



REPORT

**OF THE SLOVAK PRESIDENCY OF THE VISEGRAD
GROUP**

JULY 2014 – JUNE 2015



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INTRODUCTION

In the period from 1st July 2014 to 30th June 2015, the Slovak Republic was chairing the Visegrad Group (V4) for the fourth time¹. The Slovak Presidency in the regional group took place at a time when V4 partners commemorated the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Iron Curtain along with 10 years of accession of V4 countries to the European Union and the 10th jubilee of Slovakia's entry into NATO. These anniversaries were accompanied by several events under the auspices of the Slovak Presidency.

The Slovak Government in the last twelve months responsibly fulfilled the priorities set out in **the Programme of the Slovak Presidency of the Visegrad Group**², which reflected the current state of play of mutual cooperation, with an emphasis on sectoral dimensions and the most important European policies. Maintaining continuity in the issues of energy security, transport infrastructure, defence cooperation and foreign policy were among the top priorities of the Slovak Presidency with the ambition of making progress in long-term strategic projects, which have been successfully fulfilled by the V4.

In cooperation with other central government bodies, **the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic**, as the main sponsor and coordinator of the V4 Presidency, fulfilled the priorities identified in the Presidency programme.

The chosen motto, "*Dynamic Visegrad for Europe and Beyond*" emphasized the interest of the Slovak Presidency in strengthening the competitiveness and economic growth of the region as a whole. A significant number of events that have been successfully accomplished is a confirmation of an active approach to this objective. Events at political and expert levels in V4 format together with the increasingly sought-after **V4 + format** contributed to the strengthening of internal cohesion and the role of the Visegrad Group in the European and global community. In the extended format, regular meetings were held with countries of priority interest to V4 such as the Western Balkans, countries of Eastern Partnership and the Nordic and Baltic countries (NB8), as well as strategic partners from the European Union and the European Neighbourhood (Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Turkey and Switzerland) and other global partners (the US, Japan and Republic of Korea).

The Slovak Presidency flexibly responded to foreign policy developments. In particular, developments in Ukraine demanded prompt and increased coordination between the V4 countries. Slovakia during its Presidency strengthened the coordination of assistance to our eastern neighbour and has initiated a new project called "**V4 Roadshow in Ukraine**" that focuses on sharing transformation experiences of V4 countries.

Specific results were achieved by the Slovak Presidency in sectoral policies. Increased attention was paid to energy security. The Slovak Republic initiated an elaboration of a draft joint risk assessment in the field of gas supply. This document is to form the basis for a joint regional prevention plan.

Tangible progress in the V4 cooperation has been made in the field of defense. Several strategic documents were adopted, such as the **Action Plan of the Visegrad Group Defense Cooperation, the V4 Training and Exercise Strategy** and the **Technical Agreement on the establishment of the V4 Battle Group**, which will be on standby during the first half of 2016. Cross-border operations for the joint protection of the Central European airspace has been introduced as a new issue on the agenda of defence cooperation by the Slovak Presidency.

¹ V4 cooperation has been functioning since 1999 on the basis of annual presidencies always beginning on 1 July and ending on 30 June of the following year.

² The Slovak Government approved the Program of the Slovak Presidency of the Visegrad Group for the period 1 July 2014 - 30 June 2015 on June 4, 2014.. Subsequently, the program has formally been reviewed by the Prime Ministers of the Visegrad Group at the summit in Budapest on 24 June, 2014.

In the field of infrastructure, the long-term dominant issue remains the completion of the regional road infrastructure in the context of trans-European transport networks. The Slovak Presidency continued to coordinate the activities with the recently established **High Level Group** on transport interconnections.

The advancement of cooperation in the areas with economic growth potential, such as the digital agenda, promoting innovation and start-ups, gained a positive feedback. These issues have proven to be highly promising, not only for the Visegrad Group itself but also in cooperation with third parties. During the Slovak Presidency, a number of joint presentations of V4 start-up companies were held abroad. In order to maintain the activities of the V4 countries in the field of digital agenda in the future, the Slovak Presidency initiated a new working group for innovation (**V4 Innovation Task Force**). One of the results of the newly established working group was the concept of a possible joint V4 platform in Silicon Valley. The action in the area of innovations was also highlighted by signing the **Agreement on the Visegrad Patent Institute** (26th February 2015 in Bratislava), as an international authority that will contribute to the intensification of patenting activities in Central Europe.

The Slovak Presidency made use of the **enlarged V4 + format**, which makes it possible to communicate flexibly and to develop cooperation with third partners. During the Slovak Presidency, the extended format was used for **24 high-level meetings** and for almost **50 expert negotiations**.

The Slovak Presidency continued with the well-proven format of regular meetings of Prime Ministers before the European Councils, in order to coordinate common positions. Particular attention was paid to the effective coordination of various European issues before the meetings of different EU Councils Consultations on a regular basis before the meetings were introduced. The voice of the V4 countries was reflected in important European issues, for example the Climate and Energy Package, Energy Union, the Digital Single Market, the Eastern Partnership or migration. The Visegrad Group, as an integral part of the EU has treated these issues sensitively as a constructive partner within the EU.

Slovakia was also proactive in building public awareness on the V4. The cooperation between public television and radio of the V4 countries was highlighted by the **Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation of Public Service Media Organizations of the Countries of the Visegrad Group in the Field of Media** signed on 18th June 2015 in Bratislava. In February 2015, the Slovak public broadcaster aired an animated promotional campaign video produced on the occasion of the V4 Presidency. The Slovak Presidency was the main coordinator of the 3rd edition of **the Visegrad Bicycle Race in May 2015**.

In line with the chosen motto, the Slovak Republic has brought new dynamics to the mutual cooperation between the V4 countries. The Presidency was a good opportunity to demonstrate a positive approach of Slovakia towards regional cooperation. Slovakia leaves the Visegrad group vigorous, more vital and more respected, with clear objectives and specific results. From 1st July 2015, the Presidency was taken over by the Czech Republic. The Czech Presidency expressed its support and interest in a number of projects launched during the Slovak Presidency. Success in initiating joint projects that largely exceed the annual presidential period usually depends on the quality of dialogue and cooperation between the V4 partners, as well as on the current political will without which the implementation of the priorities of the Presidency would not be possible.

V4 coordination of European issues

The Slovak Presidency based the intensive coordination of positions in European affairs on the successful practice used during the previous Hungarian Presidency. With the aim to make the V4 coordination more efficient, a new matrix of the **V4 coordination procedure** has been put forward by the Slovak Presidency defining various preparatory stages before each European Council. The Slovak Presidency organized regular coordination meetings before each of the nine meetings of the General Affairs Council and before each of the seven meetings of the European Council. Negotiations about the new European institutional framework of the European institutions were one of the key areas where the Slovak diplomacy proved to successfully strengthen the voice of the V4. Former Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk became the newly elected President of the European Council.

An important achievement of the V4 was also a more balanced **climate and energy policy framework** adopted at the European Council in October 2014, which takes into account the distinct characteristics of the V4 countries. The outcome of discussions on the need for investments in Europe and the need to efficiently use the EU funds is another example.

Similarly, the Slovak Presidency managed to define a common position of the V4 on the Energy Union, Digital Single Market and other current issues. Several elements of V4 positions have become a part of the conclusions of the European Council and other initiatives of the European Commission.

The Slovak Presidency promptly responded to the development of foreign policy events and to the need to address the issues of migration, which dominated the agenda in the second half of the Slovak Presidency. For this reason, Slovakia organized several coordination meetings (at the level of Prime Ministers, Foreign Ministers, as well as consultations at the working level). The negotiations resulted in a common position and declaration of V4 countries in accentuating the voluntary principle in relation to the introduction of mandatory migration quotas. The Visegrad Group's principal stance as reflected in the conclusions of the European Council (25th to 26th June 2015) is a proof of a strong and respected voice of the V4 in the EU, and this fact can be included among the positive results of the Slovak Presidency.

Slovakia gained recognition for its activities from its V4 partners, EU institutions, but also from other countries. The current Czech Presidency of the V4 has announced interest in carrying forward a number of initiatives launched during the Slovak Presidency.

Eastern Partnership

Due to the external factors, the Slovak Presidency was to a great extent influenced by the events in Ukraine. Slovakia flexibly reacted to the situation of our eastern neighbour and our main aim was to streamline the coordination of V4 activities towards Ukraine. On December 16, 2014 a joint visit of the Foreign Ministers of the V4 countries was held, during which the Ministers confirmed their dedication to provide practical help to pass on the V4 experience of reforms and integration processes. The Slovak Presidency also initiated a new project, "**V4 Roadshow in Ukraine**" comprised of a series of roundtable meetings with various Ukrainian stakeholders, focusing on different areas of the reform agenda. The partners agreed with a division of labor to be applied in accordance with specific topics. In April 2015, the first joint event between V4 and Ukraine on the subject of decentralization and public administration reform was held in Chernihiv under the auspices of Poland. The following events focusing on the improvement of the efficiency in the energy sector had to be postponed due to insufficient participation of the Ukrainian side. In the following period,

roundtable meetings should be also implemented in the field of education (leader the Czech Republic) and support to the small and medium-sized enterprise (Hungary).

In providing assistance to Ukraine, V4 countries promptly responded through the **International Visegrad Fund**, which has increased the funds in support of the mobility of civil servants, scholarships and grants. In 2014 the IVF allocated about 1.240 million EUR to programs for Ukraine.

From 14th to 15th May 2015, the Slovak Presidency held a **regular meeting of Foreign Ministers of the V4 and Eastern Partnership**. The guests of the event were the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Latvia (EU Presidency), Sweden, Romania, the Vice-President of the European Commission and EU High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy Affairs *Federica Mogherini* and EU Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy *Johannes Hahn*. The meeting, which took place just a week before the Eastern Partnership Summit in Riga, gave the ministers a chance to discuss the preparation process for the EU summit. V4 countries adopted the Joint Statement on the Eastern Partnership, sharing their ambitious attitude to the Association Agenda and the need for reforms as an important part of the modernization process in partner countries.

Cooperation between the V4 and Eastern Partnership was supported by **a meeting of Ministers responsible for Youth** (22th June 2015, Bratislava), which resulted in adopting the Memorandum of Cooperation in the Field of Youth.

Mutual cooperation has deepened thanks to various expert meetings aimed at exchanging the experience and know-how during the Slovak Presidency.

Western Balkans

From 30th to 31st October 2014, the **6th Ministerial meeting of the V4 countries and the Western Balkans** was held in Bratislava. The Ministerial meeting was also attended by the Vice-President of the European Commission and the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, *Federica Mogherini*, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Austria, *Sebastian Kurz* and Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation, *Goran Svilanovic*.

The V4 countries expressed their full support for the integration of Balkan countries into the EU and NATO in the medium term. The Balkan partners perceive V4 as a model of successful regional cooperation and it was in Bratislava where they consensually adopted the decision to create a joint regional structure to support citizen action along the lines of the International Visegrad Fund. The efforts to establish a **Western Balkan Fund** based in Tirana, Albania, were later on completed by signing the founding treaty during the meeting of Foreign Ministers of the V4 countries and the Western Balkans in November 2015 in Prague.

The Slovak Presidency also prepared a seminar within the project "**Experts Network for the Western Balkans**" (13th to 15th October 2014, Omšenie) focusing on judicial training. By organizing the second **Good Governance Forum**, V4 expressed support to the Western Balkans and the Eastern Partnership countries, focusing on public administration reforms in these countries. The event was organized by the Ministry of Interior, in cooperation with the Parliamentary Committee for Public Administration and Regional Development. The event was attended by experts from V4, the Western Balkans, Eastern Partnership, members of parliamentary committees for public administration of V4 countries, as well as by the Representative of the UK Foreign Office, who presented the activities of the newly created British Good Governance Fund, aimed at promoting the transformation and good governance in the countries of the Balkans and the Eastern Partnership.

V4+ format

The Slovak Presidency organized two **Summits of V4 Prime Ministers** in enlarged formats. On 9th December 2014, Bratislava hosted a meeting with the President of the Swiss Confederation, *Didier Burkhalter*, which paved the way to further strengthening of mutual cooperation between the Visegrad countries and Switzerland. The V4 countries appreciated the contribution of Switzerland to finance projects of the International Visegrad Fond in the Eastern Partnership. The outcome of the summit was the **Joint Statement of the Meeting of the Prime Ministers of the Visegrad Group and the President of the Swiss Confederation**. The Bratislava Declaration of Visegrad Group Heads of Government on Deepening V4 Defense Cooperation has been adopted as well.

The end-of Presidency **summit of V4 Prime Ministers** (19th June 2015, Bratislava) was attended by the President of the French Republic, *Francois Hollande*, as a guest of honour. The main topics discussed were the preparation for the 21st World Climate Conference in December 2015 in Paris, Common Security and Defence Policy within the EU, migration, as well as the promotion of economic growth and fighting unemployment. The summit resulted in adopting *The Joint Statement of the Summit of the Heads of Government of the Visegrad Group, The Press Statement on the Occasion of the Summit of the Heads of Government of the Visegrad Group and the President of the French Republic*, as well as *The Bratislava Declaration of Visegrad Group Heads of Government on Deepening V4 Defence Cooperation*.

V4 Heads of States met with the Presidents of Ukraine and Germany (16th November 2014, Bratislava). Eight meetings were held at the level of Foreign Ministers in the V4 + format. On 17th July 2014, **the first ever official meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the V4 countries and the Republic of Korea was held in Bratislava**. There was a financial contribution from the Korean side, in the amount of 336,000 EUR to support seven projects of the International Visegrad Fund with the Western Balkans as a focus area. The Korean side expressed its interest in closer cooperation, including meetings at expert level under new program to exchange transformation know-how (*Knowledge Sharing Program*).

On 30th October 2014, Bratislava held a meeting of Foreign Ministers, with their British partner, *Phillip Hammond*. The cooperation of the Visegrad Group and the United Kingdom continued on the level of expert consultations on selected topics, including energy, innovation policy and the trade agreement between the EU and USA (TTIP).

In light of the developments in Ukraine, the Slovak Presidency initiated a joint **visit of the V4 Foreign Ministers in Kiev** (16th December 2014), where talks were held with the top leaders of Ukraine.

From 12th to 13th March 2015, the 3rd **meeting of Foreign Ministers of V4 with the Nordic and Baltic countries (NB8)** took place in High Tatras. The main topics of the meeting were energy security, the EU's neighborhood policy, Ukraine and the fight against terrorism. Vice President of the EC, Maroš Šefčovič, was the special guest at this meeting.

Regular dialogue between the V4 countries and the **Federal Republic of Germany** continued with the Foreign Ministers' meeting on 23rd March 2015 in Bratislava. The main topic of the discussion was the developments in Ukraine and the Eastern Partnership in the context of the EU summit in Riga. Ministers did not avoid the question of integration perspectives of the Western Balkan countries in the EU, energy security and climate policy. The German side expressed its interest in working with the V4 on activities related to Ukraine.

During the NATO ministerial meeting on 12th May 2015 in Antalya, Turkey, the V4 Foreign Ministers met for separate talks with their **Turkish partner, Murat Çavuşoğlu**.

V4 cooperation development assistance (ODA)

During its Presidency, the Slovak Republic continued its coordination of the V4 countries in the field of development cooperation, especially the exchange of information, coordination of common positions in shaping the EU's development policy (regular informal meetings before the meeting of the development segment of the Foreign Affairs Council and building public awareness. At the same time, ways of joint implementation of various development projects were being searched.

V4 cooperation has been extended to the area of humanitarian assistance and coordination of development cooperation with Ukraine. As a result, relief supplies from Hungary and Slovakia were transported to Ukraine on the occasion of the visit made by V4 Ministers at the end of 2014.

Another successful example was the submission of the joint V4 activities to promote public awareness of the **European Year for Development (EYD) in 2015** – comprising a photo competition and an art contest, followed by a mobile exhibition and other accompanying activities. These activities were co-financed by the European Commission.

On the occasion of the **International Conference on Development and Democracy** (15th October 2014) a round table entitled “Innovation for development” was organized under the auspice of the Ministry of Finance. The roundtable dealt with exploiting innovations in development cooperation from the perspective of international organizations and the individual (new) donors, with emphasis on the V4 countries. Based on the conclusions of the roundtable, the Slovak Ministry of Finance defined innovation as a cornerstone of its development agenda and started to prepare two projects (so-called competition "*Innovation Challenge*" and sharing know-how on economic transformation of Slovakia).

V4 and consular cooperation

Consular meetings took place during the Slovak Presidency covering substantial and operational cooperation and building on the EU agenda. Its importance is growing especially in cases of emergencies such as natural disasters, terrorist attacks, epidemics or mass traffic accidents. This was the case in the recent period, for example, after the earthquake in Nepal in early May 2015, after the June terrorist attack in the Tunisian resort of SÚsa or after the deterioration of the security situation in Libya and Yemen. V4 Embassies closely cooperate in exchanging information, including consultation on travel advice for its citizens. In addition, the embassies strengthened their capacities to reach out to citizens, especially when their repatriation becomes necessary. On 17th June 2015, the meeting of the V4 Consular was held in Bratislava, assessing options for further development of cooperation and the current challenges in the future use of outsourcing and representation in visa procedures, activities of PS VISA and COCON, amendment of the Visa Code. During Slovakia's Presidency, another agreements on representation in visa procedures between Slovakia and the Czech Republic and with Hungary were concluded.

SECTORIAL COOPERATION

DIGITAL AGENDA

As a first phase, the Slovak Presidency focused mainly on promoting the internationalization of the V4 innovative business environment, through presentations of V4 start-ups across Europe, but also in the USA. With the help of V4 diplomatic representations in several countries (the UK, Ireland, Netherlands, USA), events were held to introduce start-ups and linking them with potential investors abroad. **The pilot project in Silicon Valley, We4Startups** was launched with the support of the International Visegrad Fund. In the long

run, such cooperation could lead to a common platform of V4 countries in Silicon Valley for innovative start-up companies. Under the responsibility of the Slovak Finance Ministry, an ad hoc working group called "*V4 Innovation Task Force*" was established in November 2014. A memorandum of understanding was elaborated by the newly created working group and its signing is expected under the Czech Presidency. Formalized cooperation in promoting startups and innovation has also been supported by the V4 Prime Ministers in the final declaration of the Visegrad Group summit.

In the second phase, the Slovak Presidency focused on the definition of common priorities in the common framework of the EU Digital Single Market. The priorities of the Visegrad Group introduced on March 13, 2015 serve as a common starting point in forming a V4 position on the individual elements of the EU Strategy. Both Bulgaria and Romania subscribed to the V4 priorities.

The inclusion of the digital agenda to the long-term priorities of the V4 region has been supported. Future Presidencies can then build on already implemented activities and will in particular look into the area of digital learning, improving the regulatory environment for cross-border e-commerce, supporting research and development of digital technologies.

The Slovak V4 Presidency also initiated a discussion on the issue of cyber security in the context of strategic and legislative documents. Slovakia has also been active within the "*Central European Cyber Security Platform*", where it promoted the development of operational cooperation between bodies responsible for cyber security training and information sharing.

DEFENCE

Specific meetings were held between the **Defence Ministers** (April 2015), **Chiefs of Defence** (June 2015), **MoD State Secretaries in the Senior Body format** (December 2014, April 2015), National Armaments Directors (December 2014, June-July 2015) and Political Directors (September 2014, February 2015, April 2015 and June 2015). The events were supported by several meetings at expert level.

The main ambition of the Slovak Presidency was to build on past achievements and to set standards and maintain continuity in cooperation of the Visegrad Group.

Implementing the document "Long-term Vision" and "the Framework document for cooperation in defence planning" V4 Defence Ministers on 23rd April 2015 in Tomášov approved the **Action Plan of the Visegrad Group Defence and the V4 Training and Exercise Strategy**.

In accordance with the "Long-term vision", new forms of defence cooperation were established. In order to identify the most promising areas of further joint projects a group of V4 experts elaborated the Defence Planning Integrated matrix of defence capabilities of V4 countries. On this basis, 5 most promising areas for future cooperation in the field of defence were highlighted (*nuclear, chemical and biological protection; outposts air inciters, Joint Logistics Support Group; training and education; tactical training special forces*). Potential also exists in the framework of a new generation of combat vehicles.

Preparations continued successfully in establishing **the V4 EU Battlegroup (V4 EU BG)**, the certification exercise *Common Challenge* (from 14th to 20th November, 2015) related to large-scale NATO exercise *Trident Juncture* (from 28th September to 6th November 2015) was instrumental in achieving this goal. From 14th to 16th April 2015, Bratislava hosted the 8th planning conference to build V4 EU BG. The main objective was to prepare V4 multinational battle unit for being operational in the first semester of 2016. The joint battle group at the same time lays the foundation for the establishment of a permanent V4 modular unit to be used both in operations and missions of NATO and EU, as well as for the needs of any domestic crisis management. In this context, the idea of a possible V4 EU

BG 2019 has also been raised gaining preliminary support by the V4 countries. Further V4 joint battle groups would undoubtedly contribute to strengthening the ties between the armed forces of the V4 countries, promoting their interoperability. The visibility of the V4 brand would be increased in the eyes of the Allies.

Under the auspices of the Slovak Presidency in cooperation with the international Advisory Team for Security Sector Reform (ISSA), a three-day workshop for V4 countries and Ukraine on security sector reform was organized (from 22nd to 25th April 2015, Bratislava). The aim of the event was to provide experts from V4 and Ukraine with knowledge on reform processes and management of security institutions (improving efficiency and transparency).

A new topic that has been brought in by the Slovak Presidency, is cooperation in the field of cross-border operations focusing on joint protection of airspace.

In the area of education, the rectors of military academies of V4 countries agreed on a common educational platform called *Visegrad Group Military Education Platform* (VIGMILEP). The Armed Forces Academy of Milan Rastislav Štefánik was appointed as a framework institution for the program accreditation within the Allied Command Transformation (ACT).

The Slovak Presidency focused on the coordination of positions on issues related to NATO and the EU. During the meeting of the V4 Prime Ministers, the Bratislava Declaration of the Visegrad Group Heads of Government for a Stronger CSDP was adopted, aimed at strengthening regional cooperation in the field of security and defence in the context of the European Council meeting in June 2015. The V4 countries committed themselves to a closer cooperation in the revision of the European Security Strategy.

ECONOMY

Energy

The cooperation of the Visegrad Group in the energy sector is an extremely important part of their economic policy and a natural component of our foreign activities. Regional cooperation in the energy sector is a key priority in the context of recent developments that affect the security of natural gas supplies in Central Europe.

The Slovak Presidency focused on the following issues: *energy security, energy market integration, the development of infrastructure projects, climate and energy policy for the period between 2020 - 2030 and cooperation in the nuclear field*. In the period of twelve months, it organized a series of high level events, among others **meetings of V4 ministers responsible for Energy** (November 23, 2014, Bratislava) and **heads of delegations on the sidelines of the meeting of EU Energy Ministers** (7th June 2015, Luxemburg). In addition, there were working-level **discussions of the Working Group on Energy and the V4 Forum for Gas Market Integration** (18th September 2014, 19th February 2015). Coordination meetings before the EU Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council (section Energy) were organized. There was a continued coordination at the level of attaché for energy within the EU representation of the V4 countries in Brussels.

Thanks to the regular co-ordination V4 managed to promote common positions on the climate and energy policy objectives for 2030 and energy security being the main topics of the European Council in the autumn of 2014. These issues were also discussed on the occasion of a meeting of V4 ministers responsible for energy (November 2014), which was held in the framework of the Central European Energy Conference (CEEC) in Bratislava.

Given the high vulnerability of our region in terms of security of energy supply, Slovakia at the very beginning of its Presidency coordinated and submitted a joint position to the European Commission, in connection with the preparation of stress tests on the security of

gas supply. Subsequently, the V4 Forum for Gas Market Integration launched a joint procedure for preparing the **V4 Joint Preventive and Emergency Action Plan** for the gas sector. As a first step, Slovakia submitted a draft document, a joint risk assessment of the V4 countries in the field of gas supply, which was presented at the meeting of V4 ministers responsible for energy before the TTE Council in Luxembourg (7th June 2015). Works on finalizing the joint preventive and emergency plans for gas supply will for their complexity and high relevance to the Visegrad region continue during the current Czech Presidency.

An important topic that resonated in the second half of the Slovak Presidency was the new concept of the Energy Union and its action plan. Slovakia held a detailed exchange of views within the V4, which resulted in a common position as presented by the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia at the March EU Energy Council in Brussels. A balanced approach was shaped to achieve EU energy policy objectives such as safety, competitiveness and sustainability, preserving the sovereignty of the countries in the choice of energy mix in accordance with national conditions and in the choice of technologies for low carbon energy system, the need to develop an analysis of the impact on energy prices and costs for industry and households, as well as measures to protect vulnerable customers. In this context, it has been emphasized that in line with the principle of subsidiarity and technological neutrality, nuclear energy is essential from the perspective of emission reduction.

The Slovak Presidency also advocated speeding up of the completion of the missing infrastructure needed for the diversification of resources, while respecting the utilization of existing transportation routes. It focused mainly on North-South Gas Corridor projects, which including the Slovakia - Hungary gas interconnector which was put into commercial operation by the end of our V4 Presidency. There have also been intensified activities related to the preparation of the Slovakia-Poland interconnection as a part of this strategic corridor.

The Slovak Presidency also paid attention to the situation of gas supply to Ukraine. By creating a reverse connection Vojany – Uzhgorod, the Slovak transmission operator with the support of the Slovak Government has contributed to the energy security of Ukraine and the V4 region.

Industrial policy and the internal market

In the field of industrial property, the Slovak Presidency successfully fulfilled both its priorities (i.e. the stamp package at the level of EU legislation and the establishment of a joint patent institute). The revision of the regulation on the Community trade mark and the revision of the regulation on approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to trade marks, were factually culminated during Latvia's presidency in the EU Council by successful completion of the trialogue, which resulted in a compromise. Even if the documents reflect the views of many stakeholders, the interests of the Visegrad Group were respected.

An important progress during the Slovak Presidency has been achieved with regard to the Visegrad Patent Institute. After expert level discussions in 2013 and 2014, the **Agreement on the Visegrad Patent Institute** (VPI) was signed on February 26, 2015 in Bratislava. The new institution will act as International Searching Authority (ISA) and International Preliminary Examining Authority (IPEA) under the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT). Currently, only 18 bodies of this type are functioning worldwide, of which only six are in Europe. Entering this elite club, the Visegrad Patent Institute will be able to provide patent services of the highest quality for citizens of V4 countries.

TRANSPORT AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In total, 16 events in the transport sector were held during the Slovak Presidency. During the first half (July-December 2014) five expert meetings and one high level were held. In the second half (January-June 2015) four high-level events (one at ministerial level and 3 at

the level of state secretaries) were organized. In the second half of the Presidency, experts from different fields were deliberating on five occasions.

Activities of the **High Level Working on Transport Connections** between Visegrad Group countries continued, as well as mutual coordination and consultations on the V4 positions before the EU Transportation, Telecommunications and Energy Council (transport section) in Milan, Brussels and Luxembourg.

The meeting of Transport Ministers of the V4 countries and Austria, with the participation of Vice-President of the European Commission and Commissioner for Energy Union, *Maroš Šefčovič*, and Commissioner for Transport, *Violeta Bulc* (25th March to 26th March 2015) was held while traveling in a special train on the route Bratislava - Žilina. The city of Nové Mesto nad Váhom was presented as an example of using EU funds for developing the transport infrastructure. The discussions focused on the issues of cross-border interconnections with an emphasis on the state of the rail network included in the TEN-T network in different countries as well as on the cooperation in the field of modernization, speed and quality of the TEN-T in the V4 region. During the meeting, the participants shared their experiences and obtained information on current topics relating to the transport infrastructure development and financing. *The Memorandum on cooperation of the Visegrad Group in the Development of Transport Infrastructure* for the promotion and development of the TEN-T networks in the region of Central Europe was signed and handed over to the EU Commissioner for Transport, *Violeta Bulc*.

The Slovak Presidency's attention was also focused on prospects of tourism development, in order to stimulate the discussion about the need to reach a higher quality in this area within the V4 countries. For this purpose, two meetings of State Secretaries from ministries responsible for tourism were held.

Regional development as a basis of economic prosperity was the main topic of the **meeting of State Secretaries of the V4 + Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia and Ukraine** (from 16th to 17th June 2015, Demänovská dolina). This meeting defined the common challenges of spatial planning and regional development, including strengthening competitiveness, cohesion and reducing disparities amongst V4 + 4, and has consequently highlighted significant potential for the Carpathian region and neighbouring regions, as well as to benefit from mutual cooperation based on synergy effects.

In the field of regional co-operation, Slovakia has extended the scope of V4 cooperation by the **Joint Forum of Visegrad Capitals and Regions** (from 9th to 10th June 2015, Bratislava) as a new platform for exchanging views and experience between representatives of the capitals and higher territorial administration units of the Visegrad Group.

EU COHESION POLICY

In the area of cohesion policy, the Slovak Presidency continued the mutual communication and exchange of experiences between V4 countries, Slovenia and Croatia, with particular emphasis on the preparation of a strategy for the 2014 – 2020 financial framework period. Two meetings were held at the expert level and one at high-level. Deliberations of **V4 ministers responsible for cohesion policy in the format V4 + Croatia and Slovenia** (25th May to 26th May 2015, Bratislava) took place to respond to current issues in relation to the conclusion of the programming period 2007-2013 as well as the implementation mechanism of the programming period 2014-2020, especially as regards its simplification and streamlining. The outcome of the meeting was a signed joint declaration. The Presidency on 6th to 7th November 2014 held an **expert level meeting of the V4 countries + Slovenia and Croatia** with the participation of representatives of the European Commission in Bratislava to discuss the status of the programming period 2007-2013, the process of preparing partnership agreements and programs for the programming period 2014-

2020 and plan for reducing the administrative burden for the beneficiaries, as well as on the functioning of the monitoring committees in the programming period 2014 - 2020 with the participation of representatives of the European Commission. An important part of the meeting was to prepare a common position regarding the Council's 6th Report on Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion, cohesion policy and the mid-term review of the Europe 2020 strategy, as well as the approval status of partner agreements and programs. This common position was subsequently presented at the General Affairs Council Meeting (19th November 2014, Brussels).

The November expert level session was followed by a meeting of the General Directors responsible for cohesion policy of V4 countries + Slovenia and Croatia (4th to 5th May 2015, Bratislava) which was enriched by a presentation of successful projects in the fields of energy and renewable energy, financed from EU structural funds. These are unique innovative projects, especially in the field of power generation.

FINANCE

During the Slovak Presidency, the **Finance Ministers of the V4 countries, Germany and Austria** met for a working lunch (2nd October 2014, Prague), at which they focused on tax issues (carousel transactions, the fight against tax havens and exchange of information in tax cooperation and the possibility of enhanced cooperation), recent developments in the EU, focusing on investment and structural reforms, taxation of lotteries, EU sanctions against Russia and their impact on Member States, as well as the experience of the audit of EU structural funds.

The fight against tax fraud and evasion

The main goals of the Slovak Presidency in relation to customs and taxation were taken into account by an international conference in the V4 + format organized by the Slovak Financial Directorate on the topic "***Working together to increase efficiency and competitiveness of the region***" (13th to 14th November 2014), attended by top officials from the field of customs tax administrations of the V4 countries, Croatia, Austria and Slovenia. The outcome of the conference is the **Joint Declaration** on the need to intensify mutual cooperation in customs and taxation. Within this priority, the V4 Working Group focusing on the area of excise duty on mineral oil held a session for the first time in an extended format V4 + Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Austria, Romania, Slovenia, Italy from November 3 to 5, 2014 in Bratislava. Stakeholders agreed that the most effective tool in the fight against criminal gangs and fuels-associated fraud is to intensify the mutual cooperation and to amend European legislation.

In June 2015, representatives of V4 Ministries of Finance and Tax Administrations met in Poland to present and discuss the exchange of experiences about legislative measures adopted to prevent tax evasion on VAT and the control measures to ensure financial administration in relation to control any subjects with risk potential.

Innovative and financial instruments

The exchange of experiences and the search for possible cooperation in the field of **financial instruments** embodied by the European structural and investment funds was also listed in the agenda of important issues to support. The **Tatra Summit Investment Forum** focused on financial instruments and their use in promoting access to investments by small and medium-sized enterprises or in other strategic areas generating income.

Cooperation on mutual protection of investments

V4 cooperation in the field of international agreements on promotion and reciprocal protection of investments was actively conducted at the expert level. There have been several expert discussions:

- As for the validity and applicability of bilateral investment agreements between EU Member States under the EU law (the issue of “intra EU BIT”), a meeting of the V4 countries together with Croatia, Latvia, Romania was held on 19th September 2014.
- In collaboration with the UK, the Slovak Presidency organized an expert meeting of V4 + UK on 19th March 2015 in Bratislava to discuss future trade agreements (so called FTA-Free Trade Agreement), the arbitration mechanisms (Investor State Dispute Settlements) and the issues related to the common commercial policy.

The financial market

The Slovak Presidency initiated the establishment of a common **discussion platform** at the level of general directorates for financial markets, which is intended to meet on a regular basis (min. two times a year). The main ambition is to strengthen communication and to coordinate positions and national interests, in order to gain a stronger bargaining position at the EU level, while other meetings are held at lower levels as well.

During the Slovak Presidency, two **meetings of General Directors for the financial markets** (28th November 2014 and 3rd June 2015) were held. The range of topics discussed included consumer protection in the financial market, implementation of the *EU Bank Recovery and Resolution Directive (BRRD) Banking Structural Reform*, the capital markets union, increasing the efficiency of information exchange and mutual positions primarily in the banking and capital markets union.

Export credits

In the field of supporting state export credits well-established cooperation of V4 countries continued. Slovakia focused on the following **key points**:

- **V4 consultation on** open issues in the framework of officially supported export credits and formulation and implementation of a unified position at the EU and OECD levels. Currently, there is an internal process for preparing a common position of EU Member States, with the V4 countries unanimous in their opinion not to support a total ban on state export support for coal-fired power plants. Outputs of the EU Council on this issue is expected by the end of September 2015.
- **Fight against corruption** in the officially supported export credits in the *OECD Council Recommendation on Bribery and Officially Supported Export Credits*. The review on the recommendations of the OECD Council was postponed to 2016. V4 initial discussions on this issue took place in November 2015.
- **Due diligence process** of officially supported export credits and the environmental and social impacts (recommendation on common approaches to officially supported export credits, environmental and social due diligence process verification), which is in the final stage and its adoption is expected in September 2015.

Inclusion of the agenda of export credits by the Slovak Presidency helped to shape the common position and to promote the common interest of the V4 countries within relevant working groups and the OECD.

CULTURE

During the Slovak Presidency, long-term Visegrad cultural projects continued. The fifth **colloquium of library and information experts V4 + Croatia, Romania, Russia and**

Serbia took place in Bratislava from 8th to 9th June 2015. The main topic of the colloquium were the libraries in the V4 and prospects for their further development until 2020.

The V4 Working Group on Cultural Heritage organized between 13th to 19th July 2014 the Summer School on municipality administration and cultural heritage, which was dedicated to the town of Banská Štiavnica and the legacy of the mining industry. Other events under the auspices of the Working Group was the 3rd Annual Heritage Forum of Central Europe (16th to 18th September 2015, Krakow), which focused on revitalization procedures, space center, the creative heritage sites and other topics related to historic urban environment, property and resistance of the towns.

V4 cooperation was established even in the performing arts with successful seminars on the evaluation of the use of EU funds in the cultural and creative industries.

Another contribution of the Slovak Presidency in the cultural field was the International Conference on Film heritage and digitalization. Digital restoration of movies from the V4 countries and their archiving were highlighted as a means of preserving film heritage. The Slovak Film Institute as the co-organizer of the 22nd International Film Festival Febiofest 2015 (20th to 26th March 2015) offered specialist audiences and the general public the opportunity to choose from restored movies originating from the V4 countries.

The Slovak Presidency effectively continued in the audiovisual cooperation. The V4 countries have agreed to prepare a joint call of film funds for the realization of co-production projects. Slovakia also initiated a project of organizing International master classes.

During the Slovak Presidency, **the 25th meeting of V4 Ministers of Culture** (18th June to 19th June 2015, Bratislava) was held, preceded by expert level negotiations. Discussions focused on cultural and national strategies and policies to promote creativity. Making the need for exchange of experiences was highlighted in a joint report and a joint communiqué. The ministers also approved the laureate of the International Visegrad Prize for 2016 - **International Theater Festival DEMOLUDY**.

AGRICULTURE

The Slovak Presidency organized two **joint meetings of Agriculture Ministers in the format of V4 + 3** (Bulgaria, Romania and Slovenia). The first ministerial meeting was held between 6th and 7th October 2014 in Beladice, focusing on the issue of organic farming, the impact of sanctions against the Russian Federation on V4 + 3 and promoting animal production. The second meeting at ministerial level was held on 18th May to 19th May 2015 in Bratislava. The main topics included the status of farmers in the food supply chain, the possible ways of simplifying the Common Agricultural Policy, as well as current developments in the **FOREST EUROPE** process in relation to the Seventh Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe. Outcomes of the ministerial meeting are joint documents (Joint Statement and Joint Declaration), the conclusions of the V4 + 3 were presented as a common position on the EU Council for Agriculture and Council for Fisheries (in November 2014 an opinion on the draft regulation on organic production and labeling organic products in June 2015 was presented in relation to the empowerment of farmers through the supply chain with regard to a legally binding agreement on forests in Europe).

INTERNAL AFFAIRS

Activities in the field of interior security of the Slovak Presidency focused primarily on police cooperation. Positively evaluated was the international conference on "**Synthetic drugs and new psychoactive substances - state and development of the drug scene in the member countries of V4**". Several expert meetings were organized by the Bureau of Border and Alien Police joined by partners from Ukraine.

The operational officers informed each other about the situation in the fight against illegal migration, organized smuggling and human trafficking, consulted joint cases and exchanged direct contacts for further cooperation. The Border services of V4 countries and Ukraine also developed a joint analytical report on illegal migration in 2014, the aim of which is to facilitate the V4 authorities taking joint action in the fight against illegal migration.

V4 priorities with regard to the EU agenda, as is traditionally the case, were coordinated within a broader format of the Salzburg Forum.

In the area of public administration, the Slovak Presidency continued with the initiative launched under the previous Hungarian Presidency - "**V4 Good Governance Forum**" - that aims at sharing V4 experience and know-how in the areas of good governance and public administration reforms with other countries in the European neighborhood. On 3rd and 4th June 2015, the international conference "**V4 Good Governance Forum**" took place in collaboration with the Committee for Public Administration of the Slovak National Council and the participation of experts and representatives of the V4 countries those of Western Balkans, Eastern Partnership and the UK. There was also a meeting of General Directors in the field of crisis management called "Prevention, preparedness, response and recovery in the territory of disasters caused by geophysical changes (cave-ins, landslides ...) - exchange of experience; the possibility of providing special modules for V4 bilateral cooperation".

In addition to the aforementioned events, there were activities at the level of the Fire and Rescue Corps, for example Slovak Championships in saving injured persons from crashed vehicles and in particular the **International conference FIRECO 2015**.

JUSTICE

During the **traditional meeting of V4 Justice Ministers**, which was enlarged by partners from Croatia and Slovenia (25th to 26th May 2015, Bratislava) the issues of efficiency of justice systems, evaluation of judges, insolvency law, the issue of letter-box security were addressed. The Ministers were also looking for a common position on the issue of the European Prosecutor's Office.

An expert-level **informal meeting on Civil Rights was conducted in the format of V4 + Croatia and Slovenia** during which Slovakia presented a joint position paper on the V4 judicial cooperation with Eastern Partnership countries. The document was presented by the V4 Justice Ministers at the meeting of Justice and Home Affairs and Eastern Partnership countries in Riga on 29th January 2015. Four informal deliberations of Counsellors for Justice and Home Affairs were held to prepare the positions to the draft regulation and positions in the field of commercial law.

The project "Network of Experts for the Western Balkans" was organized on 13th to 15th October 2014 in the premises of the Education Centre of the Judicial Academy in Omšenie. The event focused on judicial training and meeting the criteria of the rule of law and was attended by experts from V4 countries and the Western Balkans.

ENVIRONMENT

In the field of environment, the Slovak Presidency focused on topics that dominated the negotiations at the EU level as follows:

- **Climate Change** - the issue of international climate negotiations as well as the issue of energy and climate change framework until 2030;
- **Clean Air Package** and the directive on medium-sized combustion plants, as well as the proposal for a directive on the reduction of national emissions of certain air pollutants;
- **Waste Package** and in particular the legislative proposals, relating to the Waste Framework Directive, the Landfill Directive and the Directive on packaging and packaging waste and the problems of circulatory economy.

There were two meetings of the Environment Ministers during the Slovak Presidency:

- **On 29th to 30th September 2014 in Bratislava with the participation of representatives from Bulgaria and Romania.** The main topics discussed were climate change, clean air and waste. In order to create a platform to facilitate the process The informal discussions were enlarged by the representatives of France and Germany.
- **On 17th to 18th June 2015 the second meeting of V4 Ministers** was held in the High Tatras with the participation of US representatives and the business sector on the issue of circulatory economy, innovation, environmental technologies and eco-efficient economy. In addition to the political debate a discussion was held with representatives of the business sector, where accomplishments in the context of environmental protection and synergy with economic growth and industrial competitiveness were presented.

The result of both ministerial sessions was a joint statement. Ministerial meetings of the V4 before formal negotiations were also held regularly.

At the expert level, **deliberations were conducted on nature conservation** (24th April 2015, Bratislava) **and water issues** (29th April 2015, Bratislava. In the latter case, joint recommendations were finalized with the intention to submit them at the EU level.

HEALTH SERVICE

The key topics that resonated in the field of health policy were addressed to **the V4 Health Ministers + Croatia, Austria and Slovenia** at a meeting held on 29th to 30th October 2014 in Bratislava. Discussions covered functioning of the health systems in the countries involved (primary health care, restoring health infrastructure), European health trends in the context of structural funds and research (use of structural funds for the period 2014-2020, cooperation and development of the biomedical research and science) as well as European objectives in the field of health (regulation of medical devices, innovative drug prices, reexport of drugs, cross-border health threats, Ebola, and cross border health care).

At the expert level, there was a meeting at the Chief Public Health Officers (22nd to 23rd April 2015, Bratislava) to exchange experience on the problem of obesity and other non-communicable chronic diseases, preparedness of V4 to respond to highly virulent disease situations and monitoring the state of health of the Roma population in the V4 countries. A conference of the V4 + with other Central and Eastern European countries (27th to 28th May 2015, Bratislava) was organized to discuss the access to primary care reform, regional management of patient care, promoting health prevention, restoration of infrastructure, data management and research and innovation in healthcare.

SOCIAL AFFAIRS

In the field of employment and social affairs, the Slovak Presidency was building on the previous objectives to mitigate the impact of the economic and financial crisis, in particular with regard to **strengthening growth and increasing employment** as well as the implementation of measures to promote social inclusion.

To present the common interests and positions of the V4 countries, a working meeting of the **V4 Ministers responsible for Employment and Social Affairs** (28th April 2015, Oponice) was held. The main objective of the meeting was the situation in the labor market and in employment. In addition to sharing knowledge on concrete measures **to boost employment**, attention was also paid to the possibility of cooperation in reducing unemployment and improving living standards. The meeting briefly dealt with measures to combat illegal employment and undeclared work and measures to maintain the level of socio-economic cohesion.

On the margins of the Job Expo 2015 in Nitra (29th April 2015), a panel discussion "**Youth unemployment in V4 countries**" was held. Wider professional and laic public became familiar with the forthcoming intentions and activities implemented at international level in the field of youth unemployment, implementation of the project of the European Commission "Guarantees for the young" and re-introducing the dual education.

The international conference, "**Challenges of labor law in the context of maintaining and increasing employment in the V4 countries**" brought together on 26th February 2015 in Bratislava representatives of the V4 countries, experts from Austria, representatives of employers, business, professional, academic community and trade unions and NGOs.

In order to strengthen mutual communication and exchange of experiences between V4 countries in the specific area of gender policies, a professional colloquium entitled "**Gender equality in the V4 countries: Common challenges, shared solutions?**" was held on 25th November 2014 in Bratislava, which evaluated the current issue of promoting gender equality in employment, the possibilities for reconciling work and family life for women as well as to focus on the issue of protection from domestic violence and help for its victims.

EDUCATION AND YOUTH

The success of youth policies has been highlighted in **the Memorandum on promoting mutual cooperation between young people of the V4 and Eastern Partnership**³ signed by the **Ministers responsible for Youth** on 22nd June 2015 in Bratislava. Based on the common history, it is natural that the V4 countries can assist in the development of democratic processes in the countries of the Eastern Partnership. The aim of the Memorandum is to help in exchanging experiences and to know each other's culture and traditions. Alongside the ministerial meeting, there were regular seminars focusing on youth work, modern trends in youth work, the threat of abuse of modern technology to radicalizations of youth, modern approaches and the use of formal learning methods in youth work (22nd to 23rd June 2015, Bratislava).

Cooperation between the V4 and Eastern Partnership was supported at the expert level. The **seminar on Volunteerism** (8th to 9th October 2014, Prague), during which a preliminary agreement on the exchange of European Voluntary Service participants and training youth workers (21st to 27th June 2016) under the Erasmus + scheme was reached.

The Slovak Presidency built on the joint project of the V4 countries and organized the 21st meeting of the Steering Committee for sporting competitions of V4 countries called "**Olympic Hopes**", a consultative meeting of V4 experts and the wider region (27th to 28th November, 2014 Bratislava) to support promising athletes. Exchange of knowledge and experience with partners from the V4 countries, Lithuania and Austria, in the context of the forthcoming EU Presidency preparations, as well as improving coordination process between the V4 countries in promoting common interests and positions on the EU sport agenda resonated during expert consultations held between 26th and 28th May 2015 in Častá–Papiernička.

With regard to regional education, the Slovak Presidency carried out the conference "Education - the Key to Integration" (5th March , 2015) focusing on issues relating the the integration and inclusion of Roma, pre-school education for children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, compulsory school attendance and enrollment of students with mental disability. Between 18th and 19th June 2015, the 3rd **Annual international conference in the format of V4 + Germany, Austria** on the transformation of vocational education was carried out, resulting in the adoption of a joint declaration.

³ Memorandum on cooperation in the field of youth between the countries of the Visegrad Group and Eastern Partnership was not signed by Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan, however, will continue to continue cooperation in the format of V4 + Eastern Partnership countries.

PARLIAMENTARY DIMENSION

The Slovak Presidency followed up on the parliamentary dimension of the previous V4 Presidencies, during which it generally supported the interest in strengthening the dialogue at the level of national parliaments. 19th to 20th March, 2015 a **meeting of the Speakers of the V4 national parliaments** was held in Bratislava. The adoption of the Joint Declaration underlined the importance of inter-parliamentary cooperation and parliamentary diplomacy in multilateral fora at the EU level. Another important topic was the Digital Agenda – an element chosen by the Slovak Presidency as an area for expansion of mutual cooperation of V4 countries, and also as one of its priorities.

During the Slovak Presidency, a number of meetings of parliamentary committees were held as well. For the first time, there was a meeting of the **Committees on Economic Affairs of the V4 national Parliaments**, as well as a joint meeting of the **Foreign and Economic Affairs Committees** (24th to 25th February 2015, Bratislava). In February, there was a separate meeting of members of the **Foreign Affairs Committee** focusing on the geopolitical situation and security threats in the context of current developments in Ukraine, Russia and the Middle East. On 3rd to 4th June, 2015, at the conference "*V4 Good Governance Forum*" members of the V4 Committee for Public Administration and Regional Development met together. On a regular basis, the **European Affairs Committees** (14th to 16th October 2014, Hérnádvecse, 14th to 15th April 2015, Prague) also discussed a number of topics.

Annex No.1: Overview of selected joint documents and statements adopted under the Slovak V4 Presidency

- 1) Joint Statement of the Summit of the Heads of Government of the Visegrad Group (Bratislava, 19 June 2015)
- 2) Press Statement on the occasion of the Summit of Prime Ministers of the Visegrad Group (V4) and the President of the French Republic (Bratislava, 19 June 2015)
- 3) Joint Statement of the Meeting of the Prime Ministers of the Visegrad Group and the President of the Swiss Confederation (Bratislava, 9 December 2014)
- 4) Bratislava Declaration of Visegrad Group Heads of Government on Deepening V4 Defence Cooperation (Bratislava, 9 December 2014)
- 5) Bratislava Declaration of Visegrad Group Heads of Government for a stronger CSDP (Bratislava, June 2015)
- 6) Visegrad Group Joint Statement on the Western Balkans (Bratislava, 31 October 2014)
- 7) The Visegrad Group Joint Statement on the Eastern Partnership (Bratislava, 15 May 2015)
- 8) Co-Chairs' Statement Slovakia and Denmark. 3rd Meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Visegrad, Nordic and Baltic states (March 12th and 13th 2015, High Tatras)
- 9) Joint Statement of the Visegrad Group together with Ukraine (Kyiv, 16 December 2014)
- 10) The Joint statement of the Visegrad Group Foreign Ministers on Ukraine (30 October, 2014)
- 11) Joint Press Statement from the Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Visegrad Group and the Republic of Korea (17 July 2014)
- 12) Joint Communiqué of the Visegrad Group Ministers of Defence (Tomášov, 23 April 2015)
- 13) Memorandum of Cooperation of the Visegrad Group in Development of Transport Infrastructure (Žilina, 26 March 2015)
- 14) Joint Declaration on the Need of Enhancement of the Mutual Cooperation in Customs and Tax Areas (Bratislava, 13 – 14 November 2014)
- 15) Joint Statement of the Visegrad Group, Slovenia and Croatia (Bratislava, 26 May 2015)
- 16) Joint Statement of the 21st Meeting of the Ministers of Environment of the Visegrad Group Countries, the Republic of Bulgaria and Romania (Bratislava, 30 September 2014)
- 17) Joint Statement of the Ministers of Environment of the Visegrad Group Countries and the Representative of the United States (Tatranská Lomnica, 18 June 2015)
- 18) Common Declaration of the Ministers of Agriculture of the Czech republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Romania and Slovenia on the Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on organic production and labelling of organic products (Nitra, 7 October 2014)
- 19) Joint Statement of the Ministers of Agriculture of the Czech republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Romania and Slovenia on the improvement of the farmers' position in the food supply chain (Bratislava, 19 May 2015)
- 20) Conclusions from the Meeting of V4 Ministers responsible for Energy (Bratislava, 21 November 2014)
- 21) Memorandum of Cooperation in the Field of Youth between the Ministries of the V4 countries and the EaP countries responsible for Youth (Bratislava, 22 June 2015)
- 22) Protocol on Co-operation in the Field of Tourism of the Ministry of Transport, Construction and Regional Development of the Slovak Republic, the Ministry of

Regional Development of the Czech Republic, the Ministry for National Economy of Hungary, and the Ministry of Sport and Tourism of the Republic of Poland (High Tatras, 17 – 18 February 2015)

- 23) Communiqué from the 25th Meeting of the Ministers responsible for Culture of the Visegrad Group Countries (Bratislava, 19 June 2015)
- 24) Common position of the Visegrad Group extended by Bulgaria, Romania and Slovenia. Current development in the FOREST EUROPE process / a legally binding agreement on forest in Europe (Madrid, 21 – 22 March 2015).

Joint Statement

Summit of the Heads of Government of the Visegrad Group

(Bratislava, 19 June 2015)

We, the Prime Ministers of the Visegrad Group, meeting in Bratislava on 19 June 2015 on the occasion of the official summit to mark the end of the one-year Slovak Presidency of the Visegrad Group adopt hereby the following Joint Statement:

We welcome that the Slovak Presidency under the motto “**Dynamic Visegrad for Europe and Beyond**” has focused on the implementation of long-term objectives of the Visegrad cooperation in priority areas such as energy, transport, defence, and external dimension. We also note with satisfaction that new elements to the Visegrad cooperation have been introduced in the field of digital agenda and innovation. By increasing synergies in these progressive areas V4 countries can strengthen their overall position in the rapidly changing international environment.

Energy

Ensuring security of energy supply is our priority; therefore we call for the continuation of the work based on the Joint risk assessment with an aim to develop the **Joint preventive and emergency action plan** at regional level to increase regional security of gas supply.

We appreciate the steps of the European Union towards creating a true Energy Union based on solidarity, mutual trust and balanced approach to objectives of energy security, competitiveness and sustainability. In this context we highlight the importance of completing the Internal Energy Market, in particular the missing energy infrastructure, strengthening EU legislation related to security of supply and transparency of all gas agreements, while the confidentiality of commercially sensitive information needs to be guaranteed, as well as full implementation of the legislation and guaranteeing competitive and affordable energy prices. The infrastructural network in Central-Eastern Europe cannot be compared with that of the Western part of the Union. Therefore it is of utmost importance to address that situation. We urge that the funds of Connecting Europe Facility and European Fund for Strategic Investment should be focused on the development of infrastructure in our region that would strengthen the energy security of the European Union as a whole.

Completion of the **North-South Gas Corridor** in the V4 region and realization of projects aimed at diversification of gas sources and routes is of utmost importance. The beginning of the commercial operation of the Vecsés-Velké Zlievce gas interconnector between Hungary and Slovakia will be a significant step forward. We are committed to speeding-up and finalizing as soon as possible other strategic energy infrastructure projects in and between the V4 countries, including the construction of the gas interconnector between Poland and Slovakia, the Czech-Polish interconnector “STORK II” (Libhošť-Hat-Kędzierzyn), as well as advancing V4 gas market integration in order to fully tap the benefits of developed infrastructure.

Transport

We acknowledge the efforts of the V4 countries in the development of transport links between themselves, especially those constituting parts of the TEN-T network, with a particular focus on transport routes in the North-South direction, in order to ensure interconnection of Central Europe with ports of the Baltic, Adriatic and Black Sea. By recently signing the **Memorandum on Cooperation of the Visegrad Group in the Development of Transport**

Infrastructure, V4 states confirmed their determination to continue cooperation in implementing joint projects connected with major transport corridors.

In respect of European financial instruments, such as the Connecting Europe Facility and the European Fund for Strategic Investments, we join our efforts to make full use of these instruments in order to significantly improve the transport infrastructure, including important cross-border interconnections within the V4 region.

Defence

We recognise the progress achieved in defence cooperation over the last year considering the successful completion of all the tasks given in our declarations from October 2013 and June 2014. We paid special attention to the preparation of the key document to guide the joint V4 defence efforts in the coming years – the **Action Plan of the Visegrad Group Defence Cooperation** which was adopted by the V4 Defence Ministers on 23 April 2015 in Tomášov.

We welcome the fact that the process of building the **V4 EU Battlegroup** is nearly completed. We are convinced that the certification exercise Common Challenge 2015 will prove readiness and preparedness of the V4 EU Battlegroup for the standby phase in 2016.

We expect the V4 Defence Ministers to use lessons learned from the preparation of the V4 EU Battlegroup to further work on the establishment of a permanent V4 Modular Force which could be used as our joint regional contribution to NATO and EU capacities. In this regard, interoperability of the V4 countries' Armed Forces needs to be further increased and tested through regular joint V4 exercises. In this respect, we welcome the **V4 Training and Exercise Strategy** which was endorsed by the V4 Defence Ministers in Tomášov.

Our ambition is to make progress in defence capability development. The priority will be given to the most promising areas: Training and Exercises, Joint Logistic Support Group, CBRN, Joint Terminal Air Controllers, Special Operations Forces. In addition, we will continue to promote cooperation among defence industries. In this regard, we encourage our Defence Ministers to further develop cooperation in these areas with the aim to bring more tangible results. We welcome that the issue of Joint Airspace Protection was brought to the table. To support the concept of the joint V4 Airspace Protection, we hereby encourage our Defence Ministries to sign necessary bilateral Cross-Border Agreements between the respective V4 countries to cover the whole V4 airspace as soon as possible. These agreements may serve as a first step towards developing a regional approach. Progress in this area shall be presented at the Warsaw Summit 2016.

One of our main goals is to actively contribute to complementarity of the EU and NATO initiatives and support harmonisation of their actions within the changing security environment. We expect the Defence Ministers to use the V4 format, when and where appropriate, to implement the decisions of the 2014 NATO Summit in Wales, to consult and harmonise our countries' priorities for the July 2016 Warsaw Summit as well as further coordinate our positions regarding the European Council focusing also on security and defence issues and during the drafting procedure of the prospective new European Security Strategy.

Digital agenda and Innovation Policy

In order to improve global competitiveness and visibility of the Visegrad region, we need to continue with our efforts to strengthen activities of V4 countries in the area of digital and innovation focused economy.

We welcome the **Agreement on the Visegrad Patent Institute (VPI)** signed on 26 February 2015 in Bratislava between the V4 Industrial Property Offices which will help fostering

innovation, creativity, economic growth and competitiveness in the Central and Eastern European region. We remain committed to complete the national ratification procedures before the decision on the VPI's appointment as an International Authority is taken by the Assembly of the Patent Cooperation Treaty Union in October 2015 in order that the VPI may become operational by 1 July 2016.

We confirm our willingness to build upon the progress achieved in the global expansion of the region's innovation driven start-ups and fast growing innovative SMEs. The objective is to cooperate and exchange knowledge and information of our public stakeholders running start-up and SME support programs to boost innovation potential in the V4 (coordinated through the V4 Innovation Task Force). Drawing on the first positive experiences of the task force including a high profile tech match event (particularly the **We4Startups** event in Silicon Valley, April 2015), we support to foster the V4 activities already launched in Silicon Valley as well as to engage with other centres for innovative businesses worldwide. The aim is to facilitate the organization of joint start-up and innovation related events to assist regional V4 start-ups and fast growing businesses in expanding to global markets by matching them with clients, mentors and investors.

In view of bringing the Visegrad cooperation in the area of innovation policy forward, we encourage steps leading to a formalized **V4 Innovation Task Force**.

The Visegrad Group demonstrated its readiness to shape the discussions on the Digital Single Market in the European Union in the common **V4 contribution on Digital Single Market** of 13 March 2015 which outlines joint vision and priorities in key areas. The **EU Digital Single Market Strategy** provides an opportunity for the Visegrad countries to become digital by default. We agree to cooperate in negotiations on the Digital Single Market Initiatives from the very first stage. To make sure that all initiatives are designed in a way that brings benefits to all Member States and creates inclusive growth, it would be beneficial to carry out the territorial impact assessment of new EU legislation. .

We stress the need to focus on ensuring that our companies, especially SMEs, can fully participate in the Digital Single Market. The elimination of barriers, especially in cross border e-commerce, is one of the key steps in providing concrete benefits of the Digital Single Market to citizens and businesses in the EU. In this spirit, we agree to include policies and concrete activities related to the digital agenda and innovation among the long term priorities of the Visegrad Group.

Media cooperation

We welcome the adoption of the **Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation of Public Service Media Organizations of the countries of the Visegrad Group in the Field of Media**. We look forward to enhanced closer collaboration between the public TV and Radio institutions from our countries with the aim of elaborating joint activities/common projects and thus strengthening the flow of information, enhancing the mutual knowledge of our societies and increasing visibility of the Visegrad Cooperation.

External dimension

We note with satisfaction that the increasing role of the Visegrad Group has been recognized by many European and global partners. We have been actively promoting the successful V4+ format by enlarging the V4's outreach to other important global players as well as by maintaining close relations with traditional partners in close neighbourhood and Europe. In order to open up new opportunities for developing co-operation in the V4+ format we support joint efforts in the field of science, research and innovation.

We reiterate our full adherence to the unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of **Ukraine** within its internationally recognized borders and confirm our strong support for all efforts aimed at de-escalation and political solution. The Minsk Agreements remain the basis for the peaceful solution of the conflict; therefore we expect their full implementation. We remain deeply concerned about the recent increase in heavy fighting in Eastern Ukraine. The Russia-backed separatists' attack on Marinka on 3 June constitutes the most serious violation of the ceasefire regime since the signature of the Minsk agreements in February. V4 countries have strongly supported efforts to stabilize the situation in the country and remain firmly committed towards the European perspective of Ukraine. We further encourage Ukraine to continue the necessary constitutional, economic and political reforms.

We welcome that closer coordination has resulted in a new **joint V4 project** aimed at transfer of V4 reform know-how to Ukraine. By way of enhanced dialogue with various Ukrainian stakeholders, V4 countries are committed to share their expertise in key reform areas such as decentralization, management of public finances, fighting corruption, energy efficiency, security sector reform, civil society, education, media , as well as economic development and support to small and medium sized enterprises. On the other hand, we support every diplomatic effort that increases the chances of reaching a lasting peace in the region.

We welcome the results of the Eastern Partnership summit in Riga. We will continue our cooperation and coordination to strengthen the Partnership.

We acknowledge that the Visegrad Group has at its disposal concrete instruments, notably the Visegrad 4 Eastern Partnership (V4EaP) and Visegrad+ Programs within the International Visegrad Fund, that have proven useful when it comes to the support of democratization and transformation processes in transition countries.

The V4 will continue a regular dialogue with the **Western Balkan** (WB) countries with the aim of supporting the socio-economic transformation and European integration process in the WB region. The V4 is ready to share its transformation experience and know-how which could help enhance regional and cross-border cooperation among countries of the region.

Migration

We stand ready to examine the Commission proposal on the **European Agenda on Migration** and the elements of the package published on 27 May on the basis of the outcome of the April, 23 special session of the European Council. We recall to develop a more systemic and geographically comprehensive approach to migration. Therefore we regret that the Agenda fails to address and find adequate solutions to migration pressure from and via the Western Balkan route as well as the Eastern route. We also recall the voluntary options when emergency relocation and resettlement are concerned. We do not deny the spirit of solidarity but we firmly argue the contradictory effects and pull factors of a possible mandatory redistribution scheme for asylum seekers. Furthermore, we claim for effective return of those persons who are not in need of international protection.

Incoming V4 Presidency

We hereby adopt the program of the incoming one-year V4 Presidency which is to be assumed by the **Czech Republic** as of 1 July 2015. Under the main motto “V4 Trust”, the Czech Presidency is determined to strengthen V4 cohesion by giving priority to joint infrastructure projects, building the regional energy market, enhancing security and defence cooperation, further developing the digital agenda, supporting awareness raising activity on the V4 start-ups, promoting solidarity within the EU and coordinating joint action towards external players.

Press Statement on the occasion of the Summit of Prime Ministers of the Visegrad Group (V4) and the President of the French Republic
(19 June 2015, Bratislava)

The Heads of Governments of **Slovakia, Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland** and the President of **France** met on 19 June 2015 in Bratislava. The meeting was one of the highlights of the one-year Slovak Presidency of the Visegrad Group that will come to an end on 30 June 2015.

V4 leaders appreciate the growing attention that France, as one of the leading political and economic powers in Europe and founding member of the European Union, pays to cooperation with the Visegrad Group. V4 countries acknowledge the active role of France in a strong, united and open Europe. Both V4 and France share their commitment to multilateralism, respect of international law and strong preference of peaceful conflict resolution worldwide based on active engagement by the UN and other international organizations.

The meeting brought a fruitful discussion on topics that stand high on both side's current political agenda: Climate and Energy Policy in light of preparations of the COP21 conference to be held in Paris in December 2015, Economic Growth, Regional Security and EU related issues, such as migration or fight against unemployment.

Ahead of the **United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris**, all parties underlined their expectations to reach an ambitious result. They expressed full support to a legally binding and universal agreement on climate supported by all the nations of the world, in line with the global goal to hold the increase in global average temperature below 2 °C.

Both V4 and France emphasized the need to diversify **sources and transit routes of energy** and at the same time make maximum and cost-effective use of the existing infrastructure. In line with ambitious climate goals and taking into account the role of low carbon energy sources, there is a need to call for a technologically neutral approach that respects national circumstances.

There was a broad consensus on the need to support the **research and innovation programmes** in the field of energy. The cooperation between France and V4 countries on the **Allegro** advanced reactor is an example of a successful joint project embedded in an all-European framework.

V4 and France confirmed the strong support to creating a genuine **Energy Union** based on true solidarity, mutual trust and coherence with the objectives of energy security, competitiveness and sustainability, and building on the implementation of the agreed 2030 energy-climate package. The process of building the Energy Union has to bring real added value and tangible benefits for the national economies, contribute to synergies within the EU and be assessed also from the point of view of energy prices impacts.

Both sides stressed the determination to complete the Internal Energy Market and in particular the missing energy infrastructure for efficiently fulfilling each dimension of the Energy Union and achieving the agreed 2030 climate and energy targets.

V4 and France strongly welcomed the recent positive signs of **economic recovery** in Europe that creates conditions for sustainable economic growth on our continent. Both sides agreed on the need to adapt European economies to the globally changing economic conditions by undertaking necessary structural reforms and improving competitiveness via strategies for growth, in particular through investments; they welcome in this regard the recent adoption of the European Fund for Strategic Investment. In respect of the implementation of Europe 2020: Europe's Growth Strategy, all participants agreed to look for ways how to better share the expertise and experience from implementation of active labour market policies and creation of quality jobs in their countries.

V4 countries and France will look for ways to increase **competitiveness** of their economies through joint tailor-made activities, taking also advantage of such EU Programs like COSME, which is focused on enhancing competitiveness of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises.

All parties agreed that **unemployment** in general, and youth unemployment in particular, is both a cyclical and structural concern, with potentially significant long term of consequences. They expressed full determination to solve the extensive problem of unemployment and continue improvement of particular employment policies. In particular, it is important to encourage investment into human resources. No structural reform agenda can be completed without strong efforts to modernize labour markets. Social investments are crucial for the future, as well as for social policy, employment policy, and also for education to focus on increasing the level of qualifications and skills of citizens to improve their social opportunities within the company and the labour market.

V4 and France consider the free movement of workers and freedom to provide services as fundamental principles of the internal market and important factors for economic growth. They should hence be fully respected. Any abuses and frauds must be fought in the spirit of the existing EU system. V4 and France are ready to work together to prevent them.

General support was declared for the further integration of the Economic and Monetary Union on the basis of responsibility, a strengthened coordination, convergence and solidarity, and while fully associating, in line with the framework of the Treaties, all Member States which prepare to adopt the Euro. V4 and France stressed the need to lay the foundation of a comprehensive economic strategy for the EMU and look forward to considering the report on better economic governance in the euro area.

Recognising the continued tragic events of **migrants** in the Mediterranean, V4 countries and France agreed that these challenges can only be addressed comprehensively through the adoption of both short- and long-term measures. In this context, they underlined the Statement of the extraordinary meeting of the European Council from 23 April 2015 as well as the subsequent Roadmap outlining the measures to be taken by Member States, Commission and other EU institutions to prevent further migrant deaths.

Both sides welcome the European Agenda on Migration submitted by the Commission which aims for a comprehensive EU framework to tackle migration. V4 and France recall their support to an EU response based on the principles of solidarity and responsibility, and expect the upcoming European Council (25 – 26 June) to agree on the measures to be taken in this respect.

V4 countries and France also held a discussion on **regional security** in light of the challenging aspect of the on-going crisis in **Ukraine** and its impact on Europe. Remaining committed in the support of Ukraine's unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial

integrity, they agreed that the peaceful settlement is the only option of resolving the conflict. They called on all parties to swiftly and fully implement the Minsk Agreements. They support the efforts of the Ukrainian leadership to build a modern, democratic and united society.

In view of the upcoming European Council, which will be dedicated to the Common Security and Defence Policy, V4 and France reaffirmed their commitment to pursue an ambitious and comprehensive agenda in the area of CSDP. They aim in particular at strengthening comprehensiveness and efficiency of EU crisis management tools in order to respond to crises and to remain a credible security provider, including through the newly established V4 Battlegroup to be on stand-by in the first half of 2016. V4 and France will keep on supporting the development of close relations between the EU and its partners in the East and the South, as well as international organisations, notably UN and NATO, whose decision taken at the 2014 Newport Summit must be fully and swiftly implemented.

V4 and France also share a common commitment to strengthen the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base, in a fair and balanced way and aim at forging further and long term partnerships between their industries in that sector.

The meeting in Bratislava has shown that the Visegrad Group and France share a number of common interests and priorities. For V4 countries, France is one of the most important strategic partners in Europe. From a European perspective, the Visegrad Group nowadays represents a comparable partner for Paris considering its impact on EU policy making. Both sides agreed that regular exchange of views on issues of common interest should continue as it brings added value to the already well-established bilateral formats. They are also ready to explore possibilities for developing a more practical co-operation at various levels, for example in the field of education, research and innovation or digital agenda, as well as culture.

**Joint Statement of the Meeting of the Prime Ministers of the Visegrad Group and the
President of the Swiss Confederation**
(Bratislava, 9 December 2014)

The Heads of Government of the Slovak Republic, Czech Republic, Hungary, the Republic of Poland and the President of the Swiss Confederation met on the 9th December 2014 in Bratislava at their first meeting in this format. They discussed various current international and economic issues as well as other topics of common interest, including the relations between the EU and Switzerland. The meeting has been organized within the framework of the Slovak Presidency of the Visegrad Group (V4).

1. Energy Security

V4 countries and Switzerland agree that the energy security is a key priority to be considered in a short and long term perspective.

V4 and Switzerland recognize the benefits of the utilization of indigenous energy sources and the right of countries to decide of their own energy mix in line with the objectives of secure, sustainable and affordable energy supply.

V4 and Switzerland recognize the need of adopting adequate measures for increasing energy security in Europe and preserving the international competitiveness of European industry.

They agree that the completion of the European internal energy market and increased interconnections represent an important enhancement of European energy security. In this context, the implementation of the projects of common interest and the diversification of supply routes and energy sources as well as enhanced cooperation with the EU neighbouring countries under the Energy Community are of crucial importance for Europe. They also agree that renewable energies, indigenous energy resources, safe and sustainable clean coal technologies, other low carbon energy sources and energy efficiency all contribute to European energy security.

2. Situation in Ukraine and efforts to reconsolidate European Security

V4 and Switzerland exchanged views on the situation in and around Ukraine as well as in other Eastern Partnership countries. They expressed concerns over the deteriorating security and stability in Europe.

They agreed that the foundations of European security as defined in the Paris Charter on the basis of the Helsinki Final Act need to be restored. They have been seriously put into question by Russian violations of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, including illegal annexation of Crimea.

The V4 and Switzerland reaffirm their support for a political process to resolve the crisis in Ukraine based on the full implementation of all provisions of the Minsk Protocol and the related Minsk Memorandum, which respects Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty. The principles of international law and good neighbourly relations have to be respected.

The 26 October early parliamentary elections marked an important step in Ukraine's aspirations to consolidate democratic elections in line with its international commitments. V4 and Switzerland voice support for the new parliament and government to swiftly continue to tackle the urgent and necessary reforms.

The V4 and Switzerland expressed their deep concern over the deteriorating humanitarian situation in parts of Ukraine controlled by separatists. They called for the respect of International Humanitarian Law and for full and unimpeded humanitarian access to guarantee an effective humanitarian response based on humanitarian principles. They welcome the steps taken by Ukraine to ensure rights and freedom to the internally displaced persons, at the same time call on all responsible parties to take further steps to address all impediments concerning the

implementation of humanitarian programmes. Priority should be given especially for maintaining basic services in affected areas, to avoid the further isolation of people and the increase in humanitarian needs.

V4 and Switzerland agree that the challenges to the European security should be addressed without further delay and support the OSCE efforts in that regard. V4 expressed interest in the Swiss OSCE Chairmanship's initiative of establishing the Panel of eminent persons which may complement and support efforts of OSCE to re-establish full respect for the Helsinki Principles. Both sides expect the Panel representing all regions of the OSCE to elaborate a set of recommendations concerning the next steps to be taken in strengthening European security.

3. Strengthening Economic Ties

V4 countries and Switzerland consider the mutual strengthening of ties in the domains of trade and investment as an important element in raising the competitiveness of their economies. Increased collaboration and exchanges between the respective business communities could contribute to foster investments in the V4 countries. V4 countries and Switzerland recognize the importance for each country to create a sound and stable macroeconomic, financial and regulatory framework in order to encourage technology transfer and high added value investments between them.

V4 and Switzerland support the enhancing of competitiveness and innovation in their economies. New challenges in climate and energy policies also call for new approaches, in order to support job creation and economic growth.

4. Competitiveness, Science, Research, Innovation and Education

V4 and Switzerland underline their common interest in widening their cooperation in the fields of science, research and innovation and in encouraging activities directly initiated by their respective autonomous institutions, and funded through existing national and international mechanisms. V4 and Switzerland welcome opportunities for sharing experience and exploring ways for cooperation on the basis of mutual interest in education, with a special focus on vocational and professional education and training.

V4 and Switzerland participate together in various international large research infrastructures, such as CERN, and recognize their significant impacts not only on science, but also on economic innovation and on society.

5. EU-Swiss relations

The EU–Swiss relations are firmly bound by shared values of freedom, peace, democracy, rule of law, respect for human rights and international humanitarian law, the fight against poverty and the preservation of natural resources and the common endeavour to promote them globally. These shared political and cultural values as well as the intense economic relations between Switzerland and the EU underpin a strong relationship with potential for further development.

V4 and Switzerland agree that a suitable institutional framework between the EU and Switzerland would constitute a qualitative leap ahead ensuring homogeneity and legal certainty in their relations. In this regard, V4 and Switzerland welcome the opening of negotiations about the institutional framework in May 2014 and expect substantial progress to be achieved without unnecessary delay. V4 and Switzerland underline their common interest to strengthen the relations between Switzerland and the EU by means of consolidating and further developing the bilateral way in areas of mutual interest.

Following the Swiss popular vote of February 9, 2014 and bearing in mind the importance of mutual relations and interest of the EU and Switzerland, V4 and Switzerland underline the necessity to secure a viable solution for the free movement of persons to be negotiated between

the European Union and Switzerland while recognizing it is a fundamental principle of the European Union.

V4 and Switzerland welcome the Joint Statement on Company Tax Issues between the Member States of the European Union and the Swiss Federal Council signed in the margins of the EU/EFTA finance ministers' meeting in Luxembourg on 14 October 2014 as well as the political commitment of Switzerland and the EU Member States within the OECD to adopt the Standard for Automatic Exchange of Financial Account Information in Tax Matters.

V4 and Switzerland acknowledge the importance of the Swiss contribution aimed at alleviating social and economic disparities in the enlarged EU. The V4 countries and Switzerland reiterate their strong commitment to make sure that the numerous projects financed by the Swiss contribution achieve expected results. Following the expiry of Swiss contribution in June 2012, V4 countries express their strong wish of its renewal. Switzerland notes that it will decide on a continued contribution in light of the overall development of the EU-Swiss relations.

6. Future Dialogues and Cooperation of Switzerland with V4

V4 and Switzerland express their intention to continue mutual dialogue in the future. Regular exchange of views on issues of common interest, such as foreign and European policy including EU-Swiss relations, and in the areas of education, science, research, innovation, economic cooperation including joint business and investment for a will bring added value to existing partnerships based on well-established bilateral formats.

V4 and Switzerland welcome common initiatives in sectors such as economic development, research and innovation, vocational and professional education and training as well as protection of the environment and energy.

V4 countries appreciate the Swiss financial support to specific projects of the V4 Eastern Partnership Programme within the framework of the International Visegrad Fund.

Bratislava Declaration of Visegrad Group Heads of Government
Deepening V4 Defence Cooperation
(Bratislava, 9 December 2015)

We, the Prime Ministers of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia, recognise that current security trends call for closer regional defence cooperation. We are committed to enhance our defence cooperation based on the Long Term Vision adopted in March 2014. The Action Plan, currently being drafted under the Slovak Presidency, will outline concrete steps toward this aim. We will also continue with coordination of national positions on current NATO and EU security topics.

Marking the 25th anniversary of the peaceful political transition to democracy in the Visegrad Group countries, we reaffirm our commitment to security and stability in our region and Europe as a whole. The illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol, ongoing Russia's aggressive actions against Ukraine as well as provocative activities along the eastern border of NATO have profoundly challenged the security architecture in our region and demonstrated that inter-state conventional conflict at the Alliance's borders is still a possible scenario. The Visegrad Group countries reaffirm their commitment to international law, including the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries. In this regard, V4 countries will coordinate their national positions to maximise the efforts to support Ukraine.

We acknowledge the significance of the issues addressed at the NATO Summit in Wales. We welcome the adoption of NATO Readiness Action Plan as a comprehensive package, which will help us enhance our responsiveness to the security challenges on NATO's frontiers. In this regard, we recognise the increasing importance of Multinational Corps Northeast (MNC NE). It should serve as a hub for NATO collective defence activities in our region. All decisions taken in Newport must be fully and swiftly implemented. The process needs to be completed until the Summit in Warsaw in 2016.

Solidarity among the Allies is the key principle. We are committed to a fair and balanced sharing of responsibilities. All countries of the Visegrad Group pledged to increase their defence expenditures. Moreover, all countries of the Visegrad Group have contributed to Assurance Measures in order to support the frontline Allies and to reiterate our commitment to collective defence. Among these measures was the exercise GROUND PEPPER 2014 hosted by Slovakia with the participation of V4 and US troops. Strong and stable transatlantic partnership continues to be in our vital interest.

The Visegrad Group reaffirms its commitment to work towards more effective Common Security and Defence Policy of the EU. We will coordinate our positions toward the next European Council in June 2015, which should take stock of the December 2013 European Council conclusions, and provide further political guidance. We must reflect on the security challenges in our immediate neighbourhood in close and mutually reinforced cooperation of the EU and NATO.

We will continue with preparations of the V4 EU Battlegroup to be on standby in the first semester of 2016 with participation of Ukraine. We hereby endorse the achieved results and, in particular, welcome NATO's decision to link the V4 EU BG certification exercise COMMON CHALLENGE 2015 with NATO high visibility exercise TRIDENT JUNCTURE 2015.

In our statement from June 2014, we tasked the Defence Ministers to explore the possibilities of forming a permanent V4 modular force in order to contribute to NATO and EU Rapid Reaction Forces as well as to crisis management operations. In line with this task, we

welcome the Polish initiative to form another V4 EU Battlegroup in the second semester of 2019. This is also in line with our tasking to the Defence Ministers from June 2014: to explore the possibilities of forming a permanent V4 modular force in order to contribute to NATO and EU Rapid Reaction Forces as well as to crisis management operations. We expect to continue to work on this long-term objective. Providing regular contributions to international rapid response formations will make the Visegrad brand more credible and visible.

In order to enhance the visibility, credibility and interoperability of our Armed Forces, the Visegrad Group countries will deepen cooperation in training and exercises. Slovakia hosted the first common V4 exercise GROUND PEPPER 2014 in line with the commitment to organise annual V4 military exercises. Future cooperation will be framed by the V4 Training and Exercise Strategy, which will be prepared during the Slovak Presidency.

To further enhance V4 defence cooperation, we task our Ministers of Defence to:

- seek common V4 solutions to meet the commitments made at the NATO Summit in Wales, particularly focusing on the NATO Readiness Action Plan,
- work further on establishing the permanent V4 modular force for NATO and EU rapid response formations as well as operations.

We look forward to the next NATO Summit, which will be held in Warsaw in 2016. We should seize this opportunity and present tangible results of our regional cooperation to Allies. We, the Prime Ministers of the Visegrad countries, are convinced that the implementation of our tasking from June 2014 is on the right track. We task the V4 Ministers of Defence to report on the achieved progress at the end of the Slovak Presidency.

Bratislava Declaration of Visegrad Group Heads of Government for a stronger CSDP
(Bratislava, June 2015)

1. We, the Prime Ministers of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia recognise the significance of the European Council in June 2015 and reconfirm our commitment to strengthen the ability of the EU to respond to a rapidly evolving global and European security environment. The EU must be capable of meeting the challenges ahead and setting the global agenda.
2. The upcoming European Council is an opportunity to assess the implementation of the December 2013 European Council conclusions and chart effective and feasible ways to achieve an adjusted set of ambitious yet realistic goals. Furthermore, the European Council should demonstrate the EU's political determination to assume increased responsibilities and enhance its overall security as well as reaffirm its aspiration to be a global actor.
3. The security environment of Europe is dynamic and unpredictable, with threats growing in EU's imminent neighbourhood and beyond. In the East, more than a year after the illegal annexation of Crimea, Russia continues to violate international law, undermining the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, and pose a challenge for the European Union and the security of its member states. In the South, a belt of weak and destabilized states now stretches from North Africa via the Horn of Africa to Iraq and Yemen, creating an environment conducive to challenges like unprecedented migration flows. In this context, we underline the necessity of a balanced and inclusive approach, addressing threats and challenges that the EU faces both in the East and the South.
4. The urgency and complexity of these challenges demand that the EU act with unity and solidarity, based on a common strategic vision. The Visegrad countries stand ready to bear their share of responsibility for European security as a whole and play an active role in addressing the challenges in both the Eastern and Southern neighbourhoods. The V4 countries are fully committed to a stronger, more cohesive security and defence policy of the Union, including through enhanced regional security and defence cooperation. Among several successful joint projects, we highlight the creation of the V4 EU Battle Group that will be on stand-by in the first half of 2016.
5. The future course of CSDP should be built upon achievable solutions with concrete ways and means required for their implementation. We therefore support the elaboration of a new European strategy on foreign and security policy issues by the first half of 2016. CSDP should remain the key element of this strategy. This document should match the ambitions of the EU with tools needed for their implementation. As the links between external and internal security are strengthened, more synergy is needed between CSDP and the area of Freedom Security and Justice.

Effective coordination of different EU policies and reinforced EU cooperation with partners remains an indispensable asset in tackling contemporary and emerging horizontal issues such as hybrid threats, terrorism, organized crime, foreign fighters and irregular migration, border management, energy security and cyber security.

6. Member states should be fully and transparently involved in the whole reflection and drafting process to create a strong sense of ownership. The Visegrad countries remain committed to cooperating closely during the ongoing strategic review.
7. The sustainability of European security architecture depends to a large degree on a safe and stable neighbourhood. Therefore, we will continue to support political association, security dialogue and practical CSDP cooperation as well as economic integration of partner countries, particularly those within the Eastern Partnership, the Western Balkans as well as the Union for the Mediterranean.
8. We reaffirm the relevance and importance of both military and civilian components within the crisis management toolkit of the EU. The link between security and development is a key principle of the EU's comprehensive approach to external conflicts and crisis management. In order to strengthen this concept and cover gaps in the current EU response, we support coherent, geographically balanced and effective implementation of the "Train and Equip" initiative, based on the recent Joint Communication "Capability building in support of security and development".
9. To maximise the impact, efficiency and consistency of the EU role in crisis management, we confirm our readiness to actively contribute to an EU-wide strategic framework for Security Sector Reform (SSR) by mid-2016. The V4 countries share considerable experience from successful reforms and Euro-Atlantic integration. While recognizing that a tailor-made approach in SSR remains essential for increasing the stability and resilience of partner countries, we underline that this project should be open to all relevant partners from the South and the East. We consider it as an important instrument of the EU toolbox to prevent and manage crises.
10. We call for further enhancement of the EU-NATO relations. Synergy, complementarity and full use of EU-NATO cooperation is essential. We support ongoing efforts aimed at enhancing practical cooperation in countering the threat of hybrid warfare, including early warning, information exchange, strategic communication and cyber security. At the same time, we call for progress on harmonizing capability development between the two organisations. Ahead of the NATO Warsaw Summit, taking into consideration the deteriorating security situation in Europe's neighbourhood, securing transatlantic coherence, partnership and solidarity gains additional importance.
11. With regard to further development of defence capabilities, we support the activities undertaken by the Commission in CSDP-related research and back the EDA and Commission in their efforts aimed at supporting small and medium enterprises (SMEs) by providing them with EU instruments and funds and promoting their access

to supply chains. We recall that it is necessary to create the conditions, under which all EU member states can participate in and take their share of the restructuring of the European defence sector.

12. We call on the European Council to remain seized of security and defence matters and take stock of the progress made and provide further political guidance in this area on a regular basis.

Visegrad Group Joint Statement on the Western Balkans

(Bratislava, 31 October 2014)

The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Visegrad Group (V4) and Western Balkan countries met on 31 October 2014 in Bratislava under the Slovak Republic Presidency of the V4. The meeting dedicated to the Western Balkans was also attended by the incoming Vice-President of the European Commission and High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy as well as by Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Austria and the Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council.

The Foreign Ministers discussed the situation in the Western Balkan region and exchanged views on the Enlargement Package which was published by the European Commission on 8 October 2014. The V4 member states reaffirmed their support for EU and NATO enlargement as one of the main priorities of the Group. The Ministers underlined the importance of maintaining the momentum and credibility of both the EU and NATO integration processes. Conditionality and a merit-based approach should be applied; on the other hand the EU and NATO should respond appropriately to the progress made by aspirant countries. For their part, the V4 countries are ready to continue sharing their experience with the transition and integration into the EU and NATO.

The V4 countries welcomed the European Commission progress reports on the candidate countries and potential candidates as balanced and objective assessment of the situation. They agreed with the Commission's conclusions and recommendations.

The V4 ministers highlighted the progress of Podgorica in the accession negotiations and expressed their support for the opening of new chapters by the end of 2014. The V4 member states advocated the opening of first negotiation chapters with Belgrade as soon as possible in order to keep the reform momentum in the country. The completion of negotiations on a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with Pristina is a considerable success as well. They stressed the need for the continuation of the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue as a means for the normalization of mutual relations. The participants congratulated Tirana for obtaining candidate status and encouraged the country leaders to continue their reform efforts in order to fulfill all criteria necessary for the opening of accession negotiations. The V4 countries confirmed their dedication to support Skopje on its European path but highlighted the need for all politicians in the country to focus on matters which can move the country forward. Only through constructive dialogue there is a potential to solve all domestic and international challenges the country faces. The ministers voiced their concern over Sarajevo's lack of progress in reforms and the EU integration process; however, they expressed hope that the country would get back on track after the recent elections. They called on politicians to enhance internal political dialogue and meet expectations of their own citizens. A pro-active role of the EU was highlighted in this context.

The V4 countries also pointed out a necessity to enhance the efforts to fulfill criteria in the European agenda. The V4 ministers underlined the importance of alignment of candidates and potential candidates with EU foreign policy statements and actions.

With regard to NATO enlargement, the V4 ministers welcomed the decision of the North Atlantic Council to start intensive, focused talks with Podgorica and to review the issue of the country's accession by the end of 2015. They also highlighted the importance of the

advancement of the NATO integration process of Sarajevo and Skopje. The V4 ministers stressed the role of several V4 embassies serving as NATO Contact Points in some Western Balkan countries and expressed hope that their activities will contribute to further rapprochement between the region and the NATO.

The V4 activities oriented towards the Western Balkan region were also discussed. Since the Expert Network on rule of law and fundamental rights was launched in 2012, there have been several concrete examples of practical assistance provided by the V4 in order to facilitate the fulfillment of criteria within the negotiation chapters 23 and 24, which represent the backbone of the accession process. Among others, the organization of an expert seminar on justice and the rule of law in mid-October in Omšenie, Slovakia; a conference on children rights in Warsaw, Poland between 30 September – 1 October or another seminar on the public administration reforms of the V4 and best practices in Budapest, Hungary in September proved readiness of the V4 to offer its expertise and assistance. The V4 strives to increase its activity in the Western Balkans each year also through the International Visegrad Fund by involving third countries into the cooperation.

The V4 Ministers welcomed the political will and common consensus of the Western Balkan countries to establish a fund based on the model and principles of the International Visegrad Fund. The launch of a „Western Balkan Fund” with its seat in Tirana will be another positive example of deepening the regional and cross-border cooperation among Western Balkan countries. The V4 will assist this project by providing expertise in establishing a regional fund.

The Visegrad Group Joint Statement on the Eastern Partnership

(Bratislava, 15 May 2015)

The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Visegrad Group (V4 Ministers) and the Eastern Partnership countries met on 14–15 May 2015 in Bratislava under the Slovak Republic Presidency of the Visegrad Group. The event was also attended by the Foreign Ministers of Latvia, Romania and Sweden, the Vice-President of the European Commission and the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the Commissioner for European Neighborhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations.

The meeting focused on assessing current and outlining future cooperation with the partner countries of the Eastern Partnership. The participants discussed the current developments in the region of the Eastern Partnership, preparations for the forthcoming Riga Summit, as well as future tasks in view of the challenges in the region.

The V4 Ministers reaffirmed their support to the Eastern Partnership as a strategic dimension of the European Neighborhood Policy based on mutual values, interests and commitments. They acknowledged the Eastern partners' sovereign right to choose the level of the ambition in their relations with the European Union and their readiness to continue to shape bilateral relations individually. They underlined the need for differentiation in European Union's support according to the level of commitments and aspirations made by the partners and their readiness to meet conditionality of this support. The challenging geopolitical aspects of this cooperation should be taken also into account.

The participants underlined that strengthening democracy, enabling functioning market economies, improving macro-economic stability, business and investment environment, mobility and people to people contacts open new spheres and perspectives of cooperation.

The V4 Ministers stressed that the increased cooperation with the Eastern partners, based on the shared values and principles of democracy, contributes to prosperity and stability in the region and is not directed against anyone. Conduct of reforms in the partner countries represents a corner stone of each country's modernization process, thus improving living standards of population in each partner country.

They outlined that recent events in Ukraine have shown that the fundamental principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity are not granted on the European continent. The V4 Ministers are committed in their support to the territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty of all partner countries.

The signing and provisional application of the Association Agreements/Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas with the three partner countries – Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine demonstrate significant achievements in the partnership between the European Union and the Eastern partner countries after the Vilnius Summit. More actions are needed to ensure that the Eastern partner countries and the European Union enjoy the full benefits of the Association Agreements/DCFTA. The implementation of the Association Agreements/DCFTA sets up the overall objectives of political association and economic integration with the European Union. The V4 countries welcomed the efforts made by Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine and encourage them on their paths to come closer to the European Union.

The V4 Ministers welcomed that the European Union and the three partners have developed and launched the Visa Liberalization Action Plans (VLAP). They noted that Moldova has successfully moved to the phase when Moldovan holders of biometric passports enjoy a visa-free access to the European Union. The V4 Ministers emphasized that Georgia and Ukraine have achieved significant progress in implementation of the second phase of their VLAPs. They encouraged Georgia and Ukraine to step up actions to fulfil the benchmarks. The

successful implementation of the VLAPs is a fundamental element of enhanced mobility, underpinning the association process.

The V4 Ministers stressed the importance of keeping the inclusive nature of the Eastern Partnership and strengthening ties with Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus which have decided to take their own paths in relations with the European Union. They welcomed the actions taken since the Vilnius Summit in 2013 in developing individually tailored bilateral relations between the European Union and Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus.

The V4 Ministers fully recognize the challenging aspects of the developments in Ukraine throughout 2014 – 2015 and their impact on the region. The V4 countries condemn the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia which they consider a violation of international law and a direct challenge to European security. They remain committed in their support of Ukraine's unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. The ministers pointed out the need for the peaceful settlement of the conflict in Ukraine based on respect of the norms of international law. They called on all parties to swiftly and fully implement the Minsk Agreements. They note the European Union's contribution to promote stability, good neighborly relations and confidence building in the region. The V4 countries voiced their continued support to the efforts of the Ukrainian leadership to build a modern, democratic and united society, in which the rights and freedoms of all citizens, including the individuals belonging to national, ethnic, linguistic and religious groups are fully respected.

The meeting also focused on discussion of energy security of the V4 countries. The safe and secure flow of energy sources to the V4 countries is of utmost importance for the development of stable, transparent and mutually beneficial relations with the Eastern Partnership countries. The V4 countries have contributed to Ukraine's energy stability and security by opening of the reverse gas flows. These actions represent significant assistance to Ukraine on its way to assure stability and prosperity in the country on its path to come closer to the European Union.

The forthcoming Eastern Partnership Summit in Riga is an opportunity to take stock of the progress achieved in cooperation with the Eastern partners after the Vilnius Summit. The participants of the meeting in Bratislava recognize efforts of the EEAS and the EU COM as well as the Eastern Partnership partners to implement the goals resulting out of the Vilnius Declaration. The V4 Ministers considered that more actions are needed in developing people-to-people contacts, supporting the civil society, strengthening and developing the multilateral dimension, sectorial cooperation.

The V4 Ministers reiterated the readiness of their countries to share experience of the political and economic transition, as well as integration to the European Union with the Eastern partners. They underlined that the thorough reform process was a key element of the successful and the result oriented transformation process of each of the V4 country. The V4 Ministers encouraged all partners to accelerate the reform processes and thus modernize their countries. They emphasized that only stable and predictable business and investment environment could attract foreign investors to foster economic development in each partner country.

The International Visegrad Fund, through its Visegrad 4 Eastern Partnership Program, will continue to offer project based assistance facilitating the efforts of transformation, modernization, economic development, social progress and supporting civil society in all countries of the Eastern Partnership.

The participants of the V4 and Eastern Partnership ministerial meeting in Bratislava stressed their wish to work closely in implementing the goals of the Eastern Partnership. They look forward to the Riga Summit that will assess the achieved results and will outline the future of the Eastern Partnership.

Co-Chairs' Statement Slovakia and Denmark
3rd Meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Visegrad, Nordic and Baltic states
(High Tatras, March 12th and 13th 2015)

Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Visegrad, Nordic and Baltic countries met in the High Tatras on the 12th and 13th of March 2015. During their third regular meeting (following the two previous ones in Gdansk and Narva), the Ministers discussed how to strengthen cooperation between their countries and exchanged views on current foreign and security policy issues, such as energy security, the situation in Ukraine, strategic communication in response to propaganda, Eastern Partnership, and the fight against terrorism. Maroš Šefčovič, Vice-President of the European Commission responsible for the Energy Union, also participated in the deliberations.

Energy security

The Ministers had a good discussion on the broader issues of energy.

The Ministers agreed that energy security, in the context of the crisis in Ukraine, had never been as important to Europe as it is today. They discussed the urgent need to strengthen the security of energy supply, increase energy efficiency, and maintain competitive energy costs while reducing dependence on gas and oil supplies, with the overall vision of creating a low-carbon economy.

The Ministers recognized that the EU's energy security can be increased by having recourse to indigenous renewable resources. Moderating energy demand through enhanced energy efficiency will also contribute to reduce the EU's energy dependence and increase its energy security for both electricity and gas. Energy efficiency is essential, since the cheapest and cleanest energy is that which is not consumed.

There was broad agreement on the importance of regional energy cooperation to ensure secure, affordable and sustainable energy supply.

The Ministers welcomed the Commission's recent Strategy for a Resilient Energy Union with a Forward-Looking Climate Change Policy and look forward to discussions at the European Council on 19 – 20 March 2015.

Eastern Partnership

The Ministers fully subscribed to the main goal of the project that is to support comprehensive modernization and prosperity in EaP countries based on common values, norms and standards, i.a. democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights and market economy. The Ministers underlined the importance of developing and strengthening the relations with all partner countries involved in the Eastern Partnership.

The EaP Summit to be held in May 2015 in Riga should contribute to fostering the whole process while also examining ways how to adapt it to the new conditions. The key deliverables of the Summit should include the strengthening of economic integration, better involvement of the civil society and stronger incentives to preserve the pro-European commitment in the partner countries.

The Ministers agreed that differentiation of partner countries is crucial in accordance with the level of their ambitions. It is important to provide each partner with tailor-made support.

The Ministers emphasized the significance of the signed agreements (AA/DCFTA) by Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine in June last year, which are opening a new chapter in their relations with the EU. The agreements represent a very tangible outcome of the reform efforts invested by the partner countries and the EU. They introduce important instruments for continuation of the reform agenda, which should remain a priority for the partner countries.

The Ministers called upon continuation of developing relations of the EU with the three remaining partner countries – Belarus, Armenia and Azerbaijan. This should be conducted according to the principle „more for more“. The Ministers expressed readiness to further assist the partner countries during the transition period and support the pursuit of the European aspirations of some partners, through the implementation of the Association Agreements.

The EU activities and visibility remain a principal prerequisite for the success of the whole process. The Visegrad 4 and Nordic-Baltic 8 are ready to stay at the forefront of these endeavors.

Ukraine

The ministers voiced their deep concern over the recent escalation of violence in Eastern Ukraine that resulted in a great number of innocent casualties among the civilian population. V4 and NB8 countries are convinced that military actions are not an option to resolve the crisis in Ukraine.

The Ministers expressed their strong support to solving the crisis through diplomatic means and welcomed the agreement on 12 February on a package of measures for the implementation of the Minsk agreements of September 2004, outlining clear modalities for an immediate ceasefire and withdrawal of heavy weapons.

V4 and NB8 stressed the need for a full and unconditional implementation of the Minsk Protocol and the Minsk Memorandum.

A sustainable political solution to the crisis must be based on respect for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within the country's internationally recognized borders.

V4 and NB8 countries remain committed to assisting the Ukrainian government in their effort to stabilize the situation in their country and to carry out urgently needed reforms.

Strategic communication in response to propaganda

The Ministers agreed that aggressive propaganda undermines the concept of independent media – a fundamental condition for free and pluralistic democracies. The Ministers also reaffirmed their commitment to further improve strategic communication in support of EU policies and to support the EU institutions in this work. Such effort should include proactive communication of EU policies both internally and externally, correcting misinformation when it appears, and support for the further development of independent media throughout the region.

Terrorism, Syria and Iraq

The Ministers expressed their abhorrence and condemnation of the recent fatal terrorist attacks in France and Denmark and affirmed that the terror risk remains high in other parts of Europe, too. They expressed the need to urgently step up EU efforts to counter terrorism and violent extremism using existing EU instruments to the full to address not least the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters in line with UNSCR 2178.

The Ministers also discussed various aspects of terrorism and violent extremism, mainly related to the situation in Syria and Iraq and the threat represented by ISIL/Daesh to the region as well as its possible global impact. The Ministers agreed that this complex issue requires a systematic and comprehensive approach as well as long-term commitment covering various areas such as military means, fight against terrorism and radicalization, migration, stabilization efforts as well as humanitarian assistance. The EU regional strategy for Syria, Iraq and the Daesh threat, which is expected to be endorsed by the Foreign Affairs Council on 16 March, was also mentioned.

Joint Statement of the Visegrad Group together with Ukraine

(Kyiv, 16 December 2014)

Representatives of the Visegrad Group (V4) countries and Ukraine – the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic Miroslav Lajčák, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic Lubomir Zaorálek, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland Grzegorz Schetyna, the Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary László Szabó and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine Pavlo Klimkin, met on 16 December 2014 in Kyiv to discuss the current situation in and around Ukraine, as well as the Visegrad countries' support and assistance to the government and the people of Ukraine.

The V4 countries and Ukraine reaffirmed their strong support for the full and unconditional implementation of the Minsk Protocol and its Memorandum, as a basis for a sustainable political solution to the crisis, based on the respect for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. The V4 countries once again reconfirm their commitment to the policy of non-recognition of the illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula by the Russian Federation.

The V4 countries welcome the formation of the pro-reform majority in the Ukrainian parliament and the coalition government following a democratic conduct of the October parliamentary elections. The V4 ministers also concurred that the importance of reforms is critical and expressed hope that the new Ukrainian government will use its political mandate and the backing of the majority it enjoys in the parliament to introduce and implement the much needed reforms. The participants also underscored that all efforts should be made to restore the country's peace and stability, and acknowledged the fundamental importance of the unity vis-à-vis the biggest crisis in Europe since the August 2008 conflict in Georgia. The V4 countries voiced their continued support to the efforts of the Ukrainian leadership to build a modern, democratic and united society, in which the rights and freedoms of all citizens, including the individuals belonging to national, ethnic, linguistic and religious groups, are fully respected.

The V4 countries reiterated their readiness to assist the Ukrainian authorities in preparation of a comprehensive reforms package that should be at the forefront of the new government agenda. Such package should be focused on strengthening of the rule of law, efficiency of the national and local governments, transparency of public procurement, state regulation reduction, and the fight against corruption and envisage a self-government reform that will bring the decision making process closer to Ukrainian people. Genuinely implemented reforms, as demonstrated by the V4 countries, will bring the country closer to the European Union and contribute to the realization of Ukraine's European aspirations, which are duly noted by the V4 countries. The international conference in support of Ukraine of 2015 and the Riga Eastern Partnership summit of 2015 represent important milestones in this respect.

Further steps how to strengthen mutually beneficial cooperation, including through bilateral as well as the International Visegrad Fund toolbox were discussed in details, as agreed during the V4 Presidential summit with Ukraine on 16th November 2014 in Bratislava. In this respect, mutual energy security remains among the top priorities. The V4 countries reconfirmed their readiness to support continued reverse gas flows to Ukraine during the upcoming winter months. Reverse gas flows from the V4 countries by now constitute circa 50 per cent of the country's national import. Also various

forms of transitional assistance, *inter alia* transfers of the V4 countries' experiences *via* the Eastern Partnership Academy of Public Administration in Warsaw or the Centre for

Experience Transfer from Integration and Reforms in Bratislava, were touched upon and appreciated.

The participants recalled that the V4 also supports Ukraine through its International Visegrad Fund (the IVF) which, within its Eastern Partnership Program, funded by the V4 countries' governments as well as non V4 contributors makes annual commitments to Ukraine exceeding 1.3 million EUR while tackling upon democratization, socio-economic transition, European integration, civil society building, regional cooperation, and providing regular training programs for the country's civil servants. Ukraine today is the largest external recipient of the IVF's scholarship grants and support programs for higher education institutes. The V4 countries will continue to assist *via* their official development programs, projects and grants focusing *inter alia* on areas such as democratization, good governance, SMEs promotion, regional development, the security sector reform and border control, as well as with humanitarian aid for the Ukrainian people in need, especially IDPs from Crimea and from the Eastern regions of Ukraine. By now, an equivalent of total amount of approximately 4.6 million EUR was delivered by the V4 countries in addition to the EU financial support for Ukraine. The V4 countries also provided other forms of assistance in the areas of training, rehabilitation, demining etc.

In the run up to the Riga summit, the V4 countries will work intensively also in cooperation with the Latvian EU Presidency to enhance the people-to-people contacts with Ukraine with a special focus on introduction of visa-free regime for Ukrainian citizens, once all requirements of the EU-Ukraine visa liberalization action plan are fulfilled, as well as on younger generation and civil society utilizing potential of Ukraine's participation in the relevant EU instruments, in particular, Creative Europe and Erasmus + programs. As of today the V4 countries provided for circa 720 government scholarships to Ukrainian students.

The V4 countries and Ukraine decided to further intensify political and working level contacts, *via* bilateral channels, but also cooperation at the international multilateral forums.

The Joint statement of the Visegrad Group Foreign Ministers on Ukraine
(30 October 2014)

The Visegrad Group Foreign Ministers – of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and the Slovak Republic (henceforth The V4 Ministers) – have closely followed the preparations and the conduct of the parliamentary elections in Ukraine on 26 October 2014. They welcome the victory of pro-European forces in the recent elections and look forward to working intensively with the new Ukrainian authorities. The upcoming early local elections in Donbas must be held in full compliance with the Ukrainian law. The V4 Ministers reiterate their strong commitment to the independent, democratic, stable, modern and prosperous Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders, whose people must have a right to decide upon their own future. The V4 countries once again reconfirm their commitment to the EU policy of non-recognition of the illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula by the Russian Federation.

The V4 Ministers would like to express their continued support to the efforts of the Ukrainian leadership to build a modern, democratic and united society, in which the rights of all the national, ethnic, linguistic and religious groups are fully respected. The V4 countries call upon the new Ukrainian parliament to lend its firm support to the reform processes which, as outlined in the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, are aimed at bringing Ukraine closer to the EU. The V4 countries stand ready to assist the parliament and the future government in facilitation of comprehensive structural reforms. These structural reforms, as demonstrated by the respective experiences of the Visegrad countries, will transform the country's institutions, its economy and society to progressively improve the living standards and the business environment. In this respect, transparency and inclusiveness are important for building a broad nationwide consensus to deal with the complex transformation related social and economic issues.

The V4 countries stand ready to continue working with partners and allies to provide various forms of concrete assistance to Ukraine and its people. Such external assistance is to complement the transformation process which should prioritize the strengthening of the rule of law, the efficiency of national government and local self-governments, the transparency of public procurement, the reduction of state regulation and, last but not least, the fight against corruption. In this respect, the V4 countries welcome the adoption of the Operation Plan for the EU Assistance Mission (EUAM) by the recent Foreign Affairs Council and express support for its swift deployment. The V4 countries recall that the provisional application of the DCFTA provides for the legal framework to lend support to the Ukrainian economy at this critical stage.

The V4 Ministers are convinced that a peaceful solution to the crisis in and around Ukraine must be based solely on the principle of respecting Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. The V4 countries would like to reiterate a strong appeal to all parties to the conflict to work on the full and unconditional implementation of the Minsk protocol of 5 September and its memorandum of 19 September, in particular by ensuring a durable cease-fire, the withdrawal of the illegal armed groups, weaponry, fighters and mercenaries. The V4 Ministers wish to underline the crucial role played by the OSCE in monitoring and verifying the implementation of the Minsk agreements. The latter cannot be complete without all parties to the conflict adhering to the ceasefire, the Ukrainian government restoring control over its borders with Russia, a truly

inclusive national dialogue and decentralization. The V4 countries share the view that only a constructive role of the Russian Federation would ensure sustainable peace and stability in the common neighborhood.

The V4 Ministers noted with concern the serious humanitarian consequences of the crisis for the people of Ukraine. They would like to underline the necessity to guarantee an utmost respect for international humanitarian law to protect the civilian population in the conflict zone, as well as a proper access for the international humanitarian organizations there. They also would like to recall the need for a conclusive investigation to the tragic events of the past several months or related to the downing of the flight MH17, as well as to the deteriorating situation of the Crimean Tatars.

The V4 countries, in the gas and oil downstream to Europe, welcome the ongoing trilateral EU-Russia-Ukraine negotiations to secure an agreement on energy supplies to Ukraine and their transit for European costumers. The V4 countries hope that the Russian Federation and Ukraine will approach these negotiations in the spirit of a long-term reliable and predictable energy partnership with the EU. The V4 countries reconfirmed their readiness to support continued reverse gas flows to Ukraine during the upcoming winter.

The V4 countries and their leaders will remain actively seized on the matter, and they are looking forward to meeting President Poroshenko in Bratislava on 16 November 2014 on the margins of the V4 summit.

Joint Press Statement of the Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Visegrad Group and the Republic of Korea
(Bratislava, 17 July 2014)

The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Visegrad Group (V4) and the Republic of Korea met in Bratislava on the 17th of July 2014 at their first ministerial meeting within the new format of V4 + RoK cooperation.

The Ministers discussed the perspectives of the V4 + RoK cooperation as well as exchanged views on various regional and international issues, developments in the EU and East Asia i.a. Eastern Partnership, energy security, the situation on the Korean Peninsula, Middle East/North Africa region and Afghanistan.

The Ministers recognized the shared universal values and principles, such as democracy, the rule of law, human rights, freedom, and market-based economy and underlined that cooperation between the V4 countries and the RoK constitutes an integral part of, and a tangible added value to, the EU-Republic of Korea Strategic Partnership.

The Ministers acknowledged the common interest of the V4 countries and RoK in promoting development, peace, stability internationally.

The Ministers expressed interest in strengthening of friendly ties between the V4 countries and the RoK, e.g. in the areas of economy, science, education, youth exchange and culture.

The Ministers stressing the commitment of the V4 and the RoK to democracy and the rule of law expressed readiness to pool efforts to facilitate and support the transfer of know-how in socio-economic transformation and democratization to interested beneficiary third countries.

Under this common understanding, the Ministers agreed to initiate a project for sharing the V4 countries' experience of transformation into democracy and market economy, aimed to make positive contribution to the stabilization of the V4 neighborhood and in the process of unification of the Korean Peninsula.

In this context they underlined their willingness to develop cooperation between the V4 countries and the RoK and agreed that concrete areas of this cooperation and its modalities should be determined in the course of expert consultations involving V4 and RoK national institutions and the International Visegrad Fund.

The Ministers welcomed the interest declared by the RoK to support financially the implementation of common V4+RoK cooperation projects.

The Ministers welcomed the idea to organize various kinds of seminars, cultural festivals and youth exchanges between V4 and RoK.

The Ministers also supported the continuation of the V4+RoK dialogue on the level of Political Directors/Deputy Ministers and others, if appropriate, as means of maintaining longterm dialogue on regional and international policy issues.

The Ministers exchanged views on the situation on the Korean Peninsula. They remain deeply concerned about the Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea (DPRK) nuclear and ballistic

missile programmes. They reaffirmed that the verifiable denuclearization of the DPRK is essential for peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula, the wider region and beyond. The Ministers urged the DPRK to comply with all its obligations under the relevant UN Security Council resolutions, its IAEA Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement under the NPT and its commitments under the Six-Party Talks Joint Statement of 19 September 2005. They unanimously agreed that the DPRK must abandon all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear and ballistic missile programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner, which is essential for lasting security, stability and prosperity on the Korean Peninsula. The V4 Group takes a positive note of RoK President's "Trust-building Process on the Korean Peninsula" as well as "Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative" for promoting peace and security in the region.

The Ministers expressed their full support for pro-reform course of Ukrainian government and welcome the signature of the remaining provisions of the AA/DCFTA. The ministers call on Ukraine to ratify this document as soon as possible. The Ministers express their grave concern over the recent deterioration of the situation in Ukraine. Current situation undermines the international security posing a new kind of threat in international relations. The ongoing instability in the eastern regions of Ukraine aggravates the situation and does not contribute to lasting political solution of the conflict. The Ministers reaffirmed their full support for sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, including a non-recognition of the annexation of Crimea to Russia.

Joint Communiqué of the Visegrad Group Ministers of Defence

(Tomášov, 23 April, 2015)

We, the Ministers of Defence of the Visegrad Group, met on 23 April 2015 in Tomášov (Slovak Republic) to evaluate the actions and results of the current Slovak Presidency and to decide on the future of our defence cooperation.

To implement the objectives established in the Long Term Vision of the Visegrad Countries on Deepening their Defence Cooperation, we endorsed the Action Plan of the Visegrad Group Defence Cooperation. It also takes into account proposals put forward in the New Opening Concept. Its main purpose is to ensure the continuity of V4 defence cooperation, to proceed with existing projects and initiatives, and finally to turn prospective activities and efforts of the rotating Presidencies into tangible results. We truly believe this framework document is the most suitable tool for enhancing V4 defence cooperation. We are committed to the regular updating of the document by each Presidency in order to ensure its relevance.

Furthermore, the V4 Training and Exercise Strategy was endorsed to increase interoperability among the V4 countries' armed forces and thus visibly contributing to NATO's robust exercise program. The Strategy tasks V4 planners to prepare exercise plans every four years, starting with the first cycle 2016 – 2020. To ensure the implementation of the Strategy, we hereby task our Chiefs of Defence to prepare and endorse the 2016 – 2020 Midterm Plan of Training Opportunities.

Willing to support national defence educational systems of the V4 countries, we agreed to establish the Visegrad Group Military Educational Platform (VIGMILEP) in order to coordinate efforts regarding the use, planning, pooling and/or sharing of V4 professional military education and research capabilities, to promote quality assurance systems, and to guarantee the best achievable level of education and training of military officers and other experts in the area of security and defence according to EU/NATO standards.

During the Slovak Presidency, we put into place new formats of cooperation including that of the Senior Body at the level of State Secretaries/Policy Directors as well as the V4 Planning Group (V4 PG) at the national planning and procurement expert level. As a result of their work we believe the following areas are to be considered the most promising for further cooperation:

- Training and Exercises
- Joint Logistics Support Group
- CBRN
- Joint Terminal Attack Controllers
- Special Operations Tactical Training

The project of Advanced Ground Combat Vehicle was recognised as another area with a high potential for intensive cooperation among V4 countries and is thus worth further discussion. In addition, this project might serve as a vehicle to initiate more intensive cooperation among V4 defence industries.

In identifying these areas we also take into consideration the fact that regionally developed capabilities can be offered as a joint V4 contribution to fulfil capability gaps within multinational initiatives. In order to further support the work of the V4 PG, we agreed to

establish working teams for each of the above mentioned areas. We hereby task the Senior Body to oversee the process of creating structures to provide the best suited solutions in these areas under the lead of a facilitating nation.

Regarding Cross-Border Operations (CBO), we shared already existing bilateral agreements among each other with the main aim to harmonise texts with the currently prepared agreements. Bilateral agreements should serve as a first step towards developing regional cooperation. We supported today the idea of “V4 Cross-Border Operations” and we hereby task our military experts to analyse feasibility of conducting joint V4 airspace protection. Their initial conclusions should be presented during the Prime Ministers’ meeting at the end of the Slovak Presidency.

We continue to seek common solutions to meet the commitments made at the NATO Summit in Wales. Especially, we are determined to find a common approach to implementing Readiness Action Plan-related measures on the NATO Response Force, Very High Readiness Joint Task Force, NATO Force Integration Units and increase the readiness of the Multinational Corps Northeast in Szczecin. In this regard, we discussed possible V4 activities related to the establishment of NATO Force Integration Units with the aim to identify the way of how the Visegrad Group could contribute. We tasked our Defence Policy Directors to coordinate further work on this issue. It is our understanding that compatibility between NFIUs’ tasks and the V4 Training and Exercise Strategy should be used to the fullest possible extent. In light of the recent security situation developments, we will in depth analyse all options related to the establishment of the Permanent V4 Modular Force operational for NATO and EU Rapid Reaction Forces as well as for crisis management tasks. We are determined to contribute through our common effort to the success of the Warsaw Summit.

We discussed the shared approach on how to contribute on a sustainable basis to ongoing NATO’s assurance measures under the Visegrad Group heading. This year the V4 European Union Battlegroup (V4 EU BG) certification exercise COMMON CHALLENGE 2015 will take place together with NATO High Visibility Exercise TRIDENT JUNCTURE 2015. We also envisage to organise high level political consultations in order to discuss the most important issues concerning possible deployment of the V4 EU BG. We appreciate all the efforts and work done throughout the preparation phase of the joint Battlegroup and we are ready to start mutual consultations on the preparation of the V4 EU BG 2019 under Polish leadership.

We have tasked our national experts to evaluate the on-going changes of NATO and EU Rapid Response capabilities and their effect on our future commitments. They also need to identify solutions in order to align our commitments for strengthening future contributions in the best possible manner (NATO Response Force – NRF, Very High Readiness Joint Task Force – VJTF, EU BG, operations, training and exercises).

Russia’s aggressive actions against Ukraine as well as provocative activities along the eastern border of NATO have profoundly challenged the security architecture in our region. Therefore, we are continuing to provide strong support to Ukraine to improve its own security by contributing to NATO trust funds, providing humanitarian assistance and conducting expert military courses at our national training facilities. We will continue to support Ukraine in its efforts and the implementation of wide-ranging reforms in the security sector. Ukraine also participates in the V4 EU BG.

We support the strengthening of the Common Security and Defence Policy in the EU. In this regard, the conclusions of the June 2015 European Council should provide further strategic

impetus to its development. Decision on drafting a new European security strategy that addresses changing security environment, including unveiling crisis in our Eastern and Southern neighbourhood, will send a strong political message that EU is determined to remain relevant player in the area of defence and security. In this regard, we would like to draw attention to EU Partnerships, namely that of EU-NATO, as well as to regional cooperation in line with harmonisation of NATO and EU actions.

**Memorandum of Cooperation of the Visegrad Group in Development of Transport
Infrastructure**

(Žilina, 26 March 2015)

- (1) We, the Ministers of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Republic of Poland, the Slovak Republic, countries of the Visegrad Group, **RECOGNIZE** the key role of transport to promote the growth and competitiveness of the European economy.
- (2) With an emphasis on this role, we fully **SUPPORT** the activities and initiatives that contribute to the achievement of the European Union objectives in planning, development and operation of the trans-European transport networks in our region.
- (3) We are **READY** to intensify the exchange of experiences that will enhance cooperation in meeting the objectives and principles of the EU transport policy, as defined in EU legislation Regulating TEN-T network and Connecting Europe Facility.
- (4) Bearing in mind the importance of the North-South axis transport connections as it was stated in the Memorandum of Understanding concerning the roadmap for determining the future development of the transport networks of the Visegrad Group Countries adopted by the V4 Prime Ministers in Budapest, 24th of June 2014, we acknowledge the need to cooperate on the development of transport connections, strengthening and enhancing transport cohesion of our macroregion, including cross-border sections, eliminating missing links and on the removing of bottlenecks with an effective use of funds from the European Union.
- (5) We express our determination to **STIMULATE** the removal of bottlenecks and to increase the number and the operability of cross-border links between the Visegrad Group countries.

**Joint Declaration on the need of Enhancement of the Mutual Cooperation
in Customs and Tax Areas**
(Bratislava, 13 – 14 November 2014)

The heads and high level representatives of the Financial / Tax and Customs Administrations of the Visegrad Group countries,

**the Directorate General of Customs of the Czech Republic
and the General Financial Directorate of the Czech Republic
and
the National Tax and Customs Administration of Hungary,
and
the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Poland
and
the Financial Directorate of the Slovak Republic**

Determined to intensify mutual quadrilateral relationships and deepening Visegrad cooperation under unified terms and conditions between the respective tax and customs authorities (hereinafter referred to as „Authorities”);

Acknowledging

- The core function of the Authorities is the efficient collection of taxes, duties and other charges;
- That the tax and customs evasion and fraud represent an enormous high risk problem significantly effecting national budgets;

Being aware that positive results in combatting the evasion and fraud can be better achieved through close collaboration between relevant Authorities;

Having regard to:

- the various initiatives of countries of the Visegrad Group in particular to the conclusion of the Joint Declaration of the Heads of Customs Services of the Visegrad Group countries regarding the customs undervaluation of goods imported from the Asian countries in Luhačovice on 12 September 2014 with the aim to exchange information and to prepare common methodology for proper determination of the customs value (Luhačovice V4 Joint Declaration);
- Memorandum on Cooperation in the Area of Tax Administration Activity between The Federal Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Austria, The General Financial Directorate of the Czech Republic, The National Tax and Customs Administration of Hungary, The Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Poland, The Tax Directorate of

the Slovak Republic and The Slovenian tax Administration, done in Wrocław on 14 October 2011;

- to the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council – An Action Plan to strengthen the fight against tax fraud and tax evasion (COM (2012)722);
- to the Council Regulation (EC) N° 515/1997 of 13 March 1997 on mutual assistance between the administrative authorities of the Member States and cooperation between the latter and the Commission to ensure the correct application of the law on customs and agricultural matters with further amendments;
- the Council Regulation (EU) N° 904/2010 of 7 October 2010 on administrative cooperation and combating fraud in the field of value added tax;
- to the Council Directive 2011/16/EU of 15 February 2011 on administrative cooperation in the field of taxation and repealing Directive 77/799/EEC with further amendments;
- to the Council Regulation N° 389/2012/EU of 2 May 2012 on administrative cooperation in the field of excise duties and repealing Regulation (EC) N° 2073/2004;
- relevant bilateral and multilateral tax and customs agreements.

Met in Bratislava on 13 – 14 November 2014 and agreed on the following:

1. The Authorities will cooperate **in customs and excise areas** mainly in the following matters:
 - a) Setting of a methodology for establishing fair prices and threshold values for sensitive goods imported into the territory of the Visegrad Group countries from Asia in accordance with the Luhačovice V4 Joint Declaration;
 - b) Exchange of information from Customs databases for the purpose of risk analysis;
 - c) Audit and Post clearance controls;
 - d) Projects and Programmes concerning the frauds on cyberspace;
 - e) Fight against Excise Fraud;
 - f) Explore possibilities for harmonization of national excise legislation and searching for harmonized interpretation rules of selected problems in excise area;
 - g) Explore possibilities for common training activities aimed to enhance the capacity of customs and excise personnel to effectively detect customs and excise frauds and evasions;

- h) Promoting the use of simultaneous controls and the presence of foreign officials for audits;
 - i) Planning and organizing joint customs operations (JCO) for detection and fight against customs and excise frauds;
 - j) Sharing of the experiences and the best practices in the areas mentioned in this point.
2. The Authorities will cooperate in **tax area** mainly in the following matters:
- a) Fight against VAT fraud and evasion, including the Customs Procedure 4200 and effective participation in the EUROFISC systems;
 - b) Sharing of experiences and exchange of information on national tax legislation in relation to prevention and fight against tax fraud and evasion;
 - c) Sharing experiences and exploring possibilities of setting – up uniform interpretation rules of selected cross-border issues, including trade control, transfer pricing and endorsing cooperation according to Mutual Agreement Procedures;
 - d) Promoting common training activities and sharing the best practices aimed to enhance the capacity of tax personnel to effectively detect tax frauds and evasions;
 - e) Promoting the use of simultaneous controls and the presence of foreign officials for audits;
 - f) Exchange of information on suspicious subjects.
3. If cooperation in other tax and customs matters is considered to be needed, the Authorities according to their priorities and actual needs may agree individual steps to ensure the goals mentioned in this Declaration.
4. For the effective implementation of the provisions specified in this Declaration, the Authorities will promote and stimulate the most effective use of existing communication and information exchange channels, as well as working structures established on the basis of arrangements agreed to date, including acts referred to in the Preamble to this Declaration. The Authorities may consider establishment, where appropriate, additional working structures should it be required to implement more effectively the activities specified in point 1 and 2. The established working structures will organize its meetings at least once a year and they can agree on various forms of communication of their members.
5. Exchange of information is inevitable precondition to enhance mutual cooperation of the Authorities in customs and tax areas. The Authorities will examine legal and technical conditions for more effective and efficient mutual exchange of information.

6. Participation in actions pursuant to this Declaration will be opened to the relevant Authorities of other EU Member States on the case-by-case basis. They may become a member of specific working structures, if they ask for participation and all the respective Authorities of the Visegrad group agree on it.
7. The Authorities will explore and discuss the feasibility of posting the joint Customs Attaché or making use of the Customs Attaché posted by either of the countries of the Visegrad group in the countries or regions of common interest, for the benefit of all the countries of the Visegrad group.

Joint Statement of the Visegrad Group, Slovenia and Croatia

(Bratislava, 26 May 2015)

The Ministers responsible for Cohesion Policy in the Visegrad Group, Slovenia and Croatia met in Bratislava in the Slovak Republic on 26 May 2015 to discuss the implementation of Cohesion Policy during 2014 – 2020 particularly with regard to an ambitious Investment Plan for Europe, simplification, effectiveness and efficiency of the implementation process as well as highlighting Cohesion Policy at political level.

The Ministers of the Visegrad Group, Slovenia and Croatia HAVE AGREED on the following:

The Role of Cohesion Policy under an Investment Plan for Europe

1. The Visegrad Group, Slovenia and Croatia RECOGNIZE the significance of an Investment Plan for Europe for stimulating growth, prosperity and job creation in European Union while maintaining the principles of sound economic governance. We UNDERLINE that the new European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) will complement and be additional to the EU Cohesion Policy programmes which remain the most important drivers of investment in our countries and which considerably facilitate private investments. We BELIEVE that, in order to avoid competition between the two instruments, any streamlining to be introduced in the EFSI, e.g. in state aid, shall be adopted in the mechanisms of the European Structural and Investment Funds as well.
2. The Visegrad Group, Slovenia and Croatia SUPPORT a broader use of financial instruments in 2014 – 2020 and the Commission´s assistance to Member States in this regard. We POINT OUT that the amount and the scope of support of financial expectations from the Commission to spend a certain percentage of funds on a given thematic area established top-down are seen as indicative and without prejudice to the conclusions of the ex-ante assessments.
3. In order to facilitate a more efficient operation, the Visegrad Group, Slovenia and Croatia BELIEVE that establishing representations of the European Investment Advisory Hub (EIAH) in each Member State will be of great added value, and that the EIAH must not affect negatively capacities of existing technical assistance instruments such as JASPERS.

Simplification, effective and efficient implementation

4. The Visegrad Group, Slovenia and Croatia UNDERLINE their determination to find practical solutions, to maximize the use of the 2007 – 2013 commitments applying the flexibility of the existing rules in close cooperation with the Commission. In this respect, we APPRECIATE the Commission´s assistance to Member States in line with the December European Council conclusions.

5. The Visegrad Group, Slovenia and Croatia BELIEVE that in shared management both, Member States and the Commission share responsibility for Partnership Agreements and programmes not only in the programming phase but also during their implementation. The 2014-2020 regulatory framework and agreed conditions of implementation are very demanding and need an involvement and a close cooperation of both sides. Thus, we WELCOME the advisory role of the Commission in the Monitoring Committee, respecting the roles and responsibilities of Managing Authority and the Committee resulting from the Common Provisions Regulation.
6. The Visegrad Group, Slovenia and Croatia ARE OF THE OPINION that bringing the best value for money should be the top priority in implementation of Cohesion Policy. In this context, the focus should be put on the preventive aspect of Commission audit activities as well as on effective spending. Audits could be used to highlight unclear regulatory elements and should in timely manner result in correcting errors that occur in course of implementation. The financial corrections shall not be disproportionate and imposed even when there is no effect of irregularities on declared expenditure or such effect is hypothetical and minimal.
7. The Visegrad Group, Slovenia and Croatia EMPHASIZE the importance of financial instruments for achieving the goals of Cohesion Policy which go beyond the 2014 – 2020 programming period. We WELCOME the possibility for combining these instruments with the different forms of support. Therefore, we invite the Commission to finalize guidelines on all issues concerning implementation of financial instruments without delays and in cooperation with Member States providing clear and stable implementation framework for financial instruments which do not create unnecessary administrative burden and make the use of such options attractive to relevant stakeholders.
8. The Visegrad Group, Slovenia and Croatia UNDERLINE that, in line with the regulatory provisions for the 2014-2020 period, the use of procedures that are open, transparent, proportionate, non-discriminatory, and which avoid conflict of interest (regardless the status of the body implementing financial instruments) should be regarded as satisfactory for the selection of financial intermediaries for financial instruments. This means that public procurements shall not be required. Re-interpretation of these provisions SHOULD BE AVOIDED, as public procurement rules may in reality delay setting up of financial instruments and hinder flexible market intervention when market conditions unexpectedly change.
9. The Visegrad Group, Slovenia and Croatia are COMMITTED to make use of simplified costs options BEARING IN MIND the necessity to comply with procurement rules. We UNDERLINE that simplified costs are an important streamlining instrument ensuring simple and effective implementation. Therefore we INVITE the Commission to cooperate closely with Member States in developing methodologies for simplified cost options using the existing experience.

10. The Visegrad Group, Slovenia and Croatia REITERATE the need for an efficient and audit proof solution for financing operations located in different categories of regions respecting pro-rata mechanism and calculation methods set in Partnership Agreements and operational programmes already agreed with the Commission. Especially the location of key nationwide flagship projects, which are directly linked to national structural reforms and the Council's country specific recommendations, cannot be limited to one programme area, particularly when implementing conditions are outside the programme area. This is the case of projects like National e-Services, e-Government, capacity building, ICT projects, or research with public added value and others implemented statewide or in capital regions but covering several categories.
11. The Visegrad Group, Slovenia and Croatia RAISE THE ATTENTION to the fact that spill-over benefit under the Commission's Guideline on eligibility of operations depending on location shall provide more flexibility for Member States.
12. The Visegrad Group, Slovenia and Croatia CALL ON the Commission to ensure that any proposed changes to the rules and procedures in particular related to public procurement and state aid, which increase the administrative burden or alter the level of penalties imposed, should be accompanied by a proper, independent, statistically validated study available to Member States, explaining the financial impact in an explicit and economically-sound way.
13. The Visegrad Group, Slovenia and Croatia EXPECT the Commission to establish effective monitoring procedures leading to a smooth and uninterrupted fulfillment of ex ante conditionalities in line with the given regulatory framework. Ex ante conditionalities represent a crucial factor pre-determining success or failure of Cohesion Policy implementation. Similarly, the Commission's formal acceptance of progress in action plans shall be provided on regular basis, without delays as to avoid the risk of non-fulfilment.
14. The Visegrad Group, Slovenia and Croatia RECOGNIZE the need for introducing the platform at the EU level for exchange of best practices among Member States concerning OP management and implementation. Therefore, we WELCOME the extension of TAIEX peer-to-peer platform to Cohesion Policy and UNDERLINE the Commission's role in providing adequate technical assistance, extensive administrative and legal support ensuring quality of responses and finding the adequate peers.

Highlighting Cohesion Policy on General Affairs Council

15. The Visegrad Group, Slovenia and Croatia, REFLECTING on needed strategic discussions e.g. on the outcomes of 2014-2020 programming negotiations of MFF mid-term review related to the post 2020 Cohesion Policy arrangements, SUPPORT meetings of Cohesion-dedicated General Affairs Council. Since it is the only and thus the most important high-level policy platform for Cohesion Policy, we ARE OF THE

OPINION that profound discussions SHOULD TAKE PLACE there more regularly and under every presidency compared to the current practice.

**Joint Statement of the 21st Meeting of the Ministers of Environment of the Visegrad
Group Countries, the Republic of Bulgaria and Romania**
(Bratislava, 30 September 2014)

The Ministers of Environment of the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic and the State Secretaries of Hungary, the Republic of Poland, the Republic of Bulgaria and Romania

REAFFIRMING the importance of the cooperation of the Visegrad Group countries, the Republic of Bulgaria and Romania in the field of environmental protection and climate policy,

BEARING in mind the previous meetings of the Environment Ministers of Visegrad Group countries and Visegrad Group countries together with the Republic of Bulgaria and Romania.

NOTING the Programme of the 2014/2015 Slovak Presidency of the Visegrad Group,

Have agreed as follows:

Climate Change

2030 Framework for the EU's Climate and Energy Policy

The V4+ Ministers and State Secretaries took note of the conclusions of the most recent European Council regarding the post-2020 European policy framework for climate and energy. The V4+ countries emphasize that further progress is necessary before the final agreement is reached on the proposed targets and principles that reflects different regional needs and circumstances in a balanced way.

The V4+ countries note with disappointment that the European Commission did not prepare individual impact assessments as requested by European Council in March. The Ministers and State Secretaries reiterate that the single greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction target at EU level must be set realistically and in a technology neutral way. The introduction of any legally binding renewable energy and energy efficiency targets at EU or national level is not desirable, in particular in the context of the proposal for the new governance system. Moreover, the V4+ countries share the common view that the final agreement on the policy framework is conditioned by fair effort sharing and solidarity mechanism in both ETS and non-ETS sectors among the Member States based on the current distribution criteria reflecting 2020 package ambition levels, in particularly in non-ETS.

Furthermore V4+ is convinced that predictable, stable and efficient rules protecting industry against carbon leakage are also indispensable part of a future agreement. Besides that V4+ supports higher flexibility between ETS and non-ETS sectors and the banking AEAs after distribution of efforts in both ETS and non-ETS sectors an additional compensatory mechanism should be established enabling lower income Member States to finance modernization of their energy systems and industrial innovations. The V4+ countries also maintain their position that any decision on climate and energy policy must respect that it is the sovereign right of every Member State to freely choose its most suitable energy mix as provided in the Treaty.

Finally, the V4+ agrees that the European Council should, on regular basis, review all important issues related to the 2030 climate and energy framework preparation and implementation, including possible impacts on competitiveness and energy prices.

The V4+ Ministers believe that the European Council should discuss and agree the EU position for the 2015 Paris climate conference. Following COP21 in Paris and considering contributions made there by other Parties and especially all major economies, the European Council should ensure that protective measures are in place addressing competitiveness of European industries, especially those in the risk of carbon leakage, in case of lack of comparable efforts by other Parties.

International Climate Negotiations

In respect of the preparations for the 20th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 20) to the UNFCCC and the 10th session of the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP 10) in Lima, in December 2014 V4+ stresses the importance of the upcoming climate negotiations in Lima, in particular in terms of reaching an agreement on the key elements for the 2015-Agreement.

We perceive that clear, comparable and fair indicators are the key conditions for agreeing on INDSs. Focus should be given to those already existing in order to avoid additional administrative burden which may occur in case of defining some new indicators.

We believe that Parties need to achieve substantial progress to be able to adopt the new global climate regime at COP 21 in Paris 2015. The V4+ expects the following outcomes from the Lima conference: agreeing up front information requirements applicable to intended nationally determined contribution (INDCs) of all Parties which will ensure that these contributions are quantifiable, transparent and comparable; adopting a decision on modalities of the ex-ante consultation; identifying the elements of the 2015 agreement and in this context bringing further clarity on how adaptation and finance will be addressed in the agreement so as to not confuse the notion of INDCs with centrality of elements other than mitigation.

The V4+ expects all major economies to present their INDCs by the first quarter of 2015 to complete the consultation phase without delay and to enable reaching the agreement at COP 21.

Furthermore, the Ministers and State Secretaries of the V4+ countries welcomed the outcome of the United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon Climate Summit Held on 23 September 2014 and welcomed momentum created. Ministers expressed hope that the attention summit had risen among civil society would create enough pressure for negotiators to speed up the process so that in Paris new and ambitious deal could be agreed. They also expressed the need for global cooperation to fight the negative effects of climate change.

Clean Air Package

The Ministers and State Secretaries expressed their support for the Clean Air package designed to further reduction of air pollution. Nevertheless, they reiterate that the proposed level of reduction of selected pollutants is too ambitious and its implementation would be economically challenging in our regional conditions and national circumstances. On that account, the V4+ countries shall act jointly to promote more acceptable levels for the reduction commitments for 2030 which will allow to comply with targets by the economic sectors concerned and that better reflect the national emission projections of each country.

This could be achieved by overall decrease of ambition level or by setting only indicative targets for 2030 at this moment or by additional flexibility mechanism.

With respect to Proposal for Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the limitation of emissions of certain pollutants into the air from medium combustion plants the member states concerned are willing to achieve common positions to emission limit values for SO₂, NO_x and Particulate Matter according to the different types of plants and fuels used. This joint statement shall take into account social and economic conditions.

Circular Economy – Waste Package

The V4+ countries took note of the recent Communication from the European Commission Towards the Circular Economy and the Waste Package proposal. The Ministers and State Secretaries agreed that the prevention of waste generation is one of the key elements from the side of the resource efficiency approach. However, V4+ countries also emphasize the need for further discussion about more flexible settings of the Waste Package taking into account the different base lines of EU MS.

Although, moving closer to the Circular Economy is broader than a waste management issue that requires harmonised efforts in the fields ranging from product design to the price of primary and secondary materials, as well as the practical feasibility aspects of extended producer responsibility. Furthermore the proposed recycling targets for different types of waste and restrictions on municipal waste landfilling are overly ambitious, without a sufficient cost-benefit analysis and omitting the current situation in waste management within the individual countries. Hence, V4+ countries promote either the extended time-frame for achieving the proposed targets or setting them in a more realistic way according to individual countries' specifications.

**Joint Statement of the Ministers of Environment of the Visegrad Group Countries and
the Representative of the United States**
(Tatranská Lomnica, 18 June 2015)

The Ministers of Environment of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia and representatives of the United States met in Tatranská Lomnica to discuss innovation, clean technology, including for energy, and the circular economy; and to chart a course for enhanced cooperation to address environmental challenges.

The dialogue was complemented by engagement with the private sector on its experience and success in relation to innovation, design, business strategies related to the circular economy, environmental protection, and synergies with economic growth and industrial competitiveness.

The participants underscored the importance of a circular economy in creating opportunities for companies to develop innovative business models that generate numerous environmental benefits. Moreover, a circular economy is essential for the creation of green jobs, sustainable economic, social and environmental development, and international competitiveness.

The participants intend to promote enhanced cooperation to ensure effective and efficient actions to protect the environment. The efforts will be concentrated on the concept of a circular economy with particular focus on enhancing the exchange of information on best practices, and identifying opportunities for cooperation in priority areas such as energy efficiency and renewable energy, waste management, including mining waste and contaminated sites, and water management, building upon and complementing national plans and strategies.

The participants recognize the role of the International Visegrad Fund and the progress made in promoting and assisting V4 stakeholders in the environmental domain.

Furthermore, the four countries of the Visegrad Group agree to further explore the possibilities to engage the International Visegrad Fund into the process and funding of joint environmental sustainability projects.

**Common declaration of the Ministers of Agriculture of the Czech republic, Hungary,
Poland, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Romania and Slovenia on the Proposal for a Regulation of
the European Parliament and of the Council on organic production and labeling of
organic products**

(Nitra, 7 October 2014)

Organic production and the development of the market of organic products is very important for our countries. WE SUPPORT any ideas, changes and a reform in this field, which will lead to the development of the sector and an increase in the numbers of organic products and producers.

WE are AWARE that the Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 of 28 June 2007 on organic production and labeling of organic product and repealing Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91 should be in alignment with the Lisbon Treaty. All of the proposed changes should be deeply considered in the context of the overall aims of the review and should guarantee the development of the sector. The current regulation contains many solutions which result from many years of gained experience, therefore the review should mainly focus on the reduction of unnecessary burdens and the improvement of existing requirements.

WE ASK to take into account that the development of the organic farming sector and the organic market differs in Member States. We have to keep the diversity of the organic sector of the Member States in mind. Some of the proposed amendments could create a lot of difficulties for organic operators and competent authorities and it is therefore very important to avoid such a situation.

WE ENCOURAGE the European Commission, European Parliament and Council to find a solution to the issues regarding the implementation of changes as proposed by the European Parliament and the Council, especially when it comes to producer support and a fair imports system.

WE ASK for a more profound focus on traceability in relation to the organic controls system. WE INVITE the European Commission, European Parliament and Council to carefully revise the proposed articles on the organic productions control system, to maintain the current system of official controls and to avoid a shift from a process-based approach towards simply an end-product approach. The unique status of the whole sector of the organic production control system is based on annual controls and additional risk based approach controls at all stages of organic production. This is the key element to consumer confidence and the transparency of the system. The impact of the introduction of de-certification threshold for non-allowed substances should be better assessed to find the best solution for that problem.

WE HIGHLIGHT the importance of exceptions when it comes to the flexibility, for example the use of non-organic plant propagation material and non-organic feed along with non-organic animals, the retraction of which can cause issues with primary organic production on an organic farm level in regions where the organic farmers directly depend on these mentioned exceptions. We would also like to stress that the absence of GMOs in organic food and products is crucial for our countries. WE EXPECT the definition of production rules for all species which are kept by our farmers.

WE CONSIDER that it is necessary to maintain mixed organic and non-organic production units at all stages of production (from farming to distribution). WE EXPRESS CONCERN that the proposed changes might ultimately lead to the decrease of the number of organic operators throughout the EU. (With the exception of the Czech Republic with regards to the non-organic production at the primary production level.)

WE would like to EXPRESS OUR CONCERN about the number and scope of delegated acts. WE ASK for a review of that area and for reconsideration of a move towards more solutions in the basic act. It would lead to simplification and better overview of the act, the organic sector needs stable rules that will not change for a reasonable period of time.

WE SUPPORT the idea of the promotion of the common European logo and national logos for them to assist with the consumer's orientation in the organic produce and products market. WE SUPPORT the idea of the increase of consumer trust in organic products.

WE APPEAL on the European Commission, European Parliament and Council to take into consideration our joint position and WE BELIEVE, that common ground and consensus between the consumers and producers can be reached. This could also contribute to the increase of production, the increase of consumer trust and also to satisfy demand for organic products and produce.

Joint Statement of the Ministers of Agriculture of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Romania and Slovenia on the improvement of the farmer's position in the food supply chain
(Bratislava, 19 May 2015)

The ministers of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Romania and Slovenia, taking into account recent events on world commodity markets, coupled with high levels of food inflation across many countries, which have raised concerns about the functioning of the food supply chain, declare the following:

1. **THEY RECOGNIZE**, that the sustainability of the food supply chain, which brings together three important sectors of the economy (agriculture, food processing industry and the distribution sectors), is one of the key priorities of the EU, which is an essential benefit for European citizens.
2. **THEY EMPHASIZE**, that the potential economic instability and structural issues of any of the parts of the food supply chain could negatively affect the functioning of the whole food supply chain, in particular the ability to fulfill its basic role in social, economic and environmental terms and to meet consumer's needs.
3. **THEY EXPRESS CONCERN**, that significant imbalances in bargaining power between contracting parties within the food supply chain are a common occurrence and this asymmetry in bargaining power may lead to the application of unfair trading practices. **THEY CONSIDER** that the greatest threat to the sustainability of the food supply chain constitutes of the abuse of the greater economic power, which leads to unfair trading practices in mutual trade relations.
4. **THEY WARN** that the application of unfair trading practices in the food supply chain has the most negative impact mainly on the farmers and food processors.
5. **THEY UNDERLINE** the fact, that the abuse of economic power and the application of unfair trading practices, with relation to the globalization trends in various sectors of the economy and to the increasing internationalization of capital and trade relations, grow beyond the borders of individual MS and are becoming an issue for the EU as a whole.
6. **THEY WELCOME** the recent initiatives of the European Commission and the European Parliament to launch an activity to tackle unfair trading practices in the food supply chain. In this context **THEY ASK** for further elaboration on the analytical work and for presenting legislative proposals in due time at the European Union level by the European Commission.
7. **THEY APPEAL** for the compliance with the business ethics code at every level of the food supply chain and **THEY SUPPORT** all of the voluntary activities, which demonstrate real contribution to the improvement of trade relations for all of the links of the food supply chain. **THEY CONSIDER** that the coexistence of the legislative

and voluntary framework represents the optimal solution for all of the involved parties when applying the business ethics code and unfair trading practices elimination in the food supply chain.

8. **THEY SUPPORT** the promotion of a mutual dialog and cooperation among all stakeholders within the food supply chain with the aim to further contribute to its sustainable development.
9. **THEY ASK** that a clear decision regarding a legislative solution on unfair trading practices is made by the EC before the end of 2015 and **THEY CALL** on the EC, the Presidency of the Council of the EU and the EP to work together in order to find a functional solution of these issues. The main goal should remain to eliminate disproportions of the common market caused by unfair trading practices and the setting of a common legislation to improve the functioning of the food supply chain.

Conclusions from the Meeting of V4 Ministers responsible for Energy

(Bratislava, 21 November 2014)

A meeting of ministers responsible for energy from the Czech Republic, Hungary, the Republic of Poland and the Slovak Republic (hereafter V4 ministers) was held in Bratislava under the auspices of the Slovak Visegrad Group Presidency on 24 November 2014. The aim of the meeting was to have an exchange of views on the energy sector related outcomes of the meeting of the European Council held on 23 and 24 October 2014, to discuss regional energy security issues, in particular regarding the preparation for the upcoming winter, and further concrete areas with potential for the V4 energy cooperation.

The Slovak V4 Presidency appreciated the coordination and exchange of views on the issues of post 2020 climate and energy framework and the energy security measures prior to the informal meeting of EU ministers responsible for energy held on 6 October 2014 and the European Council on 23 and 24 October 2014. V4 ministers confirmed usefulness of such coordination and agreed to continue with coordinative approach also in the future as appropriate.

V4 ministers took note of the conclusions adopted by the European Council in October. The ambitious targets of emissions reduction, increased share of renewables and increased energy efficiency will require significant additional efforts. V4 ministers welcomed the fact that several of the jointly promoted principles and measures were included in the final conclusions. In particular, they welcomed the continuation of carbon leakage measures, non-binding character of the EU energy efficiency target, the statement that the EU targets would not be translated into national binding targets, the confirmation of importance of indigenous source and the compensation mechanisms for less economically developed Member States. V4 ministers agreed that further cooperation within the legislative process following the European Council conclusions would be of added value.

V4 ministers exchanged their views on the energy security situation on both national and regional level before the upcoming winter. They concluded that, in general, the level of security of supply in V4 countries is higher compared to 2009 gas crisis, also due to the commonly realized measures, including the reverse gas flows and new gas interconnectors. V4 ministers confirmed the intention to jointly undertake efforts to elaborate regional preventive and/or emergency plans based on common risk assessment, in order further to enhance the cooperative approach towards the enhanced regional security of supply. Moreover, V4 ministers agreed that additional measures, especially regarding timely implementation of the gas projects of common interest and cooperation in implementation of European network codes, are needed to develop V4 gas market and further increase energy security in the region. It is of utmost importance to pursue the finalization of projects included within North-South corridor in order to provide additional sources of gas for the region. V4 ministers also welcomed the agreement reached among Ukraine, the Russian Federation and the European Commission on the gas supplies for Ukraine during the current winter period. Given the fact that a secure supply for Ukraine and secure transit of gas via Ukraine is an important precondition for security of gas supply in the V4 region, V4 ministers expect all parties to adhere to the agreement. However, the ministers also acknowledge the fact that necessary in order to ensure stable and predictable market and increase security of supplies of the whole region.

The option to elaborate a joint V4 analysis of future regional electricity balances will be subject to further discussions on expert level. Given the role of nuclear energy in the V4 region, V4 ministers agreed to discuss the issues of nuclear fuel supplies. V4 ministers also agreed they will formally support to maintain the current format of the European Nuclear Forum, especially concerning hosting countries.

Memorandum of Cooperation in the Field of Youth between the Ministries of the V4 countries and the EaP countries responsible for Youth

(Bratislava, 22 June 2015)

The Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and the Slovak Republic, the countries of Visegrad Group and Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, the countries of Eastern Partnership to the European Union represented by their ministers responsible for youth (hereinafter referred as the „Participants“),

with respect to historical connections and taking into consideration relationship and friendship between nations and nationalities of the Participants,

believing that young people could contribute to the development of further mutual understanding, tolerance, friendship and cooperation between the Participants;

desiring to expand and strengthen friendship between young people in the Participants and to promote cooperation in the youth field,

expressing their mutual will to promote relations between countries through cooperation in the field of youth affairs,

convinced, that there are common challenges to be faced by young people of both Participants,

acknowledging the role of the youth in the process of strengthening relations between the Participants,

have reached the following Understanding:

I

The Participants are ready to take the appropriate measures in order to enhance their cooperation in the youth field and support the development of direct contacts and friendly relations between the two groups of countries.

The Participants will promote the exchange of information on youth issues; provide information on youth programs, youth policy, national legislation, and regional programs for youth, various structures working on youth matters, experts, researches and other important issues.

II

The Participants will support the exchange of experience in the field of youth affairs. For this purpose, the Participants will develop joint action plan for implementation of joint activities on voluntary basis of the members of two groups of countries. The action plan can be developed for a period of one, two or three years.

III

The Participants will promote enhancement of cooperation among the youth. Carry out joint events such as camping and forums, as well as informing youth on countries history, cultural heritage, and tourism potential.

IV

The Participants will support the promotion of cooperation among the youth organizations. Facilitate youth exchange programs, contact seminars, conferences, training-seminars and other joint activities.

V

The Participants wish to strengthen cooperation within the framework of the „Erasmus+ Programme 2014 – 2020“ according to the developmental level of the Programme within each of the countries, through contact points and/or institutions nominated as the National Agencies in charge for the Programme.

VI

The Participants will promote the main forms of cooperation in the field of youth, namely the exchange of delegations and participation in study visits, seminars, trainings, meetings and forums on the issues covered by this Memorandum as well as in other youth events.

VII

All activities covered by this Memorandum will be implemented in accordance with the national legislation of each country and within their available resources.

VIII

The Representatives of the Participants are ready to meet annually at the Visegrad-Eastern Partnership Countries meeting to discuss the cooperation within this Memorandum.

IX

This Memorandum is concluded with a view to enhancing and developing cooperation between the Participants. This memorandum does not create any rights or obligations under international law.

PROTOCOL

on Co-operation in the Field of Tourism of the Ministry of Transport, Construction and Regional Development of the Slovak Republic, the Ministry of Regional Development of the Czech Republic, the Ministry for National Economy of Hungary, and the Ministry of Sport and Tourism of the Republic of Poland

(High Tatras, 17 – 18 February 2015)

The Slovak Republic, i.e. the President of the Visegrad Group in 2014 – 2015, has organized the 2015 High Level Meeting with the representatives of the Ministry of Regional Development of the Czech Republic, the Ministry for National Economy of Hungary, the Ministry for National Economy of Hungary, the Ministry of Sport and Tourism of the Republic of Poland, hereinafter referred to as the Parties.

The State Secretary of the Ministry of Transport, Construction and Regional Development of the Slovak Republic, Mr František Palko, was the Chairman of the 2015 High Level Meeting.

The delegations met on 17th and 18th of February 2015 in the High Tatras, the Slovak Republic.

The Meeting was also attended by the Presidents and General Directors of the National Tourism Organizations from the aforementioned countries.

During the Meeting the Parties exchanged information on the current situation, events and the development in the area of tourism and in the V4 countries. There was created a platform for the exchange of information and experience of partners from the V4 countries regarding cooperation with partners from People's Republic of China in the field of tourism in the V4 countries. The parties also discussed the possible cooperation within the framework of the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Sustainable Tourism (CCWGST).

The Parties have expressed satisfaction with their intensive co-operation in the field of tourism among the Visegrad Group countries and agreed upon the following:

1. The Parties shall meet regularly in order to Exchange information concerning tourism-related activities and to strengthen their mutual relations.
2. The Parties shall co-operate to increase the tourism flow from the third, especially overseas, countries to the Visegrad Group countries, by elaborating joint marketing plans, as well as organising joint marketing activities on these markets.
3. The Parties shall increase the marketing and promotional activities in the USA, the Russian Federation, India, the People's Republic of China, the countries of Commonwealth of Independent States, South American markets, South Korea, South East Asian markets and Singapore.
4. The Parties shall continue their work in order to improve the joint website (www.european-quartet.com) and its language versions in English, Japanese, Chinese, Russian and Portuguese.

5. V4 countries agreed to form a new logo at the November meeting of NTO experts. The logo is in use from 1 January 2015 and better reflects the geographic jurisdiction of the association and its purpose. The V4 countries will make efforts towards a complete re-branding and promotion under the new heading.
6. Detailed marketing activities are presented and attached as a Marketing Plan of the National Tourism Organisations for the year 2015.

Signed in the High Tatras, the Slovak Republic on the 18th of February 2015, in four original copies in English.

**Communiqué from the 25th Meeting of the Ministers responsible for culture
of the Visegrad Group Countries**
(Bratislava 19th June 2015)

The meeting of the Ministers responsible for culture of the V4 countries was held in Bratislava, Slovak Republic, on 19th June 2015.

The meeting of the Ministers was preceded by a working meeting of ministerial experts, which took place on 17th-18th June 2015. In preparation of the Experts' Report for the meeting of the Ministers responsible for culture the following day, the topics given below were discussed:

1. Progress on the implementation of cultural projects since the 24th Meeting of the Ministers responsible for culture of the V4 countries in Fertőd in 2014:
 - a. The Colloquium of Library and Information Workers from the Visegrad Group;
 - b. The Working Group for Cultural Heritage in the V4 countries
 - c. Co-operation in the field of performing arts in V4 countries
 - d. Seminars on the Evaluation of the Use of EU Funds in the Area of Culture and Creative Industries
 - e. Visegrad Initiative for Audiovisual Co-operation
 - f. Support for further research and development in digitisation, digital restoration and preservation to enhance existing methods and processes in these areas „Film heritage in the digital era”.

2. New proposal was discussed and agreed upon:

The International Master Courses in the field of music for the students of V4+.

3. Nomination for the “2014 International Visegrad Prize”.

The Ministers' discussion focused on the topic “Cultural and creative industries”. The ministers discussed their countries' activities relating to the cultural and creative industries. They focused on the topic of culture and national strategies and policies for supporting creativity and they emphasised the need to share experiences. They agreed that cultural and creative industries play an important role in their countries, both at local, national and V4 levels. The ministers informed each other about the steps that have been taken in the field of cultural and creative industries up to the present time. Future perspectives, good examples and practices at the national level were also raised.

The following conclusions were adopted at the meeting of the Ministers:

1. The Ministers accepted the joint Experts' Report, expressed their satisfaction with the progress in the implementation of the individual projects and agreed with the experts' recommendations.
2. The Ministers welcomed the information on the activities and success of the International Visegrad Fund.
3. The Ministers welcomed the projects and activities complying with the priorities of the Slovak V4 Presidency, particularly the organisation of the colloquium in Bratislava in June 2015 with the title "Libraries in V4+ countries and perspectives of their further development towards 2020".
4. Several follow-up projects were supported: Seminars on the Evaluation of the Use of EU Funds in the Area of Culture and Creative Industries, Co-operation in the field of performing arts in V4 and Audiovisual co-operation and digitisation of film heritage.
5. The Ministers fully supported the activities of the Working Group for Cultural Heritage in the V4 countries and look forward to the next activities in the framework of The Summer Course on the Management of UNESCO World Heritage Sites and The Heritage Forum of Central Europe.
6. The Ministers appreciated the successful implementation of projects in the area of the performing arts (EEPAP and PACE.V4) and welcomed their continuation.
7. The Ministers welcomed the idea of co-operation in the field of audiovisual issues and film digitisation within their competences.
8. The Ministers welcomed the idea of new International Master Courses Project.
9. In connection with the 2014 International Visegrad Prize, which will be awarded at the following meeting, the Ministers approved the candidate DEMOLUDY International Theatre Festival.

Parties agreed that the following meeting of the Ministers responsible for culture of the V4 countries will be held in the Czech Republic in 2016.

Common position of the Visegrad Group extended by Bulgaria, Romania, and Slovenia
Current development in the FOREST EUROPE process /
a legally binding agreement on forests in Europe
(Madrid, 21 – 22 March 2015)

On the occasion of the Seventh Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (Madrid, 21-22 October 2015), we express our view that FOREST EUROPE should further serve as a high level political process for cooperation on forest policies that secures and promotes sustainable forest management and promotes cooperation among forest related organisations and processes in Europe.

We are still convinced that a legally binding agreement on forests in Europe would reinforce and strengthen implementation of sustainable forest management with the view to achieving balanced and stable continuity of all economic, environmental, cultural and social forest functions in Europe, and will contribute to achieving the vision, goals and targets for forests in Europe (Oslo Ministerial Decision: European Forests 2020). Therefore we support further efforts aimed at finding common ground in order to finalize the negotiations on the Legally Binding Agreement.

Annex No. 2: Overview of selected major events and public diplomacy activities organized by the embassies of Slovakia abroad

July 2014, Tokyo	Investment Seminar of Bank of Tokyo Mitsubishi on investment and business climate in the V4 countries for clients of the bank.
July 7, 2014, Budapest	The event to mark the beginning of the presidency of Slovakia in V4 attended by Minister of Foreign Affairs of Hungary, and the ambassadors of the V4 countries.
July 15, 2014, Brusel	Working lunch with GR SEZA MFA BE Francois Roux MRA V4 +.
August 8, 2014, Madrid	Working lunch MRA ZMRA and V4 on the occasion of taking over SK V4 PRES.
September 4, 2014, Sanok	Gala concert of laureates of the International Piano Forum on the occasion of taking over the Presidency of the Slovak Republic in V4.
September 8, 2014, Tel Aviv	Working meeting of ambassadors of the V4 and Ramallah.
September 9, 2014, Oslo	Information for EU Member States in the framework of HoMS on the objectives and priorities of the presidency of Slovakia in V4.
September 12, 2014, Astana	Lecture for students of KAZGU Astana on: <i>"Slovak presidency of the Visegrad Four."</i>
September 17, 2014, Delhi	Photo exhibition, <i>"Velvet Revolution"</i> to the 25th anniversary of the fall of communism.
18. – 19.9.2014, Mexico City	Political consultations of the Directors General of Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the V4 to Mexico City with the presentation of the academic community, government departments and NGOs.
September 19, 2014, Paris	Moyzes Quartet concert - cultural business at the opening of the Slovak Presidency of the V4.
25.9.2014, Rotterdam	Conference <i>„V4 Startups in the Netherlands”</i> .
26.9.2014, Zagreb	Presentation of priorities of SK PRES V4 at MFAEZ ChR at GR (ŠTAT) Hrvoje Marušića.
29.9.2014, Kyjev	Investment seminar <i>"Slovakia - center of Europe and business. Let's do business in Slovakia"</i> .
September 2014, Ljubljana	Working lunch with the foreign policy adviser to president SI M. Makovec.
September 2014, Haag	V4 Film Festival in the Czech cultural center in Rotterdam - presentation of Slovak film <i>Blind Loves</i> .
October 2, Athenes	Concert and a collective exhibition on the occasion of the Presidency of Slovakia in V4.
2. – 3.10.2014, Washington D.C.	U.S. Central Europe Strategy Forum.
October 3, 2014, Stockholm	Concert on the occasion of PRES SK in V4 entitled <i>"18 strings of Visegrad"</i> .
October 7, Uppsala	Discussion seminar of V4 countries on the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Iron Curtain with the participation of President ZV NR SR.
8. – 10.10. 2014, Athens	V4 Presentation in Crete. Economics - presentation mission of V4 mission organized by the Slovak Embassy in Athens.

October 9, 2014, Copenhagen	Embassy in cooperation with the Embassy V4 prepared a joint presentation titled " <i>Twenty years after the fall of communism in Central Europe</i> " at the largest Danish University of Aarhus.
October 10, 2014, Prague	Concert Visegrad Cello Quartet.
October 13, 2014, Varsaw	Concert of the visually impaired singers V4 "Music brought us together".
October 16, 2014, Sarajevo	Joint reception for a national holiday V4 in Sarajevo.
18. – 19.10.2014, Jakarta	Exhibition of Tourism and Culture „ <i>Destination Europe</i> ”.
October 21, 2014, Astana	Working lunch of the Ambassadors of V4 + 1 at the instigation of the SR presidency at V4.
October 22, 2014, Vatican	Working lunch of V4 ambassadors and representatives of the Roman Curia.
October 24. 2014, Beijing	SARIO seminar on investment opportunities in Slovakia and V4
October/November 2014, Paris	The project " <i>Visegrad cinema</i> "- movies: Step to dark.
November 3, 2014, Dublin	„ <i>MEET SK</i> ” -Meeting with representatives of Slovak startups with participation of the State Ministry of Economy and representatives of the V4 countries.
November 4, 2014, Paris	Eastern European and Balkan policy from the perspective of France - Breakfast of diplomats and embassies of V4 and MF and ID of FR.
4. – 6.11.2014, Dublin	Presentation of SK V4 PRES at WEB SUMMIT.
November 5, 2014, Haag	Seminar/panel discussion on the 25th anniversary of the revolutionary changes in November 1989.
November 5, 2014, Moscow	ZMRA meeting of the Visegrad Group and the Baltic trio of University of Economics Professor A. Portanský on EU-Russia relations..
November 6, 2014, Madrid	Business day of V4 in Malaga (Andalusia) organized in cooperation with HC SR Malaga and Commercial and Industrial Chamber Málaga.
7. – 8.11. 2014, Paris	"70. Anniversary of the Slovak National Uprising"- International Scientific Conference
9. – 11.11.2014, Skopje	Working visit of executive director MBF, lectures on the premises of the MFA and the Ministry of Culture at the University of St. Cyril and Methodius.
November 10, 2014, Budapest	"The past in us"- Conference on the reflection of the past in the literature of Central Europe.
11.11.2014, Buenos Aires	Conference on Visegrad Group and chair of the Slovak Republic 2014/2015, prepared by the Slovak Embassy and the Department of the European Union University Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences in Buenos Aires.
November 15, 2014, Copenhagen	"Slovak day in Denmark".
November 17, 2014, Jakarta	Socio-cultural event on the 25th anniversary of the Velvet Revolution.
November 18, 2014, Skopje	Commemorating the 25th anniversary of the democratic changes in the V4 by the panel vernissage exhibition "Velvet revolution".
November 18, 2014, Prague	Literary evening - meeting with authors of V4.

November 18, 2014, Podgorica	MRA V4 working lunch with prominent journalists and media in MN.
November 19, 2014, Vienna	A seminar on the promotion of small and medium-sized enterprises operating in Bratislava cooperation of V4 and JETRO Office.
November 20, 2014, Dublin	The exhibition and celebration of the 25th anniversary of the "Velvet Revolution" in cooperation with VV Czech Republic within the framework of the Slovak Presidency of the V4.
November 22, 2014, Krakow	The seminar entitled „ <i>Forum for Visegrad</i> ”.
November 22, 2014, Riga	Common lunch of V4 Ambassadors to coordinate joint events and presentations of V4 priorities during the presidency of Latvia in the EU Council.
23 – 28.11.2014, Cairo	Exhibition on the 25th anniversary of the revolutionary events in the V4 countries.
November 24, 2014, Skopje	Annual working lunch of titulars of V4 with President Gjorge Ivanov.
November 25, 2014, Vatican	The exhibition, "25th anniversary of the Velvet Revolution".
November 25, 2014, Dehlí	Working dinner of V4 ambassadors with EU ambassadors in India and representatives of the Department of Central Europe of Indian MFA.
November 26, 2014, Budapest	Gala concert to mark the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Iron Curtain and the Slovak V4 presidency.
November 28, 2014, Madrid	MRA V4 working lunch with the delegate of the Government of Catalonia, Josep María Bosch - the current internal political situation in Catalonia.
November 30, 2014, Bethlehem	V4 Presentation at the 18th charity Christmas market in Bethlehem.
November 2014, Tokyo	Concert of Visegrad jazz quartet, initiated and co-organized by the Tokyo Embassy and co-organized by the embassies of V4, part of the Year of exchanges between V4 and Japan.
November 2014, Kuwait	Social venture for ambassadors of the V4 countries.
December 3, 2014, Rabat	Business lunch, informing partners about priorities of SK V4 PRES, negotiation of joint activities in Morocco and the development of relations with countries in the region Morocco.
December 4, 2014, Varsaw	Conference on " <i>V4 experience with the process of transition: What can the Korean Peninsula learn?</i> " The event was organized by the Polish Institute of International Affairs, MFA PR, Embassy of Korea and the Slovak Embassy.
December 4, 2014, Roma	Seminar " <i>Central European Identity: Chimera, or Vision?</i> ".
December 4, 2014, Lisboa	MRA V4 working lunch with the Permanent Secretary Ministry of Foreign Affairs PT devoted to current European issues and cooperation opportunities V4 + Portugal.
December 6, 2014, Riga	Traditional joint stand of V4 during a charity Christmas bazaar.
10 – 11.12.2014, Ankara	Cooperation negotiations of V4 + Turkey.
December 17, 2014, Moscow	Moscow roundtable on the 25th anniversary of the political and social sciences in Central Europe co-organized with the Institute of Europe of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

December 18, 2014, Zagreb	Christmas concert of SK V4 PRES ensembles "14 Strings of Visegrad".
December 2014, Tokyo	Christmas concert of the societies of friendship with V4 countries organized by the Japan-Slovak society in cooperation with the Embassy in Tokyo, contribution to the activities of the year of exchanges between V4 and Japan.
January 13, 2015, Prague	Working meeting of V4 ambassadors, Germany and Austria with the foreign affairs ministers of the Czech Republic.
January 15, 2015, Riga	Informal meeting of political directors V4 and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland on the ground of the Embassy Riga.
January 20, 2015, Roma	Formal evaluation of the project "10 years of joining the EU - from the extension to unity: <i>10 years together in the EU</i> ".
23 – 24. 1. 2015, Dublin	Presentation of SK V4 PRES at the Holiday World Show.
26 – 29. 1. 2015, Tel Aviv	Film Festival of V4 in Bethlehem.
January 29, 2015, Berlin	New Year's concert of V4 - the project Inakô, music and dance performances of the Slovak world music group Banda and dance group Credance.
January 29, 2015, Kyjev	V4 + Germany, talks of the Minister of Energy and Coal Industry of UA with V4 ambassadors on issues of energy strategy of UA.
February 3, 2015, Sarajevo	MRA V4 Working lunch with Deputy Minister ZV BH Ana Trisic-Babic. Ana Trišič-Babić.
February 5, 2015, Uzhgorod	Public presentation of the proceedings speech at a conference organized by the Institute of Strategic Studies in cooperation with GK in Uzhgorod.
February 5, 2015, Berlin	Colloquium of Foundation of St. Vojtech (Adalbert Stiftung) of pulses from V4 to the fall of the Berlin Wall and the initiative to establish the memorial.
February 6, 2015, Paris	European policy, FR relations with the countries of V4 - Breakfast of V4 ambassadors in Paris with the director of the Foreign Affairs Section EÚ of FR Pierre Levy.
February 9, 2015, Brazil	V4 Working Breakfast is located in Brazil.
February 10, 2015, Tokyo	The second student conference in the format of V4 and Japan on coexistence in the era of globalisation at Josai International University.
10.2. - 30.5. 2015, Jakarta	V4 Postgraduate Course " <i>Visegrad Countries: People, State and Politics</i> " at the University of Indonesia in Jakarta.
February 11, 2015, Soul	Working lunch of V4 ambassadors in Seoul with the GR Section for European Affairs, MFA Korea Ha Tae-Youk.
February 12, 2015, Belgrade	V4 ambassadors working lunch organized by the Slovak Embassy.
February 12, 2015, Kyjev	Working meeting of representatives of the OECD aimed at showcasing projects and programs of OECD in Ukraine.
February 15, 2015, Cairo	Discussion Evening with political scientists and writers in the V4 countries on: The cultural identity of Central and Eastern Europe 25 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall.
February 16, 2015, Cairo	V4 guests meeting with the leadership of the newspaper Al Ahram.

February 17, 2015, London	V4 + team of UK Ministry to reform the EU breakfast meeting.
February 26, 2015, Sofia	Seminar " <i>V4 share with Bulgaria experience in eGovernment</i> ".
February 26, 2015, Nairobi	Working lunch of Ambassadors of the Visegrad Group (V4).
February 27, 2015, Haag	Exhibition of Quartet "18 strings of Visegrad" associated with the celebrations of the 22nd anniversary of the independence of Slovakia and the current Slovak V4 Presidency.
February 27, 2015, Pretoria	Videoconference about the business environment, business and investment opportunities in the V4 countries in collaboration with the Nelson Mandela Bay Chamber of Commerce.
March 3, 2015, Madrid	Lecture of MRA Madrid on the ground of the Institute for International Affairs and Foreign Policy (INCIPE) on " <i>Dynamic Visegrad and Slovak V4 presidency 2014/2015</i> ".
March, 3 2015, Dehlí	International Seminar "India and Central Europe" at the ground of Javaharlal Nehru University.
March 5, 2015, Madrid	Working lunch with the MRU V4 and GR POLS Ministry of Foreign Affairs S Enrique Sea.
March 8, 2015, Cairo	Workshop entitled "Visegrad countries in Egypt and the Mashreq", organized by a grant from IVF.
March 9, 2015, New York	The meeting of the V4 in NY countries organized by GK NY.
March 11, 2015, Tokyo	Seminar V4 + Japan on science and technology. Organizers were MFA and EZ SR, Japan Embassy, Slovak Embassy in Tokyo in cooperation with the University Josai.
March 13, 2015, Madrid Forum:	<i>"Central Europe after 25 years"</i> .
March 16, 2015, Soul	V4 + KR University cooperation.
March 16, 2015, Nicosia	Annual Meeting of Slovakia-Cypriot Association in the premises of arts funding "The Shoe Factory".
March 17,2015, Bangkok	Ministry of Commerce of Thailand organized in cooperation with the ambassadors of the V4 forum " <i>Central Europe Day 2015</i> ".
March 18, 2015, Berlin	Concert of V4 and Japan in Berlin.
March 18, 2015, Stockholm	Working meeting at the Embassy in Stockholm within the Bureau SR V4 - Breakfast of V4 + B3.
22 – 25 March 2015, Cairo	Stamp Exhibition of V4 states.
March 23, 2015, Helsinki	Conference " <i>Security and insecurity in Europe: Drivers and Policies</i> ".
March 24, 2015, Budapest	Panel Discussion " <i>Digital Roadmap for the V4</i> " organized in collaboration with the Central European Policy Institute.
March 24, 2015, Rome	Italy-Slovak consortium for the energy industry in conjunction with IVF, the Ministry of Health IT, a company NUCLECO Embassy in Rome organized an expert seminar on " <i>Removing radioactive medical waste</i> ".
March 25, 2015, Stockholm	Working lunch with ambassadors of the V4 with GR Section of Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the CEE Michaela Kumlinova Granite.

March 26, 2015, Haag	Under the auspices of SK Presidency in the form of V4 + DE there was a panel discussion entitled " <i>One Year after Majdan - Central European views on the situation in Ukraine</i> ".
26 – 27.3.2015, Bucharest	International Student Conference of V4 + Romania in Bucharest.
March 2015, Warsaw	Working dinner with Ambassadors of V4 with the State Secretary of MFA PR H Mościcka-Dendys.
March 2015, Ljubljana	Working lunch on foreign policy adviser to presidents M. Makovec, national SI coordinator for V4 S. Vidovič and ŠTAT ÚV SI for European and foreign affairs J. Lenarčič.
March 2015, Tokyo	Seminar on scientific and research cooperation between the V4 countries and Japan, organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan in cooperation with the Embassy of the V4 - V4 coordination with the participation of the Embassy Tokyo.
April 2, 2015, Ljubljana	Working lunch of MRA V4 with the President of the National Assembly of SI M. Brglez.
April 7, 2015, Nairobi	Meeting of V4 ambassadors with the Kenyan ministries of foreign affairs and the East African affairs.
April 9, 2015, Haag	Meeting of V4 and Benelux initiated by the presidency of the V4 (SK) and Benelux (BE) to extend their cooperation.
April 13, 2015, Vilnius	Joint lunch of ambassadors of V4, SR priorities presentation in the Energy union and common interests during the upcoming summit of the Eastern Partnership.
April 14, 2015, Jakarta	Lecture of MRA at the Indonesian University Postgraduate Course <i>V4 "Visegrad Countries: People, State and Politics"</i> .
14.4. – 5.5.2015, Washington	Screening of the film by Slovak director J. Jakubisko "Bathory" in the 4th edition of the film festival of V4 Embassy.
April 15, 2015, Uppsala	Dinner with Ambassadors of V4 with Uppsala county governor Peter Egardt.
April 15, 2015, Beijing	Presentation at the fair of tourism China Outbound Travel and Market (COTTM).
April 17, 2015, Astana	Working lunch of diplomats responsible for economic relations in the format of V4 + 1
19 – 21 April, 2015 Kyjev	Co-organization of events in the project, so-called Roadshow attended by State Secretaries of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the V4 + UA in Chernihiv on the subject of decentralization.
21 – 23 April 2015, Washington	V4 Startups Heading for Silicon Valley.
21 – 24 April 2015, Madrid	<i>V4 Film Festival "Pasado común, futuro compartido"</i> . (Common past, shared future).
April 22, 2015, Budapešť	Concert of Visegrad Cello Quartet.
April 23, 2015, Vienna	Working lunch of V4 ambassadors in Vienna with the head of the office of the Austrian President H. Freudenschuss.
April 24, 2015, Skopje	Working breakfast of titulars V4 with the Foreign Minister N. Poposki within the first " <i>Days of Slovak gastronomy in Macedonia</i> ".
April 24, 2015, Tel Aviv	Business Lunch of V4 heads of liaison offices in PA.

April 28, 2015, Zaragoza	Economic presentation of the V4 countries in the framework of IV. Summit International of business people and entrepreneurs in the seat of the Zaragoza provincial government.
April 28, 2015, Budapest	Performances and participation of MRA SR at the international event dedicated to the importance of the V4.
April 30, 2015, Bern	Working meeting with Director-General of the European Section of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs CH to "follow-up" to the Summit V4 + CH.
3 – 5 May 2015, Chisinau	Working visit of Executive Director of IVF in Moldova.
6 – 7 May, 2015, Podgorica	Consultation of CEOs of the political sections of Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the V4 countries.
May 7, 2015, Rome	International Conference on the agenda and objectives of the Visegrad Group on " <i>V4 and the EU integration: Challenges and Opportunities of Regional Cooperation</i> " on the grounds of the Faculty of Political Sciences.
7 – 10 May, 2015, Tanger	V4 Literary events at the 19th edition of the International Salon of books.
May 8, 2015, Tallin	Joint presentation stand of V4 to celebrate Europe Day.
May 9, 2015, Ankara	Common information and promotional booth in Europe Day 2015 organized the EU Delegation in Ankara.
May 12, 2015, Sarajevo	Working meeting with the MRU V4 N. Lovrenović, Chairman of the Committee on European Integration of BH.
12 – 25 May, 2015, Oslo	Exhibition "How does Central Europe help the world".
March 13, 2015, Madrid	Forum: "Central Europe after 25 years" at the headquarters of the European institutions in Madrid on the experience of transition to democracy and European integration with the participation of MEPs and prominent Spanish political leaders.
May 14, 2015, Istanbul	Grand Opening Slovakia - Turkish permanent forum for science, innovation and trade at Bilgi University.
May 14, 2015, Soul	consultation on cooperation V4 + KR on the new Knowledge Sharing Programme.
May 14, 2015, Bangkok	V4 day opening at Chulalongkorn University.
May 16, 2015, Shanghai	International Shanghai Goulash Day with the active participation of representatives of the Slovak, Czech, Polish, Hungarian, British and Dutch community living in Shanghai.
18.5. – 19.7.2015, Taiwan	Film Festival of V4 countries in 12 cities in Taiwan.
May 19, 2015, Helsinki	Startup roundtable at the Embassy in Helsinki.
May 20, 2015, Astana	Exhibition at the tourist workshop V4: " <i>European Quartet, one melody</i> ".
May 21, 2015, Riga	Meeting of the V4 countries, Romania and Bulgaria signed a joint Ministerial Declaration to promote the project Eastring.
May 22, 2015, London	V4 Garden party at the Embassy in London. Meeting the Embassies of the V4 + Austria and Slovenia.
May 24, 2015, Pretoria	Chamber duos concert on the occasion of the Presidency of Slovakia in V4.
May 28, 2014, Miskolc	Slovak day - organized by the embassy in Budapest in collaboration with GK in Békéscsaba Čaba, with the Slovak Institute and the SACR.

May 28, 2014, Cape Town	V4 Consultation Day for entrepreneurs from the Western Cape Province, organized in collaboration with the Cape Chamber of Commerce and Industry.
May 2015, Sofia	V4 concert - "18 strings of the Visegrad Group",
2 – 3 June 2015, Stockholm	Visiting of titulars of V4 in the Swedish county of Västerbotten.
June 4, 2015, Roma	The gala concert "18 strings of the Visegrad Group".
June 4, 2015, Durban	V4 Business Forum in Durban in cooperation with Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal.
4. – 5.6.2015, Washington D.C.	Consultation of Directors of expert analysis of foreign ministries in the V4 + format USA.
June 5, 2015, Washington D.C.	Discussion of the topic: " <i>The Ukraine Crisis: A Test for Visegrád</i> ".
June 5, 2015, Madrid	Literary event of V4 "Pasado Común, Futuro compartida" organized in cooperation with the Embassy of the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary with the support of the Literature Information Centre.
June 8, 2015, Copenhagen	Concert of Visegrad Cello Quartet.
June 8, 2015, Taipei	Working lunch at the level of V4.
June 10, 2015, Soul	Working lunch organized by the advisor of the Korea Development Institute (KDI) Jin Ho Lee to the issues of cooperation of V4 + KR on the project Knowledge Sharing Program.
June 10, 2015, Tripolis	Joint visit of ambassadors of the V4 countries at Peloponnese.
June 11, 2015, Roma	Business lunch in the format of V4 with the new Director General of Section of European Affairs MFAaES Giuseppe Buccino Grimaldi IT.
June 11, 2015, Consultations	of MFA Political Directors of V4 with MFAs of Egypt.
June 11, 2015, Bern	Cultural presentation of V4/concert of V4 at Yehudi Menuhim Forum – exhibition of – " <i>18 Strings</i> ".
June 11, 2015, Witbank	Business Forum V4 in Witbank in the Mpumalanga Province, organized in collaboration with the Mpumalanga Economic Growth Agency.
June 12, 2015, Astana	Meeting of ZV V4 embassies and representatives of the Coordinating Office for Central Asia of the International Organization for Migration.
June 17, 2015, Stockholm	Working lunch with ambassadors of the V4 Annika Söderova, State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
June 22, 2015, Budapest	Budapest University of Pannonia Koszeg Centre (Summer University), performance and participation of the Ambassador of the Slovak Republic in the panel dedicated to Central European / V4 cooperation.
June 23, 2015, Berlin	Opera gala evening at the conclusion of SK V4 PRES.
June 23, 2015, Vatican	Concert the work Proglas made into music.
June 23, 2015, Nikosia	Seminar on the prospects for cooperation in the field of startups.
24. – 26.6.2015, Dublin	Film Festival V4 called Fantastic V4.
June 25, 2015, Vienna	Gala concert to mark the end of the Presidency of the V4 in the Slovak Republic in cooperation with the SI Vienna.

- June 25, 2015, Kyjev Presentation of Slovakia-Ukraine reverse during the International Energy Conference KERI IEC 2015 with the participation of representatives of the V4 + Ukraine, Moldova and Romania.
- June 26, 2015, New York Concert in New York to mark the end of the Presidency of Slovakia in V4.
- June 29, 2015, Prague Working meeting of V4 ambassadors, the Netherlands, Germany, Britain, Spain, the Netherlands, Norway and China with the President of the Chamber of Deputies J. Hamáček.
- June 30, 2015, Moscow roundtable on relations between Russia and V4 on "*Visegrad Europe and Russia*" organized by the Embassy in Moscow in cooperation with the Russian Council for International Relations and the Institute of Europe of the Russian Academy of Sciences.
- June 30, 2015, Washington D.C. Working lunch of diplomats of V4 responsible for trade, economy and innovation in order to evaluate activities during the Slovak presidency in the field of economics in the USA.
- June 30, 2015, Riga Exhibition "How does Central Europe help the world" connected with the official end of the SK V4 PRES.
- June 30, 2015, Seoul working lunch with ambassadors of V4 Deputy Kim Hong-Kyun.
- June 2015, Sofia V4 partners meeting about the current situation on migration with a view to the forthcoming negotiation ER and Energy in BG.
- June 2015, Tirana Tirana embassy consultation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Albania establishing the West-Balkan Fund.
- July 1, 2015, Working lunch to mark the end of the Presidency of Slovakia in V4.
1. – 2.7.2015, Munich V4 expert consultations with Bavarian partners in cooperation with the Association of Artisans of Lower Bavaria and Upper Palatinate.