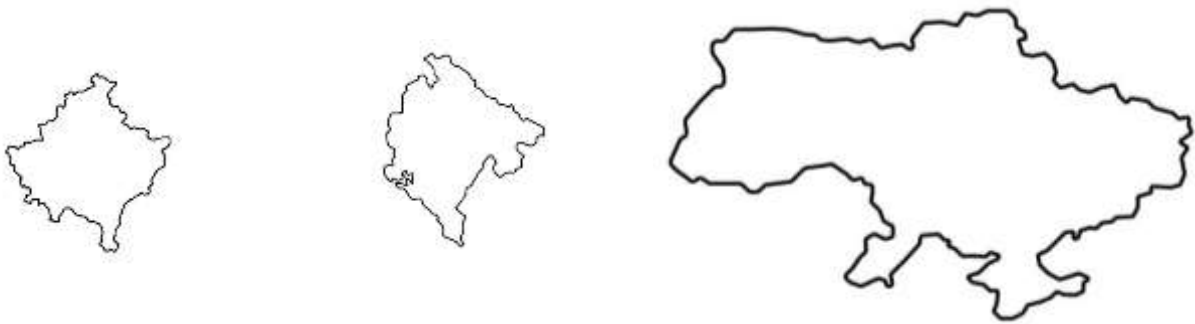
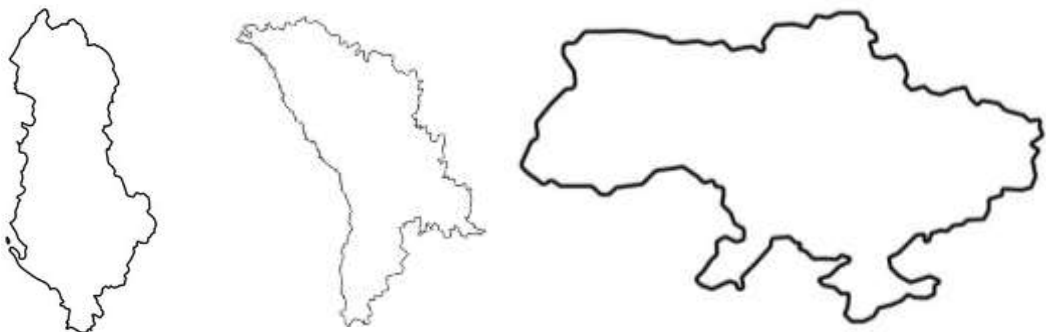


CIVIL SERVANTS MOBILITY PROGRAM 2024
KOSOVO, MONTENEGRO, UKRAINE



CIVIL SERVANTS MOBILITY PROGRAM 2023
ALBANIA, MOLDOVA, UKRAINE



STUDY VISITS CSMP 2024 [and 2023]

CZECH REPUBLIC

10 – 14 June 2024 | Ukraine

07 – 11 October 2024 | Kosovo

07 – 11 October 2024 | Montenegro

HUNGARY

2–8 June 2024 | Montenegro

2–8 June 2024 | Kosovo

POLAND

30 September – 04 October 2024 | Ukraine

06– 12 October 2024 | Albania [2023]

14 – 19 October 2024 | Montenegro

01 – 06 December 2024 | Kosovo

SLOVAKIA

01 – 06 December 2024 | Ukraine

08 – 13 December 2024 | Kosovo

10 – 14 February 2025 | Montenegro

REPORT

The Civil Servants Mobility Program (CSMP) is the experience sharing instrument for civil servants from the Eastern Partnership and Western Balkan countries. The main objective of the CSMP is to share the experience and the best practices through organizing of the study visits in the V4 countries. The visits are focused on the past and recent experience in the implementation of the sectoral reforms and harmonization of the national legislation with the EU legislation with a specific focus on the very concrete topic of the visit. Representatives of the governments and their agencies, public institutions, as well as regional and/or local government participate in study visits.

At the same time, this instrument contributes to strengthening personal capacities of the state and public administration and local self-government in partner countries. It also serves as the networking tool, widening and deepening the contacts of V4 civil servants and experts with representatives of state bodies and institutions in partner countries. As a rather flexible instrument, it responds to the specific requirements of the partner countries and adjusts program of the individual study stays accordingly.

The study visits have helped to open or develop an expert dialogue of partner institutions and organizations. Personal meetings of experts during study visits and sharing of professional experience helped to initiate long-term formal and informal partnerships across the state administration, public administration, territorial self-government, as well as non-governmental, academic and private sectors in V4 and partner countries.

During the 2024 edition, Think Visegrad platform partners hosted civil servants and experts from Kosovo, Montenegro and Ukraine. Due to the organizational issues on side of participants from Albania the 2023 planned visit to Poland of the group of high-level stakeholders dealing with the multimodal transport infrastructure planning and development with special focus on ports and terminals was organized in 2024.

The ongoing Russian war of aggression in Ukraine, which began on February 24, 2022, continues to impact the Visegrad region, including the organization of study visits for Ukrainian participants in Hungary. The Ukrainian study visit was originally planned to take place alongside a visit from Moldovan participants, but due to logistical challenges, both were postponed to 2024. However, even in 2024, neither the 2023 expert groups visit nor the planned 2024 Ukrainian visit could be organized. The Hungarian partners remain in active discussions with the Foreign Ministry and are optimistic about arranging the postponed study trips for 2023, 2024, and 2025 in 2025.

Despite the ongoing Russian war of aggression in Ukraine, which continued to impact the 2024 edition and posed certain organizational challenges, CSMP remained a key instrument for sharing V4 experience and know-how on integration and reform processes. Once again, the Think Visegrad platform demonstrated its ability to provide a wide range of expertise, as nearly all participating groups had different thematic focuses.

In 2024, Think Visegrad partners hosted **66** civil servants and experts: **22 Ukrainian** civil servants, **19** civil servants from **Kosovo** and **20** from **Montenegro**. Additionally, **5** civil servants from **Albania** finalized the 2023 CSMP edition in Poland.

Ukrainian civil servants used the study trips to discuss the topic of the energy efficiency and smart and carbon neutral cities in Slovakia, the EU accession negotiations and preparation for EU membership in Poland, and the visit to the Czech Republic focused on EU integration, Eastern European policy, and the enhancement of trade, digitalization, and policy alignment between Ukraine and the European Union.

The *civil servants from Kosovo* focused in Hungary on topic of environmental protection and climate policy and sharing Hungary's experience concerning its EU accession process. The group in Slovakia concentrated the issues of the informatization and digitalization in public administration and the visit to the Czech Republic focused on development of strategies to counter disinformation, malign influence, and hybrid threats, and an emphasis on EU enlargement and neighborhood policies. Similarly, in in Warsaw the group was introduced to Polish experience in building resilience against hybrid threats, such as cyberattacks, disinformation, and instrumentalized migration.

The delegations from *Montenegro* carried out meetings in the Czech Republic that revolved around the development of strategies to counter disinformation, malign influence, and hybrid threats, and an emphasis on EU enlargement and neighborhood policies. In Slovakia, the issues of alternative sanctions and the physical and cybersecurity of prisons were in the center of discussion. The purpose of the visit to Poland was to share the experience related to the rule of law and protection of human rights undertaken by public and non-governmental institutions. The group in Hungary discussed the issues of environmental protection and climate policy and sharing Hungary's experience concerning its EU accession process

The *civil servants from Albania* finalized the Polish 2023 edition focusing on transport system, particularly in areas such as transport policy, intermodal transport, infrastructure investment planning and financing, and the operation of major seaports and transport policy institutions.

PART 1 – CZECH REPUBLIC

UKRAINE_PRAGUE_10 – 14 June 2024

Participants

Oleksandr Nikolaiev	Deputy Director of the Department of International Cooperation and European integration, Ministry for the communities, territories and infrastructure development of Ukraine
Yuliia Proskurova	Deputy Head of the Protection on Foreign Markets and Dispute Settlement Unit of the Division for Protection of the Rights and Interests of Ukraine in the Trade and Economic Spheres of the Department of Foreign Economic Activity and Trade Defense, Ministry of Economy of Ukraine
Oleksandr Kuliiev	Head of the Expert Group on EU-Ukraine Association Bilateral Bodies, Government Office for Coordination on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine
Olha Nazarenko Daryna Kozyretska	Head of the Expert Group on Transport and Digitalisation Deputy Head of the Interparliamentary Relations, Department of the Secretariat of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine

The study trip program was held in Prague from June 10 to 14, 2024, and was designed to build international cooperation and deepen strategic expertise for Ukrainian civil servants. The program featured an array of high-level bilateral meetings, conferences, and networking events centered on EU integration, Eastern European policy, and the enhancement of trade, digitalization, and policy alignment between Ukraine and the European Union.

Monday, June 10, the program commenced with bilateral meetings at Palác Adria. These discussions focused on European integration strategies, data analysis, and policy development with experts including Ms *Eva Husková*, Mr *Jiří Skuhrovec*, and Mr *Michal Lebduška*. After lunch, delegates attended the opening of the **Conference on Czech Eastern Policy**, organized by the Association for International Affairs (AMO), setting the stage for dialogues on Czech–Ukrainian relations.

On **Tuesday**, June 11, participants continued to attend conference panels focusing on political developments in Eastern Europe. This was complemented by a working lunch with Mr *Viliam Ostatník* from Adapt Institute and Mr *Rudolf Berkes* from Political Capital, who provided insights into regional security dynamics. The day concluded with a meeting with Mr *Zdenek Beranek*, Foreign Policy Advisor to the Speaker of the Czech Chamber of Deputies, discussing Czech-Ukrainian policy priorities.

During **Wednesday**, June 12 delegates met with Mr *Václav Lidl* at the Ministry of Industry and Trade to discuss collaboration in trade and infrastructure. They then engaged with representatives from the Confederation of Industry and Transport, followed by discussions at

the Representation of the European Commission on political relations and EU policy integration. The day concluded with a session on the Czech start-up scene, introduced by Mr **René Samek** and Ms **Veronika Šimková** in CzechStartup.

The group attended the **Prague European Summit** at Černínský palác on **Thursday**. Following the sessions, participants engaged in a series of bilateral meetings covering topics like EU legal support, Eastern Partnership, and economic cooperation. Discussions included exchanges with officials such as Mr **Štěpán Pech** from the Office of the Czech Government, Mr **Stepan Rusyn** of the Transatlantic Dialogue Center, and Ms **Andrea Ferjenčíková** of the European Investment Bank.

During the **last day**, the group attended the closing sessions of the **Prague European Summit**. Afterward, they participated in a guided city tour, where they explored Prague's historical and cultural landmarks.

The program provided a valuable platform for Ukrainian civil servants to enhance their knowledge of EU integration processes, engage with their Czech counterparts on mutual policy interests, and foster connections within the European policy community. Aside from the valuable insights gained through the bilateral meetings, they also expanded their networks via informal opportunities presented at the two major conferences on Czech Eastern Policy and one of our flagship events, the Prague European Summit.

KOSOVO_&_MONTENEGRO_PRAGUE_07–11 October 2024

Participants from Kosovo:

Florent Rrahmani	Director of the Department for Information and Communication in the Office of the President
Ismet Cakiqi	Coordinator of the Office for Public Communication in the Office of the Prime Minister
Saranda Salihu	Senior Public Communication Officer at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora
Sefer Shyti	Strategic Communication Officer in the Ministry of Defence
Genc Hamzaj	Deputy of the General Director of the Agency for the Information Society/ Director of the Directorate for Management and Integration of Systems in AIS.

Participants from Montenegro

Vanja Banović	Independent Advisor, Ministry of European Affairs
Svetlana Rajković	Secretary of the Chapter 24 Negotiating Working Group, Ministry of European Affairs
Zorka Robović	Directorate for Justice, Independent Advisor, Ministry of Justice

Predrag Krsmanović

Head of the Department for second-degree administrative procedure and regulations, Directorate for Criminal Sanctions and Supervision, Ministry of Justice

Maja Jović

Head of the Cabinet of the Minister of Justice, Ministry of Justice

The study trip program was held in was held in Prague from October 7 to 11, 2024, and was designed to enhance institutional resilience among civil servants from Kosovo and Montenegro. With two primary pillars – development of strategies to counter disinformation, malign influence, and hybrid threats, and an emphasis on EU enlargement and neighborhood policies—the program offered in-depth meetings, intensive discussions, and the opportunity for engagement with stakeholders on the Czech and EU level.

The agenda included discussions with Czech policymakers, academics, and specialists in strategic communication and public relations, culminating in the Resilient Europe Symposium. This symposium fostered rich dialogues around current European issues, including disinformation, democracy backsliding, and populism, with the aim of strengthening cooperation and innovation toward a secure and resilient Europe.

On **Monday**, October 7, the program opened with an introductory lunch, followed by a meeting with the Czech Elves, a civic initiative combating disinformation. Later, attendees engaged in discussions with key figures in the Czech government’s Strategic Communication Unit and Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The day concluded with a networking dinner alongside representatives from EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy and other notable research organizations.

During **Tuesday**, October 8, participants visited the National Agency for Cybernetic and Information Security (NÚKIB) to explore Czech cybersecurity strategies. Following lunch, they met with representatives from the Office of the Government and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to discuss EU coordination and enlargement policies. The day concluded at the German Embassy, where they attended a debate on Czech-German perspectives on disinformation, followed by a networking reception.

The **next day**, the groups divided. *Group I* attended meetings focused on EU enlargement and public communication strategies, with experts from EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy, Transparency International, and the Institute for International Relations and the *Group II* participated in the Resilient Europe Symposium at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where they engaged in panels addressing European resilience challenges and solutions.

On **Thursday**, October 10 all participants attended the second day of the Resilient Europe Symposium at Martinicky Palace, engaging with experts on topics such as cybersecurity, societal resilience, and countering disinformation.

The **final day** the European Commission Representation in Prague, focusing on countering hybrid threats. Following lunch, participants enjoyed a city tour that highlighted Prague’s historical and cultural landmarks.

Civil servants from Kosovo and Montenegro in Prague gained invaluable insights from Czech and European approaches to resilience, strategic communication, and EU policy integration.

The program successfully fostered new perspectives and relationships, enhancing participants' skills and understanding essential to addressing complex security and communication challenges. Unfortunately, one participant (*Genc Hamzaj*) had to leave already on the first day due to a personal tragedy in the family.

PART 2 – HUNGARY

KOSOVO_&_MONTENEGRO_BUDAPEST_2–8 June 2024

Participants from Kosovo:

Abdullah Pirçe	Acting Director of Department for Environment Protection, Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning
Visare Istrefi	Acting Head of Division for Managing Industrial Pollution, Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning
Besiana Qorraj Berisha	Senior Officer for Renewable Electricity Standard, Ministry of Economy
Rrezartë Zjaça Dedaj	Senior Officer for Energy Efficiency, Ministry for Economic Development
Vjosa Beqaj Krasniqi	Director, Sectorial Policies Officer, Prime Minister's Office

Participants from Montenegro

Nikolina Goranović	Independent Advisor, Ministry of European Affairs
Brankica Cmiljanović	Head of Department, Ministry of Tourism, Ecology, Sustainable Development and Northern Region Development
Sanela Metjahić	Independent Advisor, Ministry of Tourism, Ecology, Sustainable Development and Northern Region Development
Ivana Mitrović	Independent Advisor, Environmental Protection Agency
Ivan Stanišić	Head of the Direction for Waste Management and Communal Services, Ministry of Tourism, Ecology, Sustainable Development and Northern Region Development, Directorate for Ecology

In 2024, from the Western Balkans, Kosovo and Montenegro were selected as beneficiary countries of the Think Visegrad Civil Servants Mobility Program. With the assistance of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary and the Embassy of Hungary in Pristina and Podgorica, the call was sent to the competent ministries and institutions of the beneficial countries. The week-long professional program was organized by the **Western Balkans Center of the Hungarian Institute of International Affairs**. The main topic of the program revolved around **environmental protection and climate policy** and sharing Hungary's experience concerning its EU accession process in the respective areas. Ten civil servants were selected to participate in the program.

On Monday, June 3, the first meeting was held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary, where Mr *Csaba Marosvári*, Deputy State Secretary for Energy Security gave a

presentation about Hungary's energy supply and energy security. Mr Marosvári pointed out the external facts shaping energy policy, and in this context he presented the Hungarian energy strategy, which has the long-term goal of achieving climate neutrality. Hungary would achieve this by basing its energy mix entirely on nuclear and renewable energy sources. In the first part of his presentation, the Deputy State Secretary outlined the pillars of the current Hungarian energy mix (oil, gas, nuclear, renewables) and illustrated the political turbulence affecting energy imports, for example in the relationship between Croatia's JANAF and Hungary. The delegation was particularly interested in nuclear energy, and Mr Marosvári spoke in detail about the importance of the Paks nuclear power plant for energy use. The discussion also touched upon the categorization of nuclear energy (green or clean) and the reasons for the attitude of countries that reject nuclear energy. Mr Marosvári pointed out that Hungary has a pragmatic energy policy and that there are limited alternative choices.

The day continued at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary, where the group was welcomed by Mr **Csaba Rada**, Head of the Western Balkans Department. Mr Rada first presented the planned programme of the forthcoming Hungarian EU Presidency, in which the promotion of the European integration of the Western Balkans will be a priority. He acknowledged that although the EU accession process of the Western Balkans is slow, Hungary is trying to push it as much as possible. Regarding Montenegro, Mr. Rada said that if the government remains in place and the domestic politics in Montenegro stabilizes, Podgorica should try to close as many accession chapters as possible during our Presidency. In the case of Montenegro, all EU members are in favor of accession, so there are in fact no obstacles for Podgorica, unless itself: Mr Rada said that a stable government and the completion of reforms are necessary. The situation in Kosovo is not so positive. As Kosovo is not recognized by all member states, potential candidate countries can only be negotiated in the Western Balkans Working Group, which will not be chaired by Hungary.

On Tuesday, June 4, the group paid a visit to the Herman Ottó Institute. Executive Director Mr **Péter Bozzay** highlighted the main objectives of the Institute:

1. nature conservation,
2. rural development and
3. agricultural education.

Mr Bozzay highlighted the flagship projects and monitoring activities of the Institute, including the National Biodiversity Monitoring System, WildWatcher Programme and GrasslandHU, Hungary's first nature conservation-themed project. Senior Agri-Environment Management Expert Ms **Adrienn Gyenes** from the Hungarian Chamber of Agriculture talked about the projects that drive agriculture towards sustainability. Ms Gyenes highlighted the structure and challenges of Hungary's agriculture as well as how the new CAP objectives and growing green expectations (including the EU's Green Deal) require a heightened emphasis on biodiversity, sustainability and the fight against climate change. Ms **Zita Zsembery**, Project Manager introduced the GrasslandHU project that centres around the conservation and protection of the Pannonian grassland. The project's key actions as well as its connections to the Natura 2000 program were also elaborated in detail. Lastly, Mr **Pál Szabó** from the Multilearn Kft. talked about the ongoing digitalization process in Hungary with the emphasis on agricultural education. Mr Szabó explained how their science text books with augmented reality can modernize agro-education in the future.

In the afternoon, the group visited the Paks nuclear power plant (NPP). Mr **Zoltán Tóth**, the Head of the Visitor Centre, gave us a tour of the Visitor Centre, where he presented the history of the Paks NPP, and the delegation learned more about nuclear energy in general, and then about its use in Hungary. In the second half of the visit, Mr Tóth showed them around the individual units of the Paks NPP, where delegation saw the reactor, the turbine room and the control room. The delegation showed great interest in the plant, and a dynamic discussion developed between the group and Mr Tóth.

The **third day**, June 5, started with a visit to the Energy Ministry, a meeting with Mr **Péter Holicza**, Deputy State Secretary for European Union Affairs and International Relations. The Deputy State Secretary started the meeting by introducing the establishment of the Ministry, as it was an answer to an energy crisis one and a half years ago. Then he outlined the Hungarian and CEE energy mix, highlighting that the region relies mostly on natural gas (most importantly houses) which still requires the development of gas infrastructure. Mr Holicza stated that Hungary is not against renewable energy sources but in order to remain competitive, we need to stay balanced concerning our energy mix. The Deputy State Secretary also introduced the Hungarian EU Presidency priorities; energy will be under competitiveness which is an umbrella priority; we are working on this together with the Belgians, because half a year is not enough for a challenge as such.

The day continued with a visit to the MOL Campus, where the delegation not only learned about the company but also its extensive portfolio and wide range of national and international activities. Director of International Public Affairs Mr **András Bácsi-Nagy** introduced the company's international presence and gave an overview on the Hungarian and international activities of MOL. Mr **Tivadar Runtág**, COO of MoHU, MOL Group's municipal waste management company explained the rationale behind a centralized waste management system that also encompasses recycling activities. The Hungarian goal, as explained by Mr Runtág, is to reach 65 per cent recycle ratio and to bring landfill ratio below 20 per cent by 2035. Modernization plans in the field of waste management and the newly launched REpont deposit refund system was also discussed. Lastly, Mr **Csaba Farkas**, Director of Renewables of MOL Group explained an interest of an oil company in renewable electricity consumption. MOL Group, being the largest electricity consumer puts a lot of efforts to sustainability and to decrease the company's CO₂ footprint through renewable electricity (decarbonization). Mr Farkas also talked about the importance of keeping up with the newest innovations such as with the usage of green hydrogen.

Thursday, June 6, started with an interesting lecture at E.ON Hungária Zrt., where Mr **Zoltán Pataki**, Director of Regulatory & Stakeholder Affairs and Mr **László Pintér**, Head of Regulation for Customer Solutions welcomed the group. The discussion started with the introduction of the Hungarian household PV systems. Mr. Pataki noted that there is no specific threshold for the inbuilt capacity, meaning that the PVs are over capacitated. On one hand, it allows to annulate the electricity bill, on the other hand, it resulted in a requirement from the EU to phase out the net settlement system since the problematic regime, meaning an imbalanced energy supply. Concerning household electricity, another problem was also mentioned, notably the cheap energy prices in Hungary (because of the price caps). Since the average people are not affected by the energy crisis due to those, there is no incentive to move towards energy-

saving solutions. According to the experience, EVs are also too expensive for an average household, without state aids there would be much less EV on the roads for sure.

The day continued with a meeting at the Clean Air Action Group, where Mr **Gábor Bendik**, Environmental Lawyer and Ms **Szegő Judit**, Environmental Researcher introduced the activities of the Action Group as well as outlined the work concerning environmental issues from the aspect of an NGO. The Clean Air Action Group focuses on greening the air, transport and energy policy, as well as public finances since bad handling of financial issues can cause environmental pollution. Mr. Bendik stated that their task is also awareness raising for the public, meeting and convincing decision makers during the legislative period, but according to their experience it is getting more and more difficult to make contact with the respective authorities and decision makers.

In the afternoon, the delegation met Mr **András Huszár**, Co-founder and Director of the Green Policy Center, one of the first climate-oriented think tanks in Hungary. The organization promotes climate neutrality and works together with decision-makers and civil society to reach this aim by 2050. Mr Huszár talked extensively about their flagship products: the Climate Neutrality Progress Report and the Climate Neutrality Hungary Conference. The Center also pays special attention to outreach activities by having its own radio program, has participated in the revision of the national energy and climate plan, and is also active in the promotion of green financing, green public procurement and green diplomacy.

The **final working day** of the visit, June 7, kicked off with a meeting at REKK Foundation for Regional Policy Co-operation in Energy and Infrastructure. Mr **László Szabó**, Director of REKK and Senior Research Associates Mr **András Mezősi** and Mr **Viktor Rácz** introduced the main energy management models of the Foundation. The meeting was particularly interesting for the group as REKK is active in the Western Balkans region building up the countries' energy strategies – the last good example is the energy strategy for Kosovo. The Associates elaborated on the HU-TIMES, FOX, Electricity Market and European Balancing Energy Market Models which were of great interest to the audience because of their innovative nature and their use in particular states of the Western Balkans.

The program continued with a **cultural excursion to the Hungarian parliament**. The group participated in a guided tour where they not only learned more about the history of the prestigious building but also about Hungarian history and culture.

The working program was finalized at the Hungarian Atomic Energy Authority (HAEA) where the group was briefed by Ms **Eszter Rétfalvi**, Director of Oversight and Mr **Béla András Balczó**, Chief of the Cabinet of the President. The delegation received valuable insights into the Hungarian nuclear energy infrastructure and HAEA's 35-year-old history. The main objective of the Authority, which is directly accountable to the Parliament, is to supervise the peaceful and safe application of atomic energy. The presenters explained how the Authority performs its regulatory tasks (i.e., assessing information, performing inspections and, if necessary, performing enforcement actions) and also discussed the national radioactive waste repository. The week-long study trip concluded with a **farewell dinner**. Participants had the chance to share their impressions and exchange ideas about the program as well as to map out future means of cooperation with the organizations they had visited throughout the week.

PART 3 – POLAND

ALBANIA_WARSAW_06– 12 October 2024 [2023 edition]

Participants

Zamira Tutulani	Head of Unit, Road Transport Policies Unit, Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy
Ela Ishka	Expert, Maritime Transport Policies Unit, Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy
Arben Muha	Expert, Rail Transport Policies Unit, Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy
Ani Verzivolli	Expert, Durres Port Authority
Adela Hajdari	Head of Cabinet, Albanian Civil Aviation Authority

The study visit was organized by the Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW) in Warsaw and aimed to share Poland's experiences over the past few decades in developing its transport system, particularly in areas such as transport policy, intermodal transport, infrastructure investment planning and financing, and the operation of major seaports and transport policy institutions. Participants (Albanian officials working for the Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy (Road Transport Policies Unit, Maritime Transport Policies Unit, Rail Transport Policies Unit) as well as from the Albanian Civil Aviation Authority and Durres Port Authority) had the chance to engage with port authorities and tour of the terminals in Gdańsk and Gdynia, including the Baltic Hub, the largest container terminal in the Baltic Sea. The goal was to familiarize attendees with Poland's insights in shipping logistics, passenger and freight ferry services, and the potential for regional investments, which contributed to the growth of the transport and logistics sectors. The Albanian guests had an opportunity to discuss the transport policy issues, and the planning and investments in the transport sector in Poland. During the course of the program minor changes were made to better suit the needs of the participants (some of the meetings – i.e. those that aroused particular interest were, for example, extended).

The working part of the visit began on **Monday**, October 7, with a seminar on regional cooperation organized at the OSW. It was attended by representatives of the Chancellery of the President of the Republic of Poland – Mr **Maciej Kubicki**, Head of the Three Seas Initiative Secretariat, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Mr **Radosław Darski**, Deputy Director of the European Policy Department, the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology, and OSW analysts. The aim was to present the role of regional cooperation in strengthening infrastructure connections. Mr **Andrzej Sadecki**, Head of the Central European Department at the OSW, presented the activities of OSW and presented the main assumptions of regional cooperation in the political area. Mr **Konrad Popławski**, Coordinator of the Connectivity program at the OSW, presented the importance of infrastructure connections, which strengthen the economic competitiveness of the region and their impact on attracting foreign investments to the country. Dr. Popławski also emphasized the role of transport infrastructure for military mobility, which is particularly important for Albania from the perspective of NATO membership. Ms **Sandra Baniak**, Research fellow at the Connectivity program, gave a presentation on the role of connectivity in the regional cooperation in relation to the recent

changes in the regulation on the TEN-T (Trans-European Transport Network). She also presented the activities of the largest Polish seaports in recent years and their importance for the Polish economy and strategic resilience, including independence from energy sources supplied from Russia.

During the meeting, guests from Albania presented their main investment projects and plans for the expansion of road and rail infrastructure and projects in the area of seaports and airports. They primarily assume the construction of a new container terminal in Porto Romano. A railway project connecting the Albanian capital with the current port of Durrës is currently being implemented. Among the important investments in the plans is the construction of a railway connection between Albania and Kosovo, and the 'dry port' in Prishtina. In addition to this, the expansion of the Tirana airport, as well as the construction of the new Vlora International Airport, which will serve the growing tourist traffic in the country.

Following point of the agenda was a meeting at the Ministry of Infrastructure. The guests were welcomed by Mr **Marcin Rzeszewicz**, Director of the Department of International Cooperation and Mr **Jakub Siwiński**, Deputy Director of the Transport Strategy Department. The meeting was attended by the number of representatives of other sectoral departments, namely the departments of aviation, railways, maritime economy, and highways and national roads, who presented the main infrastructural projects in each of the Polish transport sector. At the beginning of the meeting Mr Siwiński delivered a presentation on the Polish Sustainable Transport Development Strategy 2030 and TEN-T network. The meeting was an occasion to discuss the Polish experience in the transport policy planning, the current Albanian investment projects and ask questions about the Polish experience in that field.

At the end of the day the participants attended the official dinner. The honorary guest was the Ambassador of the Republic of Albania, M. **Mimoza Halimi**. The dinner was attended i.a. by Mr **Jakub Jakóbski**, Deputy Director of the OSW, Mr **Radosław Darski**, Deputy Director of the European Policy Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Mr **Shkelzen Macukulli**, First Secretary and Consul at the Embassy of the Republic of Albania. The functioning of the Polish and Albanian transport sector was discussed, as well as issues related to strengthening cooperation between Poland and Albania in the area of transport policy, a good example of which is the fruitful cooperation in the twinning project implemented by the General Directorate for National Roads and Motorways (GDDKiA) for the Albanian Road Authority (ARA).

The participants started **Tuesday**, October 8, with a meeting at the General Directorate for National Roads and Motorways, where Mr **Marcin Nowacki**, Head of the International Cooperation Team presented the institution achievements in construction of motorways, expressways and other national roads. As stated, currently the Polish expressway network is over seven times longer than at the time of accession to the EU. Mr Nowacki also described in detail the functioning of the National Road Fund, which objective is to collect funds for the investments, and underlined also the crucial role of EU funds in these investments. There is no such an instrument in the Albanian transport system, thus it was very interested for the participants. They were also eager to learn i.a. about the model of maintenance of the road infrastructure in Poland and toll collecting, and planning of the construction of the access roads to the seaports.

Afterwards, the participants had a meeting at the Centre for EU Transport Projects (CUPT), a state budget institution which aim is to effectively utilize the EU funds allocated for the co-financing of the transport projects in Poland. The group was hosted by Mr **Krzysztof Rodziewicz**,

Director of the Department of Transport Analyses. The participants had an opportunity to learn about the scope of assistance provided by CUPT. They asked mainly about the possibilities of assistance in investment planning. The CUPT representatives provided them with the information about the TAEX (Technical Assistance and Information Exchange) instrument of the European Commission, which was particularly interested for the representative of the Port of Durres. The last point of the agenda for the second day was the visit the **Polish Air Navigation Services Agency** (PANSa). The representatives of the International Affairs Unit of PANSa presented to the group their activity and the EU regulations on the air traffic control management. The Albanian guests had also an opportunity to see work of the air traffic controllers responsible for whole Polish airspace. In the evening, the participant transferred to Gdańsk to visit Tricity (Gdańsk and Gdynia).

On **Wednesday**, the meeting at the Port of Gdańsk Authority was organized. The Albanian guests had an opportunity to learn about the biggest Polish seaport in terms of both break bulk cargo and container handling. They were welcomed by Mr **Michał Stupak**, Customer Officer at the Port of Gdańsk Authority, who presented the general information about the seaport and share with the guests his knowledge and experience on the investment planning at the port premises, creating the transport corridors, combining the growth of tourism with the development plans of Albanian airports and ferry and cruise terminals, and the role of access infrastructure in the port's activities. The meeting was also an occasion to discuss the current Albanian government project on construct the new container terminal in Porto Romano. Then the group had an opportunity to visit the Baltic Hub, the biggest container terminal in the Baltic Sea, located in the Port of Gdańsk. Mr **Marcin Kamola**, Commercial Manager at the Baltic Hub presented to the participants the terminals' activity. It was also an opportunity to discuss the container market and rising demand for container traffic in Europe.

The participants spent **Thursday**, October 10, in Gdynia, where they had a meeting in the Port of Gdynia Authority. The group was hosted by Mr **Adam Hoppe**, Director of the Office of Strategy and Market Analysis and the representatives of the investment planning department. The group learned about the port's activity, its current biggest investment projects and the containers and ferry terminals activities, which was especially interesting for the Albanian participants. Then there was a tour of the terminals, during which the group could see the functioning of the biggest breakbulk, ferry and containers terminals in the port. The participants also had a meeting at the BCT (Baltic Container Terminal), the first one established in Poland, in 1978.

At the end of the fourth day of their visit, the guest had a meeting at the PCC Intermodal, a private company operating in Poland and other foreign markets, like Germany, the Netherlands and Italy. Ms **Monika Konsor-Fajfarek**, Marketing Director presented the activity of the PCC Intermodal and its role in developing intermodal transport in Poland. The participants familiarized themselves with the functioning of the intermodal transport and the role of the intermodal terminals, which are especially important for the rise of transshipments in the seaports and development of the freight transport. The Albanian and Kosovo governments are planning to build a "dry port" in Prishtina, which will be connected to the planned new port in Porto Romano. Therefore guests were especially interested in the idea of construction of the new intermodal terminals or dry ports.

On the **last day** the participants took part in the **Maritime Economy Forum** in Gdynia, during which they learnt about maritime logistics and the current global challenges in the transport sector. At the end the delegation attended the guided tour at the Emigration Museum in Gdynia.

Feedback:

In conversations with the project coordinators, participants expressed satisfaction with the numerous meetings and the experience shared with them by the institutions. They emphasized the benefits of Polish lessons on transport policy. Participants emphasized the size and preparedness of the Polish administration, while expressing concerns that the Albanian administration has much smaller human potential, which may affect the number of transport projects they can implement. Representatives of the Albanian side are interested in maintaining further contacts with the institutions they visited during their stay in Poland. It is especially about the possibility of gaining Polish experience in the field of investment planning, especially in road and maritime sector. They admitted that they will advise their supervisors to apply for technical assistance on construction of the container terminal in Porto Romano via the TAIEX instrument. They asked for the contact data of the representatives of each entity and presentations delivered during the meetings to convey them to their institutions. The project coordinators provided them with all the information they requested.

UKRAINE_WARSAW_30 September – 04 October 2024

Participants

Daryna Babats	Chief Specialist of the Unit for Sectoral Cooperation with the EU of the Division on Cooperation with the EU of the Department for Economic Cooperation with the EU and World's Countries, Ministry of Economy of Ukraine
Yelyzaveta Baienkova	First secretary, Sectoral cooperation unit, Department General for the EU and NATO, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine
Yana Vikhtiuk	Chief Specialist of the Expert Group on the Green Deal, Environment and Climate Change of the Government Office for Coordination on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine
Viacheslav Holub	State expert of the Expert Group for Coordination and Communication of European Integration Policy, Monitoring of the Implementation of the Association Agreement of the Government Office for Coordination on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine
Ivan Hud	State Expert of the Expert Group on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration of the Directorate for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine
Elvira Kruts	Chief Specialist of the Expert Group on Sanctions Policy of the Directorate for Strategic Planning and European Integration, Ministry of Energy of Ukraine
Olha Mishkina	Chief consultant of the European Integration Division, Department for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration,

Svitlana Mostunenکو	Office of the President of Ukraine Chief specialist of the Department for Encumbrances of Movable Property of the Department of Regulatory and Legal Support of State Registration of the Department of Private Law, Ministry of Justice of Ukraine
Oleh Panasiuk	Chief specialist of the European Integration Division of the Department of International Cooperation and European Integration, Ministry of Communities and Territories Development of Ukraine
Nataliia Pysmena	Head of the Rural Development Strategy Sector of the Department of Rural Development, Ministry of Agrarian Policy and Food of Ukraine

The study visit of Ukrainian delegation opened on **Monday**, September 30, with a session with Ms **Jolanta Szymańska**, head of the EU Program at PISM, Ms **Elżbieta Kaca**, senior analyst within the EU Program at PISM, and Mr **Daniel Szeligowski**, head of Eastern Europe Program at PISM. Polish experts introduced context of the Polish foreign policy, its strategy and key priorities. Special emphasis was given to the upcoming Polish EU presidency, and its relevance for Ukraine's membership negotiations with the EU. The group continued to the European Commission's Representation in Poland for the session with Ms **Katarzyna Smyk**, Head of the EC's Representation in Poland, and Mr **Witold Naturski**, Head of the European Parliament Liaison Office in Poland. The session was devoted to the current situation in the EU in the light of the recent elections to the European Parliament, as well as perspectives for the new European Commission. The discussion also touched upon other issues related to the Polish membership negotiations experience and its applicability to the Ukrainian case.

During **Tuesday**, October 1, The group had also the opportunity to participate in the 11th edition of the **Warsaw Security Forum**, where they attended the sessions devoted to the current security situation in Europe, and the green energy transition.

The meeting with Mr **Leszek Jesień**, former Chief Negotiator of the Poland's accession to the EU, addressed a whole range of both political and technical issues related to Ukraine's membership negotiations, preparing for the EU membership and EU-related reforms in Ukraine.

Wednesday, October 2, continued with the visit to the Polish Parliament, which included a meeting with Ms **Magdalena Słok-Wódkowska**, chief analyst in the Committee on EU Affairs of the Chancellery of the Senate. The discussion was primarily devoted to the legal issues connected with the EU integration, such as regulatory approximation, legal harmonization, mode of political operation and the bureaucratic activities of the national parliaments in this respect.

The visit to the Chancellery of the Prime Minister of Poland featured the meeting with Mr **Jakub Michałowski** from the Department of Preparation and Presidency of the Council of the EU, and

Ms **Małgorzata Kałużyńska**, Director of the EU Economic Department in the Chancellery of the Prime Minister. The discussion was centered around the upcoming Polish EU presidency, its priorities, and Ukraine's place within it.

On **Thursday**, October 3, The visit to the College of Europe in Natolin included a meeting with Ms **Ewa Ośniecka-Tamecka**, Vice-Rector of the College of Europe, former Chairman of the Committee for European Integration; and Mr **Marek Tabor**, former official of the Office of the Committee for European Integration. The session was devoted to the institutional architecture of the Polish membership negotiations with the EU, as well as lessons learned during this period, but also to the peculiarities of the Ukraine's membership negotiations in the new strategic environment in Europe.

The group visited also the City Hall of Warsaw, where they met Mr **Paweł Sajnog** from the European Funds and Development Policy Office. The topic of the discussion was role of the self-government in the EU integration, as well as applying for and spending the EU structural and development funds.

On the **last day** of the visit, the group had a meeting with several senior officials from the Polish **Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy**. The topic of the discussion was EU development policy, the structural funds, the institutional and legal issues of the EU local development, and possibility of extending the framework of EU regional policy and funds to Ukraine within the course of membership negotiations. The visit concluded with the meeting with Mr **Bogdan Zawadewicz**, Head of Geopolitical Risk Analysis in the Polish Development Bank, and his team. The discussion focused on challenges for the post-war recovery and modernization of Ukraine, but also on practicalities related to the implementation of Ukraine Facility instrument. The cultural program of the 2024 study visit featured the Chopin concert and Dali Cybernetics exhibition at the Norblin Factory in Warsaw.

MONTENEGRO_WARSAW_14– 19 October 2024

Participants

Milena Pavičević	Advisor at Legal Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro
Mirjana Pajković	Director General for Human Rights and Freedoms, Ministry of Human and Minority Rights of Montenegro
Lidija Mašanović	Head of the Directorate for International Projects and EU funds, Ministry of Justice of Montenegro
Slobodan Martinović	Advisor at the Directorate General for Multilateral Affairs Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro
Tatjana Tomić	Advisor at Directorate for Bilateral Cross-Border Programs, Ministry of European Integration of Montenegro

The study visit was organized by the Polish Institute of International in Warsaw and Gdańsk). Two experts from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and one from the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of European Integration and the Ministry of Human Rights and Minorities took part in the trip.

The aim of the project was to share with participants from Montenegro the experiences of Poland related to activities for the rule of law and protection of human rights undertaken by public and non-governmental institutions. The aim was also to establish relationships that could lead to future cooperation, further exchange of experiences or creation of joint projects. In addition, it was important for participants to have the opportunity to learn more about the recent history of Poland and the Polish socio-economic transformation through visits to museums and important cultural institutions. The maximum effort was made to respond to the expectations and needs of the participants from Montenegro. During each meeting, representatives of the delegation asked many detailed questions. Particularly interesting for the participants from Montenegro were issues related to the impact of EU membership on the solutions and standards applied in Poland.

On October 15, **Tuesday**, the first point was a visit to the PISM, during which the program of the visit, its goals and objectives were presented to the participants. In addition, Mr **Tomasz Żornaczuk**, Coordinator of the Central Europe Program at PISM presented the activities of PISM, ongoing programs, analytical work, projects and publications. The questions of the participants concerned practical aspects of PISM's cooperation with public administration, types of publicly available and confidential materials, as well as publications concerning Montenegro. The meeting was also attended by Ms **Paulina Wankiewicz**, Analyst for the Western Balkans in the Central European Team of the OSW. The activities of this institution were also presented. The delegation continued after that to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the participation of Ms **Agata Duda-Płonka**, Deputy Director of the Department of Global Affairs and Ms **Karolina Krupa** Head of the Human Rights and Democratization Unit in the Department of Global Affairs. The meeting focused on Poland's participation in various international organisations dealing with human rights and the internal organisation of work and the division of tasks in this area, which is different from that in Montenegro. The Polish MFA has a thematic division, while in Montenegro one department deals with all matters related to a given international organisation. At the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights, the group met with Mr **Janusz Roszkiewicz**, Chief Specialist at the Commissioner for Human Rights, who presented in detail the aspects of the challenges in the area of the rule of law in Poland in the area of the staffing of the Constitutional Tribunal, the National Council of the Judiciary and the process of appointing judges. In addition, the discussion concerned variants of the strategy for dealing with each of these challenges. The group also visited the Embassy of Montenegro in Warsaw, where a meeting was held with the chargé d'affaires of the Embassy Ms **Milena Mumin**. The meeting focused on bilateral cooperation between the two countries, economic cooperation, and support for Montenegro's accession process by Poland.

On the **next day**, October 16, of the visit, a meeting was held at the ODIHR headquarters with the participation of Ms **Katya Andrusz**, Spokesperson, and Ms **Karina Simonsen**, Rule of Law Officer. The conversation concerned ODIHR's activities to monitor cases of human rights violations in OSCE member states and the strategy for responding to and counteracting such phenomena. In addition, activities within the framework of election and referendum

observation missions were also presented. The group also visited the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, where the meeting was attended by Ms **Małgorzata Szuleka**, Secretary of the Foundation's Board. The conversation concerned issues related to migrants' rights, also in the context of the crisis on the Polish–Belarusian border. In addition, they discussed the Foundation's activities for human rights in Poland, the participation of non-governmental organizations in public debate and the possibilities of influencing civil society on public administration. The participants also visited the **Warsaw Uprising Museum**.

On **Thursday** participants began with a visit to the Ministry of Justice. There was a meeting with Ms **Maria Ejchart**, Deputy Minister and other representatives of the Ministry. The meeting focused on the Ministry's activities in current issues related to the rule of law in Poland, as well as proceedings against Poland before the Court of Human Rights and the use of EU funds to support the judicial system.

In addition, meetings were held at the Stefan Batory Foundation with the participation of Mr **Krzysztof Izdebski**, Member of the Foundation's Board. The meeting concerned the grant-making activities of the Batory Foundation and the activities of developing and promoting legal solutions in matters of the rule of law in Poland. The next meeting took place at the Ukrainian House in Warsaw with the participation of Ms **Myroslawa Keryk**, President of the Management Board, and Mr **Benjamin Cope**, Program Director. The meeting focused on projects implemented by the Ukrainian House to protect human rights, but also all other needs of migrants from Ukraine who came to Poland after the outbreak of the full-scale war between Russia and Ukraine.

The **last day** of the study visit to Poland was held in Gdańsk. The group visited the European Solidarity Centre, where they were given a detailed tour of the permanent exhibition of the ECS showing the history of the Solidarity movement and the anti-communist opposition in Poland. After visiting the exhibition, a meeting was held with Mr **Jacek Koltan**, the ECS Director's Plenipotentiary for Scientific Affairs. The meeting concerned the history of the ECS's establishment, the Centre's activities in the field of cultural, socio-political events and the Centre's participation in the public debate in Poland.

Feedback

The participants of the visit confirmed in a conversation with the coordinator that the Polish experience shared with them will be useful in their professional work in central institutions. The subject of the study visit was optimally selected and corresponds to the current needs and challenges faced by institutions in Montenegro in the accession process. The participants valued Poland's practical experience related to the challenges in the area of the rule of law and strategies to address these challenges. (The exchange of experience worked both ways, as representatives of Polish ministries were interested in the fact that there is a Ministry of Human Rights and Minorities in Montenegro. In Poland, topics related to human rights and minorities are scattered across several ministries.) Representatives of the Montenegrin side are interested in maintaining further contacts with the institutions they visited during their stay in Poland. This is particularly true for the possibility of using Polish experience and know-how, as well as the possibility of implementing joint projects in the future in the area of strengthening the effectiveness of administration. Participants presented their country as a leader in the EU accession process in the region. Hence, it is important to maintain interest and support for the

EU accession process in society. Therefore, cooperation formats aimed at selected social groups such as youth, teachers, journalists, etc. would be important. They would show the benefits of EU membership and the transformation in Poland during the EU accession process.

KOSOVO_WARSAW_01–06 December 2024

Participants

Valon Krasniqi	Acting Head of Central and South America Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora, MFAD
Qendresa Fazliu	Senior Officer for Public Communication, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora
Lulzim Vrapca	Head of Coordination and Planification Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora
Ekrem Ademi	Head of the Security and Planification Department, Ministry of Defence
Arbesa Hoxha	Senior Officer for IT, Ministry of Interior

The aim of the study visit organized by the Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW) was to introduce for the delegation from Kosovo to the Polish experience in building resilience against hybrid threats, such as cyberattacks, disinformation, and instrumentalized migration. The focus was on the perception of hybrid threats in a changing strategic security environment, the strategic approach toward countering these threats with a special focus was on crisis management systems, including the cyber domain, the institutional arrangement, and the adopted policy instruments.

At the beginning of the study visit, on **Monday**, December 2, the Kosovo delegation met with experts of the Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM) from the International Security Program: Mr **Filip Bryjka**, who works on hybrid threats, Ms **Aleksandra Koziol**, an expert in EU security policy as well as Russian domestic and foreign policy and Ms **Stefania Kolarz** from Global Issues Program specialized in EU Law and OSCE. This meeting was focused on the definition of the hybrid threats, the EU policy, and action to establish a common framework for defining, and detecting, challenges in analyzing FIMI incidents and facilitating information-sharing among the EU members.

On **Tuesday**, December 3, the delegation met with Mr **Robert Pszczel**, a former international civil servant at NATO's International Staff in Brussels and Press Office and in different capacities in NATO's Public Diplomacy Division, including the NATO Information Office in Moscow. The meeting focused on the issue of strategic communication in countering disinformation and foreign information manipulation and interference targeting the EU and NATO and countries aspiring to join Euro-Atlantic structures. The participants also met with Polish experts dealing with the Western Balkans Mr **Tomasz Żornaczuk** from the PISM, Mr **Andrzej Sadecki** and Ms **Paulina Wankiewicz** from the OSW. The meeting was devoted to disinformation campaigns and hybrid threat incidents in the Western Balkans, Russian disinformation strategy in the region, and the EU and NATO policy in the region aimed at countering these actions. The question of

support of independent media and other institutions, which fight against disinformation campaigns was also discussed. The delegation also met with the deputy director of the Department for Strategic Communications and Countering Foreign Disinformation Mr **Konrad Adamowicz** and experts from his department. During the meeting, the director presented the Polish Institutions responsible for Countering and Analyzing FIMI, and the scope of their works. The interlocutor also presented the methods of Analyzing, Reporting, and Countering FIMI. Moreover, the issues of the disinformation campaign in the Western Balkans (the main actors responsible, the main narratives) were also discussed. One of the discussion topics was possible areas of cooperation between Kosovo and Poland in the form of common training courses, internships, and study visits.

The participants also had the opportunity to meet with the experts at the Government Centre for Security (RCB), including the deputy director Mr **Tomasz Kołodziejczyk**. Mr **Sławomir Łazarek**, acting head of the International Cooperation Department, presented RCB and its role in the Polish System of Crisis Management with a special focus on the Operational and Analytical Centre and its mode of operation. Mr **Grzegorz Małachowski** showcased the Polish risk assessment system and the role and work of the Planning Unit. Mr **Bartosz Kłopotowski** spoke about the role of Critical Infrastructure Unite and the measures taken to protect critical infrastructure in Poland. The last presentation was devoted to the question of building resilience in society and RCB's Information Campaigns for the general public aimed at strengthening this resilience.

On December 4, **Wednesday**, the participants met with the representative of the Department of European Policy of the Polish MFA, deputy director Mr **Radosław Darski**, Mr **Wojtasik Szymon**, head of the South East Europe Division, and Mr **Maciej Żwirski**, desk officer for Kosovo and Serbia. The discussion focused on the current state of the cooperation between Warsaw and Prishtina, the priorities of the upcoming Polish presidency, and the support Poland can provide to Kosovo in fighting disinformation. Participants also asked about the Polish perspective on the EU enlargement, assessment of effectiveness of this policy as well as about the challenges Kosovo has to face with on its path to the EU. Ms **Katarzyna Chawryło**, expert on Russian Disinformation from the Centre for Eastern Studies presented to the participants the main narratives of the Russian Propaganda and the tools to fight against disinformation.

Thursday started with meeting with Mr **Marcin Domagała**, the head of the Department of the International Cooperation on Cybersecurity Issues in the Ministry of Digital Affairs during which he discussed with the participants the main laws and regulations on the National Cybersecurity System in Poland. He described ongoing legislation changes forced by the EU directives and presented the main challenges in ensuring security in the cyber domain and significant incidents reporting system in Poland. The expert from a National Research Institute NASK under the supervision of the Ministry of Digital Affairs presented the role of this key institution involved in ensuring security online. NASK engagement in providing analytical and R&D services was discussed and well as responding system to network security violations occurring in Poland and coordinating corrective actions to the cyber security violations were also presented.

The meetings on **the last day** were devoted to the question of the hybrid threat and the challenges Poland is facing due to the hostile action of Russia and Belarus. In the Ministry of Interior and Administration, the guests were received by the deputy director of the Department

of International Affairs and Migration, Mr **Kamil Kisiel**. They also have the opportunity to talk with the experts of the Department of Public Order about the risks and challenges to internal security. The delegation then went to the Headquarters of the Polish Border Guard where the role and the structure of the Polish Border Guard were presented. The system of border protection in Poland as well as the issue of strengthening security at the EU's external borders due to the hybrid threats at the Eastern EU border by Russia and Belarus were discussed. The Polish experience with the weaponization of migration and Polish response to this challenge had been also covered. The delegation had also opportunity to visit the **Warsaw Uprising Museum**.

Feedback:

Delegation from Kosovo positively assessed the program of the study visit, the meetings and their information value. The participants were active, raised a lot practical and detailed questions and showed great interest in obtaining training support, learning good practices and exchanging experiences to strengthen their competence in the area of public diplomacy. The meetings were great opportunity for contacts exchange and the establishing communication for further cooperation. The Polish side was open for assistance and further study visits from Kosovo. In participants opinion, the study visit was very informative and was organized at the right time as Kosovo is facing a lot of challenge in fighting disinformation and preventing the hybrid incidents, which became more common in the country.

PART 4 – SLOVAKIA

UKRAINE_BRATISLAVA_01 – 06 December 2024

Participants

Ivan Pidoprygora	Deputy Director of Khmelnytskyi Communal Enterprise “Spetskomuntrans” Head of Project Implementation Unit “Smart Environment” Khmelnytskyi
Nadiia Kromkach	Deputy Head of Department of Economic Development, Ecology and Energy Saving of the Ivano-Frankivsk City Council
Maryna Kuznyetsova	Chief specialist of Public Utility “City Development Agency” of Zhytomyr City Council
Liudmyla Kovalyk	Deputy Head of the Department of Housing and Infrastructure of Lviv City Council
Mariya Levanchuk	Brussels Office of the Vinnytsya City
Andriy Kyrchiv	Programs coordinator Energy Efficient Cities of Ukraine, Lviv
Artur Madatian	Regional Center of Sustainable Development, Kherson City

The main focus of the study visit of five civil servants in Slovakia organized by the **Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association** was the issue of the ***Energy efficient and Smart and Carbon Neutral Cities***. During the meetings, members of the group – representatives of 6 towns of Ukraine – made acquaintance of the institutional framework and the governance in

the field, concrete projects and measures as well as discussed the future cooperation plans in the field.

The official working program for the expert group from Ukraine was organized into the five working days and combined various meetings in order for the experts to discuss and share partners' experience, i.e. towns, companies, agencies and the first-hand knowledge of processes in practice. The program of the study trip thus consisted of series of meetings with leading representatives and experts of the cities and companies.

The team of Ukrainian experts was officially briefed and received by the SFPA's Executive Director Ms **Jitka Ivančíková**, RC SFPA's analyst of Economic and Development Policy Program Mr **Peter Brezáni** upon arrival during the orientation meeting. The program and agenda were discussed.

On Monday, December 2, the study trip commenced with a transfer to the venue of the 18th Central European Energy Conference. Participants were oriented to the conference's central themes and key speakers.

After initial panel discussion, the participants met the Executive Director of the International Visegrad Fund **Linda Kapustová Helbichová**, gaining insights into iIVFs role and operations.

Later on, a productive meeting with Mr **Ján Magyar** of the Slovak Innovation and Energy Agency covered the topic of energy efficiency in public buildings and presentations of successful reconstruction projects. Discussion revolved around measures administration may take in public building to use energy more efficiently. possibilities for regional and local administration involvement.

Participants then had the opportunity to network and share insights during a luncheon at the conference venue with conference participants (representatives of cities, municipalities included) In the afternoon, participants took part in the conference panel discussion on world energy outlook.

The conference panel discussion was followed by the roundtable with **representatives of towns** from **Ukraine** (CSMP participants), **and Mission Cities of Bratislava** (Mr **Marián Zachar and Soňa Andrášová**) and **Košice** (Ms **Adriana Šebešová**) entitled **Funding the Future: EU Opportunities for Climate Action in Municipalities**. In climate change policies, mayors of municipalities play a key role in driving localized climate action and sustainability initiatives. This discussion between EU and Ukrainian cities aims to explore paths for collaboration among mayors in implementing effective climate policies, leveraging available EU funds such as Interreg and Horizon, and maximizing their impact in the transition towards a sustainable future. The discussion will explore strategies for enhancing the visibility and impact of climate projects implemented by municipalities, fostering knowledge exchange, and facilitating peer-to-peer learning networks. The day concluded with the meeting of renowned energy expert and former Minister of Economy / Energy of the Slovak Republic, Mr **Karel Hirman** who also served as energy advisor in Ukraine. The discussion covered vast issues related to Slovak experience with projects and programs on reconstruction and building of the new energy infrastructure in cities and its variations, reconstruction processes in Ukraine, renovation of its energy infrastructure, necessity to adopt standards at the level of towns and implement them in practice and presentation of examples that might be used in Ukraine. At the meeting also participated Mr **Alexander Duleba** head of the Eastern Europe program and analyst of the Energy Policy program in Slovak Foreign Policy Association who covered topics of regional cooperation programs in

communal energy, presentation of existing projects and their impact as well as political aspect of such cooperation and possible participation of Slovak companies at reconstruction of Ukraine.

On Tuesday, December 2 the program continued with the visit of the EINPARK project of the developer Corwin. EINPARK Offices is the first building in Slovakia to fulfil the highest certification criteria of LEED Platinum (Leadership In Energy & Environmental Design). The project thus ranks among the top 1% of the most sustainable buildings in the world and at the same time brings new reference standards for future office buildings in the region. LEED certified buildings protect their surroundings, create a pleasant indoor environment and, in addition, help increase productivity at work.

Participants transferred to the Bratislava's (EU Mission City) Climate Office to meet Mr **Marián Zachar** and Ms **Adela Syslová** to discuss procedural aspects and implementation of the Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan of Bratislava. The group then continued to KOLO – reuse center run by OLO (Bratislava's waste management company). At the meeting with the head of the center Ms **Martina Čechová** mission and goals, operations and processes, community engagement, environmental impact, program, initiatives and financial sustainability of such center were discussed.

The visit to OLO proceeded with a presentation of Mr **Samuel Kukura** about the company and statistics regarding the waste management in Bratislava. After the presentation, the participants were given an excursion of the company facilities (incineration site and separation line) with their waste to energy program.

The day was concluded at the Climate Office of Bratislava City with the meeting of the city's energy managers Mr **Ján Matúška** and Mr **Branislav Zvada** sharing the experience in Cities' energy strategies and goals, sustainability, use of renewables, energy efficiency, public engagement and awareness. The financial aspect of implementing the sustainable energy management of the city was a part of the debate as well. After that, Ukrainian participants met Mr **Ján Polerecký** to talk about the goals of the LED upgrade program of Bratislava, energy and cost savings related to the modernization of the city lighting system, its environmental impact and plans.

On Wednesday, December 4, the field visits to facilities of company **DT EnergieTech** to discuss the use of biomass in small towns' heating plants. The trip included the visit to **DT Termonova**, a.s. in town of Nová Dubnica to Central District Heating supply and Heating Plant – combined production of electricity and heat from wood chips. It was followed by the visit to **biomass boiler room** in town of Nemšová, producing the heat and hot water from wooden pellets for school in Nemšová and **DT Forest**, a.s. in town of Dubnica nad Váhom (company producing wood chips from wood waste and its distribution). The presentations and Q/As was facilitated by the sales and project manager of the company Mr **Radoslav Kňazúr**. The day ended with a transfer to Kežmarok.

On Thursday, December 5 the CSMP participants visited the city of Kežmarok where group focused mainly on 3 aspects – geothermal well, combined boiler houses in the city and composting site. The composting site – its establishment, operation and education of citizens was presented by the officer of the city company Verejnoprospešné služby mesta Kežmarok (Generally beneficial services of City of Kezmarok) responsible for waste management and

environment Mr **Miroslav Fudaly**. The group then moved to the combined biomass/gas boiler station of city of Kežmarok and to the geothermal well and connected boiler station. The presentation about the nuances of this matter were presented by the director of the city's company Stavbytherm, Mr **Marián Bešenej**.

The second half of the day was organized in the city of Prešov. The agenda was introduced by Mr **František Chovanec** of Prešov Regional Implementation Agency. With prof. **Miroslav Rimár** of Regional Implementation Agency and Technical University of Technology in Prešov the discussion was combined with a tour of the multivalent RES (Renewable Energy Systems) laboratory at the University, where systems based on renewable energy sources are combined. Group then moved to a city company Spravbytkomfort, a company responsible for central heating in the city. Meeting took place at Energodispečing Spravbytkomfort Central Boiler Room, which manages the district heating system. The visit in Prešov ended with a meeting at a company Fecupral with a dangerous goods incineration plant that generates energy from waste.

On Friday, December 6, the trip concluded in city of Košice (EU Mission City) with walking tour of Košice's energy and climate measures with Mr **Michal Hudák** of Strategic Development Dpt of the city, responsible mainly for climate mitigation and adaptation measures. The tour started at Košice Military Barracks renovated into the cultural and creative space. This transformation is part of a broader initiative to revitalize historical buildings and use them for public and artistic purposes. Whole process involved several key **energy and climate aspects** to ensure that the site is sustainable and energy-efficient. The tour followed to recently renovated ice-hockey arena s achieved impressive results, delivering over 30% savings on energy costs. The ice hockey arena is now significantly more environmentally friendly. As part of mitigation and adaptation measures tour, the group continued to Košice's parks, water channel that was once an integral part of a mill drive system as well as public spaces in urban areas where all measures were discussed. Besides the positive aspects, Mr Hudák mentioned challenges when climate mitigation and adaptation measures are implemented sequentially rather than in an integrated manner. Addressing mitigation first, without simultaneously planning for adaptation, can lead to unforeseen problems, such as increased vulnerability to climate impacts or inefficiencies in resource allocation

Feedback:

Delegation from Ukraine highly positively assessed the structure of the program, the meetings and their information value as well as quality of experts. They especially praised the fact, that SFPA used demand-driven approach and all of the meetings were organized upon the request of participants The participants of the visit confirmed in an interview with the coordinator that Slovak experience is very useful as we had a very similar technical starting point, in other words, they could see it would be possible.

All participants were interested in maintaining further contacts with the institutions they visited during their stay, discussing the options of the joint activities and projects. Participants of the study visit are also interested in strengthening partnerships and cooperation between cities and companies they visited.

KOSOVO_BRATISLAVA_8 – 13 December 2024

Participants

Art Jashari	Head of the Legislation Drafting Division, Legal Department, Ministry of Finance, Labor, and Transfers (MFLT)
Mirsad Vitia	Head of the National Level Training Organization Division, Kosova Institute for Public Administration (KIPA)
Ronit Abdullahu	Head of the Training Quality Management Division, Kosova Institute for Public Administration (KIPA)
Rina Ponosheci	Acting Director at the Division of Contract Supervision and Sectoral Cooperation, with the Office of our Secretary General at the Ministry of Education (MESTI)

The main focus of the study visit of five civil servants in Slovakia organized by the **Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association** was the issue of the **Informatization and Digitalization in Public Administration**. During the meetings, members of the group made acquaintance of the institutional and legislative framework and the governance in the field, concrete projects and measures and the current activities of the respective institutions, including their competencies and interaction. One of the participants had to cancel the trip due to the health condition.

The official working program for the expert group from Kosovo was organized into the five working days and combined various meetings in order for the experts to discuss and share partners' experience and the first-hand knowledge of processes in practice in the field of informatization and digitalization. The program of the study trip thus consisted of series of meetings with leading representatives and experts of the state institutions, NGOs and private sector.

The team of Kosovar experts was officially briefed and received by the **SFPA's** Executive Director Ms **Jitka Ivančíková**, SFPA's analyst and project manager Mr **Peter Brezáni** upon arrival during the orientation meeting. The program and agenda were discussed.

On **Monday**, December 9, the study trip began with a meeting at the Ministry of Investment, Regional Development and Informatization of SR (MIRRI), Mr **Ervín Šimko**, Director General of the Cybersecurity Section, Mr **Michal Lavrinčík**, Head of the Governmental Unit CSIRT, Mr **Alexander Valach**, Head of the Analytical Department (offensive security) and Mr **Róbert Kováč**, Director of Department of Cyber and Information Security Management. The meeting introduced the Section's roles, including overseeing cybersecurity across government agencies, ensuring legislative compliance, and providing support through specialized units like incident handling and forensic analysis. The discussion focused on collaboration with other government bodies to draft and implement cybersecurity legislation to protect public sector information systems and critical infrastructure.

The department's proactive measures, such as penetration testing, vulnerability assessments, and threat intelligence services, were highlighted. These efforts aim to identify and mitigate potential security risks. Regular training and awareness programs for public sector employees,

including civil servants and students, are conducted to enhance understanding of cybersecurity threats and best practices.

The meeting also addressed the importance of international cooperation and alignment with EU directives. The Slovak cybersecurity team emphasized their commitment to sharing best practices with other countries and discussed the challenges of implementing cybersecurity measures in smaller municipalities. The need for standardized processes and documentation to ensure consistent protection across all government levels was highlighted.

Finally, the role of law enforcement in cybersecurity, particularly in investigating and responding to cyber incidents, was explored. The department works closely with police and other agencies to support criminal investigations and provide technical expertise. The meeting concluded with an emphasis on ongoing efforts to enhance Slovakia's cybersecurity posture and potential future collaboration with other nations.

The following meeting at Data Center for the Digitization of Local Self-Government in Slovakia (DEUS) with Mr **Peter Uhrík**, IT department manager and Ms **Jana Červinková**, Sales and Marketing Manager focused on modernizing Slovakia's digital and administrative infrastructure, particularly supporting small municipalities. Due to limited resources and staff, the government established a centralized system providing cloud-based services for administrative tasks, document management, and regulatory compliance. This system ensures even the smallest municipalities meet legal requirements, reduces administrative costs, supports data sharing, and ensures uniform cybersecurity and privacy law implementation.

The discussion also addressed the operational and cultural shifts required for digital transformation. Resistance to change often stems from entrenched paper-based processes, so designing digital systems from the ground up was emphasized. The system's user-focused design should include proactive notifications for residents, simplified form submissions, and mobile ID service integrations. Recommendations for further improvement included mandating digital systems for specific groups, promoting interoperability among registries, and encouraging collaboration to overcome modernization barriers. The conversation underscored the importance of strong governance and consistent policy support to achieve sustained progress.

On **Tuesday**, December 10, the day started with the meeting at the Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic with Mr **Erik Minarovič**, the Director General of the Information Technology Section and Mr **Stanislav Schubert**, Chief Information Security Officer of the Department of Information and Cyber Security. The debate outlined the digital transformation initiatives in public finance management in Slovakia, focusing on the integration and enhancement of various IT systems. Besides an overview of the public finance management ecosystem, it also detailed the interconnected IT systems involved in financial control, auditing, taxation, customs, and state treasury operations. Key systems (State Treasury Information System, Central Register of Assets, and the Central Economic System, among others) aim to streamline processes, improve transparency, and ensure efficient management of public funds.

The debate also focused on the involvement of IT systems in managing public revenues and the redistribution of financial resources, the processes from starting a business, obtaining licenses, and tax management to the allocation of resources for public services, the integration of systems like eKoloK for electronic payments and eKasa for sales tracking – which demonstrate the efforts to modernize and digitize financial operations, enhancing efficiency and reducing the risk of corruption.

Both sides also discussed the goals and objectives of the digital transformation, such as improving cybersecurity, leveraging AI for better analytics, and utilizing cloud services for infrastructure support. In conclusion, both sides agreed that the digital transformation of public finance management should aim to create a more efficient, transparent, and secure financial ecosystem. By integrating advanced IT systems and adopting innovative technologies, the state institution is to enhance the management of public funds, improve service delivery to citizens, and ensure the effective use of resources.

The debate concluded and underscored the importance of continuous improvement and adaptation to new technological advancements to achieve all goals.

The delegation then moved to the Office of the Government, Recovery Plan Section, for a meeting with Mr **Patrik Kováč**, Director for Efficient Public Administration and Digitalisation, and Mr **Robert Mojsej**, Department of European Coordination. The meeting focused on Slovakia's efforts under the Recovery and Resilience Facility to enhance public administration through digital transformation. The Government Office, along with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for the Recovery and Resilience Plan, coordinates these initiatives, with the National Implementation and Coordination Authority (NICA) playing a crucial role in guiding and monitoring the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP).

Slovakia's National Recovery and Resilience Plan, with a financial allocation of €6.408 billion, focuses on investments and reforms to support long-term economic growth and improve quality of life. Key areas include education, healthcare, green economy, and digitalization. The plan emphasizes addressing the transformation debt in public administration to create a modern, efficient, and digital state capable of supporting an innovative economy.

Digitalization efforts are a significant part of the RRP, with investments in digital skills, equipment, and information systems. Projects aim to enhance digital infrastructure, such as broadband coverage and 5G deployment, and improve digital literacy among citizens and public administration workers. Strategic documents and legislative changes support these initiatives, aiming to standardize technical solutions and strengthen cybersecurity.

The Information and Monitoring System of the Recovery and Resilience Plan (ISPO) is a key tool for managing and reporting on the RRP's implementation. It facilitates data exchange, supports decision-making, and ensures transparency and accountability, contributing to the overall success of Slovakia's digital transformation efforts.

The **Wednesday**, December 11, started with the cultural activity (Bratislava historical city tour), due to the cancelled meeting (health issues) with the representatives of CIVITTA company specializing in digital innovation support, public sector advisory.

The experts from Kosovo continued to the Ministry of Interior for a meeting with the representatives of the Public Administrative Section, Mr **Jaroslav Kmet'**, Director General of the Section and Ms Naďa Firák Kurilová of the Department of Modernization and Coordination of Public Administration.

The meeting focused on the digitalization and informatization of Slovakia's public administration. The Ministry, which includes both the police department and civil administration, presented its significant reforms which aim to decentralize competencies and improve efficiency, building on changes made during Slovakia's EU accession process. Despite these efforts, Slovakia remains one of the most centralized countries in the EU.

The both parts devoted a long time to digitalization which is a key priority. Slovak partners explained that there is a heavy reliance on EU funds to support these digital projects, and

efforts are being made to ensure compliance with EU requirements and secure digital systems. The Ministry is also addressing the challenge of motivating and retaining human resources, particularly in less developed regions, by digitizing processes to reduce paperwork and improve efficiency. Cooperation with municipalities is crucial, as the Ministry works on legislation and project funding to empower local governments. The decentralization allows municipalities to manage their own projects and resources more effectively. However, the success of these initiatives depends on political will and continued support for further reforms. They also discussed the future plans – the Ministry plans to continue its digitalization and reform efforts, focusing on enhancing public administration efficiency.

In the afternoon, the meeting at the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic with Mr. **Alexander Šproch**, Director of the Department of Digital Delivery Unit, focused on the digitalization of education. Mr. Šproch presented a major project aimed at raising the minimum viable standard of digital equipment and infrastructure in schools, ensuring equal access to digital tools by the end of next year. This strategy includes hardware, inclusion, and the impact of digital tools on students' lives. Coordination between various ministries and stakeholders was emphasized for the success of these projects. The discussion highlighted the need for a centralized methodology to support schools, especially in rural areas, and the importance of involving schools in the planning process to ensure digital tools meet their specific needs. The meeting also addressed challenges in motivating and training teachers to use new technologies, the need for ongoing support and training, and creating a sustainable system for maintaining and updating digital infrastructure. Slovak partners shared their experience and strategies, offering valuable insights for the Kosovo delegation as they work on their own digitalization efforts. The importance of cooperation and small, manageable steps in implementing digitalization projects was emphasized throughout the meeting.

The **Thursday**, December 12, started at Ministry of Investment, Regional Development and Informatization of SR with the team of the Division of IT for the Public Sector led by Mr **Martin Denéši**, Director General of the Division. The meeting as such underscored Slovakia's comprehensive approach to digital transformation, data governance, and technological advancement to improve citizen services and administrative efficiency and covered four main topics. The issue of **digital transformation goals and implementation in Slovakia** highlighted Slovakia's strategic initiatives to modernize public administration through digital transformation. Goals include improving citizen quality of life, reducing bureaucracy, and increasing transparency and efficiency in public services. Emphasis was placed on automated processes, system interoperability, and electronic communication platforms like the centralized slovensko.sk for secure document management. The **Register of Data Permissions and Obligations (RDPO)** initiative was discussed as a vital component of Slovakia's new Metainformation System, aimed at enhancing data governance. The register centralizes data attributes and legal permissions, ensuring transparency and compliance. Its benefits include effective data sharing across public and private sectors, improved public access to data, and fostering a legally sound data management framework. **Once-Only Technical System (OOTS)** developed to comply with EU Regulation 2018/1724, facilitates cross-border data sharing with user consent. It integrates existing European digital infrastructure for seamless document exchange and includes a user journey comprising authentication, evidence preview, and submission. This system represents a milestone in enabling efficient and secure inter-EU interactions for citizens and businesses. Slovakia's hybrid *Government Cloud* was presented as

a centralized solution for public sector cloud services, balancing public and private cloud offerings. The legal framework ensures security classification and compliance, with robust measures for cybersecurity and data management. The system includes advanced features like AI sandboxes, encryption, and planned integrations with global providers such as AWS, enhancing innovation and efficiency in public administration.

The delegation then moved to spend the rest of the day at the **ITAPA AI conference**, the second edition of the very successful March 2024 conference focused on the topics of using artificial intelligence in practice, examples of successful projects not only from Slovakia, but also from abroad. The ITAPA 2024 conference featured a diverse range of discussions on the integration and impact of artificial intelligence (AI) across various sectors. Highlights included sessions on AI's role in preventing burnout, optimizing healthcare diagnostics, enhancing education, and supporting government functions. The conference also explored AI's potential in urban mobility, eCommerce, and public services. The event showcased AI's transformative potential and fostered collaboration among stakeholders.

The **final day** of the study trip was at the headquarters of the Visegrad Fund in Bratislava. Kosovar experts met with the Visegrad Fund's Executive Director, Ms. **Linda Kapustová-Helbichová**, Deputy Executive Director Ms **Maja Wawrzyk** and Mr **Jiří Sýkora**, Chief of the Cabinet, gained insight of the Fund's projects and were presented with opportunities for a possible future cooperation. Delegation also shared their feedback on the week in Bratislava and meetings they attended.

The meeting between ITAS Vice President Mr **Pavol Frič** and Kosovo experts focused on Slovakia's e-communication and digital transformation. It began with a historical overview, noting the initial steps taken 20 years ago to implement electronic communication in customs, tax processes, and courts. Significant progress was marked by the 2013 law on electronic signatures, which enabled e-government by allowing electronic communication with governmental institutions. The discussion highlighted the importance of guaranteed conversion for legal validity of electronic documents and the development of data interchange systems. Mr Frič shared insights into various digital transformation projects, such as the implementation of a payment portal for customs duties and a national single window for customs processes. He acknowledged challenges like poor user interfaces of government portals and the need for better backend processes. The role of IT companies in implementing these solutions and the importance of clear specifications and qualitative criteria for public procurement were also discussed. Looking forward, Mr Frič emphasized the need for continuous digital transformation, focusing on simplifying backend processes and leveraging IT technology to make state duties more efficient and cost-effective. He highlighted the importance of legislative changes to support new technologies and the potential benefits of outsourcing certain state processes to private companies. The meeting concluded with a vision for a more user-friendly and efficient public administration, where digital processes replace outdated paper-based ones, ultimately saving time and resources for both the government and its citizens.

The study trip concluded with Mr **Ján Bučkuliak**, Founder & CEO of Digitálka.sk, Former Advisor to the Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic for Digitization and Mr **Lubomír Illek**, Co-Founder of Slovensko.Digital. Key points included the importance of correcting processes before digitalizing them, addressing corruption, and ensuring that IT projects are necessary and

appropriately scaled. The discussion also highlighted the challenges of large-scale projects and the need for more flexible procurement processes to improve project outcomes.

Another significant topic was the necessity of building IT capacity within public sector organizations. This involves hiring skilled IT personnel and ensuring they have the knowledge to manage and oversee projects effectively. The participants emphasized the importance of centralized data management, improving data quality, and fostering collaboration between the government and private sector through open APIs and data sharing. The meeting concluded with a discussion on the need for political support and a clear strategy for digitalization efforts.

Feedback:

The Kosovar experts assessed the study trip as highly productive, with well-organized meetings that provided valuable insights into Slovakia's practices and systems. The sessions were engaging, offering practical knowledge on digital transformation, data governance, and cloud implementation, which will significantly benefit future initiatives in Kosovo. Networking opportunities were commendable, fostering connections between experts and paving the way for potential collaborations. However, incorporating more hands-on workshops and case studies could further enhance understanding. Overall, the experience was enriching and well-structured, providing a solid foundation for Kosovo's digital transformation journey.

MONTENEGRO_BRATISLAVA_10 – 14 February 2025

Participants

Stevan Brajušković	Director General of the Directorate for the Execution of Criminal Sanctions and Control, Ministry of Justice
Darko Vukčević	Director of the Institute for the Execution of Criminal Sanctions
Nebojša Janković	Assistant Director at the Institute for the Execution of Criminal Sanctions for the Security Sector
Predrag Krsmanović	Head of the Department for Second-degree Administrative Procedure and Regulations, Ministry of Justice
Dušan Babović	Authorized Officer for the Control of the Execution of Prison Sentences and Security Measures, Ministry of Justice

The study visit of five civil servants to Slovakia, organized by the **Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association**, focused on **alternative sanctions and the physical and cybersecurity of prisons**. During the meetings, the participants learned about the legal framework governing alternative sanctions, discussed challenges in their implementation, and exchanged experiences on electronic monitoring, particularly in enforcing house arrest. They also examined security measures related to restraining orders, including electronic monitoring devices and the challenges of daily supervision. Additionally, they consulted on the application of electronic monitoring for domestic violence offenders and were briefed on specific projects, measures, and ongoing activities of the relevant institutions, including their roles and cooperation.

The official working program for the expert group from Montenegro was traditionally organized into the five working days and combined various meetings in order for the experts to discuss and share partners' experience and the first-hand knowledge of processes in practice in the field of informatization and digitalization. The program of the study trip thus consisted of series of meetings with leading representatives and experts of the state institutions in the field.

The team of Montenegrin experts was officially welcomed by **SFPA's** Executive Director Ms **Jitka Ivančíková**, along with SFPA's analyst and project manager Mr **Peter Brezáni** during the orientation meeting. They discussed the program and agenda, provided key context, and explained the visit's objectives and expected outcomes. The main institutions involved and their roles were highlighted, and all relevant materials from partners were distributed. Due to late arrival, the meetings were postponed to Tuesday.

On **Tuesday**, February 11, the study trip began with a meeting at the Ministry of Justice of SR and its experts from the Directorate for Restorative and Alternative Justice. The meeting however begun with the official welcome by the State Secretary of the Ministry of Justice, Mr **Michal Sedliak**. The State Secretary in his remarks emphasized the importance of the meeting's focus on alternative sanctions and prison security. Drawing on his experience as a former head of the prison, he highlighted the challenges and responsibilities associated with managing correctional facilities. He stressed the need for effective electronic monitoring, strong physical and cybersecurity measures, and continuous knowledge exchange to improve the justice system. He expressed his support for the initiative and encouraged open discussions to share best practices and enhance cooperation among institutions.

Mr **Bronislav Pongrác**, director of the Department of Penitentiary Intervention, DG for Restorative and Alternative Justice opened the expert session by introducing the Ministry, its departments, and their work in the field of alternative sanctions and prison security. He outlined the roles and responsibilities of the respective units and highlighted opportunities for potential cooperation with Montenegro. Following this, he introduced his colleagues, who were designated to address the key issues raised by the guests for discussion during the meeting. The expert debate was opened by the introductory presentation of Col. **Ľubomír Klištinec**, Director General of the Prison and Court Guard Service (ZVJS). He provided an overview of the structure, functions, and current challenges of the Slovak prison system. He explained how the ZVJS operates and that it is responsible for the execution of pre-trial detention, imprisonment, and the security of court and prosecution buildings. The service consists of a General Directorate and 18 prison facilities, including institutions for juveniles and a hospital for inmates. A key focus of the presentation was the conditions of detention, including the classification of inmates, housing capacities, and measures ensuring humane treatment. Special attention was given to differentiated security levels in prisons, psychological assessments before placement, and efforts to align prison conditions as closely as possible with life outside. Col. Klištinec also highlighted the importance of protecting inmates' basic rights while maintaining security and discipline. The presentation addressed security measures and technological advancements in Slovak prisons. He detailed the use of mobile phone detection technologies, signal jammers, and metal detectors to combat illegal communication. Additionally, he discussed challenges related to drone intrusions, explaining that the service is working on implementing radar-based early detection systems to prevent unauthorized aerial smuggling. Lastly, Col. Klištinec outlined the cooperation between the ZVJS and other

institutions, such as the police, judiciary, and healthcare providers. He emphasized the role of electronic monitoring, the handling of high-risk prisoners in civilian hospitals, and ongoing projects aimed at modernizing the prison system. Potential areas for cooperation with Montenegro were identified, particularly in security technologies, alternative sanctions, and prisoner rehabilitation. Following the presentation, a **long and highly technical discussion** took place, where participants exchanged experience and practical examples from both Slovakia and Montenegro. The discussion delved into specific operational procedures, technological challenges, and best practices, providing valuable insights for both sides.

The expert part continued with the inputs of Ms **Lucia Vasilik**, Department of Criminal Law, Criminology and Forensic Science, Comenius University in Bratislava, Faculty of Law. Expert, very closely cooperating with the Ministry of Justice on implementation of the national project "Chance for Reentry". The National Project "Chance for Reentry" (Šanca na návrat) is an initiative aimed at reducing the risks of social exclusion and enhancing the labor market competencies of individuals serving prison sentences in Slovakia. Implemented by the General Directorate of the Prison and Court Guard Service, the project collaborates with various partners, including the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Family, and the Ministry of Justice. The project is divided into two phases: the first phase ran from October 2018 to September 2023, and the second phase is scheduled from October 2023 to June 2029, with a combined budget of over €32 million.

The project encompasses several innovative activities designed to support the resocialization and education of inmates. Key components include the establishment of reentry units within prisons, which are specialized sections aimed at preparing inmates for reintegration into society. Additionally, the project offers a range of resocialization and educational programs that cover essential areas such as social communication, self-awareness, employment readiness, legal literacy, financial literacy, addiction prevention, and family relationships. These programs are tailored to address the specific needs of inmates and provide them with the skills necessary for successful reintegration.

Assessment tools play a crucial role in the project, helping to evaluate and support inmates throughout their resocialization journey. Tools such as the Individual Action Plan on Social Inclusion (IAPSI), Risk of Serious Harm (RoSH), and Crime Risk Assessment (CRA) are utilized to monitor progress and identify areas for improvement. Furthermore, the project leverages information and communication technologies, including the HOLUP application and secure internet access, to facilitate the resocialization process and provide inmates with access to valuable resources and information.

The implementation of the "Chance for Reentry" project spans various prisons across Slovakia, ensuring comprehensive geographic coverage and inclusivity. Continuous evaluation and monitoring are integral to the project, with a focus on measuring the effectiveness of the programs and making necessary adjustments to enhance outcomes. The use of digital tools and standardized educational programs underscores the project's commitment to modernizing the resocialization process and providing inmates with the best possible support.

In conclusion, the "Chance for Reentry" project represents a significant effort to reduce recidivism and support the reintegration of inmates into society. By focusing on education, social skills, and legal literacy, the project aims to create a safer and more inclusive society. The comprehensive approach and innovative activities implemented through this project highlight the importance of addressing the needs of inmates and providing them with the tools necessary for a successful reentry into the community.

The day was concluded with the discussion of Montenegrin experts with Mr *Radoslav Fedor*, Head of the Electronic Monitoring and Technical Security Department. Mr Fedor provided first an in-depth overview of Slovakia's Electronic Monitoring System (ESMO), which integrates monitoring, case management, and probation services. He explained that the system consists of interconnected platforms, including the CMS (Central Monitoring System) for active supervision and the PMS (Probation and Mediation System) for case management. Currently, over 700 individuals are monitored under electronic supervision, with an additional 43 cases involving protection measures. The system also supports probation officers in managing approximately 70,000 cases, with around 7,000 new cases registered annually. His input detailed the different monitoring regimes, including house arrest enforcement, movement tracking, and restraining orders. Mr Fedor described how GPS and RF (radio frequency) technologies ensure compliance, allowing remote supervision of individuals under electronic monitoring. Specific devices, such as personal tracking bracelets (OIZ) and location-determining units (ZUPKO), were introduced, highlighting their ability to detect movement, violations, and tampering. A key area of focus was monitoring restraining orders and alcohol consumption bans. The system allows real-time alerts when monitored individuals approach restricted zones, using a combination of GPS, RF proximity detection, and GSM communication. Additionally, Slovakia has implemented a system for remote alcohol testing, where individuals must perform scheduled or random breathalyzer tests with facial recognition verification.

The debate also covered technical and operational challenges, such as ensuring reliable GPS signals in urban areas, battery life of monitoring devices, and the need for continuous system updates. Mr Fedor emphasized the importance of pre-installation assessments to verify technical conditions, including mobile network coverage and proper device placement in monitored households. Following the presentation, a detailed and highly technical discussion took place, where participants from Montenegro shared their experiences with electronic monitoring. The exchange included practical examples, operational challenges, and lessons learned, allowing both sides to compare approaches and explore potential areas for collaboration.

On **Wednesday**, February 12, the study trip continued with expert debate and field trip to **Correctional Facility in Nitra – Chrenová**. The Montenegrin delegation was warmly welcomed at Prison Nitra-Chrenová. Together with Col. *Borislav Kročko*, Director of the facility, mjr. *Jaroslava Ivaničová*, Vice-Director, mjr. *Marcela Kočišová*, Head of the Department of Corrections, and mjr. *Peter Zubčák*, Head of the Unit of Protection, they participated in a comprehensive presentation of the facility. The discussion covered the prison's structure, inmate classification, security measures, and rehabilitation programs. Established on February 1, 1992, the prison is one of the most modern correctional facilities in Slovakia, constructed in multiple stages. It is designed to incarcerate female inmates across minimum, medium, and maximum security levels, as well as juvenile offenders. The facility comprises various units tailored to the security classifications of its inmates. Accommodations include double-occupancy cells, multiple-occupancy cells, and dormitories. Inmates have access to in-cell amenities such as toilets and showers and can utilize facilities like tea/coffee makers, radios, and televisions. For recreational activities, the prison offers both indoor and outdoor sports areas. The institution houses adult female prisoners and young offenders, all of whom are sentenced individuals. The official capacity of the prison is 354 inmates. The correctional facility engages inmates in various forms of employment and educational programs aimed at rehabilitation and skill development. These

activities include vocational training, educational courses, and participation in workshops such as hairdressing, tailoring, and pastry-making. Additionally, inmates work in production units within the prison, including a tailoring and sock production unit for the Prison and Court Guard Service and the manufacturing of fire dampers for a foreign company. They also participate in various programs outside the prison. During the presentation of individual parts of the facility, discussions with Montenegrin experts focused on several key aspects of prison management and rehabilitation. Topics included the architectural planning and phased construction of Nitra-Chrenová, along with strategies for further modernization of the prison facilities. Security and inmate classification were also addressed, covering methods for assigning inmates to different security levels and managing a diverse population, including juveniles and adults. Rehabilitation efforts were a major point of interest, particularly vocational training programs such as tailoring, hairdressing, pastry-making, and sock production, as well as the effectiveness of these initiatives in reintegrating inmates into society. Inmate welfare was discussed in relation to in-cell amenities, their impact on well-being, and the availability of recreational and sports facilities. Finally, the exchange provided an opportunity for a comparative analysis of the Slovak and Montenegrin prison systems, allowing both sides to share best practices for improving prison management and rehabilitation programs.

Due to the fact, that Montenegro now is in a process of building psychiatric hospital for prisoners, the delegation was very interested in visiting facility of this kind. Therefore, the study trip continued on Thursday with visit to **Detention Facility in Hronovce**, where delegation was welcomed by MD. **Marek Zelman**, Director of Psychiatric Hospital in Hronovce and head doctor of the facility, **Vladimír Vido**, Director of Detention Facility in Hronovce and Lt-Col. **Ondrej Leškanič**, Prison Governor of the Prison Želiezovce. The delegation was introduced to the facility's structure, which includes a capacity of 75 places and a specialized medical model of detention. The facility is managed by the Ministry of Health and supported by the Prison and Court Guard Service for security. The presentation highlighted the facility's history, from its establishment in 2022 to its current status, housing 43 detainees as of February 2025. During the tour, the Montenegrin experts were shown various parts of the facility, including the isolation rooms, therapeutic rooms, and individual exercise yards. They observed the different treatment regimes tailored to the severity and type of behavioral disorders, ranging from acute to resocialization phases. The experts noted the emphasis on individualized care and the integration of security measures with therapeutic interventions. The facility's approach to balancing security and rehabilitation was a key point of interest, showcasing how detainees' rights to personal items, communication, and spiritual services are maintained within a secure environment. After the presentation, a debate ensued among the Montenegrin experts regarding the applicability of such a model in Montenegro. Key points of discussion included the feasibility of implementing a similar multidisciplinary approach, the integration of security personnel with healthcare providers, and the legal framework required to support such a facility. Concerns were raised about the potential challenges in adapting the Slovak model to Montenegrin legal and healthcare systems, particularly in terms of resource allocation and training. The debate highlighted the need for a tailored approach that considers local contexts while drawing on the successful elements observed during the visit.

The **final day** of the study trip was at the headquarters of the Visegrad Fund in Bratislava. Kosovar experts met with the Visegrad Fund's Executive Director, Ms. **Linda Kapustová-Helbichová** and Mr **Jiří Sýkora**, Chief of the Cabinet, gained insight of the Fund's projects and

were presented with opportunities for a possible future cooperation. Delegation also shared their feedback on the week in Bratislava and meetings they attended.

Feedback:

The Montenegrin experts assessed the study trip as highly informative and well-coordinated event. The agenda was thoughtfully structured, beginning with a comprehensive meeting at the Ministry of Justice, where key officials provided valuable insights into alternative sanctions and prison security. The field visits enriched significantly the experience, offering practical insights into the implementation of security measures and rehabilitation programs. While the organizational aspects of the trip were commendable, the drive to the Detention Facility in Hronovce posed some challenges due to road infrastructure and the facility's location. However, this did not detract from the overall success of the program. The Montenegrin delegation appreciated the warm welcome and the opportunity to engage in meaningful discussions with Slovak experts. The exchange of best practices and the exploration of potential cooperation areas were particularly valuable. Overall, the study trip was a significant step towards enhancing cooperation and knowledge exchange between Slovakia and Montenegro in the field of justice and correctional facility management.