.: 02/5978 3880, viktor.borecky@mzv.sk

Department of International Economic Organizations

Head of the Department: Lenka Miháliková, tel.: 02/5978 3860, lenka.mihalikova@mzv.sk

Business Centre Department

Head of the Department: Zlata Šipošová, tel.: 02/5978 3890, zlata.siposova@mzv.sk

Directorate General for International Organisations, Development Assistance and Humanitarian Aid

Director General: Karla Wursterová, tel.: 02/5978 3601, karla.wursterova@mzv.sk

Department of the UN and International Organizations

Head of the Department: Fedor Rosocha, tel.: 02/5978 3611, fedor.rosocha@mzv.sk

Department of Disarmament and Counter-terrorism

Head of the Department: Boris Ecker, tel.: 02/5978 3621, boris.ecker@mzv.sk

Department for Development Assistance and Humanitarian Aid

Head of the Department: Anna Plassat Muriňová, tel.: 02/5978 3641, anna.murinova@mzv.sk

Directorate General for International Legal, Consular Affairs and Crisis Management

Director General: Barbara Illková, tel.: 02/5978 3701, barbara.illkova@mzv.sk

International Law Department

Head of the Department: Metod Špaček, tel.: 02/5978 3710, metod.spacek@mzv.sk

Human Rights Department

Head of the Department: Hana Kováčová, tel.: 02/5978 3770, hana.kovacova@mzv.sk

Consular Department

Head of the Department: Martin Bezák, tel.: 02/5978 3741, martin.bezak@mzv.sk

Crisis Management Department

Head of the Department: Vladimír Fraňo, tel.: 02/5978 3080, vladimir.frano@mzv.sk

Personnel Office

Director General: Juraj Macháč, tel.: 02/5978 2101 juraj.machac@mzv.sk

Headquarters Personell and Payroll Department

Head of the Department: Vanesa Vajčíková, tel.: 02/ 5978 2120,vanesa.vajcikova@mzv.s

Foreign Personell and Payroll Department

Head of the Department: Oľga Beňová, tel.: 02/5978 2130, olga.benova@mzv.sk

Human Resources Development Department

Head of the Department: Rastislav Hindický, tel.: 02/5978 2110, rastislav.hindicky@mzv.sk

Directorate General for the Slovak OSCE Chairmanship

Director General: Oksana Tomová, tel.: 02/5978 3665, oksana.tomova@mzv.sk

Department of Political and Security Affairs

Head of the Department: Róbert Kirnág, tel.: 02/5978 3660, robert.kirnag@mzv.sk

Department of Logistics, Communication and Budget

Head of the Department: Ingrid Horvay, tel.: 02/5978 3690, ingrid.horvay@mzv.sk

Directorate General for Economy and General Administration

Director General: Tibor Králik, tel.: 02/5978 2801, tibor.kralik@mzv.sk

Finance Department

Head of the Department: Ivana Čermáková, tel.: 02/5978 2810, ivana.cermakova@mzv.sk

Investments, Real Estates and Services Department

Head of the Department: František Zemanovič, tel.: 02/5978 2850, frantisek.zemanovic@mzv.sk

Public Procurement Department

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Accounts and Properties Reporting Department

Head of the Department: Andrea Ondříšková, tel.: 02/5978 2700, andrea.ondrisekova@mzv.sk

Directorate General for Information Technology and Security

Director General: Milan Kováč, tel.: 02/5978 2001, milan.kovac@mzv.sk

Department of Operation and Security of Information and Communication Technologies

Head of the Department: Katarína Hanzalová, tel.: 02/5978 2050, katarina.hanzalova@mzv.sk

Department of Security, Classified Materials, Archive, and Registry

Head of the Department: Vladimír Kopecký, tel.: 02/5978 2080, vladimir.kopecky@mzv.sk

Department of Services and Processes Electronization

Head of the Department: Vladimír Ježek, tel.: 02/5978 2090, vladimir.jezek@mzv.sk

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Minister

Peter Žiga

State Secretary

Vojtech Ferencz
Rastislav Chovanec

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tel.: 0960 11 22 33
www.mosr.sk, mod.gov.sk

Minister

Peter Gajdoš

State Secretary

Marián Saloň
Róbert Ondrejcsák

Secretary-General of Service Office

Director: Ján Holko

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www.minv.sk

Minister

Denisa Saková (Since April 26, 2018)
Tomáš Drucker (until April 17, 2018)
Róbert Kaliňák (until March 22, 2018)

State Secretary

Ondrej Varačka
Rudolf Urbanovič

MINISTRY OF FINANCE OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

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Minister

Peter Kažimír

State Secretary

Radko Kuruc
Dana Meager

MINISTRY OF CULTURE OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

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Minister

Ľubica Laššáková (since March 22, 2018)

Marek Maďarič (until March 7, 2018)

State Secretary

Ivan Sečík

Konrád Rigó

MINISTRY OF HEALTH OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

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Minister

Andrea Kalavská (since March 22, 2018)

Tomáš Drucker (until March 23, 2018)

State Secretary

Jaroslav Ridoško

Stanislav Špánik

MINISTRY OF LABOUR, SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND FAMILY OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Špitálska 4, 6, 8, 816 43 Bratislava

tel.: 02/2046 0000

www.employment.gov.sk

Minister

Ján Richter

State Secretary

Branislav Ondruš

Ivan Švejna

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE, RESEARCH AND SPORT OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Stromová 1, 813 30 Bratislava

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www.minedu.sk

Minister

Martina Lubyová

State Secretary

Peter Krajňák

Oľga Nachtmannová

MINISTRY OF JUSTICE OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

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Minister

Gábor Gál (since March 22, 2018)
Lucia Žitňanská (until March 22, 2018)

State Secretary

Edita Pfundtner
Monika Jankovská

Directorate of International Law

Director General: Michal Kotlárík, tel.: 02/8889 1349, ms.smep.sek@justice.sk
Department of Private International Law
Head of the Department: Tatiana Hačková, tel.: 02/8889 1258

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

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www.enviro.gov.sk, www.minzp.sk

Minister

László Solymos

State Secretary

Norbert Kurilla
Boris Susko

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Dobrovičova 12, 812 66 Bratislava
tel.: 02/5926 6111
www.mpsr.sk

Minister

Gabriela Matečná

State Secretary

Gabriel Csicsai
Anton Stredák

MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT AND CONSTRUCTION OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Námestie slobody 6, 810 05 Bratislava
tel.: 02/5949 4111
www.telecom.gov.sk

Minister

Arpád Érsek

State Secretary

Tibor Šimoni
Ladislava Cengelová

ANTIMONOPOLY OFFICE OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Drieňová 24, 826 03 Bratislava
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Chairman

Tibor Menyhart, tel.: 02/4829 7230, predseda@antimon.gov.sk

STATISTICAL OFFICE OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

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President

Alexander Ballek, tel.: 02/5542 5802, alexander.ballek@statistics.sk

LIST OF THE EMBASSIES OF THE EU, NATO, AND SOME OTHER COUNTRIES

THE EMBASSIES IN THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC AND THEIR HEADS AS OF JANUARY 2019

Country	Start of diplomatic relations	Adress of embassy	In charge of embassy (LoC)
The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan	-	Na Karlovce 1387/6 160 00 Praha 6 Czech Republic	Homayun Kamgar <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
The Republic of Albania	1. 1. 1993	Podjavorinskej 4 811 03 Bratislava	Enkeleda Mërkuri <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
People's Democratic Republic of Algeria	1. 1. 1993	Rudolfingasse 18 A-1190 Vienna Austria	Fauzia Mebarki <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Principality of Andorra	3. 6. 1996	Kärtnering 2A/13 A-1010 Vienna Austria	Marta Salvat Batista <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
The Republic of Angola	30. 9. 1993	Seilerstätte 15/1/10 1010 Vienna Austria	Mariano João Baptista <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
The Argentine Republic	1. 1. 1993	Goldschmiedgasse 2/1 A-1010 Vienna Austria	Rafael Mariano Grossi <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Armenia	14. 11. 1993	Na Pískách 1411/95 160 00 Praha Czech Republic	Tigran Seiranian <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
The Commonwealth of Australia	1. 1. 1993	Mattellistrasse 2 A-1040 Vienna Austria	Brendon Charles Hammer <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
The Cooperative Republic of Guyan	-	Guyana High Commission 3 Palace Court Bayswater Road W2 4LP London United Kingdom	Frederick Hamley Case <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
The Republic of Azerbaijan	27. 11. 1993	Hügelgasse 2 A-1130 Vienna Austria Hviezdoslavovo nám. 14 811 02 Bratislava	Galib Israfilov <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> Ja'far Huseyn Zada <i>chargé d'affaires for Slovak Republic</i>

Prepared by Lucia Hanusinová, Slovak Foreign Policy Association

Source: Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic

Country	Start of diplomatic relations	Adress of embassy	In charge of embassy (LoC)
The People's Republic of Bangladesh	3. 3. 1993	Dovestr.1 D-105 87 Berlin Germany	Imtiaz Ahmed <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Kingdom of Belgium	1. 1. 1993	Prinz-Eugen-Strasse 8-10 A-1040 Vienna Austria	Ghislain D'Hoop <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: December 5, 2018
The Republic of Benin	19. 1. 1993	Englerallee 23 D-14159 Berlin Germany	Josseline Marie Louise da Silva Gbony <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: December 5, 2018
The Republic of Belarus	1. 1. 1993	Jančova 5 811 02 Bratislava 1	Igor Leshchenya <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Plurinational State of Bolivia	5. 3. 1993	Waaggasse 10/8 A-1040 Vienna Austria	Víctor A. Veltzé Michel <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: January 17, 2018 Ricardo Martínez Covarrubias <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1. 1. 1993	Opletalova 27 110 00 Praha Czech Republic	
The Republic of Botswana	-	6 Stratford Place W1C 1AY London United Kingdom	Roy Warren Blackbeard <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Federative Republic of Brasil	1. 1. 1993	Palisády 47 811 06 Bratislava	Luís Antonio Balduino Carneiro <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Bulgaria	1. 1. 1993	Kuzmányho 1 811 06 Bratislava 1	Yordanka Chobanova <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Burkina Faso	1. 8. 1997	Strohgasse 14c A-1030 Vienna Austria	Dieudonné Kere <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Burundi	29. 6. 1999	Berliner Strasse 36 D-10715 Berlin Germany	Else Nizigama Ntamagiro <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
The Republic of Côte d'Ivoire	-	Neulinggasse 29/6/20 A-1030 Vienna Austria	A. Georgette M'Brah <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
The Republic of Cyprus	1. 1. 1993	Michalská 12 811 01 Bratislava	Michalis Stavrinou <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: November 7, 2018
The Republic of Chad		Korovy Val 7, Moscow, Russian Federation	Youssef Abassalah <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Czech Republic	1. 1. 1993	Hviezdoslavovo nám. 8 P.O.Box 208 810 00 Bratislava	Tomáš Tuhy <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: November 28, 2018
Montenegro	1. 1. 1993	Mahlerstrasse 12/5/4 1010 Vienna Austria	Željko Perović <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: December 5, 2018
The Republic of Chile	1. 1. 1993	Lugeck 1/311 A-1010 Vienna, Austria	Gloria Navarrete <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: December 5, 2018
The People's Republic of China	1. 1. 1993	Jančova 8b 811 02 Bratislava 1	Lin Lin <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>

Country	Start of diplomatic relations	Adress of embassy	In charge of embassy (LoC)
The Kingdom of Denmark	1. 1. 1993	Führichgasse 6 A-1010 Vienna Austria	René Rosager Dinesen Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: December 5, 2018
Representation of European Commission in the SR	-	Palisády 29 811 06 Bratislava	Ladislav Miko Head of Representation Loc: January 1, 2018
European Parliament Information Office	-	Palisády 29 811 06 Bratislava	Robert Hajšel Director
The Arab Republic of Egypt	1. 1. 1993	Panská 14 811 01 Bratislava	Bassem Mohamed Abdel-Alim Khalil Ambassador Designated
The Republic of Ecuador	1. 1. 1993	Andrássy út 20.1/2. 1061 Budapest Hungary	Maria del Carmen González Cabal Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
The Republic of Estonia	1. 1. 1993	Wohlebengasse 9/12 A-1040 Vienna Austria	Toomas Kukk Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: December 5, 2018
The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia	-	Boothstrasse 20a D-12207 Berlin Germany	Kuma Demeksa Tokon Ambassador Designated
The Republic of the Philippines	1. 1. 1993	Laurenzerberg 2/II/ZWG A-1010 Vienna Austria	Maria Cleofe Natividad Ambassador Designated
The Republic of Finland	1. 1. 1993	Hellichova 1 118 00 Prague Czech Republic	Jukka Uolevi Pesola Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: December 5, 2018
The French Republic	1. 1. 1993	Hlavné námestie 7 812 83 Bratislava 1	Christophe Léonzi Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
The Republic of the Gambia	18. 8. 1995	Avenue F. D. Roosevelt 126 1050 Brussels Belgium	Teneng Mba Jaitèh Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
The Republic of Ghana	-	Na Zatorce 89/6 160 00 Praha 6 – Bubeneč Czech Republic	Virginia Hesse Ambassador Designated LoC: June 18, 2018
Georgia	25. 11. 1993	Michalská 9 811 01 Bratislava	Revaz Gachechiladze Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
The Republic of Guatemala	15. 4. 1993	Prinz Eugen Strasse 18/1/ Top7 A-1040 Vienna Austria	Antonio Roberto Castellanos López Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
The Republic of Guinea	16. 3. 1993	Jägerstrasse 67-69 DE-10117 Berlin Germany	Mamadou Bouliwel Sou chargé d'affaires
The Republic of Guinea-Bissau	-	Kronenstrasse 72 DE-10117 Berlin Germany	Malam Djassi Ambassador Designated
The Hellenic Republic	1. 1. 1993	Hlavné námestie 4 811 01 Bratislava 1	Maria Louisa Marinakis Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
The Kingdom of the Netherlands	1. 1. 1993	Fraňa Kráľa 5 811 05 Bratislava 1	Hendrik-Cornelis van der Kwast Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
The Republic of Honduras		Cuxhavener Strasse 14 DE-10555 Berlin Germany	Christa Castro Varela Ambassador Designated
The Republic of Croatia	1. 1. 1993	Mišíkova 21 811 06 Bratislava 1	Aleksandar Heina Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
The Republic of India	1. 1. 1993	Dunajská 4 811 08 Bratislava	Sunita Naran chargé d'affaires

Country	Start of diplomatic relations	Adress of embassy	In charge of embassy (LoC)
The Republic of Indonesia	1. 1. 1993	Brnianska 31 811 04 Bratislava 1	Adiyatwidi Adiwoso Asmady <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Iraq	1. 1. 1993	Radvanská 15 811 01 Bratislava	Usama Abdelsaheb Mohsen Al Nash <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
The Islamic Republic of Iran	1. 1. 1993	Jauresgasse 9 A-1030 Vienna Austria	Ebadollah Molaie <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Ireland	1. 1. 1993	Carlton Savoy Building Mostová 2 811 02 Bratislava	Hildegard Ó Riain <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Iceland	1. 1. 1993	Naglergasse 2/3/8 A-1010 Vienna Austria	Thórir Ibsen <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
The State of Israel	1. 1. 1993	Slávičie údolie 106 811 02 Bratislava	Zvi Aviner Vapni <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Jamaica	1. 1. 1993	Schmargendorfer Strasse 32 D-12159 Berlin Germany	Margaret Ann Louise Jobson <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
Japan	1. 1. 1993	Hlavné nám. 2 813 27 Bratislava	Jun Shimmi <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Yemen	1. 1. 1993	Reisnerstrasse 18 – 20 1030 Vienna Austria	Haytham Abdulmomen Shoja 'Aadin <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: June 18, 2018 Samy Al-Basha <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan	3. 3. 1993	Rennweg 17/4 A-1030 Vienna Austria	Dana Khries <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of South Africa	1. 1. 1993	Sandgasse 33 A-1190 Vienna Austria	Tebogo Joseph Seokolo <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
The Kingdom of Cambodia	-	Benjamin-Vogelsdorf Str. 2 D-13187 Berlin Germany	Touch Sopharath <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Cameroon	-	Ulmenallee 32 D-14050 Berlin Germany	
Canada	1. 1. 1993	Laurenzerberg 2 A-1010 Vienna Austria Carlton Savoy Building Mostová 2 811 02 Bratislava	Heidi Alberta Hulan <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: January 17, 2018 John von Kaufmann <i>chargé d'affaires, Bratislava</i>
The State of Qatar	-	Schottenring 10/Top 7a 1010 Vienna Austria	Abdulla Nasser Al-Harji <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
The Republic of Kazakhstan	1. 1. 1993	Pod Hradbami 662/9 160 00 Prague Czech Republic Kancelária v Bratislave Gunduličova 6 811 05 Bratislava	Serzhan Abdykarimov <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Kenya	1. 1. 1993	Andromeda Tower, 16th Floor Donau-City Strasse 6 1220 Vienna Austria	Nilly Humphrey Kanan <i>Minister Counselor</i>

Country	Start of diplomatic relations	Adress of embassy	In charge of embassy (LoC)
The Kyrgyz Republic	1. 1. 1993	Otto-Suhr-Allee 146 D-10585 Berlin	Erines Otorbajev <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
The Republic of Colombia	1. 1. 1993	Stadiongasse 6-8/15 A-1010 Vienna Austria	Miguel Camilo Ruiz Blanco <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
The Republic of the Congo	30. 6. 1998	Wallstrasse 69 D – 10179 Berlin Germany	Jacques Yvon Ndovhu <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
The Democratic Republic of the Congo	18. 2. 1993	Soukenická 34/1765 110 00 Prague Czech republic	Albertine Kabambi Milewe Musenge <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
The Republic of Korea	1. 1. 1993	Štúrova 16 811 02 Bratislava	Byung Hwa Chung <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
The Democratic People's Republic of Korea	1. 1. 1993	Na Větru 395/18 162 00 Prague Czech Republic	Kim Pyong Il <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Costa Rica	6. 10. 1993	Wagramer Strasse 23/1/1/2-3 A-1220 Vienna Austria	Herbert Daniel Espinoza Solano <i>Consul General, chargé d'affaires</i>
The Republic of Cuba	1. 1. 1993	Somolického 1/A 811 05 Bratislava	Yamila Sonia Pita Montes <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The State of Kuwait	1. 1. 1993	Lodná 2 811 02 Bratislava	Essa Y. K. E. Alshamali <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Lao People's Democratic Republic	-	Sommerhaidenweg 43 A-1180 Vienna Austria	Sithong Chitnhothinh <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
The Kingdom of Lesotho	8. 5. 1995	Via Serchio 8 001 98 Rome Italy	Lineo Irene Molise-Mabusela <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Lebanese Republic	1. 1. 1993	Oppolzergasse 6/3 A-1010 Vienna Austria	Ibrahim Assaf <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
Libya	1. 1. 1993	Révova 45 811 02 Bratislava	Khalid Salem M. Shaban <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
The Republic of Lithuania	1. 1. 1993	Löwengasse 47/4 A-1030 Vienna Austria	Donatas Kuslys <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Latvia	1. 1. 1993	Stefan Esders Platz 4 A-1190 Vienna Austria	Veronika Erte <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: June 18, 2018 Inese Seglina <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg	1. 1. 1993	Sternwartestrasse 81 A-1180 Viedeň Austria	Marc Ungeheuer <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	1. 1. 1993	Kinderspitalgasse 5/2 A-1090 Vienna Austria	Vasilka Poposka Trenevskva <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Madagascar	16. 2. 1996	Koursovoy Per. 5 119 034 Moscow Russian Federation	Eloi A. Maxime Dovo <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Hungary	1. 1. 1993	Štefánikova 1 811 05 Bratislava	Tibor Pető <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>

Country	Start of diplomatic relations	Adress of embassy	In charge of embassy (LoC)
Malaysia	1. 1. 1993	Floridsdorfer Hauptstrasse 1-7 Florido Tower 24.fl. A-1210 Vienna Austria	Dato ' Ganeson A/L Sivagurunathan Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: June 18, 2018
The Republic of Malawi	-	Westfälische Strasse 86 D-10709 Berlin Germany	Michael Barth Kamphambe Nkhoma Ambassador Designated
The Republic of Mali	-	Ambasciata del Mali Via Antonio Bosio, 2 00161 Roma/Italia	Bruno Maiga Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
The Republic of Malta	1. 1. 1993	Opernring 5/1 1010 Vienna Austria	Anthony Licari Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
The Kingdom of Morocco	1. 1. 1993	Hasenauerstrasse 57 A-1180 Vienna Austria	Azzeddin Farhane Ambassador Designated
The Islamic Republic of Mauritania	-	Kommandantenstrasse 80 D-10117 Berlin, Germany	Mohamed Mahomud Ould Brahim Khilil Ambassador Designated
Republic of the Union of Myanmar	-	Kneza Miloša 72 11000 Belehrad Serbia	Myo Aye Ambassador Designated
The Republic of Moldova	1. 1. 1993	Löwengasse 47/10 A-1030 Vienna Austria	Victor Osipov Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: June 18, 2018
Mongolia	1. 1. 1993	Na Marně 5 160 00 Prague Czech Republic	Nyamaa Naranbat Ambassador Designated LoC: June 18, 2018
The Republic of Namibia	9. 12. 1997	Zuckerandlgasse 2 A-1190 Vienna Austria	Simon Madjumo Maruta Ambassador Designated
The Federal Republic of Germany	1. 1. 1993	Hviezdoslavovo nám. 10 813 03 Bratislava	Joachim Bleicker Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Nepal	4. 3. 1994	Guerickestrasse 27 D-10587 Berlin Germany	Ramesh Prasad Khanal Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Prakash Mani Paudel chargé d'affaires
The Federal Republic of Nigeria	1. 1. 1993	Rennweg 25 A-1030 Vienna Austria	Vivian Nwunaku Rose Okeke Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Republic of the Niger	-	Machnowerstraße 24 D-14165 Berlin Germany	
The Republic of Nicaragua	5. 1. 1993	Joachi-Karnatz-Alle 4 10557 Berlin Germany	Karla Luzetta Beleta Brenes Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
The Kingdom of Norway	1. 1. 1993	Palisády 29 811 06 Bratislava	Terje Theodor Nervik Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: November 7, 2018
New Zealand	1. 1. 1993	Mattiellistrasse 2-4/3 A-1040 Vienna Austria	Nicole Jocelyn Roberton Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: January 17, 2018
The Sultanate of Oman	3. 3. 1993	Wahringer Strasse 2-4/24-25 A-1090 Vienna Austria	Badr Mohammed Zaher Al Hinai Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary

Country	Start of diplomatic relations	Adress of embassy	In charge of embassy (LoC)
The Islamic Republic of Pakistan	1. 1. 1993	Hofzeile 13 A-1190 Vienna Austria	Ayesha Riyaz <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The State of Palestine	1. 1. 1993	Červeňova 15 811 03 Bratislava	Attalla S. A. Qubia <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Panama	-	Goldschmiedgasse 10/403 1010 Vienna Austria	Anabella Guardia de Rubinoff <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
The Republic of Paraguay	8. 1. 1993	Prinz Eugen Strasse 18/1/7 A-1040 Vienna Austria	Horacio Norgués Zubizarreta <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
The Republic of Peru	1. 1. 1993	Mahlerstrasse 7/22 A-1010 Vienna Austria	Sandra Angelica Pinto la Fuente <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
The Republic of Poland	1. 1. 1993	Paulínyho 7 814 91 Bratislava	Krzysztof Strzałka <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: November 9, 2018
The Republic of Portugal	1. 1. 1993	Ventúrska 16 811 01 Bratislava	Ana Maria Coelho Ribeiro Da Silva <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Austria	1. 1. 1993	Astoria Palace Hodžovo námestie 1/A 811 06 Bratislava	Helfried Carl <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Romania	1. 1. 1993	Tichá 45/A 811 02 Bratislava 1	Steluta Arhire <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Russian Federation	1. 1. 1993	Godrova 4 811 06 Bratislava 1	Alexei Leonidovič Fedotov <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Rwandese Republic	-	Jägerstrasse 67-69 D-10117 Berlin Germany	Igor Cesar <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
The Republic of El Salvador	1. 1. 1993	Prinz Eugen Strasse 72/2/1 A-1040 Vienna Austria	Ramiro Recinos Trejo <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
The Republic of San Marino	1. 1. 1993	Via Cison 27 48100 Ravenna Italy	Dario Galassi <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: June 18, 2018
The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	16. 6. 1995	Formanekgasse 38 A-1190 Vienna Austria	Khalid bin Ibrahim Al-Jindan <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
The Republic of Senegal	-	Dessauer Strasse 29/29 D-10963 Berlin Germany	
The Republic of Seychelles	-	Boulevard Saint Michel, 28 1040 Brussels Belgium	Thomas Selby Pillay <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
The Republic of Sierra Leone	-	Rublevskoe šosse, 26/1, of. 58-59 121615 Moscow Russian Federation	John Bobor Laggah <i>Consul</i>
The Republic of Singapore	12. 2. 1993	MFA, Tanglin 248163 Singapore	Chay Wai Chuen <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Slovenia	1. 1. 1993	Ventúrska 5 813 15 Bratislava 1	Gregor Kozovinc <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Federal Republic of Somalia	-	Simferopolsky Bulvar 7a-145 117 556 Moscow, Russian Federation	Mohamed Mahmoud Handule <i>Ambassador Designated</i>

Country	Start of diplomatic relations	Adress of embassy	In charge of embassy (LoC)
The United Arab Emirates	3. 1. 1993	Chimanistrasse 36 A-1190 Vienna Austria	Hamad Al Kaabi <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The United kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	1. 1. 1993	Panská 16 811 01 Bratislava 1	Andrew Garth <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The United States of America	1. 1. 1993	Hviezdoslavovo námestie 4 811 02 Bratislava 1	Adam Harold Sterling <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The United Mexican States	1. 10. 1993	Renngasse 5 A-1010 Vienna Austria	Alicia Buenostro Massieu <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Serbia	1. 1. 1993	Búdkova 38 811 04 Bratislava 1	Momčilo Babić <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: June 18, 2018
The Democratic Socialist republic of Sri Lanka	15. 2. 1993	Weyringergasse, 33-35 A-1040 Vienna Austria	W. Irosha Prabhani Cooray <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
The Republic of the Sudan	27. 7. 1993	Reisnerstrasse 29/5 A-1030 Vienna Austria	Maimona Ahmed Mohammed Khalid <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
The Kingdom Of Swaziland	-	Avenue Winston Churchill 188 1180 Brussels Belgium	
The Holy See	1. 1. 1993	Nekrasovova 17 811 04 Bratislava 1	Mons. Giacomo Guido Ottonello <i>Apostolic Nuncio</i>
The Syrian Arab Republic	1. 1. 1993	Daffingerstrasse 4 A-1030 Vienna Austria	Bassam Ahmad Nazim Al Sabbagh <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Kingdom Of Spain	1. 1. 1993	Prepoštská 10 811 01 Bratislava 1	Luis Belzuz De Los Rios <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Switzerland	1. 1. 1993	Michalská 12 811 06 Bratislava 1	Alexander Wittwer <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Kingdom of Sweden	1. 1. 1993	Liechtensteinstrasse 51 A-1090 Vienna Austria	Mikaela Kumlín Granit <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: December 5, 2018
The Republic of Tajikistan	-	Universitaetstr. 8/1a A-1090 Vienna Austria	Idibek Kalandar <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
The Republic of Italy	1. 1. 1993	Palisády 49 811 06 Bratislava	Gabriele Meucci <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The United Republic of Tanzania	1. 1. 1993	Eschenallee 11 D-14050 Berlin Germany	Abdallah Saleh Possi <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
The Republic of Togo	-	Grabbeallee 43 13156 Berlin Germany	Komi Bayedze Dagoh <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
The Kingdom of Thailand	1. 1. 1993	Cottagegasse 48 A-1180 Vienna Austria	
The Republic of Tunisia	1. 1. 1993	Sieveringerstrasse 187 A-1190 Vienna Austria	Samia Ilhem Ammar <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
The Republic of Turkey	1. 1. 1993	Holubyho 11 811 03 Bratislava 1	Hatice Ashgül Üğdül <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>

Country	Start of diplomatic relations	Adress of embassy	In charge of embassy (LoC)
Turkmenistan	1. 1. 1993	Argentinerstrasse 22/II/EG A-1040 Vienna Austria	Silapberdi Ashirgeldiveich Nurberdiyev <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Ukraine	1. 1. 1993	Radvanská 35 811 01 Bratislava 1	Jurij Muška <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Uganda	-	Axel-Springer Str. 54° C-10117 Berlin Germany	Mercel Robert Tibaleka <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Eastern Republic of Uruguay	-	Mahlerstrasse 11/2/2 A-1010 Vienna Austria	Bruno Javier Machado Faraone <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Uzbekistan	20. 1. 1993	Pötzleinsdorfer Strasse 49 A-1180 Vienna Austria	Rustamdjan Khakimov <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela	1. 1. 1993	Prinz Eugen Strasse 72/1/L1 A-1040 Vienna Austria	Dulfa Dalila Hernández Medina <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
The Socialist Republic of Vietnam	1. 1. 1993	Dunajská 15 811 08 Bratislava	Minh Trong Duong <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: January 17, 2018
The Republic of Zambia	5. 5. 1993	Axel-Springer Strasse 54 A D-10117 Berlin Germany	Chalwe Lombe <i>Counselor</i>
The Republic of Zimbabwe	3. 3. 1993	Chemin William Barbery 27 1292 Chambésy Geneva Switzerland	Taonga Mushayavanhu <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta	1. 1. 1993	Kapitulská 9 811 01 Bratislava	Alfred Prinz von Schönburg-Hartenstein <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>

LIST OF CONSULATES IN THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

THE HEADS OF THE CONSULATES AS OF FEBRUARY 2019

State	Address of the consulate in the SR	Consul
The Republic of Azerbaijan	Klobučnícka 4 811 01 Bratislava	Džalal Gasmov <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Albania	Mostná 56 949 01 Nitra	Valér Husarovič <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Commonwealth of the Bahamas	Ventúrska 10 811 01 Bratislava	Michal Lazar <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The People's Republic of Bangladesh	Pod záhradami 41 841 01 Bratislava	Štefan Petkanič <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Kingdom of Belgium	Moskovská cesta 10/B 040 11 Košice	Dany R. E. Rottiers <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Kingdom of Belgium	Moskovská 13 811 08 Bratislava	Bart Waterloos <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Belize	Krajná ulica 56C 821 04 Bratislava	Miroslav Strečanský <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Belarus	Osadská 679/15 028 01 Trstená	Marián Murín <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Montenegro	Mudroňova 3/B 811 01 Bratislava	Rudolf Autner <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Chile	Klzává 31/C 831 01 Bratislava	Jaroslav Šoltys <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Kingdom of Denmark	Bajkalská 5/A 831 03 Bratislava	Michal Lörintz <i>Honorary General Consul</i>
The Republic of Ecuador	M.R.Štefánika 58 036 01 Martin	Ján Molitor <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Estonia	Drieňová 3 821 01 Bratislava	Peter Pochaba <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia	Bojnická 3 831 04 Bratislava	Štefan Rosina <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Philippines	Cesta na Senec 15725/24 830 06 Bratislava	Pavol Konštiak <i>Honorary General Consul</i>
French Republic	Hlavná 104, 040 01 Košice	David Mortreux <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Finland	Moyzesova 5 811 05 Bratislava	Karol Kállay <i>Honorary General Consul</i>

State	Address of the consulate in the SR	Consul
The Republic of Finland	Žriedlová 12-14, 040 01 Košice	Rastislav Puchala Honorary Consul
Georgia	Hlavná 24 040 01 Košice	Franco Pigozzi Honorary Consul
Georgia	Orlové 116 017 01 Považská Bystrica	Nodari Giorgadze Honorary Consul
The Republic of Ghana	Palisády 31 811 06 Bratislava	James Arthur Honorary Consul
The Republic of Guatemala	Vajnorská 8/A 831 04 Bratislava	Zoroslav Kollár Honorary Consul
Hellenic Republic	Hlavná 20 040 01 Košice	Liberios Vokorokos Honorary Consul
The Kingdom of The Netherlands	Košická 44 P.O. Box 21 080 01 Prešov	Matúš Murajda Honorary Consul
The Republic of Iceland	Palisády 39 811 06 Bratislava	Otto Halás Honorary Consul
The State of Israel	Garbiarska 5 040 01 Košice	Peter Frajt Honorary Consul
Jamaica	Porubského 2 811 06 Bratislava	Marián Valko Honorary Consul
The Kingdom of Jordan	Mostová 2 813 07 Bratislava	Jaroslav Rebej Honorary Consul
The Republic of South Africa	Fraňa Kráľa 1 851 02 Bratislava	Milan Lopašovský Honorary Consul
The Republic of Kazakhstan	Ventúrska 3 811 01 Bratislava	Štefan Rosina Honorary Consul
The Republic of Korea	Dolný val 5 010 01 Žilina	Oldřich Kovář Honorary Consul
The Kyrgyz Republic	Miletičova 1 821 08 Bratislava	Tibor Podoba Honorary Consul
The Republic of Colombia	AC Diplomat Palisády 29/ A 811 06 Bratislava	Anton Siekel Honorary Consul
The Democratic Republic of Congo	Kučičdorfská dolina 4 902 01 Pezinok	Pavol Jánosik Honorary Consul
The Republic of Costa Rica	Prepoštská 6 811 01 Bratislava	Tomáš Chrenek Honorary Consul
The Lao People's Democratic Republic	Panská ulica 27 811 01 Bratislava	Bounthong Bounthong Honorary Consul
The Kingdom of Lesotho	Slávičie údolie 31 811 02 Bratislava	Dušan Blattner Honorary Consul
The Republic of Lithuania	Za záhradami 16 900 28 Zálesie	Marián Meško Honorary Consul
The Republic of Latvia	Krmanova 1 040 01 Košice	Miroslav Repka Honorary Consul
The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg	Prievozska 4/A 821 09 Bratislava	Peter Kríško Honorary Consul
Malaysia	Jašíkova 2 821 03 Bratislava	Igor Junas Honorary Consul
The Republic of Madagascar	V záhradách 4 811 02 Bratislava	Peter Brudňák Honorary Consul
The Republic of Maldives	Lazaretská 29 811 09 Bratislava	Andrej Matko Honorary Consul
The Republic of Mali	Mikulášska 3 - 5 811 02 Bratislava	Eugen Horváth Honorary Consul

State	Address of the consulate in the SR	Consul
The Republic of Malta	Palisády 33 811 06 Bratislava	Martin Hantabál Honorary Consul
The Kingdom of Morocco	Krajná 86 821 04 Bratislava	Ľubomír Šídala Honorary Consul
The Republic of Moldova	Zámocká 16 811 01 Bratislava	Antonio Parziale Honorary Consul
The Republic of Moldova	Hlavná 81 040 11 Košice	Ján Varga Honorary Consul
The Principality of Monaco	Mostová 2 811 02 Bratislava	Miroslav Výboh Honorary Consul
Mongolia	Národná trieda 56 040 01 Košice	Peter Slávik Honorary Consul
The Federal Republic of Germany	Timonova 27 040 01 Košice	Juraj Banský Honorary Consul
The Federal Republic of Germany	Priemyselná 14 010 01 Žilina	Peter Lazar Honorary Consul
The Republic of Nicaragua	Vrbová 22 900 43 Hamuliakovo	Vladimír Kaščák Honorary Consul
The Sultanate of Oman	Sasinkova 12 811 08 Bratislava	Oszkár Világi Honorary Consul
The Republic of Paraguay	Rigeleho 1 811 02 Bratislava	Martin Šamaj Honorary Consul
The Republic of Peru	Tuhovská 5 831 07 Bratislava	Andrej Glatz Honorary Consul
The Republic of Poland	Nám. osloboditeľov 1 031 01 Liptovský Mikuláš	Tadeusz Frackowiak Honorary Consul
Romania	Kapitulská 1 Banská Bystrica	Ladislav Rehák Honorary Consul
Romania	Nám.sv. Mikuláša 2 064 01 Stará Ľubovňa	Marián Gurega Honorary Consul
Russian federation	Moldavská 10/B 040 11 Košice	Ladislav Štefko Honorary Consul
The Republic of El Salvador	Záhradnícka 62 82108 Bratislava	Igor Moravčík Honorary Consul
The Republic of Senegal	Kálov 655/10 010 01 Žilina	Souleymane Seck Honorary Consul
The Republic of Seychelles	Beblavého 4 811 01 Bratislava	Andrej Hryc Honorary Consul
The Republic of Seychelles	Pod Strelnicou 161/1 040 18 Nižná Hutka	Wanda Adamík Hrycová Honorary Consul
The Republic of Sierra Leone	Partizánska 16 811 03 Bratislava	Branislav Hronec Honorary General Consul
The United Mexican States	Prepoštská 8 811 01 Bratislava	Václav Míla Honorary Consul
The Republic of Serbia	Jesenského 12 040 01 Košice	Eva Dekanovská Honorary Consul
The Republic of Serbia	Pavla Mudroňa 12 036 01 Martin	Mojmír Vrlík Honorary Consul
The Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka	Mostová 2 811 02 Bratislava	Peter Gabalec Honorary Consul
The Syrian Arab Republic	Tatranská 1 841 06 Bratislava-Záhorská Bystrica	Mustafa Al-Sabouni Honorary Consul
The Kingdom of Spain	Hutnícka 1 040 01 Košice	Daniel Lučkanič Honorary Consul

State	Address of the consulate in the SR	Consul
Switzerland	Vajanského 10 080 01 Prešov	Helena Virčíková <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Kingdom of Sweden	Tomášikova 30 821 01 Bratislava	Vladimír Kestler <i>Honorary General Consul</i>
The Kingdom of Thailand	Viedenská cesta 3-7 851 01 Bratislava	Alexander Rozin <i>Honorary General Consul</i>
The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago	Nobelova 34 831 02 Bratislava	Roman Danda <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Turkey	Kuzmányho 16 974 01 Banská Bystrica	Vladimír Soták <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Turkey	Mlynská ulica 2 040 01 Košice	Štefan Melník <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Uganda	Ružová dolina 25 821 09 Bratislava	Andrej Brna <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Ukraine	Budovateľská 29 093 01 Vranov nad Topľou	Stanislav Obický <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Eastern Republic of Uruguay	Trnkova 46 851 10 Bratislava	Milan Beniák <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Uzbekistan	Business Centrum Lake Side Park Tomášikova 64 831 04 Bratislava	Ludovít Černák <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Socialist Republic of Vietnam	Hlavná 70 040 01 Košice	Rastislav Sedmák <i>Honorary Consul</i>

LIST OF THE EMBASSIES OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC, PERMANENT MISSIONS, CONSULATES GENERAL, SLOVAK INSTITUTES ABROAD

EMBASSIES OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC, PERMANENT MISSIONS, CONSULATES GENERAL, SLOVAK INSTITUTES AND THEIR HEADS AS OF FEBRUARY 2019

Embassy	Accredited	Address	Head of the Embassy
Abuja	Nigeria, Niger, Benin, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Equatorial Guinea, Senegal, Gambia, Cameroon, Gabon, Cape Verde, Burkina Faso, Mali, Liberia, Togo, São Tomé and Príncipe, Côte d'Ivoire	21st Crescent, Off Constitution Avenue, Central Business District Abuja, Nigeria	Peter Holásek <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Abu Dhabi	The United Arab Emirates	Al Mataf Street No. 16, Villa 2 Abu Dhabi United Arab Emirates	Dušan Horniak <i>Ambassador</i>
Addis Abeba	Djibouti Republic, Ethiopia, Central African Republic	Yeka Sub-City, Woreda 13, Kebele 20/21, House No.: P7 CARA-VIL Compound Addis Abeba Ethiopia	
Ankara	Turkey	Atatürk Bulvarı 245 06692 Ankara Turkey	Anna Tureníčová <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Astana	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan	D.A Kunajeva 1, C 11 010 000, Astana Kazakhstan	Milan Kollár <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Athens	The Hellenic Republic (Greece)	Georgiou Saferi 4, Palaio Psychiko 154 52 Athens Greece	Iveta Hricová <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Bangkok	Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar	9-th Floor, South Sathorn Road 25 Bangkok 10 120 The Kingdom of Thailand	Stanislav Opiela <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Beijing	China, Mongolia	Ritan Lu, Jianguomen Wai, 100 600 Beijing The People's Republic of China	Dušan Bella <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
Beirut	Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Syria	Weavers Center, 14th FL. Clemenseau Street, Beirut Lebanon	Lubomír Macko <i>Head of the Mission</i>
Belgrade	Serbia	Bulevar umetnosti 18 110 70 Novi Beograd Serbia	Dagmar Repčėková <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Berlin	Germany	Hildebrandstraße 25 10785 Berlin Germany	Peter Lizák <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>

Embassy	Accredited	Address	Head of the Embassy
Bern	Switzerland, Liechtenstein	Thunstrasse 63 3074 Muri b. Bern, Switzerland	Andrea Elscheková Matisová <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Brasilia	Brazil, Ecuador, Columbia, Venezuela, Surinam, Guyana	SES, Avenida das Nações, Qd. 805, Lote 21 B CEP 70 200-902 Brasilia, D.F. Brazil	Milan Zachar <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Brussels	Belgium, Luxemburg	Avenue Moliere 195 1050 Brusel Belgium	Peter Kormúth <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Budapest	Hungary	Stefánia út 22 – 24. 1143 Budapest XIV Hungary	Pavol Hamžík <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Buenos Aires	Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay	Figuroa Alcorta 3240 Buenos Aires Argentina	Branislav Hitka <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Bucharest	Romania	Strada Otetari 020 977 Bucuresti Romania	Karol Mistrík <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Cairo	Egypt, Chad, Yemen, Lybia, Mauritania, Oman, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Sudan, Tunisia	3 Adel Hosen Rostom P.O. Box 450 11794 – Ramses Post Office Dokki, Cairo Egypt	Valér Franko <i>Ambassador</i>
Canberra	Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua-New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu	47 Culgoa Circuit, O'Malley 2606 Canberra Australia	Igor Bartho <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Chisinau	Moldova	A. Sciuseva 101 Chisinau Moldova	Dušan Dacho <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Copenhagen	Denmark	Vesterled 26 – 28 2100 Copenhagen Denmark	Miroslav Wlachovský <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Delhi	India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Bhutan	50-M, Niti Marg, Chanakyapuri 110021 New Delhi India	Ivan Lančarič <i>Head of the Mission</i>
Dublin	Ireland	80 Merrion Square South Dublin 2 Ireland	Igor Pokojný <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Hague	Netherlands	Parkweg 1 2585 Den Haag Netherlands	Roman Bužek <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Hanoi	Vietnam	12 Ba Huyen Thanh Quan Ba Dinh District Hanoi Vietnam	Jozef Cibula <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Havana	Antigua a Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, Cuba, Saint Lucia, Saint Christopher and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago.	Calle 66, No. 521 Entre 5B y 7, Miramar, Playa Havana Cuba	Roman Hošťák <i>Head of the Mission</i>
Helsinki	Finland, Estonia	Vähäniityntie 5 00570 Helsinki Finland	Slavomíra Mašurová <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Jakarta	Brunei, East Timor, Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore	Jalan Profesor Mohammad Yamin 29 Jakarta 103 10 Indonesia	Jaroslav Chlebo <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>

Embassy	Accredited	Address	Head of the Embassy
Kuwait	Kuwait, Bahrein, Quatar	Block No. 2, Street No. 16 Villa No. 22 131 23 Area Surra Kuwait	Igor Hajdušek <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Kyiv	Ukraine	Jaroslavov val 34 019 01 Kyiv Ukraine	Marek Šafin <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Lisbon	Portugal	Avenida da Liberdade 200 5 Esq., 1250-147 Lisbon Portugal	Oldřich Hlaváček <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
London	The United Kingdom	25, Kensington Palace Gardens W8 4QY London The United Kingdom	Lubomír Reháč <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Ljubljana	Slovenia	Bleiweisova 4 1000 Ljubljana Slovenia	Eva Ponomarenková <i>Head of the Mission</i>
Madrid	Spain, Andorra, Morocco	C/Pinar, 20 28006 Madrid Spain	Jaroslav Blaško <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Mexico City	Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Salvador, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Panama, Belize	Julio Verne 35 11 560 Mexico City Mexico	Alena Gažířová <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
Minsk	Belarus	Volodarskogo 6 220 030, Minsk Belarus	Jozef Migaš <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Moscow	Russian Federation	J. Fučika 17/19 115 127 Moscow Russian Federation	Peter Priputen <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Nairobi	Kenya, Comoros, Burundi, Congo, Seychelles, Rwanda, Somalia, Uganda, Tansania, Eritrea, South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo	Jakaya Kikwete Rd., P.O.Box 30 204 00 100 Nairobi Kenya	František Dlhopoček <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Nicosia	Cyprus	Kalamatas Street No. 4 Strovolos, 2002 Nicosia, Cyprus	Ján Škoda <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Oslo	Norway, Iceland	Thomas Heftyes gate 24 N-0244 Oslo Norway	Denisa Frelichová <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Ottawa	Canada	50 Rideau Terrace K1M 2A1, Ottawa, Ontario Canada	Vít Koziak <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Paris	France, Monaco, Algeria	125 rue du Ranelagh 75016 Paris France	Igor Slobodník <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Podgorica	Montenegro	Crnogorskih Serdara 5 81000 Podgorica Montenegro	Roman Hlobeň <i>Head of the Mission</i>
Prague	Czech Republic	Pelléova 12 160 00 Prague Czech Republic	Peter Weiss <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Pretoria	South Africa, Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mauritius, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia, Zimbabwe	930 Arcadia Street Arcadia 0083 Pretoria South Africa	Monika Tomašovičová <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Prishtina	Serbia (Kosovo)	Selim Berisha č. 11, Dragodan, 10000 Pristina Kosovo, Serbia	Lubomír Batáry <i>Head of the branch office</i>
Riga	Latvia, Lithuania	Smišņu iela 8 1050 Riga Latvia	Ladislav Babčan <i>Head of the Mission</i>

Embassy	Accredited	Address	Head of the Embassy
Rome	Italy, Malta, San Marino	Via dei Colli della Farnesina 144VI/A00194 Rome Italy	Ján Šoth <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Sarajevo	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Trnovska 6 710 00 Sarajevo Bosnia and Herzegovina	Martin Kačo <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Skopje	FYROM (Macedonia)	Budimpeštanska 39 1000 Skopje FYROM	Henrik Markuš <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Sofia	Bulgaria	Blv. Janko Sakazov 9 1504 Sofia Bulgaria	Manuel Korček <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Seoul	South Korea, North Korea	28, 10gil Hannamdae-ro, Yongsan-gu Seoul South Korea	Ján Kuderjavý <i>Head of the Mission</i>
Stockholm	Sweden	Arsenalsgatan 2/3 TR, Box 7183 10 388, Stockholm Sweden	Martina Balunová <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Taipei (Slovak economic and cultural office)	Republic of China (Taiwan)	333 Keelung Road, Section 1 110 Taipei Taiwan	Martin Podstavek <i>Head of the Mission</i>
Tashkent	Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan	Kičik Bešjogoč 38 100070 Tashkent Uzbekistan	Ján Bóry <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Tehran	Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan	72 Moghadassi St., Niavaran St., 1971836199, P.O.Box 19395-6341, Tehran Iran	Ľubomír Golian <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Tel Aviv	Israel, Palestine	Jabotinsky 37 P.O. Box 6459 Tel Aviv Israel	Peter Hulényi <i>Head of the Mission</i>
Tirana	Albania	Rruga Skenderbej 8 Tirana Albania	Peter Spišiak <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Tripoli	Libya, Tunisia, Mauritania, Chad	Hay Al-Andalus, Gargaresh Street 3 km, Tripolis Libya	
Tbilisi	Georgia	13 Mtskheta Str., Apt. 23, 0179 Tbilisi Georgia	Pavel Vízdal <i>Head of the Mission</i>
Tokyo	Japan, Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Palau	2-11-33, Moto-Azabu, Minato-ku 106-0046 Tokyo Japan	Marián Tomášik <i>Head of the Mission</i>
Vatican (The Holy See)	Vatican (The Holy See), Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta	Via dei Colli della Farnesina 144 00135 Rome Vatican	Marek Lisánsky <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Vienna	Austria	Armbrustergasse 24 A-1190 Vienna Austria	Peter Mišík <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Warsaw	Poland	Litewska 6 00-581 Warsaw Poland	Dušan Krištofik <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Washington	USA	3523 International Court, NW 20008 Washington D.C. USA	Ivan Korčok <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Zagreb	Croatia	Prilaz Gjure Deželica 10 10000 Zagreb Croatia	Peter Susko <i>Ambassador</i>

PERMANENT MISSIONS

Permanent mission	Address	Head of the Mission
PM International Organizations Vienna	Blaastraße 34 A-1190 Vienna Austria	<i>Radomír Boháč</i>
PM EU Brussels	Avenue de Cortenbergh 107 1000 Brussels Belgium	<i>Peter Javorčík</i>
PM NATO Brussels	Boulevard Leopold III NATO HQ 1110 Brussels Belgium	<i>Radovan Javorčík</i>
PM OECD Paris	28, Avenue d'Eylau 750 16 Paris France	<i>Ingrid Brocková</i>
PM UN New York	801 Second Avenue 10017 New York USA	<i>Michal Mlynár</i>
PM UN Geneva	9, Chemin de l'Ancienne Route 1218 Grand Saconnex Switzerland	<i>Juraj Podhorský</i>
PM Council of Europe Strasbourg	1 Rue Ehrmann 67000 Strasbourg France	<i>Marek Eštok</i>
PM UNESCO Paris	1, rue Miollis 757 32, Paris France	<i>Klára Novotná</i>

CONSULATES GENERAL

State	Address	Consul Genral
The People's Republic of China	1375 Huaihai Central Road 200031 Shanghai	<i>Ivana Vala Magátová</i>
Hungary	Derkovits sor 7 5600 Békéscsaba	<i>Emil Kuchár</i>
Poland	Św. Tomasza 34 31 027 Cracow	<i>Tomáš Kašaj</i>
Russian Federation	Orbeli č. 21/2 194 223 Saint Petersburg	<i>Iveta Mesiariková</i> * Viceconsul
USA	801 Second Avenue, 12th Floor New York, N.Y. 10017	<i>Ladislava Begeç</i>
Germany	Vollmannstrasse 25d 819 25 Munich	<i>Lubomír Rybár</i> * Viceconsul
Turkey	3. Levent Bambu Sokak No: 6 343 30 Istanbul	<i>Miloš Buday</i> * Viceconsul
Ukraine	Lokoty 4 880 00 Uzhhorod	<i>Miroslav Mojžita</i>

SLOVAK INSTITUTES

Name	Address	Head
Slovak Institute Berlin	Hildebrandstr. 25 10785 Berlin Germany	<i>Ivo Hanuš</i>
Slovak Institute Budapest	Rákóczi út. 15 H-1088 Budapest Hungary	<i>Ildiko Síposová</i>
Slovak Institute Moscow	Ul. 2 Brestská 27 125-056 Moscow Russia	<i>Ján Šmihula</i>
Slovak Institute Paris	125 Rue de Ranelagh F-75016 Paris France	<i>Jakub Urik</i>
Slovak Institute Prague	Nám. Republiky 1037/3 110 00 Praha 1 Czech Republic	<i>Vladimír Valovič</i>
Slovak Institute Rome	Via dei Colli della Farnesina 144 00135 Rome Italy	<i>Ľubica Mikušová</i>
Slovak Institute Warsaw	Krzywe Kolo 12/14a PL-00 270 Warsaw Poland	<i>Adrián Kromka</i>
Slovak Institute Vienna	Wipplingerstrasse 24 --26 A-1010 Vienna Austria	<i>Igor Skoček</i>

LIST OF CONSULATES OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC HEADED BY THE HONORARY CONSULS

THE HEADS OF THE CONSULATES AS OF FEBRUARY 2019

State	Consulate	Consul
Albania	Tirana	Faik Dizdarii <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Argentina	La Plata	Eduardo Kabát <i>Honorary General Consul</i>
Armenia	Yerevan	Gagik Vladimirovič Martirosian <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Australia	Brisbane	Michal Horvath <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Australia	Melbourne	Eugénia Mocnay <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Australia	Perth	Pavol Faix <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Australia	Sydney	Milan Neklapil <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Austria	St. Pölten	Veit Schmid-Schmidfelden <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Austria	Innsbruck	Jurgen Bodenser <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Austria	Linz	Harald Papesch <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Austria	Salzburg	Gerald Hubner <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Austria	Eisenstadt	Alfred Tombor <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Bahamas	Nassau	Isacc Chester Cooper <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Bangladesh	Dhaka	Miran Ali <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Belgium	Antwerp	Gunnar Riebs <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Belgium	Gent	Arnold Vanhaecke <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Belgium	Mons	Peter De Nil <i>Honorary Consul</i>

State	Consulate	Consul
Belarus	Vitebsk	Alexej Syčov Honorary Consul
Bolivia	La Paz	Hernán Guido Vera Ruiz Honorary Consul
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Medjugorje	Rajko Zelenika Honorary Consul
Brazil	Belo Horizonte	Renato Werner Victor de Queiroz Honorary Consul
Brazil	Recife	João Alexandre Neto Honorary Consul
Brazil	Rio de Janeiro	Mohamad Façal Mohamad Said Hammoud Honorary Consul
Bulgaria	Varna	Edita Blagoevova Honorary Consul
Czech Republic	Brno	Jaroslav Weigl Honorary Consul
Croatia	Osijek	Ivan Komak Honorary Consul
Croatia	Split	Goran Morović Honorary Consul
Chile	Santiago	Paul Nador Honorary Consul
China	Hong Kong	Willy Lin Honorary Consul
Cyprus	Limassol	Angelos Gregoriades Honorary Consul
Denmark	Aarhus	Claus Søgaard Poulsen Honorary Consul
Egypt	Alexandria	Mohamed Moustafa el Naggar Honorary Consul
Estonia	Tallinn	Even Tudeberg Honorary Consul
Ethiopia	Addis Abeba	Feleke Bekele Safo Honorary Consul
Philippines	Cebu City	Antonio N. Chiu Honorary Consul
Philippines	Manilla	
Finland	Teerijärvi	Mikael Ahlbäck Honorary Consul
France	Grenoble	Menyhért Kocsis Honorary Consul
France	Lille	Alain Bar Honorary Consul
France	Brumath	Christian Rothacker Honorary Consul
France	Marseille	Marc-André Distanti Honorary Consul
France	Bordeaux	
Greece	Chania	Stavros Paterakis Honorary Consul
Greece	Thessaloniki	Konstatinos Mavridis Honorary Consul

State	Consulate	Consul
Greece	Patras	Phaedon Couniniotis Honorary Consul
Greece	Pireus	Michael Bodouroglou Honorary Consul
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Italy	Trieste	Miljan Todorovič Honorary Consul
Italy	Florence	Massimo Sani Honorary Consul
Italy	Torino	Giuseppe Pellegrino Honorary Consul

State	Consulate	Consul
Jamaica	Kingston	Christopher Richard Issa Honorary Consul
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Japan	Kirishima	Masahiro Jamamoto Honorary Consul
Japan	Utsunomiya	Eichii Ishikawa Honorary Consul
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Jordan	Amman	Khaldun A. Abuhassan Honorary General Consul
South Africa	Cape Town	Geoffrey Leighton Ashmead Honorary Consul
Cameroon	Yaoundé	Mohamadou Salihou Honorary Consul
Canada	Calgary	Eva Hadzima Honorary Consul
Canada	Montreal	Dezider Michaletz Honorary Consul
Canada	Vancouver	Pavol Hollosy Honorary Consul
Canada	Toronto	Michael Martinček Honorary Consul
Kazakhstan	Almaty	Marat Džachanovič Sabalakov Honorary Consul
Kazakhstan	Karaganda	Alexej Petrovič Neřjodov Honorary Consul
Kazakhstan	Kurčatov	Kairat Kamalovič Kadyrzanov Honorary Consul
Kenya	Mombasa	Christoph Modigell Honorary Consul
Kyrgyzstan	Bishkek	Igor Konstantinovič Gusarov Honorary Consul
South Korea	Busan	Oh Myung Hwan Honorary Consul
South Korea	Soul	Gum Nanse Honorary Consul
Liechtenstein	Vaduz	Fabian Frick Honorary Consul
Lithuania	Kaunas	Vytautas Mikaila Honorary Consul
Macedonia	Skopje	Vlade Stojanovski Honorary Consul
Madagaskar	Antananarivo	Ismael Danilhousen Honorary Consul
Malaysia	Kota Kinabalu	Wong Khen Thau Honorary Consul
Malaysia	Kuala Lumpur	Tan Sri Ong Tee Keat Honorary Consul
Malawi	Blantyre	Salim David Babu Honorary Consul
Malta	Valletta	Godwin Edvard Bencini Honorary Consul

State	Consulate	Consul
Monaco	Monaco	Tatiana Paracková Honorary Consul
Morocco	Casablanca	Kamil Ouzzani Touhamy Honorary Consul
Mauritius	Port Louis	Yatemani Gujadhur Honorary Consul
Mexico	Cancún	Francisco Edmundo Lechón Rosas Honorary Consul
Mexico	Monterrey	Jorge García Segovia Honorary Consul
Moldova	Chisinau	Iurie Grigore Popovici Honorary Consul
Mongolia	Ulanbatar	Gotov Dugerjav Honorary Consul
Mozambique	Maputo	Ismael Mussá Mangueira Honorary Consul
Nepal	Kathmahandu	Pasang Dawa Sherpa Honorary Consul
Nigeria	Port Harcourt	Eze Clifford Amadi Honorary Consul
Nicaragua	Managua	Bergman Castillo Honorary Consul
Norway	Bergen	Morten L. Gjesdahl Honorary Consul
Norway	Drammen	Zuzana Opavská Wahl Honorary Consul
New Zealand	Auckland	Peter T. Kiely Honorary Consul
Oman	Muscat	Mohammed S. Al-Harthy Honorary Consul
Pakistan	Lahore	Muhammad Malik Asif Honorary Consul
Palestine	Betlehem	George Suliman Malki Jabra Honorary Consul
Panama	Panama	Julio César Benedetti Honorary Consul
Paraguay	Cuidad del Este	Charif Hammoud Honorary Consul
Paraguay	Asunción	Alex Hammoud Honorary Consul
Peru	Lima	Victor Andrés Belaunde Gutiérrez Honorary Consul
Poland	Bydhost	Wiesław Cezary Olszewski Honorary Consul
Poland	Gliwice	Marian Czerny Honorary Consul
Poland	Poznań	Piotr Stanisław Styczynski Honorary Consul
Poland	Rzeszow	Adam Góral Honorary Consul
Poland	Sopot	Jerzy Leśniak Honorary Consul
Poland	Wroclaw	Maciej Kaczmarek Honorary Consul

State	Consulate	Consul
Poland	Zakopané	Wieslaw Tadeusz Wojas <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Portugal	Faro	Rui Marques Dias Gomes <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Portugal	Madeira	Roberto Rodrigo Vieira Henriques <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Romania	Salonta	Miroslav Iabloncsik <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Russian Federation	Astrachan	Vladimir Stepanovič Sinčenko <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Russian Federation	Chanty-Mansijsk	Eduard Vasiljevič Lebedev <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Russian Federation	Omsk	Jurij Viktorovič Šapovalov <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Russian Federation	Krasnojarsk	Valerij Alexandrovič Gračev <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Russian Federation	Jekaterinburg	Alexander Petrovič Petrov <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Russian Federation	Vladivostok	Apres Gvidonovič Voskanian <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Russian Federation	Perm	Boris Abramovič Švajcer <i>Honorary Consul</i>
El Salvador	San Salvador	Nicolas Antonio Salume Babun <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Saudi Arabia	Jeddah	Saeed Omar H. Balubaid <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Senegal	Dakar	
Seychelles	Victoria	Joseph France Albert <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Singapore	Singapore	Cheo Guan Ow <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Serbia	Niš	Stela Jovanovič <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Sri Lanka	Colombo	Mahen Roshan Andrew Kariyawasan <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Sudan	Khartoum	Nasreldin Shulgami <i>Honorary General Consul</i>
Syria	Lakatia	Anas Dib Joud <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Spain	Barcelona	Joan Ignacio Torredemer Galles <i>Honorary General Consul</i>
Spain	Santa Cruz de Tenerife	Francisco José Perera Molinero <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Spain	Malaga	Jesús García Urbano <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Spain	Zaragoza	José Javier Parra Campos <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Sweden	Göteborg	Carl Magnus Richard Kindal <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Sweden	Lulea°	Jonas Lundström <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Sweden	Malmö	Rolf Bjernedell <i>Honorary Consul</i>

State	Consulate	Consul
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USA	Dallas	Martin Valko Honorary Consul
USA	North Miami	Cecilia F. Rokusek Honorary Consul
USA	Pittsburgh	Joseph T. Senko Honorary Consul

State	Consulate	Consul
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USA	Naperville	Rosemary Macko Wisnosky <i>Honorary Consul</i>
USA	Boston	Peter Mužila <i>Honorary Consul</i>
USA	Denver	Gregor James Fasing <i>Honorary Consul</i>
USA	Lafayette	Zoltán Gombos <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Venezuela	Caracas	Manuel Antonio Polanco Fernández <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Vietnam	Ho Chi Minh City	Huy Ho <i>Honorary General Consul</i>
Zambia	Lusaka	Jaroslav Kulich <i>Honorary Consul</i>

NUMBERS OF THE MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC IN PEACE MISSIONS

AS OF FEBRUARY 2019

Mission	Country	Number of the Slovak Armed Forces Members
UN		
UNFICYP (United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus)	Cyprus	242
UNTSO (United Nations Truce Supervision Organization)	Syria, Israel	2
NATO		
RS (Resolute Support)	Islamic Republic of Afghanistan	36
NMI (Nato Mission in Iraq)	Iraq	7
eFP (Enhanced Forward Presence)	Latvia	152
EU		
EUFOR Althea (European Union Force Althea)	Bosnia and Herzegovina	42
EUMM (European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia)	Georgia	1

V.

AUTHORS

AUTHORS

Tomáš Čížik is director of the Bratislava based think-tank Centre for European and North Atlantic Affairs (CENAA). He obtained his MA degree in European Studies from the Faculty of Social and Economic Studies at Comenius University. He is the author of many articles on hybrid and information warfare and is the editor of *Information warfare – new security challenges for Europe*. He attended the US Department of State's Study of the United States Institutes 2018 (SUSI) Exchange Program at the University of Delaware on national security policymaking. (cizik@cenaa.org)

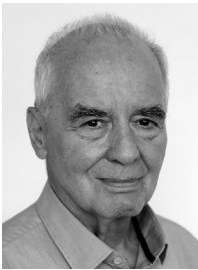


Zuzana Gabrižová is the editor-in-chief of EURACTIV Slovensko – the Slovak edition of the pan-European online media outlet EURACTIV, covering EU policies and the Slovak context. She has worked in EU related news and policy reporting since 2007. She is chairwoman of EuroPolicy – an NGO focusing on expert publications and stakeholder/public events on EU policies and legislation. She writes op-eds for various Slovak media and academic publications on an ad hoc basis. She has also been involved in various research and media projects. She holds an MA degree in international relations and diplomacy. (gabrizova@euractiv.sk)





Miroslav Lajčák began his professional career when he joined the Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry in 1988. He was ambassador to Japan between 1994 and 1998, and later ambassador to Belgrade, and accredited to Macedonia and Albania, between 2001 and 2005. Before becoming Slovak Foreign Minister in January 2009, he served in the capacity of High Representative and EU Special Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina from July 2007 to March 2009. He was the mediator and personal representative of the EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana, overseeing Montenegro's referendum in 2006. In 2010–2012, he served as Managing Director for Europe and Central Asia for the European Union's External Action Service. Since 2012, he has served as Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic. On May 31, 2017, the General Assembly of the United Nations elected Miroslav Lajčák as President of its 72nd session, running from September 2017 to September 2018. (kami@mzv.sk)



Július Lőrincz has been working as a professional journalist for over forty years. In the 1970s the focus of his interest was Yugoslavia, and especially during the crisis years of the 1990s. He is the author and co-author of numerous interviews with important political figures in the region published in the newspaper *Pravda*. In 2002–2005, he worked for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic at the Slovak Embassy in Zagreb. He has worked with various non-governmental organizations for many years, especially in relation to the Western Balkans.



Juraj Marušiak is a senior research fellow at the Institute of Political Science, the Slovak Academy of Sciences. His research is focused on the twentieth-century history of Slovakia and on issues in international relations in the Central and Eastern European region since 1989. His main research areas are the V4 countries, Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova. He is the author of *Slovak Literature and Power in the second half of the 1950s* (Brno 2001) and co-author of *The (Dis)integration Power of Central European Nationalism: A Study of the Visegrad Group Countries* (Bratislava 2015, together with Mateusz Gniazdowski and Ivan Halász). Since 2013 he has been a member of the Presidium of the Slovak Academy of Sciences. (marusiak@up.upsav.sk)

Tomáš Strážay is a senior fellow at the Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association, where he leads the Central and Southeastern Europe program. His research focuses on regional cooperation in Central Europe, bilateral cooperation between Slovakia and her neighbors and EU enlargement. He is also a co-founder of Think Visegrad – a V4 Think Tank Platform – and co-editor of *International Issues & Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs* quarterly. He obtained his PhD from the Institute of Political Studies at the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw. (strazay@sfpa.sk)



Pavol Szalai works as an analyst and editor at EURACTIV Slovensko – the Slovak edition of the pan-European online media outlet EURACTIV. His focus is on European energy and climate policies. He has previously worked at Electricité de France, the European Commission, and the Slovak Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs. He holds Masters degrees in Political Studies from Comenius University in Bratislava and from Sciences Po in Paris. He worked with RC SFPA from 2006–2008. (szalai@euractiv.sk)



Jakub Šimek studied international relations at the University of Economics in Bratislava. Since 2007 he has worked at the Pontis Foundation in development cooperation and global education. He has implemented four educational projects in Kenya supported by SlovakAid, and cofounded Sote Hub in Voi town, and assisted 12 secondary schools in running Sote ICT Clubs and student startups. He served on the board of the Slovak NDGO Platform where he also provided input for the Agenda 2030 strategy for the external environment, and also for Slovakia's national vision and strategy up to 2030. (jakub.simek@pontisfoundation.sk)



Martin Vlachynský is an analyst at the Institute of Economic and Social Studies. He graduated with a degree in Economic Policy from the Faculty of Economics and Administration, Masaryk University, and a degree in Economics, Management and International Relations from the Graduate Business School, Aberdeen University. After several years in the private sector he joined INESS where he has been since 2012. His main focus is on economic competitiveness, the business environment, European economic policies and the energy sector. He is currently head of Top20, a project for advocating policy reforms to improve the competitiveness of the Slovak economy. (martin.vlachynsky@iness.sk)



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- contributes to the fostering of the expert discourse on international relations and foreign policy of the Slovak Republic;
- creates a favorable environment for the growth of the new generation of the Slovak experts in the field of international relations; and
- stimulates the interest of wider Slovak public in the global events as well as a deeper understanding of the significance of foreign policy and its link to the domestic policy.

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