

# **VISEGRÁD GROUP. PROGRAM OF THE HUNGARIAN PRESIDENCY FOR STRENGTHENING THE COOPERATION OF THE FOUR VISEGRAD COUNTRIES (2001/2002)**

Based on the already existing results of cooperation, the program of the Hungarian Presidency is aimed at making the Visegrad Group a successful forum for members states that serves not only as a testing ground for future roles arising from membership in the European Union but also carries the message to its European and Atlantic partners that a developed and stable core, capable of meeting the requirements of the European Union, has emerged in Central Europe.

## **OBJECTIVES**

Promoting the Visegrad Group's interests related to European integration in the member states of the European Union. Providing support for Slovakia's membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Reinforcing Central European identity and the internal cohesion of the Visegrad Four region. Taking part in the EU strategy towards Ukraine. Making a contribution towards the stability of the Southeast European neighborhood of the Visegrad region.

## **POLITICAL COOPERATION COORDINATOR: MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

- Meeting of experts to discuss about the action program of the Hungarian Presidency. The meeting was held on 3 July 2001, in Budapest.
- Informal meeting of the V4 Prime Ministers at Lake Balaton. Scheduled date: 24-25 August 2001 in Tihany.
- Meeting of the political state secretaries of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of V4 to finalize and decide the action program of the Hungarian Presidency. Scheduled date: 21 September 2001, in Budapest.
- Reintroducing the cooperation between the V4 and the Benelux countries. Meeting of the heads of government. Scheduled date: 5 December 2001 in Luxembourg.
- Meeting of experts from the V4, the European Union and the Ukraine to discuss the development of relations with the Ukraine. Scheduled date: December 2001, in Budapest. Prior this meeting, consultations are proposed in the framework of V4 experts in September and V4 – Ukraine in November 2001 in Budapest. (At the end of the series of expert meetings, based on the result, the experts will make a proposal on the prime ministerial meeting between the V4 and Ukraine order to strengthen partnership with Ukraine.)
- The Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the V4 countries will participate in the Second Ministerial Meeting of the regional partnership initiative of Austria on 7 December 2001 in Bratislava.

- State Secretaries of the Ministries for Foreign Affairs of the V4 countries will meet to assess the state of cooperation and to prepare the summit of the prime ministers. Scheduled date: the first quarter of 2002, in Budapest.

- Meeting of V4 European correspondents to discuss possibilities of coordinated action in the field of Common Foreign and Security Policy - CFSP. Scheduled date: the first half of 2002, in Budapest.

- Continuation with the periodic informal meetings of the heads of V4 Policy Planning Staffs on major topical issues (the patterns of V4 cooperation, a future Central European dimension of EU, energy strategy, EU future visions, etc.) (A meeting was held on 3 July 2001 in Budapest on patterns of V4 cooperation.)

- Expert consultations between the general directorates of foreign ministries about current issues: consular questions, cooperation in the Council of Europe, preparation for the implementation of the Schengen accomplishments and sharing the experiences related to realization of controls on the external borders of the European Union. Meeting of experts from the V4 and Croatia to establish cooperation. Continuation of the consultations between the V4 and Slovenia: Expert meeting will be on 6 September 2001 in Ljubljana. Participation of the V4 in the realization of the goals of the Stability Pact.

## **SECTORAL COOPERATION**

### **ECONOMIC COOPERATION**

#### **COORDINATOR: MINISTRY OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS**

##### **Economic issues:**

- Expert consultation about preparations for receiving monies from the EU Structural Funds and state role in economic development and the means available to the state /for instance the establishment of industrial parks, incubator houses and industrial zones/.

- Expert consultation about the strategy of individual member states of the Visegrad Group for developing the e-economy, participation in the e-Europe program and the realization of the goals of the e-Europe program in V4 countries too. Possibly the formulation of a common development strategy for the e-economy. /Coordination of e-commerce and e-administration regulations.

- Expert consultation about the establishment of cross-border virtual markets and the creation of common internet-based economic portals, or ones capable of cooperation, for neighboring regions.

- Expert consultation about the state measures aimed at improving the operating conditions of small and medium-sized enterprises /SMEs/ and easing their financing problems.

##### **Energy:**

- Expert consultation and possibly preparations for cooperation in the field of maintaining stocks of crude oil and petroleum products.

- Expert consultation about the possibility for coordinating energy policies and the linking of different energy systems. /Council Directive 98/93/EC amending Directive 68/414/EEC which imposes an obligation on Member States to maintain minimum stocks of crude oil and/or petroleum products encourages, within the framework of agreements between member states, the storage of strategic reserves outside national boundaries but within the territory of the EU for the better utilization of storage capacities. Establishing cooperation between candidate countries in this important field is likely to be received positively by the EU.

**Cross-border cooperation:**

- Expert consultation about the:

Formulation of the National Development Plan /NDP/ for receiving structural support from the EU. /Recommended date: the first half of 2002/.

- Experiences related to the utilization of the Instrument for Structural Policies for Pre-Accession /ISPA/ and possibly the preparation of common project proposals on a bi- or multilateral basis. /Recommended date: the end of year 2001 or the beginning of 2002/.

- Utilization of INTERREG III, a Community Initiatives program, /preparations for the formulation of programs together with the neighboring countries concerned/, which, during the 2000-2006 period, makes it possible for member states and the neighboring countries concerned to prepare common program proposals financed by the European Regional Development Fund /ERDF/. /Recommended date: the beginning of 2002/

**Tourism:**

Expert consultation about:

- Specific forms of cooperation, the formulation of cross-border programs involving the regional organizations of the tourism sector.

- Possibilities for common TV programs addressing tourism related topics.

- Adding links to the already existing web-site of the Visegrad countries.

**COOPERATION IN EXTERNAL ECONOMIC RELATIONS  
COORDINATOR: MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

- Expert consultations about trade policy for the further liberalization of external economic relations and the promotion of the external economic relations of small and medium-sized enterprises /SMEs/.

**DEFENSE ISSUES  
COORDINATOR: MINISTRY OF DEFENSE**

Besides the already existing areas of cooperation /support for the NATO membership of Slovakia, sharing of experiences gained in the process of preparation and the further development of the cooperation in the framework of PfP/, high-level meetings and, depending on the nature of questions to be discussed, expert consultations on a bilateral,

trilateral or quadrilateral basis, within the framework of existing consultation mechanisms, in the following areas:

- Defense industrial cooperation.
- Coordination in the fields of military procurement and research and development (R+D).
- Harmonization of activities related to current questions of military upgrading.
- Evolving cooperation in areas mentioned in the NATO Defense Capabilities Initiative (DCI).

**CULTURAL COOPERATION**  
**COORDINATOR: MINISTRY OF NATIONAL CULTURAL HERITAGE**

Consultation and sharing of experiences about the implementation, adherence to and problems associated with the cultural norms developed by European integration organizations and transposed into the cultural legislation of member states.

- Meetings of cultural ministers from V4 countries on a rotation basis: Ministerial meeting was held on 22-23 June 2001 in Wroclaw. The next meeting will be in the first quarter 2002 in Sopron.

Problems arising from the liberalization of trade in cultural goods and the preservation of cultural diversity:

- Meeting of experts /Scheduled date: September 2001/.

Joint endeavors in the field of culture in order to present the image and cultural values of the region:

- Joint reception of V4 countries at the Venice Biannual Art Festival ( June 2001).
- Yearly Folklore Festival on a rotation basis: The first one will be in March 2002 in Budapest.

**EDUCATIONAL COOPERATION**  
**COORDINATOR: MINISTRY OF EDUCATION**

*Consultations in the following areas:*

- Preparations for receiving funds from the European Social Fund /ESF/.
- Establishing a forum of Visegrad countries for coordinating the contents of text-books within the framework of the Council of Europe Program for Teaching 20<sup>th</sup> Century History:

(1) Coordination of the contents of history and geography textbooks and the assessment of the common historical past.

(2) Depicting European dimension in public education text-books.

- Starting common language teaching programs between the Visegrad countries /Ministers of Education from Hungary, Austria, Slovakia and the Czech Republic have agreed to such programs on 7-8 March 2001 in Vienna/. Scheduled meeting of experts: September 2001, Graz.

- Possibility of developing a multi-lingual V4 dictionary.

**Research and development:**

- Meeting of ministers in charge of research and development.

- Expert consultation about the possible expansion of bilateral cooperation programs.

**COOPERATION IN YOUTH, SPORTS AND DRUGS ISSUES  
COORDINATOR: MINISTRY OF YOUTH AND SPORTS**

**Youth:**

- Youth Meeting of V4 Countries with the participation from government and civil organizations. The meeting was held on 13-15 July 2001 in Visegrad.

- Convening the Regional Youth Forum with the participation of governmental youth experts from Visegrad countries. Regional Youth Forum would be organized annually and the meetings would alternate between the different participating countries. Goals: the discussion of youth policy questions, further development of youth cooperation, discussion of the recommendations contained in the European Union White Paper on Youth Policy. Scheduled date: April 2002.

- Regional training program for trainers in human rights in the framework of the Human Rights Training Program of the Council of Europe. Scheduled date: In spring 2002 in Budapest.

**Sports:**

- Further development of the cooperation between Visegrad countries in the field of Competition of Olympic Hopefuls.

- Expert consultation about the sports policies of V4 countries, possible coordinated action in sports diplomacy and maintaining continuous contact with the EU Bureau.

**Drugs:**

- High-level discussion with the participation of V4 ministers in charge of narcotic drugs issues and the national narcotics coordinators. Aims: sharing of information about the implementation of the 1995 Memorandum of Understanding /UNDCP - United Nations International Drug Control Program/ signed in Prague, formulating common actions and programs, exploring EU and UN sources. Scheduled date: April 2002.

- Expert meeting /legal seminar/ for the legal experts of V4 and other countries on the Balkans Drugs Route with the guidance of a leading expert from the UNDCP Legal Advisory Program. Topics: questions about the 1988 Convention, global trends in drug

related crimes and EU legal harmonization. Further developing the practice of cross-border drug inspections. The expert meeting was held on 6-9 June 2001 in Budapest.

## **COOPERATION IN HOME AFFAIRS COORDINATOR: MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR**

- Continuation of cooperation in the already determined areas: policing of borders and foreigners, illegal migration, trafficking and smuggling in human beings, arms smuggling, international crime, combat against terrorism, further development of public administration and the discussion of experiences gained in the process of planning and implementing PHARE programs.
- Extending cooperation to new areas: management and prevention of disasters, training of police personnel, enhanced cooperation in fighting against international terrorism.
- Meeting of V4+Austria interior ministers. Scheduled date: October 2001, Budapest. Main topics: organized crime, illegal migration, border controls, visa policy.
- Meeting of the interior ministers of V4 countries and the Ukraine to develop partnership. Proposed date: the second half of 2001, Budapest. Main points of discussion: issues related to border controls and improving border control procedures and mechanisms, illegal migration, refugee policy. Representatives from the EU /Belgian/ Presidency and the European Commission are to be invited to participate in the meeting.
- Continuation of exchange of information between the border control officials of V4 countries. Strengthening cooperation between government agencies responsible for issuing visas, that is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of the Interior. Exchange of information and the discussion of views about the border controls in the region of the V4 countries and the Ukraine and adding new topics to the agenda:  
  
= In the framework of EU legal harmonization in the field of agreements on repatriation of persons, concluding agreements with similar provisions between V4 countries and third countries.
- Expert consultations about the implementation of the Schengen Agreement and particularly establishing cooperation aimed at the realization of the Schengen Information System.
- Expert consultation about provisions for exchange of information between car registration systems and the implementation of regional cooperation within the framework of European Car and Driving License Information System /EUCARIS/.
- Meeting of V4 director generals for civil and disaster prevention. Scheduled date: the second half of 2001. Slovenia is to be invited to the meeting as an observer.
- Meeting of Interior Ministry State Secretaries from V4 countries for reviewing and further strengthening cooperation in improving the public administration systems of participating states. /Scheduled date: the second half of 2001, Budapest/.
- Continuation of activities started within the framework of expert work panels.

**COOPERATION IN JUSTICE AFFAIRS  
COORDINATOR: MINISTRY OF JUSTICE**

- Keeping the tradition of ministerial meetings
- Discussion topics:
  - The changing role of state organs responsible for administering justice - the judiciary - following political and economic transition and the emergence of alternative forums for arbitration.
  - Co-operation in criminal affairs, result and experiences from implementation of the conventions of the Council of Europe in the field of granting legal assistance and extradition into the national legislation, development of action plans to implement *acquis* in this field.
  - Harmonization of the legislation in the V4 countries in the field of trafficking of people and sexual abuse of children.

**COOPERATION IN TRANSPORT AND WATER MANAGEMENT  
COORDINATOR: MINISTRY FOR TRANSPORT AND WATER MANAGEMENT**

- Meeting of the Ministers. Scheduled date: 19 October 2001 in Visegrad  
Discussion topics for expert and high-level talks:

**Railway traffic:**

- Expanding strategic cooperation and the reform of national railway companies.

**Combined carriage of goods:**

- Promotion of environmentally friendly trains /market approach to environmentally friendly means of carriage, coordinated action for formulating favorable schedules and other conditions/.

**Carriage by road:**

- Promotion of carriage by road and the simplification of rules governing carriage by road.

**Public road infrastructure:**

- Examining the possibilities for developing the North-South traffic infrastructure.
- Providing mutual access to traffic databases.
- Joint review of the experiences of opening up of EU borders.
- Joint registration of travel purposes at the border and preparation of forecasts.
- Joint set of proposals aimed at formulating optimal targeted EU support that takes into consideration the mobility, network and financing conditions and options available in Eastern Europe.

- Experiences of collecting road fees by highway stickers.

#### **Cooperation in water management:**

- Possibilities for protection against floods.
- Disaster prevention with special view to the institutional and organizational aspects of flood-control and its legal background.
- Experiences and questions of border water cooperation on water reservoirs shared with other countries.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL COOPERATION COORDINATOR: MINISTRY FOR ENVIRONMENT**

Regular consultations of the ministers of environment on actual questions of environmental policy with special attention to the EU accession process, the implementation of major international conventions, programs, strategies and policies on environment and nature conservation e.g.

- 6<sup>th</sup> Environmental Action Program of the EU.
- Strategy on Sustainable Development of the EU.
- OECD Policy on Sustainable Development.

Regular ministerial meeting: 30-31 August 2001, Olomouc. March 2002, Hungary.  
Organization of business forums connected to the ministerial meetings.

- Cooperation concerning the actual questions of sustainable development with special attention to the preparations for the Rio+10 events in 2002.
- local implementation of Agenda 21, participation of the civil society and its effects on the global developments.
- enforcement of the implementation of the economic and environmental goals of sustainable development in the sectoral policies.
- social aspects of sustainable development, e.g. problematic of environment and economically disadvantaged regions (employment).
- elaboration of a Joint Environmental Program of the V4 countries.

Consultation of experts in the following topics:

- Adaptation of the Regional Environmental Initiative /REI/ of the Hungarian Government in the V4 frames in order to increase environmental security, and strengthen confidence in the region.

- Exploration of cooperation possibilities in the development of environmental background industry.
- Possibilities for establish of a consistent system (gates for radiation control) on the borders to control and monitor the radioactive contamination.

Publication of environmental newsletter of the V4 countries.

Bi- or multilateral expert consultations to elaborate concrete cooperation in the following fields:

- Establishing transboundary protected areas (reserves) and their management based on common professional principles of nature conservation.
- Reduction of risks of transboundary pollution, with special attention to shared catchment areas.
- Developing cooperation in the control of transboundary waste transport and in the establishment of an information system necessary for this.

### **FINAL REMARKS**

- Based on the agreement between V4 presidents, the next presidential meeting will be held in Prague in 2002.
- Within the framework of inter-parliamentary cooperation, the chairmen of cooperating parliamentary committees (Foreign Affairs, Defense and European Integration) will meet according to their previous agreement on a rotation basis every six months. (The last meeting was held on 24-25 June 2001 in Prague.) The next scheduled meeting will be in November 2001 in Budapest. (Health and Social Committee met on 17 May 2001 in Budapest.)
- Leaders of central banks of the V4 countries will meet in Budapest. Date and agenda will be proposed by the Hungarian National Bank.
- Knowledge Based Economic Working Group has been established in Budapest on 21 September 2001. The Working Group worked out its action plan. The Working Group meets once a year on a rotation basis.
- The Ministry for Foreign Affairs pledged to organize an expert meeting on Trans Caucasus issues.
- The State Secretaries of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs have suggested in their meeting in Budapest on 21 September that it would be useful to organize V4 jazz festival, a joint concert or exhibition in Brussels, to establish the Visegrad Prize, and to work out possible cooperation in archeology. The State Secretaries charged the competent experts to discuss the issues.
- The Hungarian Presidency upon suggestion of V4 partners will examine the possibility to work out cooperation in agriculture, and make concrete proposals.

- V4 coordinators will meet on two occasions during the term of the Presidency for reviewing the action program and preparing the meeting of Prime Ministers. Scheduled date: the end of 2001 and the beginning of 2002, Budapest.

- Ministries in charge of the specific areas of cooperation will evaluate the activities concluded in those fields at the end of the Presidency and will make recommendations to the next Presidency. The Hungarian Presidency will prepare a summary report on the implementation of the 2001/2002-action program.

- Presidential and parliamentary offices will receive information about the action program of the Presidency and the annual report summarizing the state of cooperation. The competent authorities of the V4 member countries will inform the umbrella organizations of the NGOs about the possibilities to participate in V4 cooperation and see to it that the NGOs will be invited to enhanced cooperation.

Budapest, 10 October 2001

[Quelle: <http://apache.allytrade.cz/v4/events.php?kdy=programofpreshun>]