

PROGRAMME OF THE SLOVAK PRESIDENCY OF THE VISEGRAD GROUP – V4
(July 2010 – June 2011)

**EFFICIENT VISEGRAD - CONTINUITY, COHESION, SOLIDARITY,
AWARENESS**

INTRODUCTION:

The Slovak Republic will hold the presidency of the Visegrad Group (V4) from 1 July 2010 to 30 June 2011, taking over from the Republic of Hungary and passing it on to the Czech Republic on 30 June 2011. During its presidency, Slovakia wants to build on the experiences and achievements of previous presidencies, supporting the key priorities and the main lines of Visegrad cooperation which have been successfully established. Moreover, Slovakia would like to bring added value in terms of building awareness of the Visegrad identity not only in our countries and among their citizens, but also within the EU and beyond. The pursuit of V4 interests within the EU framework, as well as in broader international contexts, constitutes one of the main priorities of the group's international modus operandi under the Slovak Presidency.

The priorities and programme of the Slovak Presidency have been drafted in due consideration of the fact that the V4 countries are members of and allies in the European Union and NATO. As members of these important integration groupings, the countries are well placed to effectively participate in international endeavours aimed at solving various European and global issues and, equally importantly, bear their deal of responsibility for such solutions.

In formulating the main priorities of its presidency, Slovakia based itself on the V4 programme documents, particularly the “*Contents of Visegrad Cooperation*” approved by Prime Ministers at the Bratislava V4 summit on 14 May 1999, the *Visegrad Declaration of the Slovak, Czech, Hungarian and Polish Prime Ministers on Cooperation of the Visegrad Group Countries after their Accession to the EU*, adopted in Kroměříž on 12 May 2004, and annex thereto – *Guidelines on Future Areas of Visegrad Cooperation*.

The main projects within the framework of sectoral and cross-border cooperation in the economic, energy security, commercial, scientific, and technological areas, including diplomacy activities, will be driven by demand, taking due account of the interests of V4 citizens. Slovakia will therefore support pragmatic cooperation aimed at mitigating the impacts of the global economic and financial crisis, accelerating universal modernisation, fostering economic growth, and enhancing energy security. At the same time, Slovakia will continue to implement a responsible and constructive foreign-policy approach designed to strengthen the stability, security and prosperity of the EU and its immediate neighbours and partners.

The V4 is a living and informal international regional structure. In order to confirm its viability, the group must adequately and flexibly react to emerging European and global challenges and focus its activities and orientation accordingly. In preparing its presidency, Slovakia reflected on topical European and global issues, first and foremost being the ramifications of the global economic, financial and energy crisis, plus new challenges, including the negative impacts of the climate change, threats of terrorism, religious extremism, and the like. The Slovak Republic is aware of the fact that peaceful and stable development across the Visegrad Group and in neighbouring countries is the basic prerequisite for ensuring a stable and successful development of the region. The intention of the Slovak Presidency will be to contribute, through closer regional cooperation, towards

making sure that the reaction of the broader international community to these challenges is responsible and effective. Slovakia remains convinced that the future dignified existence of universe can only be secured through broad cooperation, cohesion and solidarity of the entire international community.

During the Slovak Presidency, the V4 will commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Visegrad Group formation, the modern foundations and underlying framework of which were laid at a meeting of the Presidents of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic and the Republic of Poland and the Prime Minister of the Republic of Hungary, which took place in Visegrád on 15 February 1991. The 10th anniversary of the establishment and launch of the International Visegrad Fund (IVF) based in Bratislava will give us an ample opportunity to intensify the promotion of the V4 and present the most successful projects and positive examples of Visegrad cooperation. A jubilee euro-coin and a Visegrad postage stamp will be issued in February 2011 as part of the 20th anniversary commemoration.

Last, but not least, during the second half of the Slovak presidency another V4 country, Hungary, will hold the presidency of the Council of the European Union (to be followed in the second half of 2011 by yet another member of the V4, Poland). The V4 considers this coincidence as a source of synergy, where the two parallel presidencies should and can help each other in implementing their respective work programmes.

The main goals and priorities of the Slovak Presidency will be pursued in keeping with the following principles:

- *Continuity* – implementation of sectoral cooperation projects, which are currently in progress or under preparation, will continue until their successful completion to the benefit of V4 citizens; strengthening of the V4 as a dynamic regional grouping of EU Member States; strengthening of V4 cooperation aimed at creating a strong, united and dynamic formation in Central Europe;
- *Cohesion* – the togetherness and solidarity of the Visegrad countries should be enhanced by deepening the consultation and coordination mechanisms and improving mutual interaction among the governments, sectors and institutions in the interest of attaining common positions and opinions on important issues of common interest, particularly those on the EU agenda, as well as in selected areas of V4 sectoral cooperation, including energy security as agreed in particular in “*Declaration of the Budapest V4+ Energy Security Summit*” of the 24th of February 2010;
- *Solidarity* – by intensifying mutual relations, the V4 countries should support further development of cooperation with the Western Balkans and the Eastern Partnership countries, and their endeavours for European and/or Euro-Atlantic integration, using the mechanisms and instruments of the IVF and EU;
- the benefits and instruments of direct cooperation and exchanges between regional self-governing institutions, municipalities and towns, including the resources of scientific centres, academia and non-government organisations (NGOs), will be put to use in order to provide practical support to joint projects, strengthen Visegrad links, facilitate student and youth exchanges, and foster the development of civil society using the tools of the IVF, public-service TV and radio broadcasters and relevant NGO platforms within the V4;
- *Awareness* – regular dissemination of information to the public through central and regional media on the activities and successes of V4 projects and the IVF, combined with a more effective presentation of Visegrad cooperation and activities in individual V4 countries, in Brussels and, where appropriate, capitals of Member States.

CALENDAR OF MAIN SUMMITS:

Presidents

Autumn 2010, venue:, Czech Republic
2011, venue:, Hungary

Speakers of Parliament

At least one meeting.

Prime Ministers

November/December 2010, venue:, Slovakia
June 2011 venue:, Slovakia

Foreign Affairs Ministers

Two working meetings on specified foreign policy/EU issues on dates that take into account the programme of the relevant EU presidency:

Autumn 2010 venue:, Slovakia
- meeting at the level of Foreign Affairs Ministers of the V4 and Western Balkan countries

Spring 2011 venue:, Slovakia
- meeting at the level of Foreign Affairs Ministers of the V4 and Eastern Partnership countries

During the Slovak Presidency from July 2010 to June 2011, the individual ministries will organise working meetings of ministers and other representatives and experts on V4 sectoral cooperation. Details will be provided in a separate action plan of the Slovak V4 Presidency.

FOREIGN POLICY

V4 Cooperation on Global and Regional Issues

The Slovak Presidency intends to employ the V4 platform and coordination mechanism for:

- **a close cooperation in formulating V4 countries' positions** on alleviating the impacts of the global economic, financial and social crisis, and on EU position for global climate change negotiations (including financing measures to address the impacts of climate change);
- a flexible exchange of views on problems that pose a threat to **international security**, with emphasis placed on the security of the Central European region; taking an active part in the preparation of NATO's Strategic Concept;
- **intensifying cooperation with a view to increasing external energy security** of the V4 countries – **by interlinking regional energy networks, strengthening the EU Common Energy Policy, and diversifying sources, routes and suppliers of energy and raw materials**;
- **enhancing the cooperation of V4 countries in the field of candidatures to different organs and bodies of international organizations**;
- **strengthening the European Global Approach to Migration** – legal migration management, combating illegal immigration, reinforcing synergies between migration and development of its eastern and south-eastern dimension. Slovakia also intends to continue the implementation of the “Building of Migration Partnerships (BMP)” process and a project launched under the Czech EU Presidency. In communication among the V4 Foreign Ministries, attention should be paid to the questions of institutional and systemic linkages between **migration and development policy**.

V4 Cooperation within the EU

EU strategic documents:

- Within the EU context, the V4 countries will be more active in **pursuing their joint policies** in identified key areas, defending their shared **interests** on the basis of common positions and/or coordination in EU regional policy areas, participating actively in discussion on macro-regional strategies inside the EU, implementing the Treaty of Lisbon and the new Strategy Europe 2020, EU budgeting and discussions about the multi-annual financial framework of the EU after 2013, combating climate change and adaptation to its adverse effects, reforming the Common Agricultural Policy, and the European External Action Service; they will also cooperate and coordinate their candidacies to EU bodies, the Commission, the European Parliament, and their offers to host the seats of EU agencies, etc. V4 countries will continue in exchanges of views on Permanent Structured Cooperation (PSC), with aim to pursue effectiveness of our commitments stemming from our participation in CSDP;
- Presentation and promotion of the V4 countries' cooperation in the EU capitals;
- Sharing experience from the implementation of **sectoral policies**, i.e., holding a discussion on the setting of sectoral policies as part of the dialogue with Western Balkan countries and Eastern Partnership members (*experience from transformation reforms, including social and economic transition, as well as with the EU accession process and development cooperation, in the case of the Western Balkans*);

- Sharing **experience from the euro area accession processes**, including the implementation of system changes towards public finance consolidation (*within the V4*);
- Sharing experience related to **the rotating presidency of the EU (HU, PL)**;
- Slovakia's priority will be to make a more intensive use of the V4 expert format in discussing and/or drafting EU legislation and acts under different Council formations. This approach should gradually create conditions for a more effective use of the V4 format within the EU and, at the same time, facilitate mutual support of the V4 countries in connection with the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon;
- Formulation of the V4 common policy considering the special needs of the V4 region and creation the basis for a coordinated lobby activity in order to favourably shape the Community's Energy Policy;
- Development of an adequate form of cooperation in order to achieve a higher allocation share of EU financial resources to all regional infrastructure projects aimed at increasing the energy security of the region;
- Close follow-up of the implementation of common regional interests in the process of establishing the Second Action Plan (Energy Strategy for Europe 2011-2020) and developing the architecture and budget of the new EU Energy Security and Infrastructure Instrument;
- Closer cooperation of the V4 countries in discussions on the energy legislation issues at the meetings of the High Level Energy Working Group.

European External Action Service

- Joint V4 **consultations** on issues pertaining to the formation and activities of the **European External Action Service (EEAS)**, experience sharing and potential coordination of a joint approach – including with other “like-minded” countries;
- Consultations in the following areas: **Training and posting of national diplomats to the EEAS**; EEAS staff selection methodology and practices; EEAS competences and agenda; taking specific (especially higher) posts in the EEAS.

Regional policy

- Exchange of experience from the implementation of the first stage of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and close cooperation of the V4 countries in preparations and approval of a draft EU Strategy for the Danube Region;
- Based on a suggestion presented by the Slovak president at a V4 presidents' summit held in Sopot, Poland, on 11-12 September 2009, the V4 group will promote further discussion on the Visegrad region as one of the prospective new EU macro-regions. The Visegrad region meets the essential requirements and characteristics necessary in order to launch a comprehensive expert assessment of the V4 as a new natural EU macro-region.

V4 Activities towards Western Balkan Countries, Eastern Partnership

- The Visegrad Group will continue to implement its ongoing diplomatic activities and promote V4 projects, maintaining continuity of the programmes implemented by the previous Presidencies in the priority areas with respect to the Western Balkans and the Eastern Partnership.

Stabilisation of Western Balkan countries, their European and Euro-Atlantic integration

- **Supporting integration process of the countries of the Western Balkans (WB).** EU integration and NATO open door policy are strategic instruments to ensure stability, democracy and prosperity in Europe; advocating EU enlargement as one of the Union's priorities; reinforcing links between NATO and the Western Balkan countries and continuous endorsement of the Alliance's "open door" policy; supporting the WB countries in reaching a further level in their integration process; signature and ratification of the accession treaty between the EU and Croatia; encouraging new quality of the regional cooperation policy using V4 experience with mutual support in integration processes as a main policy priority of all involved countries;
- **V4 cooperation** in the **pre-accession assistance** to the Western Balkan countries;
- **Joint sharing** with the Western Balkan countries **of the Visegrad Group's experience and expertise from the EU and NATO accession processes**, using the past and current V4 activities; joint seminars, workshops and videoconferences with participation of experts from the foreign affairs ministries and other governmental agencies of the V4 countries; diplomatic missions with active involvement of non-governmental and academic sector representatives; developing a comprehensive experience-sharing programme between the V4 and WB countries using the IVF resources, preparation and implementation of the Visegrad+ projects;
- **Sharing** with the Western Balkans the joint V4 **experience from regional cooperation**;
- Ensuring the coherence of the development assistance provided to the Western Balkans by the V4 countries and other international donors (organisation of an expert meeting on this issue); maintaining close contacts with the regional initiatives implemented in the region of South-Eastern Europe (CEI/Central European Initiative/, SEECP/South East European Co-operation Process/, RCC/Regional Cooperation Council/, BSEC/Black Sea Economic Cooperation/) in order to ensure a coherent approach to development policies linked with the EU policies;
- Supporting mobility and people-to-people contacts, including by advocating further visa liberalization and promoting scholarships for students from the Western Balkan countries.

Eastern Partnership and intensified cooperation within the Eastern dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy.

In order to accomplish this foreign policy priority, the Slovak V4 Presidency wishes to:

- Emphasise the importance and benefits of the Eastern Partnership, which is a specific Eastern dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy, for the European Union;
- Ensure effective implementation of the Eastern Partnership both in its bilateral and multilateral dimensions. Active engagement of the V4 should facilitate tangible results in various areas of cooperation, such as the **energy sector, economy, justice and home affairs, human rights and democratisation**, and the building of administrative capacities. In this respect, effort will continue to ensure active participation of all the countries involved, as well as the European Commission and future presidencies of the European Union. Sharing valuable experience will be of benefit to the Eastern partners;
- Encourage partner countries in their endeavour **to implement economic and political reforms** and, using intensive links, contribute towards the building of a common area of values and standards based on the European Union model and the overall modernisation of these countries;

- Pay specific attention to the **intensification of relations between the V4** and partner countries. Cooperation between the V4 and partner countries should concentrate on possible **advancements in the visa regime facilitation** in the EU context, economic development, removal of trade barriers, standardization, energy security, human rights dialogue and border protection. The V4 countries should also stress the importance of closer cooperation with actors of the civil society in the EaP countries and promote the networking and exchange of experience between CSOs in the EaP countries and their counterparts in the V4;
- Sharing with the Eastern Partnership countries the joint V4 experience from regional cooperation;
- Supporting mobility and people-to-people contacts, including by advocating further visa facilitation and promoting scholarships for students from the Eastern Partnership countries;
- Prepare joint Eastern Partnership projects for implementation in partner countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine), identify appropriate projects for the EaP countries and jointly promote their implementation through the Eastern Partnership mechanisms (platforms, joint activities);
- Advocate the idea of allocating reasonable EaP funds for projects identified commonly by the Civil Society Forum to be implemented in the target EaP countries;
- Initiate a **meeting of Foreign Affairs Ministers from the V4** and partner countries to discuss Eastern Partnership issues;
- Cooperate closely in **drafting the revised European Investment Bank (EIB) external mandates** to achieve territorially more balanced division of the financial support provided by the EIB between the southern and eastern groups of states.

V4 Cooperation in Providing Official Development Assistance (ODA)

The aim of the Slovak Presidency will be to promote:

- V4 ODA cooperation with respect **to developments in the Western Balkans** and to discuss new opportunities for cooperation based on the principles of effective development assistance; involvement of the Ministries of Finance and cooperation within ODA.
- International exchange of experience and information in the implementation of the V4 regional development policy.

V4 and Cooperation with Third Countries and Regional Organisations

- The V4 will seek appropriate forms of cooperation and joint activities **with other regional organisations**, e.g., the Benelux, the Baltic Sea states, the Nordic Council, the Gulf Cooperation Council members and Central Asian countries, as well as other V4 partners, including Germany, Japan, Israel, United States, the Russian Federation, Turkey;
- In this respect, Slovakia suggests **organising expert-level V4+** foreign policy consultations on topical issues concerning international development and regional situations, expert seminars on V4 experience from regional and cross-border cooperation with partner institutions from the aforementioned groupings and/or countries. Details and a draft calendar of consultations, ministerial meetings and expert-level events will be agreed separately and included in the operational action plan of the presidency programme;

- In compliance with sectoral priorities (tourism), V4 will encourage joint presentation projects of the Visegrad countries in tourism and economy, i.e., presentation of the Visegrad region as an attractive travel destination through joint V4 expositions at selected international tourism fairs and, at the same time, as an attractive region for foreign direct investment with high added value;
- The Presidency will organise a V4-Japan workshop on cooperation and support to small and medium enterprises in Bratislava and a joint V4 investment seminar in Tokyo.

V4 Cooperation in Using Diplomatic Networks and in Consular and Visa Assistance:

- Based on recommendations by a working group established by V4 Foreign Affairs Ministers, pursuing **closer cooperation in providing assistance to V4 nationals in third countries where a V4 country does not have its own diplomatic mission or consulate**, or if such mission/consulate is difficult to contact (*in large countries*);
- Exerting effort towards formalising agreements on mutual representation in issuing visas to third-country nationals if the respective V4 member does not have its diplomatic mission/consulate representation in that third country;
- Continuing **closer cooperation** and communication among V4 Foreign Affairs Ministries in order to **coordinate the process of streamlining the diplomatic and consular presence of V4 countries abroad**. To this end, effort will focus on providing mutual support and seeking opportunities for more effective, or even shared, utilisation of premises and buildings that are the property of a V4 country; feasibility study of proposals for shared utilisation of V4 buildings and consulates in selected countries;
- Coordinating V4' course of political action towards those countries that apply different visa requirements to the V4 countries than those applicable to other EU Member States;
- Consider a more efficient utilisation of the opportunities provided by the new EEAS.

COOPERATION WITHIN THE V4 GROUP – SECTORAL POLICIES:

CULTURE, MEDIA

During its presidency, Slovakia will support volunteerism in the field of culture in line with the EU initiative “*The European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship (2011)*”. The exchange of good practice and joint projects using existing EU projects in support of volunteerism (*Europe for Citizens, Culture*) will be particularly encouraged.

The Slovak V4 Presidency will continue:

- to discuss implementation of the EU Council’s Work Plan for Culture for 2008-2010 and the new work plan for the forthcoming period, as well as the future EU programming period;
- to discuss the role of culture and creative sectors in the V4 countries;
- to discuss cultural heritage and its contribution towards developing cultural tourism;
- to support intercultural dialogue, cultural diversity and the related programmes within the V4 and in the neighbouring regions, including the implementation of the following approved V4 projects:
 1. *Literary Anthology of Visegrad 4 Countries* in a Spanish-English version;
 2. *Colloquium of Library-Information Employees from the V4 Countries*, which develops close cooperation of V4 library experts;
 3. *Working Group for Cultural Heritage in V4 States*;
 4. The newly proposed *Visegrad Days 2011* project;
 5. Continuation of the project of *Summer School for Managers of UNESCO World Heritage in V4 Countries*;
 6. *The Follow-up of Utilisation of EU Structural Funds in the field of Culture* through interactive website and new events to exchange experience, analyse results and barriers of the use of EU funds;
 7. V4 film-art cooperation through conferences and meetings of professionals from the Visegrad countries and the organisation of screenings and festivals designed to introduce to V4 viewers the cultures of their immediate neighbours and discussion on the cinema digitising process in the V4 countries.

Through the departments for cultural and public diplomacy at the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the V4 countries, with active participation of the Ministries of Culture and the IVF, the Slovak Presidency will support implementation of the joint cultural and artistic projects, including V4 presentation events at EU institutions based in Brussels and in capitals of EU Member States:

- Joint cultural programme of performing artists from the V4 countries to take place in Brussels on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Visegrad Group, plus one joint Visegrad project staged in the capital of the country holding the V4 presidency;
- Joint projects and events within the framework of the activities pursued by the cultural institutes and centres of the V4 countries, particularly on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Visegrad Group and 10th anniversary of the International Visegrad Fund.

V4 joint initiatives in the field of cultural diplomacy:

- Continued effort to present the V4 region through its cultural heritage “*Conjunction of Four Cultures – One Heritage, One Message*”;
- Coordination of joint promotion of the cultural heritage and values of the V4 region in various formal and informal groupings where V4 states are members (e.g., *Central European Cultural Platform, ASEF, EUROMED, Eastern Partnership*);
- Joint presentation of the V4 region at events organised by the European Capitals of Culture, and presentation of Slovak cultural heritage listed by UNESCO.

Public-service television and radio cooperation in the V4 countries (Awareness)

- The Slovak V4 Presidency will initiate discussion and support cooperation in the area of public-service broadcasters funding; Agreements on the Contents, Aims and Ensuring of Service to the General Public in the Area of Radio and Television broadcasting, which were signed between the state and the Slovak Radio and Slovak Television in December 2009, will be presented as an example of good practice.
- During the Slovak Presidency, Slovak Television (STV) and other public-service TV stations in the Visegrad countries will inform the public on all significant activities of the Visegrad Group and IVF projects, including news and reporting coverage of international events.
- In 2010, STV will prepare a festival of programmes produced by regional television studios under the name *Seal of Visegrad*, linked to the joint project of TV studios of the V4 countries. *Seal of Visegrad* is a regional television festival connected with a joint project of TV studios of the V4 countries. The next festival will be organised by the STV studio in Košice in the summer of 2010.
- STV will continue to broadcast its monthly magazine show *KWARTET (Quartet)*, which is brought to viewers in all V4 countries. *Kwartet* is a cross-border monthly magazine broadcast in all V4 countries. The monthly magazine is produced cooperatively by the regional STV studios in Košice and Banská Bystrica, Czech TV studios in Ostrava and Brno, Hungarian TV studios in Szeged and Miskolc, and Polish TV studios in Rzeszów and Kraków. The main theme of the programme is to show the life of people in individual towns and municipalities and exchange their views and experiences (*more at www.v4tv.eu*).
- Public radio stations in V4 countries will intensify mutual cooperation and exchange of broadcast content in order to bring to their listeners as much information as possible on the life of people in the region, present successes and positive examples, and promote the joint activities of the V4 region.
- The Presidency will promote V4 public diplomacy activities. In this respect, the public and all interested institutions can obtain more relevant information on Visegrad cooperation and topical IVF activities from public television and radio broadcasting and the following websites: www.visegradgroup.eu and www.visegradfund.org.

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND RESEARCH, YOUTH EXCHANGE PROGRAMMES, SPORTS:

Education:

- The Ministries of Education will continue cooperating with the IVF in providing internships to students under all IVF study programmes.

Youth:

- Supporting closer cooperation among the V4 countries in meeting the general objectives under the “*Youth in Action*” Community programme with a focus on the promotion and development of volunteerism, all forms of youth mobility, support to long-term regional and local-level youth projects and initiatives, facilitating the recognition of non-formal learning, and support and development of youth research activities in the V4 region.

Sports:

- The “Olympic Hopes” project for best junior athletes (*aged 14 to 18*). The aim is to give talented young athletes, through various competitions in V4 countries, the possibility to prove their performance and status of an “Olympic Hope” in their respective disciplines. The project will also continue under the Slovak Presidency.

Science and research:

- The V4 Academies Forum ensures implementation and coordination of a joint approach to advancing member countries’ interests in European research area, and coordination of other activities within the EU with the focus on their participation in European research programmes and development of the networks of excellence. The joint activities include a Young Researcher Award competition, summer schools for young researchers, and the publication of the Central European Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities.
- A call for bilateral project proposals with Hungary for 2011-2012 will be announced in 2010. Projects implemented in cooperation with Poland and the Czech Republic will be funded throughout 2010; these projects have been chosen based on the calls for the 2010-2011 period. The V4 Academies Forum will focus on the following fields of science and research:

I. Inanimate nature

- Energy sector, modernisation of traditional and development of alternative sources of energy, as well as joint initiatives in the field of gas transport and supply for V4 countries;
- Climate change and its economic and social impacts;
- Building and linking V4 motorway networks;
- Water as a strategic natural resource, preservation of its quality and protection of water sources;
- Building of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology and involvement of V4 countries in its structures.

II. Animate nature and chemical sciences

- Human and animal health – studying aetiology and pathogenesis of diseases in humans and animals, improving effectiveness of diagnostic and therapeutic practices in human and veterinary medicine;
- Environmental management – comprehensive study of interactions between individual components of ecosystems and links among various biotopes, and study of the impacts of our civilisation on ecology with the aim of optimising environmental management and ensuring its sustainability;
- Safe food – research into possibilities of combining traditional food production processes with new cutting-edge technologies designed to ensure that the food industry processes reflect the extensive body of knowledge on healthy diet;
- New substances – discovering new substances with properties that make them fit for use in various areas of human life.

III. Society and culture

Under sectoral regional cooperation, facilitating the establishment of frameworks for cooperation in social sciences, humanities and arts studies, with the focus on:

- Understanding historical development in the regions and sub-regions of the V4;
- Ethno-cultural diversity as a contribution to the cultural mosaic of the V4 countries and Europe;
- Current trends in culture and arts – between local anchors and global distribution;
- V4 economic area – seeking new directions in the European and global context;
- Region of Central Europe (V4) – a socially and spatially diversified territory between poverty and prosperity.

Civic Dimension of Visegrad Cooperation

Based on the initiative presented by the Slovak President at the plenary session of the V4 presidents held in Sopot on 11-12 September 2009, a proposal was put forward to found an *International Visegrad Award of V4 Presidents*. The Slovak Presidency will coordinate discussions about the statute of the Award and the scope of its possible implementation.

The IVF will follow up on its previous successful activities and focus on the implementation of projects designed to reinforce Visegrad civic participation, in particular in the area of academic exchanges and internship programmes, culture, tourism, research and development, official development assistance and cross border cooperation.

FINANCE

Representatives of the Finance Ministries, together with all relevant ministries responsible for the management of EU funds, monitoring of expenditures and simplification of the funding implementation procedures, will concentrate joint consultations and activities on the following areas:

Themes:

EU funds

- Financial management of the Structural Funds and the European Fisheries Fund.
- Operational programmes – sharing the experience with the finalisation of programmes of the 2007-13 programming period implementation phase, using the so-called flat-rate, eliminating duplicate expenditure, certification, irregularities, and horizontal priorities.

EU budget review and the next multi-annual financial framework

- Hold consultations on the EU budget review (*including its individual components*) and, subsequently, where appropriate, consider a coordinated approach to pursuing priorities and interests within the EU budget review process.
- Exchange information on the priorities with respect to the EU budget in the context of negotiations on the multi-annual financial framework, which are expected to take place during the course of 2011.

Information society

- Exchange of experience in the area of information society.

Control

- Continuous monitoring of the resources/funds received from the EU budget, as well as funds received from other countries under international treaties, and their proper spending;

Financial market

- Joint penetration to third markets. Within its portfolio of finance, insurance, export loan guarantee and export credit insurance products, Slovak EXIMBANK will advocate wider cooperation among institutions and related authorities of the Visegrad Group countries in, for example, facilitating joint V4 entry into third markets.

Customs

- e-Customs development, including V4 consultation and exchange of experiences;
- Better awareness among enterprises of the planned activities and changes affecting the legislation on the customs and excise duties administration, including the establishment of an information centre;
- Prevention of violations of the customs and excise duty regulations;
- Protection of intellectual property rights;
- Prevention, identification and investigation of cross-border crime involving V4 countries;
- Development of special forms of cooperation under the Naples II Convention;
- V4 cooperation in building relations with Ukraine, especially in defining common requirements for the exchange of information, assisting road and rail carriers in submitting interim customs declarations, and building up a uniform technical solution for goods control on EU external borders by V4 countries aimed at preventing smuggling and illicit imports into the EU through the territory of V4 countries, as well as in facilitating trade and maximizing border crossing points' vehicle throughput capacity, where possible;
- Establishment of contact points for cross-border cooperation to enhance effectiveness and coordinate cooperation in joint operations, operational exchange of information, in particular on the smuggling of goods subject to excise duties, as well as closer collaboration between mobile inspection units and competent authorities in the V4 countries.

Taxes

Continued effort and discussions focusing on:

- New trends in tax administration management;
- Combating tax fraud;
- Unified collection of taxes, customs duties and social insurance contributions;
- Improved quality of service by tax administrations;
- Improved procedures and regional cooperation in detecting international direct-tax related evasions;
- Enhanced effectiveness of international administrative cooperation and combating tax fraud (*VAT*) with a focus on intra-European Union transactions;
- Support to the development of sophisticated advanced means of management and identification of risk taxpayers;

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In the area of regional development, Slovakia intends to further:

- Strengthen territorial cohesion of the V4 countries with a focus on regional development, while respecting the unique character of each territory;
- Support the establishment of new territorial partnership relations and cooperation opportunities in line with the EC regulation on the European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC), and territorial cooperation among entities at regional and local level, e.g., within the framework of European Territorial Cooperation projects;
- Advocate active participation of the V4 countries in discussions on the future orientation and development of the European Territorial Cooperation beyond 2013, i.e., Objective 3 of the European Commission;
- Support mutual cooperation in putting through common positions during preparations for the post-2013 programming period, making sure that the rules are set in a timely and clear fashion and the conditions for implementation the Community Structural Funds are stable;
- Deal with the issues of urban and municipal development with specific focus on disadvantaged urban and rural regions;
- Promote the preparation of integrated urban and municipal development plans, including through efforts to shape joint V4 positions at the level of the Council and Commission working parties;
- Address territorial relations (*urban–rural, downtown–periphery*), agglomerations, metropolitan areas, and sustainable territorial development;
- Cooperate in preparing a common position for discussions on the future of the EU cohesion policy;
- Exchange experience in the area of co-ordination and complementarity, with particular focus on policies and projects funded from multiple sources (e.g. CAP funds, Structural Funds, Cohesion Fund etc.);
- Implement the projects under the Structural Funds and the ISPA/CF (Instrument for Structural Policies for Pre-Accession) and the Cohesion Fund in the 2004–2006 programming period; cooperation with the Managing Authorities for the Operational Programme *Transport*, the Operational Programme *Environment* and the *Regional Operational Programme* in the preparation of projects for the 2007–2013 programming period;
- Impacts of the global financial crisis on the V4 countries and the potential consequences for the implementation of projects funded from EU funds; identification of suitable models for the division of powers between the national and regional levels in the implementation of EC Structural Funds;
- Support for the implementation and sharing of knowledge and experience among the national teams within the JEREMIE, JESSICA and JASPERS initiative in the V4 countries;
- Support for the implementation of projects under horizontal priorities of sustainable development;
- Analysing experience from the establishment of EGTC; the future of this tool within European territorial cooperation; as well as the identification of common topics that could be developed into projects within the framework of cross-border and transnational cooperation; exchange of experience from participation in the European Territorial

Cooperation programmes (national co-financing schemes, first-level control models, support for beneficiaries, added value, synergies with mainstream programmes etc.).

Development of cooperation in the following areas:

- Basic infrastructure, which should remain one of the pillars, in proper balance with the Lisbon Strategy priority – knowledge-based economy;
- Integrated policy of housing revitalisation and urban development by creating and enhancing the quality of public areas through the modernisation of infrastructure networks and improvement of energy efficiency;
- Reduction of the administrative burden associated with the use of EU funds, including the optimisation of state aid rules in cross-border cooperation of the V4 countries from the perspective of partnerships among various regional development actors applying for public funds;
- Cooperation in the design and implementation of the Danube Strategy, which could serve as a model for a project connecting the Danube route with the Baltic Sea through the Váh and Odra waterways.

Regional Infrastructure

- Based on the output from the Common Spatial Development Document of the V4+2 countries, continued cooperation in drawing up joint concepts for non-linked/non-continuous development areas, development axes and transport corridors at the level of the V4+2 countries' Spatial development.

TRANSPORT

Within the framework of the planned activities, the Ministries of Transport will pursue the following priorities:

- Further cooperation of the V4 countries in the process of the preparation of a new White Paper on European Transport Policy with the aim to establish common position;
- Continued cooperation of the V4 countries during the process of Trans-European Transport Network Policy review in order to establish common position and priorities;
- Intensified effort to support the development of international rail freight corridors and road infrastructure within the Trans-European Transport Network (*TEN-T*), as well as the effort to support ERTMS deployment;
- Possibilities for developing and building joint waterways;
- Impact of the global economic crisis upon transport development and construction; continuity and support of cooperation of the V4 working groups.

AGRICULTURE

In this sector, the main task is to strengthen the coordinating and consulting mechanism of the V4 cooperation with a view to finding common positions and standpoints on issues of common interest and promoting them jointly before key institutions (EU, OECD, WTO, FAO, etc.). Implementation should focus on the following priority areas:

- Joint course of V4 action in an effort to prevent reductions in the livestock population and revitalise the dairy industry;
- Joint course of V4 action in addressing the current market situation, proposal for measures to dilute the abuse of monopoly position by multinational chains vis-à-vis suppliers and

food processors, with particular emphasis on small and medium-sized producers, by supporting the setting up of producer associations and defending their interest against monopolies;

- In the area of food safety, the V4 countries should exert joint effort to eliminate problems connected with the imports of low-quality agricultural products from third countries and, subsequently, convince the European Commission to lobby within WTO negotiations for a better control of imports of low-quality and harmful foodstuffs to EU Member States, leading also to higher motivation toward improvements in the quality of foodstuffs;
- Joint course of V4 action to minimize differences between the ‘old’ and ‘new’ Member States and ensure their equal treatment under the Common Agricultural Policy during discussions on the shape of the post-2013 CAP, making use of the synergies afforded by the Hungarian and Polish presidencies of the EU;
- Joint course of action by the V4 landlocked countries with no access to seaports (*Slovakia, Czech Republic, Hungary*) in furthering the intention to introduce a new special instrument for the common organization of the market in cereals within the EU, i.e., financial aid from the EU budget for landlocked countries for the transportation of cereals to sea and river ports;
- Discussion on different ways of eliminating the threat of energy crisis through increased production of biofuels in a sustainable manner (or agricultural produce for biofuel production) within the Central European group, analysing, among other things, the pros and cons of responding to the threat of crisis through higher biofuel production;
- Discussion on the joint position for negotiations during the Ministerial Conference on Protection on Forests in Europe (MCPFE).
- Use the International Year of Forests, declared by the United Nations for 2011, as a vehicle to raise public awareness of the importance of forests and forest management for society; discussion on common courses of the forest policy, with main focus on both the V4+2 and the national levels;
- Invite other EU Member States to engage in active cooperation (*in particular Romania and Bulgaria within the V4+2*).

ENVIRONMENT

In the area of the environment, V4 cooperation will focus on:

- Eco-efficient development under the EU-2020 Strategy, the sustainable development strategy and the climate change strategy of the V4 countries and the EU;
- Waste management, with particular emphasis on waste prevention, recycling and renewable energy recovery, including responsibility for illegal trans-boundary shipments of waste;
- Strengthened cooperation in the field of chemical and industrial safety, including cooperation in preventing and removing environmental damage;
- post-2010 biodiversity target and new EU Biodiversity Strategy – main priorities for V4 countries;
- Continuation of expert-level cooperation in the areas of flood protection and flood risk assessment;
- Encouragement of the submission of applications for environmental projects to the International Visegrad Fund.

JUSTICE

Main lines of cooperation:

- Implementation of the Memorandum on Cooperation on information technologies among the V4 justice ministries;
- Cooperation and mutual coordination in the formulation of V4 positions and opinions on the EC/EU legal acts in the field of justice which are currently in the pipeline;
- Exchange of information on the national reform projects in the field of civil and criminal law (including new methods of alternative sanctions and measures);
- Develop training activities for judges, with particular focus on ensuring better application of the European legislation by judicial institutions.

HOME AFFAIRS

The V4 cooperation in the area of home affairs will focus in particular on maintaining continuity with the previous activities undertaken by the relevant bodies within the framework of police cooperation, public administration, fire protection and civil defence. In its external dimension, the V4 efforts will focus on the Schengen area enlargement expected in March 2011, further visa facilitation for the Western Balkans countries, and the migration issues.

The working meetings of senior officials from the Interior Ministries, expert coordination meetings, and the core events and activities will be undertaken in the following areas:

Police cooperation

- The V4 countries will continue to hold regular meetings of senior police officials so as to inform each other on the progress achieved in joint activities and propose further areas of cooperation in boarder regions for the upcoming period;
- The cooperation between the V4 countries and Austria in combating extremism will continue through the V4 and Austria Working Group on Combating Extremism which operates under the helm of the Czech Republic;
- The priority themes of cooperation are in compliance with the Conclusions of the V4 and Austria Working Group on Combating Extremism. These themes include neo-Nazism and its manifestations, extreme nationalism, hate crimes, Islamist extremism and its specific manifestations, eco-extremism, and the abuse of the Internet and modern IT by extremist groups.

Public administration

The V4 cooperation in the area of public administration provides a useful platform for shaping and promoting joint views and interests of the V4 countries in the EU, the Council of Europe and other international organisations. Besides the exchange of information and experience, it sets out mainly the directions for public administration development by mapping the existing public administration systems and comparing the theoretical approaches and practical solutions within the individual V4 countries.

- The V4 will focus, in particular, on the implementation of the “Strategy on Innovation and Good Governance at the Local Level” in the V4 countries.

Fire protection

- Specific forms of cooperation will be agreed upon with a focus on the exchange of information concerning the organisation and operation of an integrated rescue system,

exchange of information on fire protection – in particular as regards the fire safety of buildings – and operational and day-to-day management, with particular emphasis on education and training.

Civil protection

- The civil protection cooperation will primarily focus on chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) safety in order to improve prevention, detection and response to serious accidents involving CBRN substances. In this context, Slovakia and the Czech Republic will organise an exercise of their civil protection chemical control laboratories in September;
- The V4 will continue to cooperate in the preparation and implementation of joint projects with a view to improving the V4 civil protection capabilities and preparedness for possible occurrence of emergency situations with cross-border effects.

Migration

- The V4 countries will continue to work towards developing the eastern and south-eastern dimension of the EU external migration policies through the “Building Migration Partnerships” (BMP) process and project, as well as through consistent implementation of the relevant Stockholm Programme sections;
- The Presidency will focus on the successful implementation of the final phase of the project, in particular the expert missions, wrap-up meetings and preparation of the second ministerial BMP conference in Budapest in March 2011;
- The V4 countries will also cooperate to further their shared interest in building the “Common European Asylum System” and implement the European Immigration and Asylum Pact to ensure a fair sharing of the migration burden within the wider European territory.

The Schengen Area

- The V4 will actively support the ambitions of Bulgaria and Romania to join the Schengen area in March 2011, on both political and expert level.

COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF SECURITY AND DEFENCE:

The goals and main priorities of inter-sectoral cooperation in the field of security and defence will be:

- to continue exploring options for joint V4-participation in the international civilian and military crisis management activities;
- to continue inviting third countries to the meetings of V4 Defence Ministers and Chiefs of Staff of the Armed Forces;
- to continue, in line with the Polish initiative, mutual cooperation in matters related to the improvement of the NATO-EU cooperation;
- to continue discussions on the establishment of an EU Battle Group of the V4 countries;
- to follow up on the results achieved so far in (1) the modernisation of the V4 armed forces training facilities, (2) the planning of joint military exercises of the V4 countries, and (3) utilisation of their military training areas;
- to continue cooperation and exchange of experience gained by the V4 armed forces and

civilian experts deployed in international crisis management operations;

- to continue cooperation in the areas defined in the Memorandum of Understanding among the Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic, the Ministry of National Defence of the Republic of Poland, the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Hungary and the Ministry of Defence of the Slovak Republic on Cooperation in Military Technical Matters;
- to continue exploring the possibilities for implementing multi-national solutions for the joint development of V4 countries' capabilities within the purview of the national armaments directors and national capabilities directors.
- to continue exploring further areas of possible cooperation among the V4 countries, e.g., in military education;

ECONOMY, ENERGY, TOURISM, COOPERATION OF CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

The main sectors of economic cooperation:

Energy sector

The Visegrad cooperation in the energy sector and in the field of external energy security will continue within the framework of activities of the working group for energy security at the level of high representatives of the V4 governments (High Level Energy Working Group). At the same time, Slovakia will continue to cooperate with other countries under the V4+ format.

- In the electricity sector, Slovakia proposes cooperation in the implementation of legislative proposals under the 3rd legislative package for the internal market in electricity and gas. The implementation will focus on issues concerning the national regulators, unbundling models, retail markets, and access to gas storage facilities in the gas sector. Slovakia also proposes cooperation in the implementation of the climate energy package, in particular, the assessment of possible joint projects in the area of renewable energy and energy security.
- The security of supply is a priority, especially in the natural gas and oil sectors. In the aftermath of the gas crisis in January 2009, the main objective is to ensure security of supply through diversification of sources and transmission routes, also having in mind the need for alternative routes for supplying the region with oil in cases of supply disruption via the Druzhba pipeline. In this context, Slovakia suggests cooperation in these areas:
 - a. Security of supply – assessment of possibilities for mutual cooperation of the V4 countries in crisis situations. One of the possibilities is to consider the establishment, in accordance with the proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council to safeguard security of the natural gas supply, of a common crisis plan for the V4 region. These efforts have to be embarked to exclude the possibility of creating isolated regional energy islands within the new system of security of supply;
 - b. Improvement of mutual interconnections of the gas infrastructure for its potential utilisation in case of emergency supplies, including the reverse flows of gas; the main priority will be to develop the North-South interconnection through all V4 countries between the planned LNG terminals in Poland and Croatia as well as through other gas infrastructure projects as referred to in the Declaration of the Budapest V4+ Energy Summit;
 - c. Continuing and further strengthening cooperation in order to develop a new alternative oil supply scheme for all V4 countries now depending on the Druzhba pipeline. Another common tasks will be to open discussions on the EU platform and gain

support for the V4 effort from the European Commission as well as other EU Member states;

- d. Development of the EU's external energy policy through continued implementation of the common international legal basis so as to improve dialogue and cooperation with the supply and transit countries;
- e. More efficient actions - within the framework of existing legislation - designed to eliminate those internal market dysfunctions which hinder the development of solidarity mechanisms within the V4 countries and weaken both the gas trading liquidity and access to the energy infrastructure;
- f. Joint efforts aimed at ensuring higher allocation of EU funds, notably from the Cohesion Policy instrument, to infrastructure projects which are not detrimental to the security of supply of any Member State and which increase the energy security of the V4 region;
- g. Creation of ad-hoc task forces in order to elaborate on concrete themes of cooperation, based on the Declaration of the Budapest V4+ Energy Summit.

Industry and innovation

The main priority of economic development is to boost the performance and competitiveness of the V4 economies and mobilise those factors which indirectly influence the growth. Slovakia therefore suggests that attention be paid to the following objectives:

- to resume the previous cooperation programme in the industrial sector, implement projects of cross-border and regional cooperation, and create conditions for direct contacts among the small and medium-sized enterprises, with effective support of professional unions and associations;
- to create an environment for the support and coordination of innovation development in the V4 countries, establishing a common fund for the co-financing of selected innovation projects;
- to consider the establishment of a "V4 Innovation Centre" for the purpose of ensuring the exchange of information on the implementation of innovation projects and the transfer of the results of applied research to the business sector, facilitating the search for innovative technologies, processes and services for their transfer and introduction to the market, with the aim of improving the quality of the innovative environment in cooperating countries; the Centre could also promote innovative companies from the V4 countries through various domestic and foreign presentation campaigns;
- to create conditions for the development of a project of joint action to eliminate administrative barriers for businesses within the framework of the EU's "Better Regulation" agenda, and create a common information system of the V4 countries to support businesses and define business opportunities in individual countries.

Consumer protection

The future V4 cooperation in the field of consumer protection should focus on product safety, specifically on:

- cooperation in the drafting of legislation to ensure consumer safety in the field of non-food consumer products in the non-harmonised area;
- joint activities in the field of market surveillance;

- cooperation of the national contact points for a rapid alert system for dangerous non-food products (RAPEX);
- coordinated action at Member States' meetings in the field of general consumer product safety;
- cooperation in the field covered by the newly proposed consumer rights directive and joint course of action towards full harmonisation of the consumer rights, while maintaining the maximum level of their protection.

European Consumer Centres

- The V4 countries will continue to cooperate in developing the European Consumer Centres Network (*ECC-Net*) and building consumer trust in cross-border shopping.

Internal market

The V4 cooperation will focus on those areas that correspond with the priorities of the EU Competitiveness Council and will be reflected in:

- better access to practical information for the providers and recipients of services, thus enabling them to become aware of their rights and obligations;
- administrative cooperation among the authorities of Member States and the application of internal market rules, including problem-solving through the use of existing mechanism and systems.

The cooperation will develop, in particular:

- in a joint course of action towards compliance with the requirements of the Directive on services in the internal market, particularly as regards access to services through the single contact points and the mutual evaluation process;
- in the mutual recognition of professional qualifications for the performance of a given service;
- in applying the principle of mutual recognition in the area of free movement of goods;
- in an effective administrative cooperation among the authorities in the performance of supervision over service providers, as well as via the internal market information system – cooperation at a higher quality level (*rapid exchange of information*).

Standards, metrology and testing

- Cooperation in the field of quality infrastructure will focus on the transfer of know-how in the enforcement of the *acquis communautaire* – assistance in complying with the internal market requirements and projects under the European Neighbourhood Policy, with a view to provide assistance to the cooperating organisations and enterprises (*in particular small and medium-sized enterprises*) in overcoming non-tariff barriers to trade, especially as regards the services of certification, accreditation and evaluation of compliance with the application of harmonised EU standards and specifications or mandatory GOST standards and specifications of the countries forming the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Particular attention will be paid to:

- the exchange of experience and information on the application of the New Legislative Framework for products/goods adopted in Brussels in 2008 and the adaptation of existing directives;

- cooperation in adopting common positions in negotiations at international forums dealing with standardisation issues; as well as on the revision of the “old approach” Directives on the measuring instruments in MID (*Measuring Instruments Directive*);
- the development of national legislation in the field of metrology and harmonisation of the authorisation framework for the performance of metrology services in the territory of the V4 countries;
- the transfer of experience in relation to the euro changeover, if relevant, to other countries (*information campaign and metrology provisions related to the euro changeover*);
- the exchange of information related to the experience in implementing the EU twinning projects.

Themes for cooperation:

- Better utilisation of links established between the chambers of commerce and industry in order to promote this activity to Polish, Czech and Hungarian entities;
- Enabling Polish and Hungarian producers exporting to the Russian Federation a simpler way of obtaining documents necessary for exports through the respective testing facilities officially registered in V4 countries.

Tourism

- The Presidency will support the activities aimed at informing domestic tourism operators on the V4 activities.
- The V4 countries will extend the range of jointly promoted product groups, e.g., by adding MICE and Incentive, as well intensify cooperation with the Russian market.
- The Slovak Tourist Board (SACR) will function as a workshop coordinator in the Asian part of the Russian Federation and will organise a joint educational trip for Russian journalists and tour operators to the V4 countries. The V4 countries are considering the expansion of their marketing and promotion activities to new Asian and South American markets.

The Slovak Presidency will focus on the following priorities in the field of tourism:

- Close cooperation among the V4 national tourism organisations under the “European Quartet – One Melody” project;
- Presentation of V4 common interests in the field of tourism on third markets;
- Creation of a uniform image of the V4 countries as a tourist destination through the renewal of the common V4 website;
- Exchange of information on anti-crisis measures and solutions, including the support of common interests of the V4 countries in this area; and
- Intensification of V4 activities in order to support and develop cross-border co-operation among the Member States.

CENTRAL EUROPEAN ROMA STRATEGY OF THE V4

The main objective is to continue – in cooperation with the EU - the implementation of the Central European Roma Strategy of the V4, the draft of which has been presented for finalization and necessary approval. The Central European Roma Strategy of the V4 is a good starting point for further elaboration and specification of the modalities for the purposes of its implementation in close cooperation between the V4 countries and the EU. The implementation of the action steps under this strategy should lead to the solution of the two major issues related to the social inclusion of the Roma:

- Ensuring equal access of the Roma to EU funds and financial resources in the field of education, employment, housing and health;
- Summarising those instruments that facilitate the elimination or reduction of discrimination and social exclusion of the Roma more effectively.
- The Presidency will continue intensive V4 cooperation and strengthen the V4 coordination mechanism to facilitate social inclusion of the Roma on the basis of expert recommendations and the implementation of conclusions resulting from the previous activities of the working group for the Roma inclusion at the level of high representatives of the V4.
- The plenipotentiaries of the V4 governments will continue to regularly exchange experience and information on how action plans in individual areas have been effectively implemented, with active participation of representatives from the central, regional and local levels of government, using the instruments of civil society and non-governmental organisations. The IVF will also help achieve these goals through its activities and individual projects.
- The Czech Republic, the Republic of Hungary and the Slovak Republic will strengthen their common coordination mechanism for the implementation of the activities under the programme “Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015” (“*Decade*”). Its priority areas include employment, education, health and housing, with due consideration of other key aspects, i.e. aspects of poverty, discrimination and gender-integrated approaches to a part of the Roma population.
- The commencement of the Slovak V4 Presidency will coincide with the termination of the Slovak Presidency in the “Decade” programme, which was based on these priorities:
 - a) integrated and multicultural education;
 - b) Roma identity;
 - c) the fifth year of the Decade – revision of national action plans.

HEALTH CARE

One of the topical priorities is the monitoring of overweight and obesity in children and juveniles on the basis of the results of the examination of physical development of children and juveniles, including the identification of trends.

The aim of this activity by the Presidency is as follows:

- to conduct statistical comparison of the incidence of overweight and obesity among children and juveniles in individual V4 countries and cooperate in the field of healthy diet with particular emphasis on the child population;
- to discuss the development or improvement of guidelines for school meals to make them healthier, and explore other possibilities of support;
- to intensively cooperate in identifying and implementing efficient preventive measures aimed at children and juveniles aimed at preventing the development of non-communicable diseases in adult age, given the global rise in overweight and obesity in various age categories;

SOCIAL POLICY AND EMPLOYMENT

In this area, the V4 will primarily focus on:

- the transfer of best practices in relation to combating long-term unemployment;
- the exchange of information on anti-crisis measures related to the active labour market policies;
- the review of the measures for Roma minority integration;
- the compliance with the relevant EU regulations and the conventions of the Council of Europe and International Labour Organisation, and active participation in working groups and delegations.