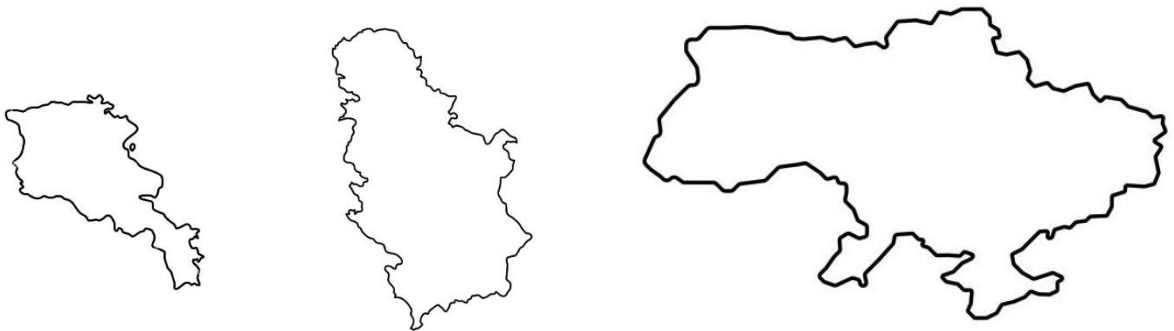


## CIVIL SERVANTS MOBILITY PROGRAM 2025

### ARMENIA, SERBIA, UKRAINE

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## STUDY VISITS CSMP 2025 [and 2023/2024]

### CZECH REPUBLIC

12–16 May 2025 | Ukraine

20–24 October 2025 | Armenia

3–7 November 2025 | Serbia

### HUNGARY

1–5 June 2005 | Moldova [2023]

26–30 May 2025 | Ukraine [2 delegations – 2023 & 2024]

### POLAND

17 – 21 November 2025 | Ukraine

23 – 27 November 2025 | Armenia

14 – 19 November 2025 | Serbia

### SLOVAKIA

23 – 29 November 2025 | Ukraine

14 – 19 December 2025 | Armenia

25 – 30 January 2025 | Serbia

# 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 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

In 2025, Think Visegrad platform partners hosted civil servants from Armenia, Serbia and Ukraine. Hungarian implementing partners finalized three study visits originally scheduled under 2023 and 2024 CSMP editions (civil servants from Ukraine (2) and Moldova(1)) that were postponed due to the issues related to the Russian war of aggression in Ukraine and organizational challenges respectively. The Moldovan civil servants focused on energy security, infrastructure, and regional cooperation and two groups from Ukraine visiting Hungary dealt with the public administration reforms, environmental protection, climate adaptation, and regional cooperation.

Even in 2025, the implementation of certain planned study visits to Hungary faced external challenges beyond the project's control. In the case of Serbia, following consultations with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Serbian Ministry of Mining and Energy, it was jointly recommended to postpone the CSMP due to the ongoing energy crisis, as the partner ministry was operating in crisis-management mode with significantly reduced staffing capacity, making participation in a multi-day study visit unrealistic. For Armenia, implementation was delayed due to institutional and logistical uncertainties on the partner side, as Hungary did not manage to open the Embassy in Yerevan and thus finalizing thematic priorities and/or, identifying appropriate counterpart ministries constrained coordination capacity. Regarding Ukraine, repeated coordination efforts with multiple stakeholders were undertaken; however, an unstable institutional environment and heightened internal sensitivities significantly limited the ability of partner institutions to formally engage, confirm participation, and commit to the organization of a study visit within the planned timeframe.

Despite the continued impact of external challenges, including the broader geopolitical environment in Eastern Europe, CSMP in 2025 remained a stable and effective platform for

sharing experience related to reform processes, EU integration, and institutional resilience. The implementation of both current and postponed study visits demonstrated the program's adaptability and its capacity to respond to changing circumstances while maintaining a high level of thematic relevance and professional quality.

In 2025, Think Visegrad partners hosted **41** civil servants and experts: **15 Ukrainian** civil servants, **12** civil servants from **Serbia** and **14** from **Armenia**. Additionally, **5** civil servants from **Moldova** and **10** from **Ukraine** finalized the 2023 and 2024 CSMP edition in Hungary.

**Ukrainian civil servants** used the study trips in 2025 to discuss the topic of energy efficiency and smart and carbon-neutral cities in Slovakia, EU accession preparation with particular emphasis on the practical aspects of adapting legislation and administrative standards to EU requirements and managing the implementation of European funds in Poland, and the visit to the Czech Republic focused on EU integration processes, Czech experience with EU accession and transitional processes, including institutional reforms, policy coordination, and practical implementation at both national and EU levels.

In addition, Ukrainian civil servants finalized in Hungary study visits originally planned under the 2023 and 2024 CSMP editions, where discussions focused on public administration reform, environmental protection, climate adaptation, regional governance models, and institutional cooperation relevant to Ukraine's recovery and EU integration process.

**Armenian civil servants** focused in the Czech Republic on digitalization in law enforcement, cybersecurity, migration management, and modern policing tools, combining strategic briefings with practical demonstrations of digital systems. The group in Poland concentrated on "memory policy," historical dialogue, and relations with neighboring countries, drawing on Polish institutional experience in addressing complex historical legacies. In Slovakia, the visit focused on defense reform, innovation, strategic modernization, and alignment with EU and NATO standards, including discussions on civil–military cooperation and cybersecurity.

The **delegation from Serbia** carried out meetings in the Czech Republic that revolved around the implementation of the Natura 2000 network, biodiversity protection, habitat management, and institutional coordination in environmental policy, combining expert discussions with extensive field visits. In Poland, the focus of the visit was on strengthening local and regional development, cooperation with business and cultural sectors, and the effective use of European Union funds. In Slovakia, Serbian civil servants focused on comprehensive strengthening of systemic migration management in line with EU standards

**Moldovan civil servants** finalized in 2025 their postponed study visit in Hungary, originally scheduled under the 2023 edition, focusing on energy security, infrastructure, and regional cooperation.

## PART 1 – CZECH REPUBLIC

### UKRAINE\_PRAGUE\_12 – 16 May 2025

#### Participants

<b>Daria Herasymenko</b>	Head of the Division of Regulatory Work and Legal Expertise, Legal Department. Ministry of Strategic Industry of Ukrainian
<b>Anna Melnychuk</b>	Deputy Head of the Sanctions Policy Division of the Property and Sanctions Policy Department - Head of the Division for the Formation, Implementation and Monitoring of Sanctions Policy. Ministry of Economy of Ukraine
<b>Andrii Naista</b>	Chief specialist of Expert Group on Customs, Finance Policies, Taxation and Entrepreneurship. Government Office for Coordination on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine
<b>Andrii Sulyma</b>	Head of the unit for humanitarian and international issues, harmonization of legislation with EU countries and protection of human rights of the Main Scientific and Expert Department. Secretariat of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine
<b>Olha Mishkina</b>	Deputy Head of the Division for Euro-Atlantic Integration and International Security, Directorate for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, Office of the President of Ukraine

The Civil Servants Mobility Program for the Ukrainian group took place in Prague. The main objective of the visit was to familiarize Ukrainian civil servants with the Czech Republic's experience with EU accession and transitional processes, including institutional reforms, policy coordination, and practical implementation at both national and EU levels. The program was designed as a five-day working visit combining high-level institutional meetings, expert discussions, and participation in a major international policy conference. The structure of the program enabled participants to gain first-hand insight into Czech governance practices, foreign and economic policy coordination, sanctions implementation, legislative processes, and cooperation between the public, private, and civil-society sectors. The Ukrainian delegation consisted of five senior and mid-level civil servants representing key institutions involved in European integration, sanctions policy, legislative harmonization, and strategic economic governance.

On **Monday**, May 12, the study visit officially commenced with meetings at the Ministry of Industry and Trade of the Czech Republic. The delegation met with Mr **Václav Lídí**, Head of the Division of Eastern Europe, Western Balkans and Central Asia, and Mr **Jakub Mareš**, Deputy Head of the same division at the **Ministry of Industry and Trade of the Czech Republic**. Discussions focused on current regional political and economic developments, Czech priorities toward Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans, and the role of trade and industrial policy as tools supporting broader foreign-policy objectives. A follow-up meeting was held with Mr **Matyáš Pelant**, Principal Advisor in the EU and Foreign Trade Section of the **Ministry of Industry and Trade of the Czech Republic**, concentrating on EU trade policy, external economic relations,

and coordination between national and EU-level approaches in an evolving geopolitical context. In the afternoon, the delegation attended the international conference Europe as a Task at Prague Castle, which brought together policymakers, experts, and opinion leaders to debate Europe's strategic responsibilities, resilience, and future direction in light of ongoing geopolitical challenges.

On **Tuesday**, May 13, the delegation continued its participation in the **Europe as a Task** conference, this time at Černínský Palace, the seat of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic. Conference sessions further explored questions of European unity, foreign-policy coordination, and the European Union's role in addressing security, economic, and political challenges in its neighborhood and beyond. Participation in the conference allowed the Ukrainian civil servants to engage with a broader policy community and situate Czech and Ukrainian perspectives within wider European debates.

**Wednesday**, May 14, was dedicated primarily to institutional and policy-focused meetings. The day began with a meeting with Mr **Jan Jendřejas** from the Legislative Department of the **Ministry of Justice**, focusing on legislative procedures, legal reforms, and the role of the justice system in supporting the rule of law and alignment with European standards. In the afternoon, the delegation met with Mr **David Stulík**, Special Representative for the Eastern Partnership Countries, Mr **Jiří Jílek**, Deputy Director of the European Policies Department, and Mr **Martin Bouček** from the Sanctions Policy Department at the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic**. This meeting provided a comprehensive overview of Czech foreign-policy priorities, the Eastern Partnership framework, and the design, implementation, and impact of sanctions policy, particularly in relation to Russia and support for Ukraine. The day concluded with an analytical discussion with Mr **Pavel Havlíček** at the **Association for International Affairs**, offering a research-based Central European perspective on regional security, EU foreign policy, and current international developments.

On **Thursday**, May 15, the program focused on economic policy, investment, and regulatory analysis. The day began with a meeting with Mr **Ondřej Votruba** at the **Association for Foreign Investment**, addressing foreign-investment trends, the Czech investment climate, and the relationship between economic security, foreign-investment screening, and strategic industries. This was followed by a meeting with Ms **Jana Bok Toužimská**, Business Development Director at **People in Need – Ukraine**, which highlighted humanitarian and development activities in Ukraine, cooperation with international partners, and the operational challenges of working in conflict-affected environments while supporting recovery and resilience. Later in the day, the delegation met with Ms **Martina Novopacká** from the Analysis and Regulatory Impact Assessment Unit, Judicial Section of the **Ministry of Justice**. Discussions centered on regulatory impact assessments, evidence-based policymaking, and the use of analytical tools to support legislative decision-making within the justice sector.

On **Friday**, May 16, the final day of the visit, the delegation met with Ms **Soňa Černá** at the **Financial Analytical Office**. The meeting focused on financial intelligence, anti-money laundering measures, countering terrorist financing, and inter-institutional and international cooperation in financial oversight. This was followed by a meeting with Ms **Alžběta Rücklová**, Head of the Americas Department at the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic**,

addressing transatlantic economic relations, cooperation with partners in the Americas, and trade and investment priorities. The study visit concluded with a meeting at the **Czech Chamber of Commerce** with Mr *Ladislav Minčíč*, Secretary General, and Ms *Denisa Klieščíková* from the Legislative Department. Final discussions emphasized the role of the Chamber in representing business interests, legislative advocacy, and cooperation between the private sector and public authorities, concluding the program with a comprehensive perspective on Czech public–private cooperation frameworks.

## ARMENIA\_PRAGUE\_20–24 October 2025

### Participants

<b>Gevorg Azizyan</b>	Police Colonel, Deputy Head of the General Department of Community Policing of the Police of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, concurrently Head of the Control Department
<b>Georgi Khachatryan</b>	Police Lieutenant Colonel, Deputy Head of the Control Department of the General Department of Community Policing of the Police of the Ministry of Internal Affairs
<b>Abraham Danielyan</b>	Head of the Computer Network and Information Security Management Division of the Information Technology and Communications Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs
<b>Vardan Kharatyan</b>	Chief Specialist of the International Cooperation Planning and Programs Implementation Division of the International Cooperation Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs
<b>Gohar Noreyan</b>	Chief Specialist of the Data Management Division of the Demographic Data Processing Department of the Migration and Citizenship Service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs

The Civil Servants Mobility Program for the Armenian group took place in Prague. The main objective of the visit was to provide Armenian law enforcement specialists with comprehensive insight into the **latest trends, technologies, and practices within the Czech police and law enforcement sector**. The five-day working visit combined high-level institutional meetings, expert briefings, and practical demonstrations, allowing participants to gain both strategic and operational perspectives on digitalization, cybersecurity, migration management, and modern policing tools applied in the Czech Republic. The Armenian delegation consisted of five senior and mid-level officials representing key institutions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Armenia and its affiliated bodies.

On **Monday**, October 20, the program officially commenced with a meeting at the **Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic**, where participants received an overview of digital tools used in firearms policies. The session was delivered by Ms *Milena Bačková* from the Security Policy and Crime Prevention Department, focusing on regulatory frameworks and the practical application of digital solutions in firearms management. Later that day, the delegation visited the **National Cyber and Information Security Agency**, where they met with Mr *Tomáš Procházka*, Head of the Bilateral Cooperation Unit. The discussion focused on the agency's role

in maintaining and overseeing national cybersecurity, including the protection of digitized systems and critical online infrastructure. In the afternoon, a joint session was held at the **Digital Information Agency**, presenting various eGovernment services for citizens, including digital identity solutions, eWallet, and the unified service portal. The session also provided an overview of the processes involved in establishing and operating these platforms. Presentations were delivered by Mr **Ondřej Menoušek**, Director of the eGovernment Service Department, together with Mr **Filip Bílek**, specialist on the European Digital Identity Wallet, Mr **Tomáš Musil**, responsible for website and mobile application accessibility, and Mr **Radek Horáček**, responsible for the register of contracts. The day concluded with a welcome offering an opportunity for informal networking and the exchange of initial impressions of the program.

On **Tuesday**, October 21, the morning session featured a presentation by Mr **Jan Beneš**, Deputy Director of the Department of Human Resources Management at the Logistics Department of the **Police of the Czech Republic**. The presentation focused on the Electronic Vehicle Logbook system and its application in operational planning, accountability, and resource management. Following lunch, the delegation met with Ms **Anika Stulíková**, Digital Envoy and Head of the Department of Digitalization and Artificial Intelligence at the **Police Presidium of the Czech Republic**. The discussion addressed current challenges, responsibilities, and ongoing developments related to the role of the Digital Envoy and the broader digital transformation of police services.

**Wednesday**, October 22, was dedicated to exploring emerging technologies in law enforcement in cooperation with the Department of Press and Prevention of the **Police of the Czech Republic**. The morning session featured presentations on a range of digital systems, including Pol Point, virtual reality training applications, drone technology, the Claudia and Avatarius systems, and videoconference capabilities in criminal proceedings. After a refreshment break, participants visited the Criminal Complaint Intake Department and the Operations Department, where they were introduced to the Pol Point Terminal and the K6 “Six Levels of Prevention” Project. These sessions provided practical insight into preventive policing approaches and citizen-facing digital tools. In the afternoon, the delegation met with Mr **Jan Klofáč**, Head of Digital Strategy and Analytics at the **Office of the Government of the Czech Republic**, who presented an overview of the **Digital Czechia** initiative. The meeting provided a comprehensive perspective on the national digital transformation strategy and cross-government digitalization efforts.

On **Thursday**, October 23, the group traveled to Kutná Hora, where they were received by Ms **Eliška Rozdolská** from the International Education Division of the **Czech Police** and Ms **Martina Fejfarová**, Head of the **ePolis Police Education Department**. Participants attended a presentation on e-learning systems used in police training, demonstrating how digital platforms support the development of transport maneuvers, language skills, legal training, and routine evaluations of professional knowledge. Following a luncheon with police representatives, the delegation visited Saint Barbara Church and toured the historic town of Kutná Hora.

On **Friday**, October 24, the final day of the visit included three in-depth meetings at the **Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic**. The morning began with a session with the Asylum and Migration Department, led by Mr **Radim Křištof**, focusing on asylum procedures, migration data

management, and coordination mechanisms. This was followed by a joint meeting with the **ICT Department**, headed by Mr *Tomáš Hrubý*, Director General of the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Section, covering technical infrastructure, cybersecurity measures, and IT service delivery within the Ministry of the Interior. The program concluded with a meeting with the Strategic Development Department, led by Mr *Petr Fejtek*, providing insights into long-term planning processes, strategic priorities, and institutional development strategies.

## SERBIA\_PRAGUE\_03–07 November 2025

### Participants

<b>Dragana Ostojić</b>	State Secretary, Ministry of Environment
<b>Radislav Momirov</b>	Senior Adviser in the Section for Ecological Networks, Ministry of Environment
<b>Nataša Lalić</b>	Senior Adviser in the Department for Biodiversity, Ministry of Environment
<b>Jelena Dučić</b>	Head of the Department for Biodiversity, Ministry of Environment
<b>Dušan Ognjanović</b>	Head of the Section for Protection and Sustainable Use of Fish Stocks, Ministry of Environment

The Civil Servants Mobility Program for the Serbian group took place in Prague. The week-long visit was organized to provide the Serbian delegation of civil servants with an in-depth understanding of the **Natura 2000 implementation process**, combining policy-level discussions with field-based learning. The delegation engaged with stakeholders from the **Ministry of Environment**, academia, non-governmental organizations, and relevant national institutions, participating in expert discussions as well as practical activities focused on biodiversity protection, habitat management, and EU environmental legislation.

On **Monday**, November 3, the program commenced with a field excursion to the **Průhonice Botanical Garden**. The visit was guided by Mr *Sekyrka*, an expert botanist and conservationist, who delivered an in-depth presentation on botanical conservation, habitat management, and the long-term protection of biodiversity within cultivated and natural landscapes. The excursion offered a practical demonstration of conservation practices applied *in situ*, illustrating how scientific expertise is translated into effective landscape and garden management. In the afternoon, the delegation met at **Prague City Hall** with Ms *Tereza Libová*, Head of the Environmental Projects Department. The meeting focused on Prague's environmental strategies, financing mechanisms, and the city's approach to addressing climate-change impacts on local ecosystems, flora, and fauna, with particular attention given to municipal-level responsibilities, project implementation, and funding opportunities supporting environmental protection initiatives.

On **Tuesday**, November 4, the morning program featured a meeting with Mr *Vlastimil Karlík*, an expert on Natura 2000 implementation from the Czech NGO **Arnika**. The discussion focused on practical aspects of Natura 2000 designation, stakeholder engagement, and challenges related to implementation at both national and local levels. This was followed by a joint meeting with

Mr **Petr Roth**, an independent Natura 2000 consultant and former Director of the Biodiversity Department at the **Ministry of Environment** during the Czech Republic's accession to the EU, and Mr **Tomáš Růžička**, Head of the External Relations Department at the **Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic**. Drawing on extensive professional experience, including work in Serbia, the speakers shared insights into institutional coordination, EU accession-related reforms, and long-term management of Natura 2000 sites.

On **Wednesday**, November 5, the entire day was dedicated to a field trip to the **Czech Bohemia Highlands**. The delegation was welcomed by representatives of the Protected Landscape Area Administration in Litoměřice, where participants received a comprehensive presentation on conservation activities, management structures, and regional biodiversity-protection strategies. The field excursion included visits to several Sites of Community Importance in the surroundings of Litoměřice, notably Bílé stráně u Litoměřic and Holý vrch u Hlinné, with a possible visit to the Louny area (Raná–Hrádek) depending on time availability. Participants were introduced to specific conservation measures aimed at protecting unique biomes and local flora, as well as the coordinating role of the Nature Conservation Agency.

On **Thursday**, November 6, the delegation met in the morning with Ms **Veronika Vilímková**, Head of the Natura 2000 Division at the **Ministry of Environment**. The meeting focused on the national-level approach to Natura 2000 implementation, institutional coordination, and policy alignment with EU environmental legislation. Following lunch, the participants visited the **National Museum** exhibition *Miracles of Evolution* in the historic building on Wenceslas Square. The exhibition provided a broader scientific and educational context to the week's discussions, highlighting evolutionary processes, biodiversity, and the importance of conservation from a public-outreach perspective, with a specific focus on biodiversity in the Czech Republic.

On **Friday**, November 7, the final day consisted of a full-day field trip to the **Třeboňsko Protected Landscape Area**. Representatives of the **Protected Landscape Area Administration** presented their conservation efforts and management strategies, emphasizing integrated landscape protection and the sustainable use of natural resources. The field excursion showcased a wide range of natural habitats, including national and local nature reserves, natural monuments, peat bogs and wetlands, significant ponds such as **Velký and Malý Tisý**, and extensive floodplain forests. The visit illustrated practical approaches to habitat protection, water management, and biodiversity conservation in one of the Czech Republic's most ecologically valuable regions.

## PART 2 – HUNGARY

### UKRAINE\_BUDAPEST\_26–30 May 2025 [2023 & 2024 editions]

#### Participants

<b>Hanna Bashta</b>	Head of Department, Department of Ecology and Natural Resources, Lviv Regional State/Military Administration – Department for Regulation and Monitoring of Nature Management
<b>Olha Panas</b>	Senior Expert, Department of Ecology and Natural Resources, Lviv Regional State/Military Administration – Department for Regulation and Coordination of Natural Resource Use
<b>Ihor Hrysiuk</b>	Deputy Head of Department, Department of Fuel and Energy Utilities, Energy Efficiency Management and Housing, Lviv Regional State/Military Administration – Department of Infrastructure Development
<b>Bohdan Demkovych</b>	Deputy Director General, Department of Engineering Support and Development of Housing and Communal Services, Ivano-Frankivsk Regional State/Military Administration
<b>Nataliia Trukhanivska</b>	Senior Expert, Department of International Cooperation and Local Government Eurointegration, Ivano-Frankivsk Regional State/Military Administration – European Integration Department
<b>Svitlana Franchuk</b>	Senior Expert, Department of Economic Development, Ivano-Frankivsk Regional State/Military Administration – Department for Implementation, Analysis and Research of Development Projects and for Social and Labor Relations
<b>Yaroslava Halai</b>	Senior Expert, Department for Euroregional Cooperation, Zakarpattia Territorial Military Administration
<b>Anastasiia Tsybulska</b>	Head of Department, Department for Internally Displaced Persons, State Support and Family Policy, within the Department of Social Protection of the Population, Zakarpattia State/Military Administration
<b>Olena Zubanich</b>	Senior Expert, Department of State Programs and Priority Projects, Zakarpattia State/Military Administration – Department for Implementation and Monitoring of State Programs
<b>Kateryna Putrashyk</b>	Project Manager, Zakarpattia Regional Development Agency

The study visit was organized by the **Centre for Euro-Atlantic Integration and Democracy (CEID)** and took place in Hungary from 26 to 30 May 2025, involving representatives of the regional governments of Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, and Zakarpattia. The main focus of the program was on public administration reforms, environmental protection, climate adaptation, and regional cooperation. Throughout the study visit, participants had the opportunity to engage with Hungarian municipalities, ministries, and public service providers in order to gain a better

understanding of their institutional structures, operational practices, and development strategies.

The delegation arrived in Budapest on May 26. On the following day, May 27, the group traveled to the **town of Szentendre**, a mid-sized suburban municipality, where they were hosted by Deputy Mayor Mr **József Gulyás**. Mr Gulyás played an important role in Hungary's democratic transformation and served multiple terms in the Hungarian government, primarily dealing with legislation related to local governance. During the visit to **Szentendre City Hall**, the delegation was introduced to the Hungarian municipal system and its major transformations since 1989. Particular attention was paid to developments following 2010, including the re-centralization of many local government competences—especially in the areas of education and urban planning—and the significant reduction of municipalities' fiscal autonomy. The discussions also addressed emerging priorities such as environmental sustainability and participatory governance, illustrated through concrete examples from Szentendre's local policies and practices.

In the afternoon, the delegation visited the **Budapest Central Wastewater Treatment Plant** in Csepel, operated by **Budapest Waterworks Ltd.** They were received by Regional Director Mr **János Gombaszögi**, who presented the company's operational structure, reflecting a process of privatization followed by re-privatization, with the capital city holding 99 per cent ownership and surrounding municipalities owning the remaining one percent. The site visit included detailed presentations on wastewater treatment technologies, the plant's key operational indicators, and development projects financed from both domestic sources and European Union funds. Participants had the opportunity to walk through the entire facility and observe each stage of the wastewater treatment process, gaining practical insight into the management and maintenance of large-scale environmental infrastructure in an urban European context.

On May 28, the program continued with institutional visits in Budapest. In the morning, the delegation visited the **Ministry of Public Administration and Regional Development**, where meetings were held with senior officials, including Deputy State Secretary for Local Governance Mr **Zoltán Kivés**, Deputy State Secretary for the Implementation of Regional Development Mr **Zoltán Polyánszky**, and Deputy State Secretary Responsible for Regulatory Affairs Mr **Győző Almási**. The discussions focused on ongoing public administration reforms and the restructuring of regional governance in Hungary. This was followed by a session dedicated to Hungary's approach to regional development, with particular emphasis on the management of large-scale projects and the strategic use of European Union funds.

In the afternoon, the group visited the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade**, where representatives of the Central Europe Department provided an overview of cooperation within the Visegrád Group (V4). The presentation highlighted the role of the **International Visegrád Fund** in supporting Ukraine and other regional initiatives, as well as outlining grant opportunities available within the V4 framework. The day concluded with a briefing by the Ukrainian Ambassador to Hungary, who provided an update on the current state of Hungarian–Ukrainian relations, offering a diplomatic perspective that complemented the technical and administrative topics discussed earlier in the program.

On 29 May, the final day of official meetings, the delegation was received at **Budapest City Hall**. The visit began with a welcome by Mr **János Kenderney**, Head of the City Diplomacy Group at

the Office of the Mayor. The discussions focused on the city's climate and energy policies, including a presentation on Budapest's participation in the European Union's "100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities" initiative. Participants were also introduced to the city's **Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan**, which outlines key strategies for climate adaptation and the integration of renewable energy into municipal operations. These presentations were followed by open discussions, allowing Ukrainian representatives to raise questions and reflect on the potential applicability of similar approaches in their home regions. The day concluded with a farewell lunch hosted by **CEID**, providing an informal setting for networking and evaluation of the study visit.

The study visit successfully facilitated knowledge exchange and mutual understanding in the fields of local governance, environmental sustainability, and regional cooperation, while also strengthening institutional ties between Hungary and the participating Ukrainian regions.

## MOLDOVA\_BUDAPEST\_1–5 June 2025

### Participants

<b>Sergiu Guzun</b>	Senior Consultant, Secretary of State's Energy Security Team
<b>Nicolae Negru</b>	Senior Consultant, Electric Power Directorate
<b>Sandu Oprea</b>	Head, Natural Gas and Fuel Products Department at the Ministry of Energy
<b>Ruslan Graur</b>	Senior Consultant, Natural Gas and Fuel Products Directorate
<b>Serghei Ivanov</b>	Senior Consultant in the Energy Efficiency Directorate at the Ministry of Energy

The study visit was organized by the **Centre for Euro-Atlantic Integration and Democracy (CEID)** and took place in Hungary from 1 to 5 June 2025 within the framework of the Civil Servant Mobility Programme (CSMP). The visit was prepared for a delegation from the **Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Moldova** and focused on energy security, critical infrastructure, and regional cooperation. The program was coordinated with the support of the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary** and aimed to provide practical insight into Hungary's energy strategy, regional dynamics in Central Europe, and concrete approaches to strengthening energy security and resilience.

The visit took place against the background of a major energy crisis faced by Moldova in January 2025, following Ukraine's decision not to renew its gas transit agreement with Russia, which resulted in the cessation of Russian gas flows through Ukrainian territory. This abrupt disruption severely affected Moldova's breakaway region of Transnistria, which had remained fully dependent on Russian gas delivered via Ukraine. The crisis led to significant energy shortages, failure of heating systems during winter, and serious humanitarian consequences, including deaths caused by carbon monoxide poisoning from improvised heating methods. In response, the Moldovan government declared a state of emergency and intensified cooperation with the European Union, which provided €30 million in immediate assistance and later approved a €250 million package aimed at strengthening Moldova's long-term energy independence, including infrastructure development and full integration into the European energy market.

From Hungary's perspective, the crisis highlighted vulnerabilities in regional energy security. Although Hungary was not directly affected due to gas supplies via TurkStream, the loss of Ukrainian transit increased regional market volatility and wholesale gas prices. Hungarian-linked energy traders, particularly **MET Group**, played a role in facilitating EU-backed gas deliveries to Transnistria, underscoring Hungary's strategic position in regional energy supply chains and its relevance as a partner in strengthening Moldova's energy security, economic resilience, and EU integration process.

The delegation arrived in Budapest on June 1. The official program began on June 2 with a kickoff meeting at the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade**, where participants were welcomed by Mr **Bálint Czékus**, Head of the Central Europe Department, Ms **Zsófia Légrádi**, V4 Coordinator, and Mr **András Forray** from the same department. The introductory session outlined the main themes of the visit and placed particular emphasis on Visegrád Group cooperation, regional energy interdependence, and Hungary's strategic priorities in the energy sector.

This was followed by a comprehensive presentation by Mr **Csaba Marosvári**, State Secretary responsible for Energy Supply Security at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, who introduced the structure of the Hungarian energy market, the national energy mix, and Hungary's energy security strategy. He highlighted key regional trends, including diversification of supply sources and the importance of infrastructure resilience. After a lunch break, the afternoon featured a forward-looking expert discussion led by Mr **András György Deák** from the **John Lukács Institute** at the **National University of Public Service**. Held in an informal setting, the discussion focused on global energy trends and their implications for Central Europe, including the energy transition, EU policy frameworks, the Paks II nuclear power plant project, and the potential return of Russian energy to regional markets.

On June 3, the program turned to the electricity and gas sectors. The morning began with a technical session at the **Ministry of Energy**, led by Ms **Ágnes Csermely**, Head of the Department of Electric Power, who presented key issues related to electricity supply, grid development, system operation, and regulatory challenges, including risks associated with rapid solar energy expansion. This was followed by a session on gas distribution infrastructure presented by Mr **Dániel Balog** from the Ministry of Energy. After lunch, the delegation visited **FGSZ Zrt**, Hungary's national natural gas transmission system operator. Mr **Balázs Tatár**, Head of Sales and Market Development, and Ms **Linda Mézes**, Business Development Specialist, provided an in-depth overview of recent and planned infrastructure developments, strategic planning processes, and the regional trading platform operated by FGSZ, which is also used by key Moldovan companies. The visit offered valuable on-the-ground insight into gas transmission modernization and cross-border market integration.

Later that day, the delegation met with Ambassador **Mihail Barbulat** at the **Embassy of the Republic of Moldova in Budapest**, where discussions focused on Hungary–Moldova relations, regional cooperation, and shared interests in energy resilience and EU integration from a diplomatic perspective.

The program continued on June 4 with a visit to **MET Hungary**, one of the country's leading energy companies. Mr **Attila Szaniszló**, CEO of MET Gas and Energy Marketing AG, and Mr

**Zombor Smaraglay**, Executive Director for Gas Wholesale and International Business, presented the company's market strategy, its role in regional energy trading, diversification efforts, and innovations in gas and electricity supply management. MET's role as a key gas provider to Transnistria and an increasingly significant stakeholder in Moldova's energy security was also discussed, including its plans to expand activity through strategic reserves and potential investments in renewable energy.

In the afternoon, discussions shifted toward regulatory developments at the EU and regional levels during a meeting with representatives of the **Hungarian Energy and Public Utility Regulatory Authority**. Dr **Szabolcs Koppányi**, Head of the EU Affairs Unit, and Mr **István Szabó**, Head of International Relations, presented Hungary's regulatory positioning within EU energy policy, addressing implementation of EU directives, national regulatory challenges, and mechanisms for regional coordination.

The final day of the visit, June 5, focused on strategic energy security and critical infrastructure protection. The delegation met with representatives of **MOL Group**, Hungary's flagship oil and gas company. Mr **András Bácsi-Nagy**, Head of International Public and EU Regulatory Affairs, and Ms **Dóra Fiedler Várkonyi**, Senior Expert in International Relations, discussed MOL's efforts to enhance energy security, diversify supply sources, and protect critical infrastructure. Following the meeting, participants visited the SkyDeck of the **MOL Tower**, Hungary's tallest building and a symbol of the company's modern transformation. The program concluded with a farewell lunch, which provided space for informal reflection, networking, and evaluation of the study visit before the delegation's departure to the airport later that afternoon.

The study visit successfully facilitated in-depth knowledge exchange and mutual understanding in the fields of energy security, infrastructure development, and regional cooperation. It strengthened institutional ties between Hungary and Moldova and provided Moldovan participants with concrete insights and transferable experience relevant to strengthening national energy resilience and supporting Moldova's European integration trajectory.

## PART 3 – POLAND

### UKRAINE\_WARSAW/GDAŃSK\_17–21 November 2025

#### Participants

<b>Halyna Shyrochuk</b>	Deputy Director - Head of the Regional Development Department of the Economic Policy Department of the Lviv Regional State Administration
<b>Olga Yutovets</b>	Head of the Department of International Cooperation and European Integration of the Rivne Regional State Administration
<b>Iana Krainianska</b>	Head of the Department of State Programs and Priority Projects of the Transcarpathian Regional State Administration
<b>Valentyn Dunaievskyi</b>	Director of the Department of Regional Development of the Chernivtsi Regional Military Administration
<b>Viktoriia Parchevska</b>	Chief Specialist, International Cooperation and Regional Development Department, Vinnytsia Regional Military (State) Administration

The study visit was organized by the Polish Institute of International Affairs. It took place in Warsaw and Gdańsk. The study group consisted of five representatives of regional administrations from Ukraine, representing the Lviv, Rivne, Vinnytsia, Chernivtsi, and Zakarpattia regions.

The main focus of the study visit was to familiarize Ukrainian regional officials with Poland's experience in the process of **European integration and EU membership**, with particular emphasis on the practical aspects of adapting legislation and administrative standards to EU requirements and managing the implementation of European funds. During the meetings, the participants gained insight into the institutional framework and governance mechanisms in this field, concrete programs and instruments, as well as practical examples of project implementation. The program also provided space for discussion on future cooperation opportunities and the practical involvement of Ukrainian partners in EU-funded initiatives.

The official working program for the Ukrainian delegation was organized over five working days and combined a series of expert meetings designed to share practical experience and first-hand knowledge of EU-related processes. The program consisted of meetings with representatives of public institutions, foundations, and managing authorities responsible for EU funds, enabling participants to discuss strategic planning, implementation mechanisms, and administrative coordination in practice.

Upon arrival, the delegation was officially welcomed at the **Polish Institute of International Affairs**, where participants were introduced to the program, its objectives, and expected outcomes. Ms **Justyna Szczudlik**, Deputy Head of the Research and Analysis Office at **PISM**, presented the Institute's activities, analytical work, ongoing programs, projects, and publications. The discussion focused primarily on practical aspects of cooperation between

analytical institutions and public administration, the availability of publicly accessible materials, and publications related to the war in Ukraine and its implications for Poland.

The next meeting was held at the **Solidarity Fund PL**, where participants met with Mr **Paweł Aleksandrowicz** and Mr **Mateusz Pachura**, who are responsible for projects supporting local self-governments in Ukraine. The presentation focused on initiatives related to vocational education, firefighting services, and internship programs for Ukrainian officials in Polish local administrations. The discussion addressed principles and opportunities for cooperation between Ukrainian regions, Polish local governments, and the Solidarity Fund PL.

Another meeting took place at the **Robert Schuman Foundation**, attended by Ms **Ewelina Górska**, President of the Foundation, and Mr **Marcin Święcicki**, an expert involved in Poland's EU accession negotiations. The discussion focused on the EU integration processes of Poland and Ukraine, highlighting similarities and differences between the two paths, and included a presentation of the Foundation's activities as one of the leading Polish non-governmental organizations active in the field of European integration.

The following day of the study visit took place at the **Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy**. At the Ministry's headquarters, the group met with Mr **Marcin Chruściel**, Director of the Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Polish-Ukrainian Development Cooperation. This was followed by a series of presentations on EU-funded programs, including European Funds for Eastern Poland, European Funds for an Innovative Economy, and cross-border cooperation programs, with particular emphasis on the Poland-Ukraine Program. During the discussions, a wide range of issues related to the full implementation cycle of EU programs was addressed, including planning, calls for proposals, implementation, monitoring, and control. Given that some Ukrainian regions already participate in cross-border cooperation projects, special attention was paid to financial monitoring mechanisms and the future EU financial framework after 2027, including opportunities for Ukraine's increased involvement. In the afternoon, the delegation visited the **Joint Secretariat of the INTERREG NEXT Poland-Ukraine Cross-Border Cooperation Program**, where discussions focused on the use of cross-border funds to support regional development strategies in Western Ukraine and on the future orientation of the program. Particular attention was given to governance arrangements and monitoring structures, including the role of Ukrainian representatives in the Program's Monitoring Committee.

The next part of the study visit took place in Gdańsk, where the delegation visited the **European Solidarity Centre**. Participants received a guided tour of the permanent exhibition presenting the history of the Solidarity movement and Poland's democratic transformation, followed by a meeting focusing on the Centre's activities in support of solidarity with Ukraine.

Afterwards, a meeting was held with Ms **Małgorzata Matkowska** from the **Pomeranian Region Association in the European Union**, which brings together the Marshal's Office, cities, and municipalities of the Pomeranian Region. The discussion focused on the Association's activities in Brussels and on projects and services provided to local governments of the region.

On the final day of the visit, the group visited the **Mazovia Development Agency**, a company wholly owned by the Mazovian Regional Authority. During the meeting, participants were introduced to the Agency's activities related to investor support, innovation, and startup development, as well as to a number of EU-funded projects implemented under Interreg

Europe, Baltic Sea, and Central Europe programs. Special attention was devoted to Ukraine's role as a learning partner in Interreg Europe projects and to practical modalities for cooperation with Ukrainian institutions.

#### **Feedback:**

The participants assessed the study visit very positively, emphasizing the relevance of the topics addressed and the practical value of the Polish experience for their professional work in regional administrations. They expressed strong interest in maintaining further contacts with the institutions visited and in developing joint projects in the future, particularly in light of existing partnerships between Ukrainian and Polish regions. The study visit confirmed that Poland's experience in EU integration and the use of European funds represents a valuable and transferable reference for Ukrainian regions preparing for deeper involvement in EU programs.

## **ARMENIA\_ WARSAW/GDAŃSK \_23– 27 November 2025**

#### Participants

<b>Avetik Harutyunyan</b>	The Department of Bordering Countries, Second Division for Bilateral Relations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
<b>Aleksander Hovhannisyan</b>	CSTO Division, Department of Eurasian Region, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
<b>Anush Harutyunyan</b>	Department of Security Policy and Fundamental Documents, Office of the Security Council
<b>Harutyun Vanyan</b>	Department for Protection of Historical and Cultural Monuments, Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport
<b>Harutyun Marutyan</b>	AGMI Department for the Study of Repressions Against Armenians in Artsakh, Nakhichevan, and Azerbaijan

The study visit was prepared by the **Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW)** in Warsaw in cooperation with the **Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM)**. The program was implemented in Warsaw and Gdańsk. The coordinators of the visit were Mr **Wojciech Górecki** and Mr **Adam Michalski** from **OSW**, who cooperated on logistical and financial matters with Ms **Stefania Kolarz** from **PISM**. The project involved five Armenian officials representing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia (Department of Bordering Countries and Department of Eurasian Region), the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport (Department for the Protection of Historical and Cultural Monuments), the Security Council, and the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute, part of the Armenian Genocide Memorial Complex.

The thematic focus of the study visit, reflected in its title ***The Past for the Future. The Politics of Memory in Relations with Neighbors – Polish Experience and Practice***, corresponded closely to Armenia's current needs. Armenia is simultaneously pursuing normalization of relations with Azerbaijan and Turkey and working to develop a renewed vision of its own past, free from colonial legacy. According to the authorities in Yerevan, these efforts aim to strengthen the Armenian state as the central subject and focal point of Armenian patriotism. Both the implementation of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's "Real Armenia" ideology and the process of reconciliation with neighboring states require the development of a coherent and credible

Armenian memory policy. In this context, Polish experiences were considered particularly relevant. The aim of the study visit was to familiarize participants with the activities of specialized Polish institutions—both state and non-governmental—engaged in memory policy, historical research, and dialogue with neighboring countries. These included the Institute of National Remembrance, the Mieroszewski Centre, and the KARTA Center, as well as Poland’s practical experience in historical dialogue with neighboring states. Meetings with leading Polish experts, including Prof. *Adam Daniel Rotfeld*, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, provided additional perspectives. In Gdańsk, the participants also visited the Museum of the Second World War and the European Solidarity Centre. During the visit, the Armenian delegation participated in fifteen meetings with twenty-nine Polish experts and officials, visited thirteen institutions, and worked in two Polish cities—Warsaw and Gdańsk. All meetings were conducted in the form of presentations followed by in-depth discussions, allowing participants to ask detailed questions and become familiar with the operational specifics of the institutions visited. Throughout the program, minor adjustments were introduced to better respond to the interests of the participants, including extending meetings that generated particular engagement.

The first day of the study visit had a semi-official character. After the overnight flight from Yerevan, participants had time for rest and an opportunity to take a walk around the city. They were also invited to an introductory lunch attended by Mr *Wojciech Górecki* and Mr *Adam Michalski*, during which organizational matters were discussed and participants familiarized themselves with the details of the visit program.

The substantive part of the study visit began with a meeting at the **Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW)**. On the Polish side, participants included Mr *Karol Wasilewski*, Head of the Turkey, Caucasus and Central Asia Team, as well as experts Mr *Wojciech Górecki*, Mr *Adam Michalski*, Ms *Zuzanna Krzyżanowska*, and Ms *Daria Zielińska*. Experts from PISM, Ms *Stefania Kolarz* and Mr *Wojciech Wojtasiewicz*, were also present. The guests were introduced to the activities, goals, and analytical work of both institutions. Prof. *Harutyun Marutyan* from the **Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute** delivered a presentation on the beginnings of the Karabakh movement in Armenia in the late 1980s, followed by a discussion covering both historical and contemporary issues.

The next meeting took place at the **Mieroszewski Centre**, where the guests were received by its Deputy Director, Dr *Łukasz Adamski*, who presented the Centre’s mission, institutional history, publishing activities, and educational projects, particularly in the field of international law. The Armenian participants expressed strong interest in these areas.

During the meeting at the **Klub Jagielloński**, the guests attended a debate prepared specifically for them on Polish memory policy, featuring Prof. *Michał Łuczewski* from the University of Warsaw and Mr *Marcin Napiórkowski*, Acting Director of the **Museum of Polish History**, moderated by Mr *Stanisław Okoński*. The debate was followed by an active discussion involving the Armenian delegation.

The day concluded with a dinner attended by Prof. *Adam Daniel Rotfeld*, former Minister of Foreign Affairs and participant in numerous international bodies, including NATO’s Group of Wise Men, as well as a Holocaust survivor, and Amb. *Grzegorz Michalski*, former Polish Ambassador to Turkey.

The following day began with a meeting with Prof. **Grzegorz Motyka** at the **Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences**. Prof. Motyka outlined the stages of Polish-Ukrainian reconciliation and answered questions from the participants.

At the **POLONIKA National Institute of Polish Cultural Heritage Abroad**, the guests were received by Ms **Marta Szyska** and Mr **Bartłomiej Gutowski**, who presented the Institute's activities related to preserving Polish heritage abroad. Particular interest was shown in Armenian heritage linked to the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and in Polonika in Armenia.

A meeting with Amb. **Andrzej Kasprzyk** provided an opportunity to discuss relations between conflicting states and nations, as well as post-conflict normalization, drawing on his long experience as the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on the Karabakh conflict.

The day concluded with a visit to the **KARTA Center**, where the guests were received by its founder and long-time head, Mr **Zbigniew Gluza**, who presented the institution's history, documentation activities, international cooperation, and educational initiatives.

The next day, participants visited the **European Network Remembrance and Solidarity**, where they met with Mr **Rafał Rogulski** and Ms **Joanna Orłós** and learned about flagship projects involving cooperation between formerly conflicting nations. This meeting significantly exceeded its planned duration due to the strong interest of the participants.

At the **Institute of National Remembrance**, the Armenian delegation met with representatives of the Office of International Cooperation and the Office of the Commemoration of Struggles and Martyrdom, followed by a tour of the Technology Zone. At the **Ministry of Science and Higher Education**, participants were received by Prof. **Andrzej Szeptycki**, who spoke about reconciliation processes involving Poland, Germany, and Ukraine. A meeting at **the Pilecki Institute** with Dr **Jerzy Rohoziński** focused on different forms of historical commemoration and documentation.

The final day of the study visit took place in Gdańsk. At the **Museum of the Second World War**, the delegation met with Prof. **Rafał Wnuk** and Dr **Dmitriy Panto** and toured the exhibition, which prompted in-depth reflection on approaches to presenting history and on parallels with Armenian historical experiences. The visit concluded with a tour of the **European Solidarity Centre**, highlighting its dual role as a museum and a living space for civic engagement. Following their return to Warsaw, the participants departed for Yerevan.

### **Feedback:**

Ongoing conversations between the coordinators and the guests demonstrated clearly that the study visit was both important and necessary for the Armenian participants. At the stage where Armenia currently finds itself—shortly after the end of the Karabakh conflict, which constituted a profound trauma for Armenian society but at the same time created a hope for escaping regional isolation following the loss of Nagorno-Karabakh, and in anticipation of a historic reconciliation with its Turkish neighbors—it is essential to build and strengthen memory institutions capable of presenting Armenian narratives about the past and engaging with the outside world in this field. The discussions held during the visit indicated that the participants not only fully realized the importance of this task, but also returned to Armenia with concrete ideas and proposals regarding possible institutional, policy, and organizational steps that could be taken in this direction.

The diversity of places visited and interlocutors included in the program proved to be a particularly effective element of the study visit. The participants had the opportunity to engage both with large public institutions operating with multimillion budgets, such as the Institute of National Remembrance and the Museum of the Second World War, as well as with smaller entities—though not the smallest—functioning according to non-governmental organization principles, notably the KARTA Center. In addition, they visited research institutions focused primarily on Polish history, such as the Pilecki Institute, as well as institutions oriented toward education and international cooperation, including the European Network Remembrance and Solidarity. This diversity ensured the desired multiplicity of perspectives and demonstrated that each of these entities has identified a specific institutional space in which it can effectively pursue its objectives.

A particularly valuable aspect of the visit for the participants were the meetings and in-depth conversations with recognized authorities in the field, including Prof. *Adam Daniel Rotfeld*, Prof. *Grzegorz Motyka*, and Amb. *Andrzej Kasprzyk*. None of the invited individuals or institutions declined to participate in the program, thereby confirming the shared conviction of the organizers that Poland possesses experience in the field of memory policy that is not only substantial, but also worth sharing with international partners.

An important indirect outcome of the study visit was the promotion of Polish analytical thought and of the Think Visegrad consortium as a whole.

## SERBIA\_POZNAŃ/WARSAW\_23–28 November 2025

### Participants

<b>Luka Gašević</b>	City of Niš Deputy Mayor
<b>Dušan Ćirić</b>	City of Niš Administration for Local Economic Development and Investments, Expert for preparation of infrastructure and investment
<b>Dragana Stojanović</b>	Director of the Regional Development Agency South

The study visit for civil servants from Serbia took place between 23 and 28 November 2025 in Poznań and Warsaw. Its main objective was to familiarize representatives of Serbian local governments and regional development institutions with Polish experience in strengthening local growth potential, managing development policies, cooperating with the business environment and cultural institutions, and effectively using European Union funds. Two additional participants that originally planned to take part in the visit were unable to travel to Poland due to urgent professional obligations or serious illness, respectively.

The program began in Poznań with meetings at the **Poznań City Office**, where the delegation met with representatives of the Culture Department and the **Poznań Local Tourist Organisation**. Mr ***Marcin Kostaszuk***, Deputy Director of the Culture Department, emphasized the significant role of the creative sector and education in local development, highlighting initiatives supporting talent development and community integration. Mr ***Maciej Marcinkowski*** from the **Poznań Local Tourist Organisation** presented activities related to tourism promotion, with particular attention to building an attractive international image of the city and expanding its offer for foreign visitors. The discussion also addressed cooperation between cultural

institutions and the tourism sector aimed at increasing the visibility of Poznań's cultural offer. The meeting provided an opportunity to exchange experiences and identify potential areas of cooperation in culture, education, and tourism, which may contribute to further urban development and strengthen the city's international position.

An important part of the visit was a meeting at **Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań (AMU)**. Discussions focused on the potential of academic cooperation as a tool for deepening Serbian–Polish relations. Both sides underlined the importance of long-term academic partnerships in strengthening mutual understanding and fostering social, cultural, and scientific ties. The meeting addressed opportunities for expanding student exchange programs, creating new mobility pathways, and encouraging joint research initiatives. Particular emphasis was placed on mechanisms of mutual support in promoting academic offers, including joint participation in international education fairs, exchange of promotional materials, and coordinated recruitment activities. Representatives of **AMU** presented the university's internationalization strategy and the range of programs available to foreign students, while the Serbian delegation outlined the educational profile and strengths of their home institutions. Both sides expressed interest in organizing thematic workshops, guest lectures, and short-term study visits to support sustained academic dialogue.

The delegation subsequently held a working meeting with the **Association of Polish Cities**, during which they gained insight into Polish local governance practices, the support system for municipalities, and the decentralized model of managing local development. The discussions highlighted the crucial role of local government associations in strengthening municipal capacity, providing expert assistance, and facilitating the exchange of knowledge and best practices among local leaders. Particular attention was paid to mechanisms supporting municipalities in applying for and managing EU funds, as well as advisory and training services in areas such as strategic planning, citizen participation, sustainable development, and digital transformation. The delegation also learned how the Association acts as an intermediary between municipalities and national and European institutions, representing local government interests and advocating for policies that strengthen local democracy. The meeting provided a comprehensive understanding of how organized municipal structures contribute to administrative capacity-building and effective use of European financial instruments.

Later that day, the delegation visited **Plus Jeden Poznań**, a municipal coworking and innovation space. Ms **Hanna Drewniak** from the Department of Economic Activity and Agriculture presented the Poznań Business Partner initiative, illustrating how cities can support entrepreneurship, start-ups, and creative industries through infrastructure provision and targeted programs. The participants also visited the **Niewczyk & Sons** violin-making workshop, which served as an example of municipal support for local crafts and cultural entrepreneurship.

During the visit to the **Brama Poznania** heritage center, the delegation explored how cultural heritage can be used to strengthen place identity and promote tourism. Dr **Monika Herkt**, Director of Brama Poznania, and Mr **Bartosz Małolepszy**, Deputy Director, presented innovative approaches to interpreting historical narratives, engaging local communities, and integrating heritage sites into broader cultural and educational programs. The delegation also examined how modern technologies and interactive exhibitions enhance visitor experience and contribute to building a coherent and attractive city image. These examples demonstrated the

strategic role that heritage-based projects can play in sustainable urban development and international cultural promotion.

The program continued with a visit to **Galeria Arsenał**, where participants learned how cultural institutions use European Union funding to implement artistic projects. Mr **Marek Wasilewski**, Director of the Gallery, explained how EU programs support investments in modern infrastructure and digital tools. The meeting highlighted the role of cultural institutions in promoting the local brand, strengthening cultural identity, and increasing international visibility. Through contemporary art exhibitions, international collaborations, and participation in European cultural networks, Galeria Arsenał contributes to shaping Poznań's image as an open, creative, and culturally dynamic city. Both sides discussed potential areas for cooperation, including joint exhibitions, artist-in-residence programs, workshops, and study visits, identifying these initiatives as promising avenues for deepening long-term cultural relations.

The program also included a meeting with Mr **Mariusz Wiśniewski**, Deputy Mayor of the City of Poznań, and representatives of the Department of International Cooperation. The discussion focused on the city's strategic approach to foreign relations and its long-term vision for strengthening international partnerships. The Deputy Mayor presented Poznań's priorities in sustainable urban development, innovation, culture, and education, emphasizing collaboration with partner cities and institutions across Europe and beyond. Both sides identified cultural exchange, youth engagement, innovation policy, and academic cooperation as particularly promising areas for deepening Serbian–Polish cooperation at the municipal level.

The Warsaw part of the program began on 27 November with an extended training session at the **Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy**, organized by the European Affairs and International Cooperation Department, the Department of Regional Programs, and the Department of Strategy. Ministry representatives presented the institutional framework, policy instruments, and the Polish system for EU funds absorption and management, including the implementation of cohesion policy at national and regional levels. Particular attention was devoted to Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI) as a multi-level governance tool and to Poland's experience in strengthening administrative and strategic capacities of local governments, which is especially relevant for countries undergoing the EU accession process. Additional thematic sessions provided in-depth presentations on effective EU funds absorption, urban policy instruments such as the **Partnerska Inicjatywa Miast**, and mechanisms facilitating cooperation between central and local administrations.

In the afternoon, the participants held a meeting with Mr **Andrzej Szumowski**, Director of the Foreign Relations Department and Vice-Chairman of the Council at the **Polish Chamber of Commerce**. Representatives of the Chamber outlined key trends in bilateral trade, highlighting both existing areas of cooperation and sectors with potential for further growth. Discussions focused on strengthening economic ties through business matchmaking, trade missions, joint promotional events, and increased participation of companies from both countries in fairs, exhibitions, and sector-specific conferences. Both sides emphasized the importance of creating favorable conditions for deeper economic engagement and long-term partnerships aimed at boosting trade flows, encouraging investment, and supporting innovation-driven cooperation.

The day concluded with a working dinner with representatives of the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs** and experts from the **Centre for Eastern Studies** and the **Polish Institute of International Affairs**, focusing on Serbia's European integration process and broader Polish–Serbian cooperation.

The final day of the visit, November 28, included a meeting at the **Embassy of the Republic of Serbia in Warsaw**, during which the delegation discussed opportunities to further strengthen bilateral cooperation and develop mechanisms supporting institutional partnerships between Serbian and Polish municipalities.

The study visit provided Serbian participants with a comprehensive overview of Poland's experience in managing local and regional development, supporting entrepreneurship and innovation, and implementing EU cohesion policy. Throughout the visit, they engaged with representatives of central and local administration, academic institutions, cultural organizations, and business support centers, allowing them to observe a wide range of practical solutions and operational models. The visit contributed to deepening institutional contacts between Polish and Serbian partners and created a solid foundation for further cooperation, particularly in the context of Serbia's ongoing EU accession process.

## PART 4 – SLOVAKIA

### UKRAINE\_BRATISLAVA\_23 – 29 November 2025

#### Participants

<b><i>Borys Pakholiuk</i></b>	Director of the Public Utility "City Development Agency", Zhytomyr City Council
<b><i>Uliana Plytus</i></b>	Deputy Director, Department of Economic Development, Ecology, and Energy Efficiency, Head of the Energy Efficiency, Ecology, and Transition to Autonomous Heating Division Ivano-Frankivsk City Council
<b><i>Dmytro Leskiv</i></b>	Department of the Energy Management, Head Khmelnytskyi City Council
<b><i>Larysa Rudnitska</i></b>	Specialist in energy management responsible for the implementation of the Covenant of Mayors of Kamyanets-Podilskyy City Council
<b><i>Iryna Pokhodzei</i></b>	Head of the Dept. of Economics, Investments and Regulatory Activities of the Bar City Council

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 5 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 on November 23<sup>rd</sup>, during the orientation meeting. The program and agenda were discussed.

**On Monday**, November 24, the study trip commenced with a transfer to the venue of the 19th **Central European Energy Conference**. Participants were oriented to the conference's central themes and key speakers and actively participated at first panel and first workshop of the conference.

After that, the participants met the Executive Director of the **International Visegrad Fund** Ms ***Linda Kapustová Helbichová***, gaining insights into IVFs role and operations and discussed possibilities of their involvement in the IVF grant schemes.

Later on, a productive meeting with meeting with Ms **Kristína Korčeková**, expert from **Budovy pre budúcnosť** (Buildings for the Future), who provided an overview of Slovakia's approach to large-scale building renovation. She outlined the national renovation strategy, the implementation of NZEB standards, and the current coordination mechanisms between state institutions, municipalities, and private-sector actors. She also introduced existing models and funding schemes for renovating public buildings—particularly schools, kindergartens, and hospitals—with an emphasis on energy-efficient solutions such as heat pumps, photovoltaic installations, and smart-energy management systems. Following her introduction, the discussion focused on the main challenges and opportunities in Slovakia's renovation ecosystem, practical lessons learned from implemented projects, and the potential relevance of the experience for Slovak–Ukrainian cooperation. Both sides explored possibilities for transferring know-how, building municipal capacity, and developing joint renovation or reconstruction.

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 participants of the study trip then participated in workshops of the conference. 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.

In the evening, the delegation also took part in an informal professional gathering with experts from the **U\_CAN project**, including representatives from Germany, Denmark, Italy and another Ukrainian city. This meeting provided a valuable platform for open discussion on the themes of the study visit, allowed participants to exchange early observations with European peers, and helped identify potential synergies between Slovak experiences and ongoing U\_CAN activities. The informal setting encouraged deeper conversation on municipal energy challenges, reconstruction needs and opportunities for long-term collaboration within the wider European network.

**On Tuesday**, November 25 a group of five representatives from Ukrainian cities participated across the four parallel workshops, contributing practical post-war reconstruction perspectives to discussions on climate governance, energy efficiency, circular economy approaches, and climate adaptation. In the session on climate governance and citizen participation, they highlighted how Ukrainian municipalities are integrating climate objectives into recovery planning and engaging local communities despite wartime constraints. During the roundtable on energy performance standards and local building codes, they emphasized the relevance of EU renovation principles—deep renovation, digital building logbooks, and modern heating

systems—for Ukraine’s reconstruction efforts. At the workshop on circular municipal and regional strategies, the group shared emerging examples of selective demolition, material reuse, and circular construction practices in Ukrainian cities. In the session on strengthening urban and regional resilience, they provided concrete insights into managing climate risks amid damaged infrastructure, showcasing local initiatives on heat-resilience, water management, and green-infrastructure recovery. Their contributions collectively positioned Ukrainian cities as active partners ready to align reconstruction with European climate and sustainability standards.

The day continued with a field visit to **EINPARK**, a flagship sustainability project developed by Corwin, offering the delegation a first-hand look at one of Central Europe’s most advanced green buildings. EINPARK Offices is the first building in Slovakia to achieve the LEED Platinum certification—the highest level under the global *Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design* system—placing it among the top 1 per cent of the most sustainable office buildings worldwide. During the visit, participants learned about the building’s integrated energy-efficiency concept, including its high-performance envelope, smart ventilation and shading systems, low-carbon materials, and advanced monitoring technologies that minimize operational emissions. The project demonstrates how sustainable design can enhance both environmental and human well-being: LEED-certified buildings not only reduce their ecological footprint and improve urban surroundings, but also deliver superior indoor comfort, air quality and natural light conditions, which are proven to support employee health and workplace productivity. EINPARK thus serves as an important reference point for future office developments in Slovakia and an inspiring example for Ukrainian cities seeking to integrate cutting-edge sustainability and energy-performance standards into reconstruction and urban development projects.

Participants transferred to the last meeting where they met with Ms **Lubica Šimkovicová** and Ms **Andrea Borská** from the **Institute of Passive House** (iEPD), who presented their current work on sustainable urban planning and high-performance building standards. The discussion centered on Positive Energy Districts (PED), and a comprehensive approach to creating urban quarters that produce more renewable energy than they consume. They explained how PEDs integrate passive-standard buildings, local energy generation, smart mobility, and community-focused design, offering a scalable model for climate-neutral neighborhoods. The delegation also reviewed iEPD’s work on passive houses, highlighting key principles such as airtight construction, high-quality insulation, heat-recovery ventilation, and integrated design as essential foundations for both new buildings and deep renovation projects. The meeting further touched on iEPD’s work on resilient districts, including deep renovation of Slovakia’s large residential districts and strategies to improve energy efficiency, comfort, and climate resilience. The institute’s representatives stressed the need to shift from shallow, cosmetic renovations to holistic upgrades that combine envelope improvements, ventilation systems, material quality and long-term planning. All documents shared—on Positive Energy Districts, passive houses, and resilient neighborhoods—provide valuable, practical guidance for cities looking to integrate energy-efficient construction and district-level sustainability into future development and reconstruction efforts.

**On Wednesday**, November 26, meeting at the **Dual Academy** in Devínska Nová Ves (Jana Jonáša 5) with Mr **Daniel Popluhár** of **Daikin Slovakia** was held. The discussion provided an in-depth overview of high-efficiency heat pump technologies, covering air-to-water, air-to-air, and

ground-to-water systems used for space heating and domestic hot water preparation. Mr. Popluhár outlined current technology trends, efficiency parameters, and the growing integration of heat pumps into modern building renovation and new-build strategies, emphasizing their role in decarbonization and reduced operational energy costs. He also highlighted the association's work in standard-setting, professional training, and supporting municipalities and industries in transitioning to low-emission heating solutions. The visit included a practical demonstration at the Dual Academy's training facilities, where participants could see the installation, operation, and performance characteristics of different heat pump systems. Mr Popluhár showcased diagnostic tools, smart controls, and real-time monitoring equipment, illustrating how properly designed systems contribute to comfort, reliability, and energy savings. The session provided valuable hands-on insight into technological solutions relevant for municipal buildings, public infrastructure, and residential renovation projects, making it highly relevant for future Slovak–Ukrainian cooperation in energy-efficient heating and sustainable reconstruction.

The following meeting at the Bratislava Self-Governing Region (BSK) with Mr *Marián Kupec*, energy analyst, was focused to discuss the region's strategic approach to energy governance, public-sector decarbonization and long-term climate objectives. Representatives of BSK outlined how regional energy policy is structured, including the division of competencies between the region and municipalities, schools, hospitals, and social-service facilities. They described the region's developing regional energy strategy, its energy management system, monitoring tools for energy consumption, and internal decision-making processes for prioritizing renovation and investment projects. The discussion also addressed BSK's ongoing work on decarbonizing public buildings—from modernizing heat supply systems and reducing gas dependence to improving insulation, lighting, building control systems and implementing EPC/ESCO models in selected facilities. A substantial part of the meeting focused on the deployment of renewable energy in regional buildings, especially rooftop photovoltaics, opportunities for further expansion, and technical issues related to grid connection and surplus-electricity management. BSK representatives also reviewed the financing landscape for public-sector energy projects, including use of EU funds, the Modernization Fund, IROP, EPC/PPA mechanisms and project bundling to access larger investment schemes. Finally, the region presented how its activities align with the European Green Deal, including efforts to strengthen climate adaptation measures, integrate greenery and water retention into planning, mitigate heat-island effects, support sustainable mobility, and encourage the development of energy communities. The meeting provided a comprehensive overview of how BSK is positioning itself as an active regional leader in energy transformation and climate resilience.

The group then transferred to city of Martin.

**On Thursday**, November 24 the CSMP participants visited the city of Martin where group focused mainly on a technical site visit to the company **ENGUL**, a Slovak company specialising in advanced cogeneration technologies. Senior manager, Mr *Peter Šiška* presented its portfolio of combined heat and power (CHP) units, which can operate not only on natural gas and conventional fuels but also on renewable and alternative energy sources, including biogas, landfill gas, wastewater-treatment-plant gas, syngas from biomass and other sustainable fuels. The company's engineers introduced the group to the design and operation of their modular CHP systems, highlighting their efficiency, reliability and relevance for decentralised energy

production. The visit offered participants practical insight into how flexible cogeneration technologies can support municipal energy resilience, reduce operational costs, and contribute to low-carbon reconstruction and regional energy security.

The second half of the day was organized in the **city of Prešov**, where the agenda was opened by Mr *František Chovanec* from the Prešov Regional Implementation Agency. Together with Prof. *Miroslav Rimár* of the Regional Implementation Agency and the Technical University of Prešov, the group engaged in a discussion on regional energy innovation, followed by a guided tour of the university's multivalent RES (Renewable Energy Systems) laboratory, which combines multiple renewable-energy technologies into integrated experimental systems. The delegation was then formally received by the Mayor of Prešov, Mr *František Olha*, who welcomed the group and highlighted the city's commitment to sustainable development. Afterwards, the participants were introduced to Prešov's practical projects in energy efficiency and renewable energy, presented by Mr. *Pavol Šutor* of HSH, before moving to the municipal energy company Spravbytkomfort. The visit concluded at the Energodispečing Spravbyt Central Boiler Room, where experts demonstrated how the city's district heating system is operated and managed, providing insights into modern heat supply, system monitoring and future decarbonization pathways.

On **Friday**, November 28, the trip started 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 per cent 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.

The program continued in a small town of **Trebišov**, where the group visited **municipal water-treatment (cleaning) facility** — the main infrastructure responsible for processing and purifying wastewater for the city and surrounding municipalities. The visit, guided by Mr *Ivan Bačo*, head technical expert, provided participants with a detailed tour of the facility's treatment processes: from preliminary screening and removal of coarse solids, through biological and chemical treatment stages, to final clarification, sludge handling and safe discharge or reuse of treated water. Technical staff explained the design capacity of the plant, average daily throughput, recent upgrades, and compliance with national and EU environmental and wastewater-discharge standards. During the discussion, the group explored how modern wastewater management contributes to public health, environmental protection, and sustainable urban water cycles.

The trip and the day were concluded with a visit to Trebišov, where the group was received by the company **Trebišovská energetická** under the direction of Mr **Miroslav Mražík**. He presented the group with the company's combined boiler station that uses wood-chips and straw-based biomass — a solution that drew particular interest among participants, especially given that Ukraine has abundant straw resources. According to the company's publicly available profile, Trebišovská energetická has committed to gradually modernizing the city's heat production system by replacing natural gas with local biomass (straw and wood), shifting its fuel base toward renewables, and building a central boiler house to serve the entire district's heating needs. Importantly, Mr. Mražík emphasized that the company financed all investments and renovations from its own budget, without relying on external grants or subsidies — underscoring the economic viability and sustainability of the project even under purely private financing. This visit offered participants a valuable real-world example of how a small regional energy company can transition from fossil-based district heating toward a renewable-biomass model, while maintaining financial and operational independence. The experience is especially relevant for envisaged cooperation or reconstruction initiatives — as it demonstrates that locally available agricultural by-products (e.g., straw) can be mobilized for clean heat production in a cost-effective manner, which may be of interest for both Slovak and Ukrainian contexts.

#### **Feedback:**

The Ukrainian delegation assessed the study visit very positively, highlighting both the structure of the program and the high professional quality of all meetings. Participants particularly appreciated that the Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association (RC SFPA) applied a demand-driven approach, tailoring each meeting to the specific needs and requests expressed by the group. They emphasized that every session—whether with public authorities, municipalities, companies, research institutions or experts—provided directly relevant and practical knowledge applicable to their own work in Ukrainian cities.

In interviews with the coordinator, the participants noted that Slovakia's experience is highly relatable and transferable, as Slovak municipalities and systems share a very similar technical and infrastructural starting point with those in Ukraine. This made the Slovak examples convincing and realistic, demonstrating that comparable upgrades, standards, and climate-neutral pathways are indeed achievable in their domestic context. All members of the delegation expressed clear interest in maintaining further contact with the institutions, companies and experts they met, and discussed concrete possibilities for joint activities, knowledge exchange, pilot projects, and long-term cooperation. They also underlined their readiness to deepen partnerships between Ukrainian and Slovak cities and, where relevant, involve Slovak companies in reconstruction and modernization efforts.

## **ARMENIA\_BRATISLAVA\_14 – 19 December 2025**

#### Participants

**Artur Asatryan**

Deputy Chairman of the Military Industry Committee, Ministry of High-Tech Industry of the Republic of Armenia

<b>Artak Baghdasaryan</b>	Head of the Department for Organization of Research and Experimental-Design Works, Military Industry Committee, Ministry of High-Tech Industry of the Republic of Armenia
<b>Vram Karakeshishyans</b>	Chief Specialist of the Production, Repair and Disposal Department, Military Industry Committee, Ministry of High-Tech Industry of the Republic of Armenia
<b>Artur Ohanyan</b>	Expert at the Legal Department, Ministry of High-Tech Industry of the Republic of Armenia
<b>Armen Simonyan</b>	Head of the Quality Control Department, Military Industry Committee, Ministry of High-Tech Industry of the Republic of Armenia

The study visit of five civil servants from Armenia to Slovakia, organized by the Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association, was implemented with the objective of familiarizing participants with the Slovak experience in **defense reform, innovation, and strategic modernization**. The program focused on institutional and legislative frameworks, governance mechanisms, and practical implementation of reforms, with particular attention paid to innovation ecosystems, civil–military cooperation, and the role of public and private stakeholders in strengthening defense and security capacities.

The official working program was organized over five working days and combined policy-level meetings, expert briefings, and technical visits. This comprehensive format allowed participants to compare institutional approaches, discuss practical challenges, and explore opportunities for future cooperation. Particular emphasis was placed on sharing Slovak experience related to innovation support, international cooperation, and alignment with NATO and EU standards, providing relevant inspiration for potential application in the participants’ home institutions.

The study visit commenced with an orientation and briefing meeting with **SFPA’s** analyst Mr **Peter Brezáni** upon the delegation’s arrival in Bratislava. During this introductory session, the objectives, structure, and detailed agenda of the program were presented and discussed, ensuring a shared understanding of the goals and expected outcomes of the visit. (Unfortunately, due to a personal tragedy, one of the participants was required to return to their home country on the first day of the study visit and was therefore unable to continue with the program. The remaining participants proceeded with the study visit as planned, and the overall implementation and objectives of the program were not affected.)

The official working program on **Monday**, December 15, commenced with a joint meeting at the Ministry of Defense of the Slovak Republic, involving representatives of the Ministry of Defense, the Security and Defence Industry Association of the Slovak Republic (ZBOP SR), and the Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic. The meeting addressed defense policy priorities, the ongoing modernization of the armed forces, the strategic role of the domestic defense industry, and state support mechanisms for innovation and exports. The Ministry of Defense of the Slovak Republic was represented by Mr **Ján Rebljan** and Mr **Juraj Mrenica** from the Department of International Cooperation and Research Support. Their presentation underlined that Slovakia is implementing a comprehensive, long-term modernization of its armed forces focused on capability development, resilience, and full interoperability within NATO structures. The speakers outlined the structure and transformation of the Slovak Armed

Forces, emphasizing that procurement planning, force development, and operational readiness are increasingly aligned with evolving security threats and allied standards. The Security and Defence Industry Association of the Slovak Republic (ZBOP SR), represented by Mr **Ervin Haramia**, Vice-President, and Ms **Andrea Hankoščáková**, Director, highlighted that a strong domestic defense and security industry constitutes a strategic asset for national security, technological innovation, and economic development. The presentation demonstrated that Slovak defense companies possess advanced capabilities across land, air, cyber, and unmanned systems, supported by a strong focus on research, development, and export competitiveness. The introduction of the Security & Defence Technologies Catalogue illustrated how these capabilities are systematically presented to international partners and promoted abroad. Representatives of the Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic, namely Ms **Silvia Horváthová**, Ms **Eva Minárčiný**, and Mr **Andrej Koleda**, stressed that transparent export licensing procedures and trade control mechanisms are essential for balancing international security obligations with support for responsible defense exports. Their contribution demonstrated how regulatory frameworks, international cooperation, and targeted industry support instruments together create conditions for sustainable growth of the defense industry while ensuring compliance with international commitments.

The afternoon program continued with an expert meeting at the **National Security Authority of the Slovak Republic** (NBÚ SR), focused on national cybersecurity architecture and the protection of defense-critical infrastructure. The meeting brought together senior representatives of the National Cyber Security Centre, SK-CERT, and the Cyber Security Competence and Certification Centre, providing a comprehensive overview of Slovakia's institutional setup, governance mechanisms, and operational practices in the field of cybersecurity.

The session was opened by Mr **Pavol Sykorčín**, Chief Advisor to the Director of the National Security Authority, who outlined NBÚ's role as the central authority responsible for cybersecurity strategy, legislation, supervision, and coordination at the national level. The presentation highlighted that effective protection of critical and defense-related infrastructure requires a clear division of responsibilities, strong legal foundations, and close coordination among national, sectoral, and internal CSIRT units. The importance of international and EU-level cooperation was emphasized as an integral component of national cyber resilience.

Representatives of the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC-SK) and SK-CERT, including Mr **Milan Pikula**, Director of SK-CERT and Deputy Director of NCSC-SK, Mr **Jaroslav Krcheň**, Director of the Security Strategy and Policy Division, Mr **René Baran**, Director of the International Relations Division, as well as Mr **Dominik Štepanovič** and Ms **Sandra Jakálová**, provided insight into the operational and strategic layers of Slovakia's cybersecurity system. Their contributions demonstrated that incident response, threat intelligence, early warning, and crisis management are closely linked to strategic risk assessment, policy development, and regulatory oversight, ensuring a coherent national approach to cyber defense.

The role of capacity building, certification, and community development presentation underlined that building a resilient cybersecurity ecosystem requires systematic education, certification of professionals, regular audits, and close cooperation between the public and private sectors. The discussion highlighted that standardized audits, awareness-raising activities, and professional training significantly contribute to improving compliance, reducing systemic risks, and strengthening the overall security posture of critical and defense-related entities

On **Tuesday**, December 16, program continued with a working visit to the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Information Technology, Slovak University of Technology (FEI STU), with a particular on how applied research, innovation, and education contribute to national security priorities, especially in the fields of automation, robotics, and cybersecurity. The expert discussion was led by Mr *František Duchoň*, representing the Institute of Robotics and Cybernetics. The presentation introduced the Institute's core research activities, including autonomous robotic systems, intelligent control, sensor fusion, artificial intelligence, and cyber-physical systems. Particular attention was paid to the use of these technologies, demonstrating how research in robotics and automation can be adapted for security, and crisis-management purposes. The meeting highlighted that close cooperation between universities, state institutions, and industry plays a crucial role in developing future-ready capabilities. The discussion emphasized the importance of linking fundamental research with practical deployment, supporting innovation through international research projects, and educating highly qualified specialists capable of responding to emerging technological and security challenges.

The Tuesday program continued with a technical visit to **Airvolute** at its premises in Bratislava. The visit focused on autonomous unmanned aerial systems, their application and the integration of artificial intelligence into next-generation UAV platforms. The meeting combined a technical presentation, in-depth discussion, and an optional on-site demonstration of selected systems. The company was represented by Mr *Jozef Rodina*, Chief Executive Officer, Mr *Lukáš Palkovič*, Chief Operating Officer, Mr *Marek Plavčan*, Managing Director, and Mr *Ján Cingel*, Business Development Manager. The presentation introduced Airvolute as an engineering ecosystem for rapid development of unmanned systems based on a modular open-architecture approach. Particular emphasis was placed on the company's focus on European production of critical components, reducing dependency on non-EU supply chains, and supporting NATO and EU requirements for interoperability and resilience in the unmanned domain. Airvolute presented its key platforms. The discussion highlighted how software-defined architectures, AI-enabled autopilots, and modular payload integration allow rapid adaptation of UAV platforms to different operational needs. The use of artificial intelligence for autonomous navigation, sensor fusion, and mission execution was presented as a critical factor in increasing effectiveness while reducing operator workload

The **Wednesday**, December 17, program continued with a visit to **Letecké Opravovne Trenčín (LOTN)** in Trenčín, where the presentation focused on the modernization of the Slovak Air Forces and highlighted LOTN's close cooperation with private-sector partners, in particular Airvolute, as an example of effective industry collaboration. This cooperation was presented as a key element in integrating innovative unmanned technologies and accelerating the adaptation of air force support capabilities to emerging operational requirements. During the visit, participants were given a tour of LOTN's repair hangars, where the company presented its practical work on aircraft maintenance, repair, and modernization. The delegation gained first-hand insight into ongoing servicing of aircraft platforms and the technical processes involved in sustaining air force readiness. The discussion underlined that combining traditional aviation expertise with cooperation with innovative private companies strengthens technological capacity, supports modernization efforts, and enhances the overall resilience and effectiveness of air force operations.

The day continued with a visit to **Virtual Reality Media (VRM)** in Trenčín, focusing on the design, development, and delivery of advanced simulation and training technologies for military and civilian operators. The delegation was received by Mr **Eduard Cristea**, Vice-President for Sales, together with Mr **Richard Varga** and Mr **Marián Majer**, Sales and Marketing Director. The presentation introduced VRM as an established international supplier of full-mission simulators, flight training devices, and complex training systems, with extensive experience in delivering certified solutions for air, land, and unmanned platforms in accordance with NATO, EASA, and ICAO standards. During the visit, participants were given a practical demonstration and had the opportunity to test selected simulation systems, gaining first-hand experience with immersive training environments used for pilot and operator training. The discussion highlighted the value of simulation technologies in improving operational readiness, reducing training costs, and enabling realistic mission rehearsal without the risks associated with live training. VRM's approach—covering the full lifecycle from system design and production to maintenance and upgrades—was presented as a key contribution to modern defense training infrastructures and to the effective preparation of personnel for both military and crisis-management scenarios

The **Thursday**, December 18, program included a visit to S.M.S., spol. s r. o., a long-established supplier of defense industry products for the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic. The delegation was received by Mr **Ladislav Buranský**, Sales Director, and Mr **Viliam Bajzík**, Director of the company. The presentation introduced S.M.S. as a company with a long tradition in the Slovak defense sector, focusing on the supply, modernization, and support of defense-related products and systems.

During the meeting, S.M.S. outlined its portfolio of products and services for land and air forces, as well as its experience in repairs, modernization, and training. The discussion provided participants with an overview of the role of traditional defense industry suppliers in maintaining operational capabilities and supporting the armed forces through the full lifecycle of military equipment, in line with national and allied standards.

The program continued with a technical visit to **EVPÚ Defence** in Nová Dubnica, a Slovak company specializing in advanced defense electronics and systems. The delegation was received by Mr **Michal Pavlík**, Chief Executive Officer, and Mr **Patrik Hlůšek**, Head of Sales. The visit focused on the company's research and development activities and its role in delivering high-technology solutions for modern armed forces.

EVPÚ Defence presented its core research areas and product portfolio, which include fire control systems, optoelectronic sensors, electro-optical and infrared systems, and C4ISR solutions. The presentation highlighted the company's strong emphasis on in-house research, system integration, and continuous innovation, enabling the development of modular and interoperable solutions applicable across land and air platforms. Particular attention was given to how sensor fusion, real-time data processing, and digital fire control enhance situational awareness and precision in operational environments.

The discussion underlined the importance of long-term research capacity, cooperation with national and international partners, and alignment with NATO standards in developing advanced defense technologies. The visit demonstrated how sustained investment in research and engineering enables EVPÚ Defence to contribute to capability development, modernization efforts, and technological self-reliance within the defense and security sector.

On the final day of the study visit, the participants met with senior representatives of the **International Visegrad Fund**. The meeting was held in Armenian, which enabled an in-depth and direct exchange and facilitated full engagement of all participants. The delegation was received by Ms *Linda Kapustová Helbichová*, Executive Director of the International Visegrad Fund, Mr *Jiří Sýkora*, Chief of the Cabinet, and Ms *Éva Merenics*, Project Manager. During the meeting, participants were introduced to the role, mandate, and operational mechanisms of the International Visegrad Fund, including its support for regional cooperation, capacity building, and people-to-people contacts. The discussion focused in particular on the structure of IVF grant schemes, application procedures, and opportunities for Armenian institutions and experts to engage more actively in Visegrad-funded projects in the future.

Throughout visit, participants had the opportunity to gain first-hand insight into concrete projects, technologies, and support mechanisms applied in Slovakia. The agenda facilitated structured exchanges with representatives of key ministries, national authorities, academic institutions, and private companies operating in the fields of defense industry, cybersecurity, aviation, unmanned systems, and simulation technologies. These discussions enabled the delegation to better understand how strategic objectives are translated into operational solutions and how cooperation between the public sector, research institutions, and industry contributes to modernization and interoperability.

### Feedback

The Armenian delegation provided very positive feedback on the study visit, emphasizing the coherence of the program and the consistently high level of expertise across all meetings. Participants valued the opportunity to engage in focused, substantive discussions that combined policy perspectives with concrete technical and operational insights. They noted that the study visit offered a comprehensive overview of how institutional frameworks, industry, research, and innovation ecosystems interact in practice. The Slovak experience was perceived as particularly instructive in terms of gradual modernization, effective public–private cooperation, and the practical implementation of reforms. Delegates expressed strong interest in sustaining professional contacts established during the visit and identified potential avenues for future cooperation, including expert consultations, exchange of know-how, and participation in international and Visegrad-supported initiatives relevant to Armenia’s ongoing reform and modernization efforts.

## SERBIA\_BRATISLAVA\_25 – 30 JANUARY 2026

### Participants

<b>Tatjana Grujičić</b>	Head of the Department for project implementation
<b>Uroš Živković</b>	Head of the Group for Migration and EU integration
<b>Marija Bojić</b>	Programming officer, Group for Migration and EU integration
<b>Danilo Đuranović</b>	AVRR officer, Section for Asylum

The study visit of Serbia’s civil servants to Slovakia, organized by the **Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association (SFPA)**, focused on **comprehensive strengthening of systemic migration management in line with EU standards**. During the meetings, the participants –

representatives of Serbia's Commissariat for Refugees and Migration - learned about the institutional and legislative framework and governance in the field of migration, as well as ongoing projects. The meetings provided insights into inter-institutional cooperation and models of collaboration of institutions with the civil society currently in practice in Slovakia. The delegation numbered four members, as one of the intended participants had canceled the trip due to unforeseen circumstances.

The official working program for the expert group from Serbia was organized into five working days and combined a series of meetings and facilities' tours in order for the experts to discuss and share partners' experience and knowledge of practical processes in migration management. The discussions were held with leading representatives and experts of the state institutions, local authorities, and civil society.

Upon arrival, the team of Serbia's experts was officially received by the SFPA's analyst and project manager Mr. **Peter Brezáni** during the orientation meeting, discussing the planned agenda.

On **Monday**, January 26, the study trip began with a meeting at the **Migration Office of the Slovak Republic**, the main counterpart to Serbia's Commissariat for Refugees and Migration. The delegation from Serbia was welcomed by the Migration Office (MO) Director, Mr **Ludovít Bíró** and eleven other representatives of the MO, including Heads of all seven MO Sections; such attendance ensured in-depth presentation and discussion. The MO structure and scope of competences was explained, highlighting the fact that the MO operates under Slovakia's Ministry of Interior, whereas Serbia's Commissariat is a specialized government body directly subordinate to the government, while both institutions are the lead in coordinating and developing migration policies. Following the presentation of the current situation and migratory profile of Slovakia by the MO Director, the Head of the Section on Documentation and International Cooperation, Mr **Pavol Dinga**, provided an overview of activities of the individual MO Sections, which was further elaborated by other Heads of Sections. Existing challenges regarding integration of migrants, as presented by Ms **Petra Archbergerová**, Head of Integration Section, gave rise to discussion and numerous questions by Serbia's delegation, highlighting specific challenges in Serbia and comparing institutional responses in the two countries. Examples of best practice were shared, such as Slovakia's procedure on creating a 'social profile' of migrants in the reception centers, recording specific features and needs which enables drafting adequate integration plans for individuals in later phases.

The two institutions highlighted emerging challenges linked with the changing dynamics in migratory flows in their respective jurisdictions: from a country of origin and a transit country, to a country of destination. It was acknowledged that both Slovakia and Serbia had experienced rise in the regular economic migration, which requires adjusting the tools in the management of migration. Finally, Ms **Natália Horská** and Ms **Michaela Sumilasová** of the MO explained the modes of cooperation with the EU Agency for the Asylum and the European Migration Network, and utilization of EU funds instruments (e.g. AMIF), as well the MO plans to adjust to the new priorities and requirements of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum, including by constructing of a multi-disciplinary center in the vicinity of Slovakia's border with Ukraine. The latter received considerable attention from Serbia's delegation, assuming a similar process would await Serbia's institutions, which might benefit from Slovakia's lessons learnt in the process.

On **Tuesday**, January 27, the discussion with the MO representatives continued in the **Residence Centre in Rohovce**, situated 30km away from Bratislava. The participants were met by Ms **Michaela Sumilasová** of the MO Section for Asylum Centers, and the Rohovce Centre Manager, Mr **Peter Privitzer**. After the overview by Mr. Privitzer about the history and the current situation at the centre, the participants were given a tour of the camp facilities. This included a short discussion with the representatives of staff of the Slovak Humanitarian Council, a CSO which provides direct psychosocial services in asylum centers in Slovakia. The delegation from Serbia was particularly interested in the system of daily financial support for residents and the camp's house rules, which were readily provided to them in English, and which they would like to use as a model for upcoming revision of such rules in Serbia.

The delegation went on to meet the **International Organization for Migration**, where they were briefed by the Head of the IOM Mission in Slovakia, Mr **Valon Halimi**, and Ms **Katarína Kubovičová**, Head of the Unit for European Migration Network (EMN), who provided an overview of migration governance and main actors, as well as EMN activities, noting Serbia's status and activities as observer EMN country. Mr **Vladimír Slama**, Head of Migrant Protection and Assistance Unit, presented the work of the Migration Information Centre, and cooperation with municipalities across Slovakia. Ms **Janka Honschová** of the IOM Movements Unit shared information on the IOM involvement in the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration Programme.

On **Wednesday**, January 28, the CSMP participants visited the **LOOM Centre**, a service for foreigners run by the City of Bratislava. Ms **Zuzana Weberová** and Ms **Dominka Nagyová** of Department of Support for People with Foreign Background outlined the city's activities and the situation preceding the formal establishment of the Centre in April 2025, as well as current scope of services provided by the city, including advocacy activities. The question of sustainability of financing was discussed, as was the operational cooperation between municipalities and schools in terms of integration of migrants. Both counterparts exchanged insights on how the lessons learnt from crises situations (in 2015 in Serbia and in 2022 in Slovakia) helped shape role of local authorities in migration management, as well as necessity to coordinate the valued support from the civil society.

The discussion at the **Human Rights League**, a leading CSO in providing legal counselling, further elaborated on the details of the provision of in-person legal services to migrants in four cities in Slovakia, including at the LOOM Centre in Bratislava and the municipal center in Trnava (which the delegation was to visit the following day). Mr **Tomáš Kušnír**, Communication Manager, and Mr **Lukáš Novák**, Lawyer, provided overview of the legal support, which includes also online consultations through Telegram or free phone line consultations. The model of cooperation with local authorities was shared, as were inputs by the League into the draft Law on International Protection (currently undergoing parliamentary procedure), harmonizing Slovakia's legal system with new EU Pact on Migration and Asylum. The participants noted difficulties for an EU candidate country such as Serbia, adjusting to EU standards, which are at the same time changing and developing.

On **Thursday**, January 29, the participants traveled to the **city of Trnava**, where they were received by the Deputy Mayor Ms **Eva Nemčeková**, Mr **Alan Le Van** of the Department of Social Affairs and representatives of the ConnectTT, Support center for foreigners of Trnava. Drawing parallels to Serbia's town of Kragujevac, given the size, presence of car industry and the recent

influx of economic migrants, Deputy Mayor Nemčeková provided overview of city's challenges and solutions in terms of addressing migration and integration. Reference to the sizeable Serbian community in Trnava was made. As was the case at the LOOM Centre, the discussion highlighted the importance of structured partnership of local authorities with the civil society in order to ensure complementarity and extract most value of available resources and expertise provided by CSOs. Likewise, importance of engaging directly with the private sector was raised, particularly around the issue of cluster housing of foreign workers, which often presents an obstacle to effective integration. Alan Le Van outlined the innovative process of the co-design of the local Integration strategy by involving also migrant population. The issue of sustainability was a recurring theme throughout the meeting, noting the risks associated with over-reliance on project-funding. The **ConnecTT Centre** activities were presented by M. **Amila Talgat**, Cultural Mediator, and Mr **Danyil Tsybulko**, Policy Officer for Local Integration. The delegation took note of Trnava's language courses for foreigners, including a tailored course for non-Slavic speakers, who are shift-workers, a practice they would like to see local authorities adopt in Serbia. Meanwhile, Trnava city representatives showed interest in Serbia's system of Commissariat's focal points in all municipalities, which can receive financial support from the central level if they adopt Local Action Plan on migration. A brief tour of the ConnecTT Centre premises followed.

**Friday**, January 30, the final day of the study trip was dedicated to the discussion at the headquarters of the **International Visegrad Fund** in Bratislava. Serbia's experts met with the Fund's Executive Director, Ms **Linda Kapustová Helbichová** and Project Managers Ms **Karolina Janik** and Mr **Peter Olgert-Michael**, and received information on the Fund's grants opportunities and existing projects, particularly those involving Serbia. They were furthermore briefed on opportunities for funding for the Commissariat's partners from the civil society. The delegation shared their feedback on the week-long study trip and inquired on possibilities of a reciprocal visit of Slovak institutions and CSOs to Belgrade.

### Feedback

The delegation from Serbia appreciated the structure of the program, particularly as each following meeting complemented the previous one and offered another perspective and a piece of mosaic in the migration management landscape in Slovakia. Oftentimes an issue mentioned in one meeting was picked up and further elaborated by partners at the next meeting, ensuring a good flow of information. The participants were satisfied that all topics that they had indicated as relevant prior to the trip were indeed covered during the study visit. The opportunities to see practical examples of migration management services in the Asylum Centre in Rohovce and in the ConnecTT centre in Trnava were highly rated. While the participants had been aware of the similarities between the two countries beforehand, the study visit affirmed the relevance and usefulness of Slovakia's processes in the field of migration, not only due to the size of the country but also due to the similar migration dynamics: both countries have shared experience of traditionally being a country of origin and a transit country, yet becoming a country of destination. The delegation identified a number of follow-up topics which could be explored further with Slovak counterparts, for instance the issue of burnout of frontline workers engaged within state services.