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Ministry
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Slovak Dissemination of Democracy

For a long time Slovakia existed in the commune regime. The citizens of the Slovak Republic are able to work together in co-creating and strengthening of the democratic culture, spread participation approaches and mechanisms for the democratic dialogue. One of the aims is to provide help in international development programs and arrange cultured dialogue among various interest groups. Many Slovaks are working in non-profit organizations, public administration institutions and cross-sector partnerships.

The final phase of the Slovak democratic consolidation was the process whereby democratic institutions and practices became seated in the political culture. The recent political development in Slovakia divides society and introduces two main groups of arguments exploring this fact from different points of view and pertaining to building a democracy governed by the Rule of Law, managing ethnic minority problems, establishing a market economy, determining foreign policy orientation and aiming to build institutions of civil society.

Slovakia joined the OECD (2000), European Union (2004) and the Committee of the OECD Development Assistance Committee – DAC (2013). Slovakia also became part of a community of donors who provide aid to developing countries. Membership in these organizations, more precisely preparation for it, significantly contributed to the formation mechanism Slovak official development assistance. Mechanism of Slovak development assistance, as we know it today, was established in 2003. The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic became the national coordinator of Slovak development assistance. In the early years of the Slovak development assistance there was a mechanism constructed for the strong support of the Canadian Development Agency (CIDA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Slovakia's foreign policy is constructed around four pillars. The first is bilateral and multilateral diplomacy, the second European policy (Inter-ministerial and cross-sectional, which is implemented by the joint participation of all ministries and other state administration bodies and which is also reflected in other dimensions of Slovakia's foreign policy), the third one is economic diplomacy and the coordinated presentation of Slovakia abroad and the last – fourth, is consular work and assisting citizens.¹

The main reason why Slovakia assists developing countries is that development cooperation should be seen as a contribution Slovakia to more prosperous, more stable and a more secure world.

We cannot make a strict borders on the Earth. Poverty, terrorism, trafficking of narcotics, illegal migration, climate change are not only the problems of developing countries, but in today's global world these problems are also our

problems. By helping others we are indirectly helping ourselves.

Slovakia could build on its own historical experience, specific story and we, as a country, have gone through a difficult and successful transformation process. The webpage of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic (MFEA SR) promotes as the main goals of our diplomacy:

- "Human development of partner countries, primarily by supporting education and employment"
- Support of democracy and good governance including dialogue between civil society and state institutions

In fulfilling its vision and the goals, the SR relies on:

- Its transformation experience in building independent state institutions, development of a market economy and meeting the principles of democracy
- Successful integration in international organisations and groups
- Recent experience as an aid recipient²

Development assistance is an effective instrument of our foreign policy, not least of all, we fulfil the responsibilities and obligations of membership in the EU, UN and OECD. In addition, thanks to the membership in the EU, through contributions to multilateral Europe Aid (but also other organizations influencing global policy), Slovakia has the ability to influence the international development agenda with a full voice membership, by compensating geopolitical weight given the size of our country.

Centre for Experience Transfer from Integration and Reforms (CETIR)

The centre was established on summer 2011 by the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic (MFEA SR). "CETIR main mission is to share Slovak experience from integration into the European Union and NATO as well as knowledge gained during transformation process and implementation of the reforms. CETIR is used as a support tool in Medium-Term Strategy for Development Cooperation of the Slovak Republic for 2014-2018.³

This centre has eight sectorial priorities that are defined by the partner countries of the Western Balkans and the Eastern Partnership and by available expert capacities of the Slovak governmental, non-governmental and busi-

ness entities:

1. reform and management of public finance, tax reforms, management and utilisation of EU financial tools
2. security sector reform
3. energy with emphasis on energy security and alternative resources
4. support of market environment development and small and medium enterprises
5. water protection
6. food security
7. decentralisation and public administration reform
8. building civil society - cooperation between the governmental and non-governmental sector⁴

Moreover, there are also other ways of cooperation like study visits, visits of Slovak experts abroad, workshops. CETIR tries promptly to respond to the specific requirement(s) of the partner countries by using the experience, active participation of the Slovak ministries and other institutions. The emphasis is put on strengthening of the reform processes, fulfilling European perspective and improving good governance of public affairs through partner consultations in specific sectors within governmental institutions to prepare background for common projects with Slovak entities.⁵

The Slovak NGDO Platform

The NGDO Platform was established as an interest group of 15 legal entities and was officially registered at the Regional Office in Bratislava in 2003. It also became one of the founding members of the European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development (CONCORD).⁶

The main goals of the Slovak NGDO platform according to the official webpage are:

- representing joint interests of its members
- providing and sharing information about current trends in development cooperation and humanitarian assistance
- co-ordination of joint activities and projects of its members
- lobbying on issues related to international development and humanitarian assistance on a national and international level
- review and scrutiny of official documents related to development and humanitarian assistance, conducting surveys and expert activities

- organizing professional workshops, conferences and seminars for member organizations and the public
- engaging the Slovak media into the topic of development cooperation
- activities to promote global development education in Slovakia and raise public awareness about development assistance
- publication and editorial activities⁷

Slovak help with democratization

The Slovak Republic is trying to achieve a valuable, transparent foreign policy, in order to increase its prestige. This effort was directed primarily to supporting and promoting the values of democracy and human rights.

In the case of Belarus, Slovakia is supporting actions against non-democratic regime of Alexander Lukašenko. The main reason of this pressure was to force the Belarusian leadership to release political prisoners and strive to improve the situation of human rights field in Belarus. Slovak diplomacy tried to and is still trying to support active citizenship in Belarus. Slovak political elites have significantly contributed to the maintenance of issues in the undemocratic regime of Belarus at an international and European level.

The Slovak Republic also reacted on the situation in the northern region of Africa on the so called "Arabian Spring". For example the Slovak Republic co-operated with the Netherlands in Tunisia where they helped with the transformation processes of this country.

Moreover, from other activities I can mention Slovakia's joining in the group of a US-Brazilian initiative concerning open governance.

Conclusion

The year 2014 is an opportunity to reflect on the outcomes of our strategic foreign policy decisions of the Slovak republic. We will commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Velvet Revolution, the 10th anniversary of its accession to the EU and NATO, the 70th anniversary of the Slovak National Uprising. The fact that we live in a free and democratic state should not be taken for granted. It is a never-ending challenge to preserve these values for future generations. We have to be prepared to defend the values of freedom and ideals of humanism both here in Slovakia and internationally. By the words of Shmuel Vaknin in Russian Roulette: Russia's Economy in Putin's Era: "This dictatorship, however much it may claim a temporary success, must inevitably have the effect of poisoning all."⁸



Annotations

¹ The Slovak Republic. Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, Direction of Slovak Foreign and European Policy in 2014. Available at [https://www.mzv.sk/App/wcm/media.nsf/vw_ByID/ID_1E870F04753534FCC1257C7F0048B9F7_EN/\\$File/Direction%20of%20Slovak%20Foreign%20and%20European%20Policy%202014.pdf](https://www.mzv.sk/App/wcm/media.nsf/vw_ByID/ID_1E870F04753534FCC1257C7F0048B9F7_EN/$File/Direction%20of%20Slovak%20Foreign%20and%20European%20Policy%202014.pdf) (accessed 11 September 2014).

² For more information, see http://www.foreign.gov.sk/en/foreign_policy/slovak_aid (accessed 11 September 2014).

³ <http://www.slovakaid.sk/en/cetir> (accessed 11 September 2014).

⁴ Official Development Assistance of the Slovak Republic, CETIR and Medium-Term Strategy for Development Cooperation of the Slovak Republic for 2014–2018, <http://www.slovakaid.sk/en/cetir> (accessed 11 September 2014).

⁵ For more information, see <http://www.slovakaid.sk/en/cetir> (accessed 11 September 2014).

⁶ Slovak NGDO Platform, What is the Slovak NGDO Platform: History, <http://www.mvro.sk/en/about-us> (accessed 11 September 2014).

⁷ Slovak NGDO Platform, What is the Slovak NGDO Platform: Activities, <http://www.mvro.sk/en/about-us> (accessed 11 September 2014).

⁸ Democracy: Webster's Quotation, Facts and Phrases. San Diego (California: ICON Group International, Inc., 2008), 198.



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