

# **Program of the Hungarian Presidency of the Visegrad Group**

**July 2009 – June 2010**

## **Hungarian V4 Presidency 2009 – 2010**

### **Introduction**

Hungary will hold the Presidency of the Visegrad Group from July 2009 to June 2010, after which it will hand over the Presidency tasks to Slovakia.

During its presidency term Hungary will build on the achievements of previous presidencies, supporting the main lines of V4 cooperation that have been established and have proven to be successful in recent years.

When formulating the priorities of its presidency year Hungary took into consideration some of the common interests of all Visegrad Group countries: to promote a stable and safe neighbourhood by assisting those states concerned in getting closer to Euro-Atlantic integration on the one hand, and to elaborate and present common positions whenever possible on important issues figuring on the agenda of various EU fora, on the other hand.

In recent years the agenda of most V4 high-level and expert level meetings have been dominated by issues that also appear on the agenda of the GAERC and the European Council. This tendency is equally valid for sectoral and foreign policy cooperation and Hungary wishes to reflect it in its presidency program.

Based on these considerations the Hungarian V4 presidency program includes the following priority areas:

- Cooperation on issues related to the Western Balkans, the Eastern dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership. In the view of the Hungarian presidency such cooperation is not only in the interest but also the responsibility of the Visegrad Group.
- The enhancement and deepening of sectoral cooperation wherever it is necessary and possible with a view to better represent and promote common V4 interests within the EU.

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- Focusing the whole spectrum of V4 cooperation on bringing about tangible results for the people of the Visegrad Group and ensuring that results attributable to V4 cooperation are presented and communicated to our societies in a positive way.
- Further strengthening civil society in the V4 countries and supporting the scholarship programmes by the means of the International Visegrad Fund and the target-oriented use of the Fund in assisting democracy-building in our neighbourhood.

Three of the V4 countries will be chairing the European Union in a period of 36 months. Considering its role as a kind of bridge between V4 and EU presidencies, the Hungarian V4 Presidency intends to build on some of the achievements of the Czech EU Presidency and will try to carry on the work to promote the jointly shared objectives of the EU and the Visegrad Group during its EU Presidency term in the first half of 2011, that is to be followed by Poland. This constellation holds the potential for the successive V4 presidencies to assist V4 EU presidencies in keeping issues important for the V4 on the EU agenda.

The unpredictable nature of the current global financial and economic crisis might necessitate to hold consultations on this issue at appropriate V4 high-level meetings and coordinate the elaboration of proposals to be presented at the EU or other international fora.

The Hungarian V4 Presidency plans to organize an expert meeting on the issue of the Lisbon Treaty in mid-July 2009.

### **Calendar of meetings**

#### Presidents

September, 2009, Sopot, Poland

#### Prime Ministers

December, 2009 and June, 2010, Hungary

#### Foreign Ministers

Two meetings are planned (V4 + Western Balkans and V4 + Eastern Partnership) for 2009-2010, one in Autumn 2009 and the other one in Spring 2010 at dates taking into consideration the calendar of the Swedish and the Spanish Presidencies of the European Union.

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### Speakers of Parliament

At least one meeting

There are several other ministerial level meetings planned for 2009-2010. These include Ministers of Defence, Ministers of Economy, Ministers of Environment, Ministers of Culture.

In addition to the ministerial meetings, high ranking officials of ministries will meet on several occasions both in Hungary, or, in the case of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in a third country.

The Hungarian V4 Presidency intends to make the best and most flexible use of the V4+ format in all sectors of cooperation.

### **Foreign Policy**

#### **European and Euro-Atlantic integration of the Western Balkans**

Five years after the accession of the V4 countries to the EU the enlargement remains one of the most effective policy tools of the EU. The strengthening of ties between NATO and the countries of the Western Balkans, as well as the continuation of NATO enlargement remains an equally essential tool in fostering security and stability on the entire Western Balkans. The accession of Albania and Croatia to NATO has been a historic milestone to this end.

In the context of enlargement, the stabilization and Euro-Atlantic integration of the Western Balkans is one of the Hungarian V4 Presidency's priorities. To keep the region engaged for the integration, the credibility and "the tangibility" of the European perspective should be accentuated. Hungary will seek to increase the V4 contribution to the European integration of the Western Balkans countries by helping to maintain the commitment of the EU toward the region, as well as the continuation of the reform and reconciliation processes of the Western Balkans states.

To further this goal, Hungary proposes to focus on the Western Balkans at one of the V4 foreign minister's meeting under its presidency. A Political Directors' meetings will prepare the aforementioned meeting.

The Hungarian V4 Presidency stands for maintaining of a reliable pace for the accession negotiations with Turkey that reflects the preparation of the candidate. The perspective of EU membership should motivate the reform process in Turkey.

With the promotion of Croatia's smooth and successful accession process the Hungarian V4 Presidency offers a tangible model and motivation for the countries of the Western Balkan region. The Presidency will contribute to the successful implementation of the Commission's indicative timetable for the final phase of the accession negotiations with Croatia, and will support the prompt signing and ratification of the Accession Treaty.

The Hungarian Presidency will assist the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to enhance its efforts to get closer ties with the EU, and to become a full-fledged member of the NATO. Once the necessary conditions are met, Hungary supports the beginning of the

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accession negotiations with FYROM, and the invitation to start accession talks with the Alliance.

The Hungarian V4 Presidency also attaches great importance to supporting the endeavors of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro for NATO-membership, and to the development of a substantial relationship between NATO and Serbia.

The Hungarian Presidency will also focus its work on the promotion of civil society development, as well as people to people contacts, including visa liberalization. Special attention should be paid to raising awareness in the Serbian society concerning the benefits and responsibilities of EU membership. At the same time Hungarian V4 Presidency will support the ratification of the Stabilization and Association Agreement as well as the implementation of the Interim Agreement with Serbia. Further emphasis will be put on supporting a reinforced EU-engagement in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The presidency will also assist Albania and Montenegro in advancing within the framework provided by the SAA process.

As far as Kosovo is concerned, the Presidency will further seek to find flexible solutions to open wider European perspective for the people of Kosovo. The Hungarian V4 Presidency attaches great importance to the continuation of the engagement of the international community in Kosovo. The role played by EU and NATO and the strengthening of EU-NATO co-operation in Kosovo are particularly essential in that context.

### **ENP, Eastern Partnership**

The Hungarian Presidency will give strong priority to the implementation of the Eastern Partnership and the EU's engagement in the region. Special emphasis will be placed on the successful implementation of the Eastern Partnership, both with regard to its bilateral and multilateral dimensions. In this respect, the Hungarian Presidency will continue the efforts to enhance the V4 cooperation with the interested EU members, our Eastern partners, as well as with the European Commission and the forthcoming EU presidencies. The V4 should approach the advancement of the Eastern Partnership in an ambitious but pragmatic way, targeting its contribution to those areas, projects, which will help the rapprochement of our

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Eastern neighbours towards the EU most effectively. The V4 should share the valuable experiences and lessons from its own transition with the Eastern partners.

The V4 should seek to support political and social-economic reforms of the Eastern Partner States, facilitating approximation towards the European Union and the best possible compliance with EU values and standards. Support should be maintained in order to create the necessary conditions to accelerate political association and further economic integration between the European Union and interested Eastern Partners.

The partners should continue their economic and political reforms to be able to make full use of the opportunities of the Eastern Partnership. The success of the Eastern Partnership will largely depend on their intentions and achievements. Closer cooperation between partners in the region should be also encouraged, exploiting the unique experience of the V4 in this regard.

Special attention should be paid to the final phase of the negotiations on the Association Agreement between the EU and Ukraine, the relevant negotiations of the Union with Moldova and the V4 contribution to the work towards visa facilitation and future visa liberalization as well as to the activities in the framework of the pillar ‘mobility and security within the Eastern Partnership.

There is a need to develop cooperation with Belarus within the Eastern Partnership both on bilateral and multilateral basis with regard to positively influence the economic and social transformation of this country. The cooperation with Belarus could be started first of all with economy, energy security and mobility, including visa issues.

Hungary supports the Euro-Atlantic integration process of Georgia and Ukraine and the development of special relations with these two countries.

Hungary intends to initiate a meeting of V4 foreign ministers to review issues related to the Eastern Partnership.

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### **Official Development Cooperation**

Hungarian V4 Presidency will strive for promoting exchange of experiences in the field with special emphasis on the impact of the world financial and economic crisis. In order to promote aid effectiveness, the V4 countries will explore the means and possibilities of implementing common development cooperation projects. A meeting of the V4 MFA State Secretaries responsible for development cooperation will be convened dedicated to the discussion of this matter.

### **V4+Ukraine**

The Hungarian V4 Presidency attaches a special importance to a continued political dialogue with Ukraine with the objective of bringing Ukraine closer to European practices, by stimulating its democracy building and structural reform processes. The ultimate aim of this dialogue is to provide assistance to Ukraine to integrate in a most comprehensive way into the European political and economic structures.

The most important topics of the V4+Ukraine dialogue could be:

- Democratic governance and stability, legislative reforms;
- Energy cooperation, energy safety;
- Economic integration and financial cooperation;
- Border administration, mobility and visa liberalization processes;
- Labour mobility;
- Cross-border co-operation, regional development;
- Joint efforts in environmental protection;
- Civil society and people-to-people contacts.

In order to foster a substantial exchange of views with the Ukrainian leadership on a series of highly sensitive issues we wish to maintain the V4+Ukraine dialogue at both high- and expert levels.

### **V4 + Belarus**

The Hungarian V4 Presidency supports the dialogue aiming at enhancing cooperation between the EU and Belarus, the fulfilment of the conditionality pending. In the dialogue with

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Belarus the Presidency wishes to put special emphasis on human rights, including minority issues, and democratisation processes. Moreover the Hungarian V4 Presidency will aim at developing dialogue on: mutual consular issues; cultural exchange; energy security and environmental questions; fight against illegal migration, trafficking in human beings and of drugs; dialogue on transport and transit.

### **V4 + Russia**

The Hungarian Presidency attaches a special importance to a continued dialogue with Russia. The V4 expects that the dynamics of the EU-Russia relations will result in increasing standards in all areas of co-operation. The V4 will continue to pursue our engagement on the basis of mutual interests and common commitments to democratic principles, human rights and the rule of law. Regarding the negotiations for the post-PCA agreement, the V4 will contribute to developing a comprehensive new agreement which will set out reinforced legally-binding provisions, notwithstanding in the field on energy policy. With respect to the conclusions of the V4 + Russia expert meeting organized by the Polish V4 Presidency, the Hungarian V4 Presidency will continue the dialogue with Russia at the expert level (Directors of COEST or/and Directors of Analytical Departments).

The Hungarian V4 Presidency considers the V4 framework as a particularly important forum to discuss views on Russia, including the tendency of NATO-Russia relations, the Russian proposal on a New European Security Architecture and the challenges faced in the field of energy security.

### **V4 + Moldova**

The Presidency intends to promote the efforts aiming at strengthening democracy and the rule of law, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of the media. The V4 should give political and technical support to Moldova especially in strengthening the capacities of the Moldovan administration.

### **V4 + Japan**

Acknowledging the shared interests and joint responsibilities in the field of environmental protection and energy security, aiming at meeting the values of a "Green Visegrad", Hungary

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intends to initiate a workshop for national experts dealing with environmental issues in a V4 + Japan format.

Within the framework of its presidency Hungary intends to further strengthen the cooperation of V4 countries and Japan in the field of development assistance, for example in Afghanistan, Central Asia, the Western Balkans, Moldova and Ukraine.

### **V4 + Israel**

Hungary plans to organize consultations at the expert level between the V4 countries and Israel on the EU-Israeli Association Agreement and the furthering of EU-Israeli ties, as well as on the Middle East Peace Process.

### **V4 + Nordic Council of Ministers**

In the dialogue between the V4 and the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Hungarian V4 Presidency wishes to put special emphasis on climate, environmental and energy issues. The European Council recently adopted its “3x20” targets and took a decision on the ETS. The accumulated vast experience of the Nordic States may help the V4 countries during the implementation of those goals. The UN Climate Conference is due in December 2009 in Copenhagen. Cooperation of the V4 and the Nordic Council countries may greatly contribute to achieve the best possible results at the Conference.

The Hungarian Presidency also intends to promote the exchange of views on issues related to the global financial crisis. Every state has been affected by its consequences although in very different ways and extent. Comparing notes on the lessons one or another state has drawn from its own experience, sharing ideas about the possible ways out from the economic recession may benefit all.

An enhanced co-operation is envisaged with the Nordic Council of Ministers in the field of strengthening democracy in the neighbouring countries.

### **V4+ Benelux**

Cooperation with the Benelux countries came to a standstill in the past two years. The partners will continue to identify the areas of possible cooperation in the future. A field of special interest might be the implementation of common V4-Benelux projects in the framework of the Eastern Partnership and in the Western-Balkans.

### Sectoral Policies

#### Health Issues

Hungary will put the issues of *health security* and *combating communicable diseases* on the agenda of the Hungarian V4 Presidency Programme, based on the following reason:

**Health security is a priority topic on global, European as well as national agendas.**

The **EU Council conclusions on health security**, adopted by the EPSCO Council in December 2008, defines, inter alia, the following priority areas providing a coordinated response, strengthening of coordination, taking better account of communication, interoperability and the intersectoral dimension.

Following the adoption of the Council conclusions, a “health security legislative initiative” will be prepared by the European Commission, by the end of 2010, including 4 main elements:

- Review of the Decision 2119/98/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 September 1998, which set up a network for the epidemiological surveillance and control of communicable diseases in the Community;
- Implementing the International Health Regulations (IHR);
- Providing the Health Security Committee (HSC) with a legal basis;
- Evaluating the functioning of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC).

Therefore, health security shall be a priority issue during the Hungarian V4 and EU Presidencies.

These issues are high on the agenda of V4 Countries, sharing a number of common challenges as regards health security issues on the EU agenda.

Information on exact themes, proposed contents as well as the possible place and venue of the proposed programmes will be communicated later.

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### **Agriculture and Rural Development**

During its presidency Hungary intends to cover the following subjects in the field of ARD: discussions and exchange of views on the current strategic issues of the Common Agricultural Policy and that of the WTO, to reach a common approach and its representation on the Councils meetings in Brussels.

Common research consortiums should be set up in order to apply for EU funds successfully.

Tasks:

- catering and organising R&D tasks;
- facilitating and controlling agreements;
- making contacts, intensive communication;
- working out project proposals, project coordination;
- keeping in touch with other portfolios and small regions, intensive communication among the portfolios and other concerned organizations of the V4, preparing reports, making proposals;
- coordinating projects applying for EU funds, lobbying.

The compilation of a list of cooperating universities, research institutions, trade schools (regarding contacts) from the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia and Hungary shall be drawn up, as well as that of the concerned organizations, companies and coordinators in the field of R&D in order to harmonize the common fields.

The Hungarian V4 Presidency will encourage closer relations between the V4 and Russia in the field of agriculture and sale of agricultural products.

The Hungarian V4 Presidency shall launch common research projects dealing with demographic/social/ natural and environmental aspects of changes in rural areas of V4 since EU accession. The project will feature scenarios for the next 10-20 years regarding changes of rural areas in order to provide assistance to the political decision makers to formulate a common position in the debate of the CAP after 2013.

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Hungary intends to improve the representation of regional issues, better cooperation at expert level and working group meetings of the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE) and in the implementation of the resolutions approved on the 5th meeting (Warsaw, 2007) – Forests and energy, Forests and water – shall be encouraged.

Hungary aims at exchanging information and experience on research, prognosis and planned forestry measures in relation to foreseen climate change effects on forests and forestry.

Exchange of information and experience on the prognosis, prevention and mitigation of biotic damages and on large scale abiotic damages also affecting the timber markets as well as on forest fires in border regions.

Existing co-operation in the field of animal health, plant health and food chain safety will be enhanced. Since 2010 is the year dedicated to food chain safety in Hungary, within the framework of different programs throughout the year, the World Meat Hygiene and Inspection Congress is to be organised in Budapest between 10-13 May 2010.

Co-operation in the evaluation and in the future use of the outcome of the public consultation of the Green Paper about agricultural product quality (incl. organic farming) towards the effective adaptation of the requirements in question and the effective operation of quality schemes;

Strengthening the principle of common preference as regards agricultural and food products;

Close cooperation and harmonised position towards the European Commission and the European Council in finding solutions in case of market disturbances, and further simplification of CAP based on comparable conditions for all EU member states;

Close cooperation and harmonised position in the case of establishment of import quotas originating from third countries;

Joint elaboration of strategy and actions concerning multinational retailers standing in the end of the food supply-chain in order to ensure fair trade behaviour and to protect farmers and food processors, especially Small and Medium Enterprises.

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### **Regional policy**

The Hungarian V4 Presidency will concentrate on:

- Searching for common procedure and proposals of the V4 at EC regulation simplification process for EU Structural Funds in the programme period 2007 – 2013;
- V4 common statement preparation for future Cohesion policy of the EU;
- Current possibilities of cooperation of V4 countries arising from the EC regulation No. 1082/2006 on a European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC);
- Policy of urban and rural development (urban and rural relations, centre-periphery or urbia – suburbia, metropolitan agglomerations, etc.);
- Exchange of views on macro regional strategies based on experiences of current work on the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and in the context of planned work on the EU Strategy for the Danube Region.

### **Regional development**

The V4 cooperation in the field of regional development will remain focused on issues that have been initiated during the Polish V4 presidency. This is an important area of V4 cooperation considering the growing intensity of the European debate on the cohesion policy and the EU budget, especially given the fact that Hungary and Poland will chair the EU presidencies in 2011 - a crucial period for the future of the cohesion policy. Therefore V4 countries will work closely on V4 common positions in the most important areas.

Hungarian V4 presidency will also continue the debate initiated during the Polish V4 presidency on facilitation and simplification of the structural funds and the Cohesion Fund implementation system on EU level for the period 2007-2013. Territorial cohesion will also be subject of exchange of views among V4 experts. The Hungarian Presidency will enable consultations and sharing experiences within the Visegrad Group in order to discuss current delivery mechanisms and the future of the Cohesion Policy. The identified points of common position will be presented to the forum of the EU Member State Countries.

### Environmental protection

International co-operation is essential for the protection of the environment and coordination among the V4 countries is particularly important for the countries involved.

Bearing in mind the vision of the Green Visegrad and in line with the program of the coming Hungarian EU presidency the Hungarian V4 Presidency would like to focus on the following topics:

- Strengthening environmental security in the region in particular in the field of flood protection, chemical safety, and transboundary shipment of waste;
- Exchange of opinion and coordination of positions on the negotiations on climate change related issues during EU level discussions of global issues with special attention to the elaboration of the post-2012 regime, as well as during the discussion on EU legislation;
- The evaluation of the implementation and achievements of the EU Sustainable Development and Lisbon Strategies;
- Encouragement of the submission of applications on environmental issues to the Visegrad Fund;
- Exchange of experience on the Czech EU Presidency in the environmental area;
- Maintenance of the Environmental and Health Information System (ENHIS) based on indicators of environmental health;
- Exchange of experience concerning the implementation process of the Health Impact Assessment (HIA);
- Implementation of goals of the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP).

Expert level meetings will be hosted on the strengthening of environmental security in the region. In addition, consultation of the ministers concerned may be held before the meetings of the European Council, as appropriate.

### Economic and financial matters

#### Economic issues

**The Hungarian presidency will focus the V4 cooperation on strengthening the economic potential of the region and increasing its competitiveness.** This activity should preferably be based on previous programmes, paying respect to the economic policy priorities of wider integration settings – like the EU.

The global economic crisis has set a new need for a more active approach allowing a better response to the crisis challenges and will help to overcome its negative effects on V4 countries economies.

The Hungarian presidency initiates the setting up of a V4 level **working group** on the comparison and, in certain fields where possible, a better coordination of national crisis-management policies. This working group should consist of representatives of ministries of economic affairs and those from ministries of finance and national development policies, respectively.

In the field of EU policies – having also in mind the forthcoming EU presidencies of the V4 member countries – measures shall be taken to arrange consultations for experts (concerning issues of the EU agenda) in order to exchange experience and to adopt a common position. The proposed aim is to increase the coordination of the V4 member countries. Topics suggested by the Hungarian Presidency for consultations will include:

- EU legal harmonization (alignment);
- experience in drawing EU sources;
- co-ordinated deployment of EU financial resources;
- common appointments, support of headquarter tender application for institute development (e.g. ESS, EU Aid Office).

The Hungarian V4 Presidency will pay special attention to the common project to be realized under Czech coordination: the preparation of the common regional planning and regional development documentation of the V4 + 2 (Romania and Bulgaria) countries.

A common co-ordinated appearance of the V4 countries in the field of economy and trade will be of high priority in the neighbouring countries (e.g. in aid program for the Balkan countries or in applying for tenders in form of a consortium).

### **Sectoral co-operation**

**In many sectors of the economic relations there has been an effective co-operation of the V4 already. It has also been successful in the V4+ format** (e.g. in the field of energy, SMEs, cohesion policy, regional development, etc.). In this field the Hungarian V4 Presidency's main objective is to increase efficiency and competence. This will include initiatives to support SMEs, to intensify their cross-border activities, to reduce their administrative burdens, to simplify regulations, to improve the investment incentives in the region. In order to help SMEs to become internationally more competitive, the Hungarian Presidency will also focus on creating the framework of cluster cooperation policy in the V4 region.

Common and coherent ambitions have been conceived in the energy sector. High priority will be given to the ideas and developments diminishing the vulnerability of the region: connection of energy and transport networks, cooperation in the storage of strategic goods, consultations and exchange of experience concerning the liberalization of energy markets and the harmonization of obligations. As part of the diversification process the Hungarian V4 Presidency will foster closer co-operation in the field of renewable energy sources, energy efficiency and nuclear energy.

The V4 countries will work together on the elaboration of a European anti-crisis and solidarity operational mechanism with regards to energy supplies. A joint V4 position should be worked out in this field. Common projects related to the development of the South Gas Corridor should also be implemented.

The Hungarian V4 Presidency will regard regional development and the modernization of infrastructure as high priority issues for the V4. In order to facilitate these aims, first and foremost, the cross-border cooperation and the local initiatives will be prioritised.

### **Transportation**

In the field of the transportation sector, the Hungarian presidency will focus its attention on the following questions:

- Harmonised and unified traffic control of heavy goods vehicles and exchange of experiences between experts of V4 countries on the implementation of Eurovignette Directive on toll payments.

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- Continuing the consultations on the current situation and prospective ideas of the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS).
- Co-operation shall continue under the framework of working groups established with the participation of experts in transportation. The V4 countries will maintain the established mechanism of consultations on draft of legal documents elaborated at the EU level in the field of transportation.

### Energy

Enforcement of energy supply security in the Central European region by:

- Coordination of the V4 position during the review of the directive on the security of gas supply as agreed by the European Council in March 2009.
- Collective action to promote the inclusion of the region's energy policy interests into the second **EU Energy Policy Action Plan**, to be adopted in Spring 2010.
- Coordination of the V4 position during the **TEN-E programme** review and for the start of the **EU Energy Security and Infrastructure Instrument**, in order to secure financial assistance for as many Central European projects as possible.
- Giving further major political, financial and energy policy support for the construction of missing and/or weakest interconnections of our region that are important for a creation of the internal EU energy market, for increasing of security of supply and which also contribute to the short-term recovery of the whole EU economy. Especially, the completion of the missing **Baltic-Adria north-south gas link** has particularly strong positive transformative effect on the infrastructure development and gas markets of our region.
- Promoting regional cooperation in the legal framework set out in the 3rd liberalisation package. A more efficient, integrated regional gas market would be a more desirable end market for upstream producers and would raise the chances for finance.

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- The **Energy Community** membership would extend the EU energy acquis to the neighbouring countries which is the best means to bring stability and transparency to these regions. The Visegrad countries should therefore support the membership of the Ukraine and Moldova.
- Promoting cooperation between national **electricity markets** of the V4 countries at the wholesale level.
- Analyzing the possibilities of creating common **underground gas storage** facilities for the V4 countries.
- Continual using of financial means from Structural Funds for increase of energy efficiency (including buildings).
- Support of RES and Joint Regional Projects.

### **Financial affairs**

Concerning the **community budget review**, primarily reconciliation is needed at expert level between the delegates of the V4 countries to identify joint interests and to discuss and harmonize positions. As the reform of the revenue side of the budget is included in the review, **the future of the VAT based own resource** system and the question of the abolition of correction mechanisms are absolutely interconnected with the abovementioned subject. Accordingly, these questions will be reconciled at expert level during the Hungarian V4 Presidency. However, considering the progress of the budget reform, negotiations are needed both at expert and higher level to formulate common positions especially regarding EU budget expenditures (including the shape of Cohesion Policy as from 2013) to be represented jointly at EU level.

Considering the time-schedule, V4 positions shall adapt to the community process of the budget reform. As the overall mandate of the commission will expire in November 2009, it is the upcoming new Commission, which will handle the issue in substance. Therefore the Hungarian V4 Presidency considers the second half of the year 2009 of the V4 presidency, as the more active part of the budget review.

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The Hungarian V4 Presidency will launch **expert consultations regarding indirect taxation** (VAT, excise duties and customs), especially on the cross-border aspects, like tackling cross-border tax frauds, customs and tax exemption issues, etc. These issues are also on the agenda at EU-level. These consultations are to be commenced in 2009.

Expert consultations on the experience of V4 member states and practise of **trade-aid** will be organised from the autumn of 2009.

The European Commission is expected to put forward its proposals on **the common financial supervisory and regulatory framework in the EU** during the autumn of 2009. The exchange of experience and opinions on this issue will be commenced at expert and higher level as required after publishing these proposals in order to clarify the mutual positions amongst V4 countries. The effects and experience of state intervention packages implemented in order to alleviate the consequences of the global crisis and to support the economies of the V4 countries would also be discussed at expert group level.

### Education and Culture

The Hungarian Presidency undertakes the central thought of the preparation of the 20th anniversary of the Visegrad regional cooperation in order to raise broader awareness of the Visegrad Group's activities in its own member states, in and outside Europe. The Hungarian V4 Presidency will continue the previous presidencies' efforts to strengthen the constructive V4 stance within the EU and in the neighbourhood. Emphasis is to be put on the integration process of the Western Balkans and Ukraine. In the field of education, the activities of the International Visegrad Fund will be steered toward new possibilities to involve more students and the youth in the V4 cooperation.

### Education

The European dedicated **Year of Creativity and Innovation 2009 and Year of Fight against Child Poverty 2010** will be supported through the activities of public and higher educational institutions, as well as establishing direct contacts and meetings.

The period of 2004-2006 of the Structural Funds provided experience of the use of the Funds as well as it resulted in new possibilities for the implementation of the new programming period 2007-2013. Conclusions are to be drawn from the first programmes of the later period and the exchanges of national experience will be supported. Particular attention is to be paid to the experience of the Czech EU presidency at senior and expert level.

- Exchange of knowledge and experience in the implementation of national lifelong learning strategies (LLL) as well as the exchange of European best practices
- Building the European Higher Education Area and its further possibilities after 2010; results of Higher Education reforms in the V4 countries; promoting the Visegrad Higher Education Region; expanding the Visegrad programmes for higher education on the basis of previous results
- Supporting equity of education and equal opportunities in education with its tools - experience of the inclusive education.
- Supporting language training and language diversity, extending multilateral cooperation between public educational institutions in the four countries in order to get acquainted with each other's languages and cultures.
- Exchange of knowledge and supporting education for sustainable development.

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### Culture

The European dedicated **Year of Creativity and Innovation 2009** will be supported, as well as its further extension for the year of 2010 with the activities of cultural institutions and their direct contacts. Cultural programmes and developments financed by Structural Funds in 2007-2013 programming period will provide us with new possibilities of utilizing of EU Funds so the exchange of national experience will be most welcome.

There will be one Cultural ministers' meeting, namely the 20<sup>th</sup>, to be held in Hungary. The experience of the Czech EU presidency will be highly appreciated at all levels.

- The Hungarian V4 Presidency will continue the priorities of preservation and utilization of cultural heritage.
- Emphasis will be put on the development of cultural and creative industry focusing on cultural heritage-based regional development and the exchanges of best practices.
- Discussions on the V4 experience of the EU Council Workplan for culture 2008-2010.
- Promoting cultural dialogue and related programmes in V4 and its neighbouring regions.
- Fostering the common image of V4 as a region through common programmes for dedicated years of the famous composers – Chopin and Erkel.
- Approved V4 cultural projects to be continued:
  1. Continuing the Visegrad Literary Anthology project with the Arabic- English version as well as supporting new initiatives
  2. Visegrad Library project - V4 national literature to be published
  3. Digitalisation of libraries - V4 conference for V4 librarians (planned in Warsaw, first half 2010)
  4. Cultural heritage project and related events
  5. Importance of the EU funds and other sources in cultural development – V4 workshop for experts.

### Programmes planned by the Hungarian V4 Presidency

- 20<sup>th</sup> V4 cultural ministers' meeting – early 2010
- Summer course on the management of UNESCO world heritage sites for young specialists from V4 countries (Krakow July 2009)

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- International conference on UNESCO world heritage cities based in on the territory of V4 countries (Krakow first half of 2010)
- V4 Workshop on the use of Structural Funds in Cultural and Educational programmes /end of 2009 /
- V4 workshop on exchanging views of the inclusive education /first half of 2010/
- Common programmes for the dedicated years of Erkel (2009) and Chopin (2010).
- Language diversity and cultural dialogue – Visegrad Anthology.

**Justice and Home Affairs**

**Police and justice co-operation**

**Hungary proposes to focus the V4 co-operation on the following issues:**

**Public order and security**

- International cooperation in tackling thefts of non-ferrous metals committed to the detriment of the railway infrastructure – comprehensive evaluation of the operation “FERUM” carried out on 15 October 2008, setting directions for further cooperation.

**Border management**

- Organisation of a pilot project of the Visa Information System (VIS) focusing on external land borders.
- Carrying out experience exchange concerning the border policing duties of the EU Presidency, in the light of the Presidency terms.
- Meeting of the heads/experts of border policing units – review of the border policing system from the aspect of operating as a Schengen member state, on the basis of practical experience:
  - possible joint activities in third countries;
  - international cooperation among the affected states;
  - cooperation in controlling and guarding external borders;
  - compensatory measures within the country and at the internal borders;
  - intensification of the cooperation in EU working groups.
- As regards the Schengen system of integrated border management we are committed to represent the special security needs of the Eastern land borders and to give this aspect comparable weight to the Southern maritime borders at different EU fora. Additionally, the Hungarian V4 Presidency will work toward the establishment of new technologies and the consequent sharing of their burdens. The Hungarian V4 Presidency will also co-operate in the development and testing of these systems.

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### **Prison Service co-operation**

- The Hungarian Prison Service will organize an international conference in autumn of 2009, in the framework of the Visegrad Group (V4) Cooperation:
  - Topic of the conference: “Experiences with the operation of PPP prisons”
  - Venue of the conference: Szombathely /The PPP-financed prison will be officially opened this year/.
  - Participants: representatives of the Polish, Slovak, Czech, Croatian, Slovenian, Estonian, Latvian, Romanian, Bulgarian, Austrian, Bavarian, Italian and Serb prison administrations.

### **Crime prevention**

The V4 countries keep a good contact with each other within the framework of the EUCPN. Within the framework of the Hungarian presidency activity there is an opportunity to intensify and enhance cooperation in the field of both community and police crime prevention. The Hungarian V4 Presidency suggests the following projects:

- Sharing of practical experience in crime prevention with special regard on effects of joining the Schengen Area. The countries would outline mutually their model-projects, which were delivered, and the professional documentation of the execution procedure of the projects.
- Organizing of study visits and co-ordinating of visits in order to get acquainted with crime prevention systems and specialized experience of the participant countries.

### **Road Safety**

Hungary considers the issues of road safety and the cross-border enforceability of the corresponding penalties as priorities. The Hungarian V4 Presidency will co-operate with the V4 partners in these issues:

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Since 2001, the aim of EU road safety policy has been to halve the number of road fatalities by the year 2010. In 2007, for the first time since 2001, no progress has been made in the reduction of deaths on the roads in the EU. Currently, traffic offences are often not sanctioned if they are committed with a vehicle which is registered in a different Member State from the one where the offence has been committed. The problem is particularly acute for offences that are registered automatically by road-side cameras, where there is no direct contact between the driver and the police. Public acceptance of enforcement is vital to the ongoing effort to reduce casualties and evasion by non-resident drivers could undermine this acceptance. One of the Hungarian V4 Presidency's objectives is to facilitate the enforcement of sanctions against drivers who commit an offence in another Member State than the one where their vehicle is registered. Traffic offences with the highest number of accidents and deaths on the road to be focused on are as follows: driving under the influence of alcohol not using a seat belt, and failing to stop at a red light.

### **E-justice**

In the field of e-justice the most important priority is the exchange of experience. The Hungarian V4 Presidency will organise expert level meetings in every six months or at least once a year. Such meetings will provide a good occasion for justice experts to learn about the Visegrad countries and their legal solutions.

### **Global Approach to migration- eastern and southeastern dimensions**

It is suggested that the eastern and south-eastern third countries form a priority for the V4 countries. The Hungarian V4 presidency will endeavour to continue and develop the dialogue with those states along the East-West migration routes, especially the Western Balkan countries, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova.

In order to develop the political dialogue on migration, the Hungarian V4 Presidency wishes to continue the migration partnership program that is set to start in 2009 under the Czech presidency. The program "Building Migration Partnerships" is aimed at the enhancement of the features of the Global Approach to Migration in the neighbouring eastern and south-eastern countries.

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V4 countries will exchange information and the statistical data on the current legal frameworks and migration trends especially from Asian countries. They will also support bilateral and multilateral projects implemented in cooperation with neighbouring countries.

In the external dimension of handling migration, the Hungarian V4 Presidency shall pursue co-operation with countries of origin and transit. Taking into account the strategic importance of our eastern and south-eastern neighbouring regions, the Hungarian V4 Presidency will continue the dialogue and practical co-operation with these countries. The co-operation shall cover legal and illegal migration and the relation of migration and development.

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### **Social Affairs**

The Hungarian side sees the necessity to exchange information on crisis management in the field of employment (at ministerial level as well as at the level of public employment services) but mainly through communication channels such as internet and written materials. Hungary welcomes and is ready to attend at any kind of expert meetings and seminars organised by the V4 countries on crisis management in employment during the Hungarian Presidency but has financial resources for organising only one seminar on “Measures used for supporting labour market integration of disadvantageous groups-especially people with disabilities” as indicated in the work plan. Of course, the topic of the seminar can be extended to the examination of the effect of the crisis and of the measures used to preserve employment and improve workers’ qualification. In the frame of the existing European co-operation between the public employment services (PES) of the Member States (V4 countries), we suggest to discuss the special tasks and programmes of the PES in the crisis period.

### **Central-European Roma Strategy**

Hungary will launch a discussion aiming at creating a Central-European Roma Strategy. The Hungarian V4 Presidency’s primary goal is to improve the mutual learning in the field of Roma issues between the countries concerned. On the basis of this process, a Central-European Roma Strategy is planned to be created, which can be presented as best practice at EU level in order to give the opportunity for EU decision-makers to take it into consideration by developing policy areas concerned at Community level. The Central-European Roma Strategy should consider international platforms as well as their experiences especially the Decade of Roma Inclusion Programme and the EU Roma Platform.

**Type of event(s):** meetings at expert level, during these meetings debates as well as field visits will be organised with the aim of sharing some best practices concerning desegregation policy in the field of housing and education as well as barriers to access the labour market by Roma.

### **V4 knowledge centre on handling demographic challenges**

The establishment of a researchers’ database and a consortium related to research and development is proposed. The main aim is to deepen the co-operation between the V4

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countries and to launch common researchers' programmes, especially with the aim of analysing the economic, housing, income situation of older people, their situation/status within the family, health and well-being, life style, social role and future perspective of the target group.

**Type of event(s):** organization of scientific conferences on an annual basis, where the results concerning the aging society can be presented, dissemination of related information via the internet, designing electronic database, modernisation of training programmes, composing studies.

### **Social integration of disadvantaged groups and their integration to the labour market**

V4 experts will exchange views and present their "best practices" related to the latest trends on labour market.

In relation to the social integration of disadvantaged groups and to their integration to the labour market the sharing of experience and information is suggested. This aim is envisaged through the mutual presentation of related results and already achieved programmes, as well as an overview of the structure of the institutional system.

The overall role of European funds in the implementation of national measures will also be discussed by V4 experts with a possible participation of European Commission's and other relevant European experts.

**Type of event(s):** conference, presentations, study visits, dissemination of strategic documents in English.

### **Fight against poverty and child poverty**

Considering the fact that 2010 will be dedicated to the **European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion** in the European Union, the Hungarian V4 Presidency intends to focus on the issue of fighting against child poverty. This aim is intended to be realised through the mutual presentation of the ways and methods of combating child poverty, collection of best practices in the field of childcare, comparison of different types of allocations, comparison of measures taken at governmental level, exchange of information on

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alternative forms of employment as social economy cooperatives, green jobs and other examples of alternative jobs as an effective way of combating the social exclusion.

**Type of event(s):** exchange of experience and best practices, training, organisation of workshops.

### **International Conference on Ageing Society**

The question of ageing society is becoming an increasingly important issue in Central Europe as well as in Europe as a whole. For this reason, Hungary intends to highlight the importance of this topic through the presentation of good practices and model projects, exchange of experience in the field of fighting against segregation, enhancing the social integration and participation of older people and building cross-border co-operation. This aim is proposed to be realised by making an overview of the aging society based on the demographic prognosis. The Hungarian V4 Presidency proposes that the V4 Member States could prepare a report on the challenges each country faces on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the International Year of Older Persons – taking into consideration of the goals of UN of 1999 (independence, participation, care, self-fulfilment, dignity). Hungary intends to give the **Awards for the Elderly-Friendly Local Government** in Hungary on this event with the aim of disseminating good practices in Hungary.

**Type of event(s):** international conference (presentation, roundtable discussion).

### **Sports policy area**

In the area of sport, two cooperation efforts are underway with V4 countries. The Hungarian V4 Presidency wishes to build on the already existing structures.

#### **Olympic Hopes Competition**

The so-called Olympic Hopes Competition tournament was set up on the basis of cooperation among V4 ministries and Olympic Committees. The organisation and evaluation committee meets once a year in a rotating system. The tendency of recent years shows that more and more countries accede to the V4 framework.

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### **"V4+" regional sports policy cooperation**

In the spring of 2008, the Hungarian Ministry of Local Governments took the initiative in Budapest to launch a cooperation to which Slovenia, Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia and Serbia are also parties in addition to the V4 countries. This cooperation mainly aims at exchanging experience on sports policy matters and consulting on matters arising within European and international organisations. Owing to the success of the kick-off meeting, the Polish party forthwith announced to organise the subsequent meeting in Warsaw in September 2008. The Polish party included the Ukraine in the scope of invited parties. Romania will host the next meeting in the first half of 2009, after which Serbia also indicated its intention to organise the following sessions of the sports policy cooperation.

### **Tourism policy area**

Cooperation in tourism in the areas of both tourism marketing and tourism diplomacy is a successfully and dynamically developing area of joint efforts by V4 countries; the Hungarian Presidency aims at strengthen cooperation further in both areas.

**In the area of tourism marketing cooperation, the Hungarian Presidency aims to strengthen the joint marketing promotion of V4 countries - European Quartet – One melody – in third-party markets, including mainly the US, Japan, Russia, China and an additional market to be determined jointly. The main objective is to improve cooperation through joint participation in exhibitions, refreshing a joint home page, a map and publications, realising publications in new hardcopy formats, organising workshops, journalist and tour-operator study tours on tourism. In addition to programmes functioning well, the Hungarian Presidency aims to adapt the V4 specialist tour-operator training programme running successfully in the US to tour-operators working in the Russian market and widen the health tourism co-operation on this market.**

**In order to set up promotion campaigns and to determine the related tourism budget, two sessions are proposed in Hungary for tourism marketing organisations during the Hungarian Presidency.**

**In the area of tourism diplomacy, the Hungarian Presidency aims at strengthening coordination between and joint action by the four countries in international cooperation,**

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**to approximate positions** and properly represent them based on mutual interests such as within the framework of the EU Tourism Advisory Committee and the World Tourism Organisation.

In connection with one of the tourism topics of the 2011 Hungarian EU Presidency, the experience and achievements of V4 countries in the implementation of EU Commission Communication for the Year 2007 for sustainable and competitive tourism development are to be taken into consideration. State tourism leaders of the V4 countries will meet in the second half of the Hungarian Presidency in the spring of 2010 to discuss the proceeding actions and to approve annual marketing plans.

### Disaster management

In the area of civil defence, V4 countries are mainly responsible for disaster prevention and coordination of interventions regionally, and contribution to readiness of provision for citizens. During the V4 Presidency of the Czech Republic, a **Meeting of V4 Civil Defence and Disaster Management Directors was held in Brno on 2-4 April 2008**. Here the representatives of V4 countries expressed their intention to improve the effectiveness of active cooperation, to disseminate their knowledge and practical experience through which Central Europe contributes to the stability of the natural environment of entire Europe.

In recent years, Austria and Slovenia has also acceded to the V4 disaster management cooperation (V4+2).

**The National Disaster Management Directorate General foresees the implementation of the following programme points during the Hungarian V4 Presidency with a view to Hungary's EU Presidency in 2011:**

- Session of civil defence directors general of V4+2
- Working group sessions on current disaster management issues for the disaster management agencies of V4+2 countries and for the disaster management agencies of the Western Balkans in the phase of EU pre-accession.

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### Defence Policy

The Hungarian V4 Presidency will focus on:

- informal harmonization of partners' opinions and objectives prior to important discussions at NATO and EU defence ministers' meetings;
- exchange of information and experience with V4 countries on preparing and actual holding of the EU presidency, in the field of ESDP;
- the continuation of supporting of the preparation for the Euro-Atlantic integration of the countries of the Western Balkans, as well as Ukraine and Georgia through the transfer of defence-related experience on accession to NATO and the EU;
- the mutual exchange of information on the objectives and possibilities of joint participation in international crisis management activities;
- seeking further coordination of V4 countries in the sphere of military -technological cooperation including the discussion on the possible establishment of an EU Battle Group of the Visegrad Group countries in the horizon beyond 2015, as laid down in the 2007 Bratislava communiqué;
- EDA – mutual support and exchange of information on participation in projects; exploring possible ways of launching joint projects;
- discussing the possibility of enhancing cooperation in decreasing helicopter capability shortfalls in the framework of NATO and EU;
- co-operation in the emerging new NATO Signal Battalion;
- Seeking possibilities of consultations in the preparation work of devising NATO's new Strategic Concept (as decided at NATO Strasbourg/Kehl summit)
- Continuation of discussion on NATO- and EU-led operations in Afghanistan.

Hungary proposes to host at least one meeting of V4 Defence Ministers, State Secretaries (State Secretaries for Defence Planning and Infrastructure, Defence Policy Directors) and Chiefs of Staff, respectively.