



Civil Servants Mobility Program 2019: UKRAINE, ALBANIA and NORTH MACEDONIA

Poland	18 – 23 November 2019 (AL), 25 – 30 November 2019 (NMK), and 8 – 14 December 2019 (UA)
Hungary	10 – 16 November 2019 (AL), 10 – 16 November 2019 (NMK), and 23 – 27 March 2020 (UA) – cancelled due to COVID-19)
Czech Republic	5 – 11 October 2019 (NMK), 10 – 16 November 2019 (AL), and 8 – 14 December 2019 (UA)
Slovakia	23 – 26 June 2019 (UA), 9 – 15 February 2020 (AL), and 23 – 28 February 2020 (NMK)

Report

The aim of the Civil Servants Mobility Program (CSMP) is to share experience of Visegrad countries on the implementation of the sectoral reforms and harmonization of the national legislation with the EU legislation with the Eastern Partnership and Western Balkan countries. The goal is to educate civil servants from both regions through organizing study visits in the V4 countries.

The Civil Servants Mobility Program 2019 was divided in three parts, hosting altogether **19 participants from Ukraine, 20 participants from Albania and 20 participants from North Macedonia**. Unfortunately, only 14 Ukrainian participants have participated in the programme this year. Due to the recent COVID-19 outbreak, 5 Ukrainian participants had to postpone their study visit until later date.

In comparison to CSMP 2018, the number of participating countries grew from two to three, thus allowing more experts to gain useful knowledge in their respective fields. And while Ukraine has been in the focus of the CSMP since the very beginning of its existence, Albania and North Macedonia are new participating countries. All in all, the **CSMP proved to be an**

important instrument of the V4 experience and know-how sharing from integration and reform processes. It was once again shown that the Think Visegrad platform is able to provide a wide range of expertise since nearly all of the participating groups had different thematic focus.

Regarding the **Ukrainian civil servants**, the first group focused on the topic of energy efficiency. The second group shared know-how in regional development and foreign investment and the third group focused in detail on pre-school education. The fourth group unfortunately did not have a chance to participate yet.

The **Albanian civil servants** focused on four topics respectively: the first group focused on the Euro-Atlantic integration, the second one focused on tourism, the third group took a closer look on border management, and finally the last group focused on the topic of public finance and public debt.

The **North Macedonian civil servants** had a chance share know-how from four topics. The first group of civil servants discussed the topic of environment, the second took a closer look on Euro-Atlantic integration (a topic shared with the Albanian group), the third group focused on regional and cross-border cooperation and the last group discussed digitalisation, digital economy and data protection.

Part I – Poland

Warsaw, 18 – 23 November 2019 (Albania)

Participants: **Enver Saliassi**, Chief Commissioner, specialist in migration for the Border Police's Migration Department; **Artan Spaho**, Chief Commissioner, border specialist for the Border Police's Directorate for Borders; **Gezim Manaj**, Chief Commissioner, head of the Migration Department in the Durrës Region; **Pashko Lakaj**, Chief Commissioner, head of the Migration Department in the Shkodër Region; **Armir Gjokolaj**, Chief Commissioner, head of the Migration Department in the Kukës Region.

The aim of the organiser - Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW) - was to introduce the participants from Albania to the migration management system in Poland, with particular emphasis on return operations. During meetings with representatives of Polish institutions at various levels, the system for protecting the state border was presented, together with assumptions and practical solutions in the field of migration policy, with particular emphasis on institutions and procedures for return operations. The programme's participants also learned about practical solutions for protecting the Polish state border and how the detention system in Poland is organised.

In Warsaw, the participants took part in a full-day training session at the Border Guard Headquarters on the prevention and counteraction of illegal migration in Poland, including the

foreigners' identification system and the organisation of forced return to the country of origin. Of particular interest to the partners was the principles for cooperation with neighboring countries in the field of readmission and transfer of migrants. The Albanian delegation met representatives of the Department of Refugee Proceedings and the Social Assistance Department of the Office for Foreigners, as well as the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Poland and the Frontex agency, where representatives of the Department for International Cooperation discussed the mechanisms for cooperation between the agency and the Balkan countries, as well as its activities in the Western Balkans region.

At the Bieszczady Department of the Border Guard in Przemyśl, the participants familiarised themselves with the system of reception centres for foreigners and migrant detentions. Along the lines of the Guarded Centre for Foreigners in Przemyśl, they learned about the structure and functioning of the guarded centre for foreigners. The delegation's members also became acquainted with the principles of operation of the road crossing in Medyka, a facility located on the external border of the EU. The subjects for discussion included the tasks of the border post's employees with respect to foreigners, and the issue of identifying persons who do not meet the entry criterion and belong to vulnerable groups (including victims of human trafficking). Procedures related to so-called simplified readmission were presented, and the current cooperation with Ukraine in the field of combating irregular migration was also discussed.

The meeting at the Centre for Cooperation of Border, Police and Customs Services in Barwinek served to present the comprehensive system of cooperation between the Polish and Slovak services.

Feedback: The participants showed great interest in obtaining training support, learning good practices and exchanging experiences to strengthen internal security in the fields of border control and protection, crisis management, cross-border cooperation, and the control and management of migration movements, among others.

It is worth continuing the study visits within the CSMP Visegrad instrument aimed at strengthening the competence of the Western Balkan countries' border services and transferring experience in this field. It is advisable to strengthen cooperation with the Balkan countries' border police forces due to the constant irregular migration along the Balkan route, the risks associated with criminal organisations originating in this area, as well as the significant number of tourists from the V4 countries who visit the Western Balkans. In this context, it is in the interest of the V4 countries, and the EU as a whole, to strengthen the operational capabilities of the Western Balkans' border police forces.

Warsaw, 25 – 30 November 2019 (North Macedonia)

Participants: Semra Amet, Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe – NALAS; Atse Kotsevski, Mayor of Veles; Ivana Serafimova, Association of Cities of Macedonia (ZELS); Zhika Stoyanovski, Mayor of the city of Ilinden.

The aim of the organiser - Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW) - was to present the participants from North Macedonia with Poland's experiences in the field of cross-border cooperation, with particular emphasis on the Polish-German border. The meetings for the North Macedonian group were planned in such a way as to show cross-border cooperation from national, regional and local perspectives. The Lower Silesian province was selected as an example because it has been actively implementing various instruments for cross-border cooperation. Another important component of the project involved sharing experiences in the operation of local governments in Poland, with particular emphasis on processes of decentralisation and the transfer of competences and funding to local governments at various levels.

In Warsaw, the participants visited various government administration offices and NGOs. During a meeting at the Ministry of the Interior and Administration, representatives of the Territorial Cooperation Department presented the cross-border cooperation programmes operating on all Polish borders, as well as the systems for management, devising strategy, selecting projects and monitoring cross-border programmes. In the Ministry of Investment and Development, the main topic of conversation was the bilateral intergovernmental committees coordinated by the Territorial Cooperation Department of the Department of International Affairs. The meetings at the Foundation for the Development of Local Democracy and the International Solidarity Foundation concerned models for implementing projects to support civil society and specific areas of the operation of local government.

In Wrocław, meetings were held with representatives of the Institute of Territorial Development, a planning unit of the Marshal Office of Lower-Silesian Voivodeship, the Lower Silesian Tourist Organisation, the Lower Silesian Chamber of Commerce, the Wrocław Technology Park, the NUTRBIOMED Cluster, the Lower Silesian Provincial Office and the Hala Stulecia complex. The visit to the residents' service centre at the Lower Silesian Provincial Office proved particularly interesting in the context of specific solutions (how the work was organised, how cases were registered, the transparency of the decision-making processes).

A meeting was held in Zgorzelec with the participation of the deputy mayor of Zgorzelec and the heads of the municipalities of Zgorzelec and Platerówka. In the neighbouring city of Görlitz on the German side a meeting was held with representatives of the Görlitz City Hall. In addition, the group visited the European Centre of Remembrance, Education and Culture, which operates on the site of the former Stalag VIII-A camp from World War II. The Centre's goal is education, dialogue and reconciliation between Poles and Germans in the context of their difficult common history.

Feedback: The partners from the Western Balkan countries are very interested in cross-border cooperation and the operation of local self-governments. North Macedonia, like all the WB6 countries, also needs support and exchanges of experience with regard to the use of pre-accession funds and the creation and management of European projects. The Polish experience deviates far from the practice of a centralised state like North Macedonia, but in the context of the planned reforms, it proved to be interesting and useful for the participants. The most

interesting aspects for the guests were specific aspects of how the local governments operated, as well as how the tasks were financed, the relationships with authorities at higher levels, and the European projects. An important aspect which was raised at each meeting was the possibility of using EU projects for the purposes of investments which could improve the locals' quality of life.

It is advisable to continue the study visits for representatives of the Western Balkan countries under the CSMP programme, focused on various aspects of the operation of local governments and cross-border cooperation. It would also be worth generating a synergy effect between the Polish, Czech and Slovak editions of the programme by organising joint study trips. In the area of local government cooperation, it would pay to stimulate the establishment of lasting partnerships between entities from WB6 and V4 (local governments and local government associations, foundations supporting local governments; partnerships between cities and municipalities).

Warsaw, 8 – 14 December 2019 (Ukraine)

Participants: **Nataliia Hyzhko**, Director, Agency of Regional Development, Vinnytsia Oblast, **Sergii Trokhymyshyn**, SME's Support Specialist, Agency of Development, Zhytomyr Oblast, **Serhii Khobotnia**, Director, Agency of Development, Czernihiv, **Sviatoslav Didenko**, Deputy Director, International Cooperation Department, Kiev Investment Agency, **Oleksandr Protsiuk**, Director, Agency of Regional Development, Rivne Oblast

The project was implemented on 8th – 14th December 2019 in Warsaw, Wrocław, Zgorzelec and Górlitz. Five representatives of both municipal and regional governments participated in the visit. In accordance with the principles of the CSMP program, the members of the delegation were selected by the visit coordinator based on the recommendations of various institutions.

During all meetings a workshop method was used. It involved dialogue, answering participants' questions, discussing good practices and presenting specific examples. The aim was to satisfy the needs and expectations of the participants from Ukraine. During each meeting delegation representatives asked a lot of detailed questions. They were especially interested in activities conducted without the support of European funds as the amounts available in Ukraine are significantly lower than in Poland. Moreover, they were particularly interested in all possible ways of cooperation between Ukrainian and Polish partners.

The meeting at PISM focused on the analysis of the current state of the cooperation between Polish and Ukrainian local governments as well as the cooperation recommendations developed by PISM. The program of the study visit was also discussed in a comprehensive manner during this meeting.

In Warsaw, meetings were held at the Industrial Development Agency, National Center for Research and Development, Polish Agency for Enterprise Development, Technological Enterprise Foundation MIT EF and Targowa Enterprise Centre of the Warsaw City Hall, Centre of Development of Mazovia Region. Discussions were focused on using EU funds to support entrepreneurship and the development of the startup ecosystem. The mentioned institutions presented opportunities for cooperation with partners from Ukraine. The IDA leads a program aimed at Polish entrepreneurs who can apply for grants for the purchase of technology abroad. It could support technology transfer from Ukraine to Poland. NCRD has grant programs at its disposal that support the cooperation between technology enterprises from Poland and other countries, including Ukraine. MIT EF is a private acceleration program for startups and it is also open to newly founded technology companies from Ukraine. The visit at the Targowa Enterprise Center was very interesting for the participants as it constitutes an example of how local government can support local entrepreneurship. This example can also be implemented in Ukraine as it does not require large EU funding.

In Wrocław, the delegation met the representatives of the Wrocław Agglomeration Development Agency that coordinates the urban startup ecosystem. They have presented good practices applied in Wrocław to promote creation of new companies that offer unique solutions. Moreover, possibilities of implementing joint projects as well as cooperation in the field of student exchange were discussed.

During the next visit at the Wrocław Technology Park (the largest technology park in Poland) one presented activities in the field of business incubation, operation of laboratories and Nutibiomed cluster. There was also a meeting with Grzegorz Roman, the President of the Zielona Dolina Company whose task is to support innovative projects in the field of healthy nutrition.

On the last day, the group visited the headquarters of the Special Economic Zone in Legnica, Europastadt Görlitz/Zgorzelec and learned about the conditions of tax concessions offered in the zone as well as related legislative changes in Poland. The activities of the Lower Silesian Aviation Cluster that are coordinated by SEZ in Legnica were also presented.

Part 2 – Hungary

Budapest, 10 – 16 November 2019 (Albania and North Macedonia)

Participants from Albania: **Oljan Kanushi**, Coordinator, Department of Development and Good Governance, Prime Minister’s Office; **Andi Nano**, Legal Advisor in the Parliamentary Commission for European Integration, Albanian Parliament; **Biliana Naumova**, First Secretary, Department for Europe and Central Asia, Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs; **Alban Malia**, Desk officer, EU Department, Unit for Political Dialogue, Ministry for Europe

and Foreign Affairs; **Erenik Shllaku**, Desk officer, EU Department, Unit for Political Dialogue, Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs;

Participants from North Macedonia: **Sara Ali**, Assistant, Cabinet of the Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs, General Secretariat of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia; **Marjan Barton**, First Secretary/Desk officer for the Visegrad Group countries, Directorate for European Countries, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of North Macedonia; **Slavica Kuzmanovska**, Public relations and management officer, Secretariat for European Affairs; **Renata Petreska Boshkovska**, Third Secretary/Desk officer, Department of EU Sectoral Policy, Directorate for European Union, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of North Macedonia; **Lukman Shakiri**, Head of Department and IPA Coordinator, Department of European Integration, Ministry of Economy of the Republic of North Macedonia.

In 2019, Albania and North Macedonia were selected as the beneficiary countries of the Think Visegrad Civil Servant Mobility Programme. With the assistance of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade as well as the Hungarian Embassies in Tirana and Skopje, the call was sent to the competent ministries of the beneficiary countries. The main topic of the programme revolved around the Euro-Atlantic integration of the region and the coordination mechanisms that oversee EU policies in the Hungarian public administration. Ten civil servants – five from each country – were selected to participate in the programme.

The participants' fields of work varied from diplomatic/political issues to sectorial policies of EU integration. The study trip reflected on this diversity: the meetings gave an insight into the Hungarian coordination mechanisms from legal, financial and technical perspectives as well as opened the floor for discussions on current challenges of the EU–Western Balkans relations.

The week-long programme offered the opportunity for the participants to share their experience on the political and technical sides of the EU integration process and to broaden their cooperation network. The meetings with representatives of Hungarian institutional units/departments gave them the chance to get to know Hungary's experience in the EU integration and its stances on the future of enlargement.

The selected civil servants arrived on the 10th of November; participants from North Macedonia left in the evening of the 15th of November, followed by the departure of the Albanian group in the morning hours of the 16th of November. Accordingly, the professional meetings took place from Monday to Friday. A farewell lunch marked the end of this year's programme.

On Monday, participants visited the State Secretariat for European Union Development Policy within the Ministry for Innovation and Technology. The group got familiar with the Hungarian coordination mechanisms and had an in-depth overview on the competences of different ministries and agencies related to the coordination of EU policies. Gábor Dányi,

Deputy State Secretary explained how the Ministry is involved in the allocation of EU funds. A special emphasis was put on the IT system that provides support and back-up for these transactions.

Tuesday morning was dedicated to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The participants met with heads of two departments: András Klein from the Department for Western Balkans and Zoltán Horváth from the Department for Visegrad Cooperation and Central Europe. These meetings focused on the Hungarian and Central European perspective on EU enlargement as well as on the challenges Albania and North Macedonia have to face with on their path to the EU. Both heads of departments reassured participants: Hungary and the Visegrad countries are supporters of the EU enlargement towards the region.

Meetings at the Ministry of Justice were also held on Tuesday. The group was welcomed by two units, the State Secretariat for European Affairs and the State Secretariat for International and European Union Justice Cooperation. In his opening remarks, Deputy State Secretary dr. Oszkár Ökrös explained that it is the Ministry of Justice that deals with the EU-related policies as those are internal issues for Hungary. Mr. Ökrös and his colleagues then briefed participants on the legal background of the EU coordination mechanisms within the Hungarian administration. Questions were aimed at the effectiveness of these cooperation mechanisms, while exchange of ideas included good practices that can be implemented into the Albanian and North Macedonian systems too.

Wednesday started with a guided tour at the Hungarian Parliament building. The visit gave participants a good opportunity to get to know the history of Hungary and the Hungarian parliamentary system better. The day then continued with a meeting at the European Affairs Committee of the House of the National Assembly. Dr. Csaba Gergely Tamás, Senior Fellow of the Committee showcased the day-to-day work and responsibilities of the Committee.

On Thursday, the group returned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. László Sinka, Head of the Department for EU Enlargement and Pre-Accession Assistance briefed the participants on the current EU–Western Balkans relations and what is to be expected within the EU in the upcoming months. As Mr. Sinka explained, the main duty of the Department for EU Affairs is to follow-up internal EU policies that have external aspects too.

The CSMP ended on Friday by visiting the Deputy State Secretariat for Implementation of Economic Development within the Ministry of Finance. Participants got an insight into the structure of the Hungarian economic development strategy and the programmes that support such initiatives. The participants brought up examples from their respective countries and their questions enabled them to compare their own development strategies. Péter Keller, Deputy Head of the Department and Noémi Danajka, Head of Unit placed special emphasis on the implementation mechanisms and how those can serve as good examples for Albania and North Macedonia.

Feedback: After a week of professional meetings, the group further exchanged their experience during a farewell lunch. Participants expressed their gratitude towards the organisers and their conviction that they would use the acquired new knowledge on their everyday work.

Budapest, 23 – 27 March 2020 (Ukraine) – cancelled due to COVID-19

Participants: Ms. Yana Ovsianykova, Investment Adviser, UkraineInvest, Ms. Alina Filimonova, Deputy Director, Department of International Cooperation, Kharkiv City Council; Mr. Yuriy Deyneka, Chief Executive, Department of City Development, Ternopil City Council; Ms. Yaryna Soroka, Chief Specialist, Investments and Projects Office, Lviv City Council, Mr. Andrii Tovt, Deputy Director, Department of Foreign Relations, Transcarpathian Regional Council

In the framework of the Civil Servant Mobility Programme (CSMP), the Centre for Euro-Atlantic Integration and Democracy (CEID) took on the task of organizing a study trip for Ukrainian experts and public officers in the subject of investment promotion. The topic was selected by the Hungarian Embassy in Kiev and aimed to present the Hungarian administration's experience and best practices to the Ukrainian officers by providing a platform for professional consultation. The program was supposed to be held the 23th through the 27th March, 2020, however, unfortunately, CEID had to cancel, or at least postpone the program until further notice due to the novel coronavirus outbreak.

It has to be stated that the fact the date of the trip arched well over into 2020 was due to a number of unforeseen organizing difficulties, mainly from the side of the possible Hungarian partner organizations. The request of the Hungarian MFA was to include HIPA, the Hungarian Investment Promotion Agency, in the program, as they are the state-owned institution responsible for the Hungarian state's activity of this nature. The initial contact was made with them in early September, however, they could not confirm their involvement until late January, 2020, regardless of the countless phone calls made and emails sent by CEID. This seriously set back the consolidation of the whole program, which meant that we could only move forward after their involvement started to become clearer. Due to a high-level foreign minister visit to the Hungarian Embassy in Kiev in relation to the ongoing crises in bilateral relations, the program could only be implemented by middle March, and we were able to put together a trip that included visits of high-profile state-owned institutions in Budapest and Debrecen. We are also sending the confirmed program of the CSMP with the report, but these included the HIPA, the Department for Investment Promotion and the Department for Eastern Europe of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the State Secretariat for Parliament and Strategy of the Ministry of Innovation and Technology, the EDC Debrecen Urban and Economic Development Center, and the EXIM Bank of Hungary. We also received a finalized list of participants from the Embassy, which included five state officials, mostly employed by city councils of five different Ukrainian cities: Kiev, Kharkiv, Ternopil, Lviv and Uzhgorod. The list of the participants is the following:

Unfortunately, as previously mentioned, the implementation of the program had to be postponed due to the restrictions and states of emergencies introduced by virtually every country due to the coronavirus pandemic. Both the participants and the welcoming institutions had to cancel their involvement, and of course, regarding the health and safety of all those involved as the top priority, we had no other choice at CEID, as well. We are very much hopeful that we can welcome the Ukrainian officials in the not too distant future after the situation has returned to normal.

Part 3 – Czech Republic

Prague, 5 – 11 October 2019 (North Macedonia)

Participants: **Jasmina Petkovska**, Head of Department for Coordination of the Work of the Minister, Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, Republic of North Macedonia; **Ana Karanfilova**, Head of Department for Waste, Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, Republic of North Macedonia; **Lendita Dika**, State Councillor for Industrial Pollution, Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, Republic of North Macedonia; **Getoar Abduramani**, Advisor at the Department of Waste, Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, Republic of North Macedonia; **Frosina Antonovska**, Junior Associate at the Department of EU, Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, Republic of North Macedonia

The study trip for a delegation of The Republic of North Macedonia under Civil Servants Mobility Programme was organized in Prague by EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy. The main focus of the programme was **sharing the experience gained by the Czech Republic within its accession process and membership to the EU in accordance to the protection of environment**. Main topics of the meetings were Waste management and Industrial pollution, also due to a current work of North Macedonian delegation on a new legislation on waste. To provide participants with a wide reach of expertise, both state representatives and professionals from non-governmental sector were selected for the meetings. Moreover, an onsite meeting was scheduled at incineration plant. General emphasis was put on Czech environmental reforms and fulfilment of the EU standards, with a deeper focus on specific areas of legislation and practical functioning.

Starting their study trip, the North Macedonian delegation met with **Kateřina Davidová**, Research Fellow at EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy. This meeting was focused to present the participants with a general picture of environmental issues, both current and past, that Czech Republic is or was facing, and to display how some of the previous issues were managed. Furthermore, Kateřina analysed plans and possibilities for the future transformation of Czech energy sector and its shift from coal dependency. The following

meeting was with the representatives of the Central Bohemian Regional government – **Miloš Petera**, Deputy Governor of Central Bohemian Region; **Josef Keřka**, Head of Department of Environment and Agriculture, **Eva Jirovská**, Waste Referent, Department of Environment and Agriculture; **Věra Vacková**, IPPC Referent, Department of Environment and Agriculture. After an introduction of the region by their representatives, the talk shifted to subjects concerning the scope of work of their regional government and their cooperation with Ministry of Environment on the legislation process, they led an open discussion with the North Macedonian representatives, which revolved mainly around the main causes of pollution in the region, industry and transportation.

The following day, we continued by a meeting with **Lukáš Kůs**, Head of Department, Technical Protection and Integrated Prevention, Czech Inspection of Environment, who explained how does their organization work and how does the mechanism of monitoring industrial pollution work and what are the tools they can use against possible violators. This discussion was particularly interesting for the delegation, as they lack similar institution in North Macedonia.

During the third working day of this study trip, the delegation met with **Radim Polák**, Head of Department of Waste, Municipality of Prague, who got everyone acquainted with the system of waste management within Prague municipality. He explained the structure of recycling of waste, the process of waste transportation and the usage of its part for the heating scheme of Prague. He also discussed the pros and cons of private entities engaged in waste sector. Afterwards, the delegation met with **Tomáš Budín**, Head of Director's office at Palivový kombinát Ústí state enterprise (PKÚ), who approached the delegation with the presentation about work of PKÚ on reclamation and revitalization of coal regions in Czech Republic. He pointed out the difficulties of social transformation within the regions which were deeply connected to mining industry, and the effects of the switch from coal on people working in the industry.

On Thursday, delegation met with the representatives of the Czech Ministry of Environment, namely **Michal Pastvinský**, Deputy Director General of the Environmental Policy and International Relations Section, and his colleagues **Helena Kameníčková** from the Department of IPCC, **Petra Urbanová** and **Vojtěch Pilnáček** from the Department of Waste and **Lucie Holíková** from the Department of the EU Funds. This meeting started with an introduction of the problems that Czech Republic experienced during its accession, followed by closer focus on topics of Waste legislation and prevention of industrial pollution and concluded by a presentation of the structure of EU Funds and the projects which were carried out in Czech Republic. Later on, the meeting continued with a work lunch, where the delegation was joined by **Lukáš Jaňura**, Head of Bilateral Unit. The programme of this study trip continued by a meeting with **Ivo Kropáček** from Hnutí DUHA – Friends of the Earth Czech Republic, who offered a different perspective on the topic of waste management and showed good examples from around the EU.

On the last day the delegation met with **Tomáš Baloch**, Ecology expert at ZEVO Malešice incineration plant for the excursion over their premises, where he demonstrated the

technology behind the ‘waste to energy’ process and presented detailed information on how ZEVO Malešice produces electricity and heating for the city of Prague.

Feedback: Overall, the program of this study trip and the meetings received a very positive feedback from the North Macedonian delegation. Each of the visitors was satisfied for getting to know their counterparts in the Czech Republic, allowing them to build a base for a future cooperation among these countries. However, although presentations were very informative, they didn’t answer some of the questions on the new legislative on waste, which representatives of North Macedonia are currently working on, as Czech Republic is also still in a preparation of such legislative. All in all, each participant gave the program and its organization an excellent feedback, rating it with 5/5 points. This included the accommodation facility, as well as the accompanying free-time program.

Prague, 10 – 16 November 2019 (Albania)

Participants: **Ertenka Cabej**, Specialist in the Directorate of Programming, Standardization and Harmonization of the Regulatory Framework, Ministry of Tourism and Environment, Albania; **Erifili Monka**, Specialist in the Directorate of Programming, Standardization and Harmonization of the Regulatory Framework, Ministry of Tourism and Environment, Albania; **Eriola Sojati**, Specialist in the Directorate of Tourism Development Policies and Strategies, Ministry of Tourism and Environment, Albania; **Marsida Karaxho**, Specialist in the Directorate of Tourism Development Programs Ministry of Tourism and Environment, Albania; **Erjon Suparaku**, Specialist in the Directorate of Tourism Development Programs Ministry of Tourism and Environment, Albania

The study trip for a delegation of Albania under Civil Servants Mobility Programme was organized in Prague by EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy. The main focus of the programme was **sharing the experience gained by the Czech Republic in the field tourism and its promotion strategies and policies**. Main theme of the meetings was Tourism policy and marketing with specific topics being Tourism promotion methods, Hiking tourism development, Maintaining and developing tourist attractions and Methods of establishing tourism policies through marketing. To provide participants with a wide reach of expertise, both state representatives and professionals from non-governmental sector were selected for the meetings. Moreover, an onsite visit to a town of Český Krumlov was organized during the study trip.

Starting their study trip, Albanian delegation met with **Renata Králová**, Director at the Department of Tourism, Ministry of Regional Development. This meeting was focused to present the participants with a general legal framework of tourism in Czech Republic with a stressing on a connectivity between the ministry and the CzechTourism agency, an organization funded by the ministry. Ms. Králová presented the multiannual plan for the development of tourism in Czech Republic, explained its main difficulties and also dug into a taxation of accommodation facilities. She briefly introduced the problems connected with the alternative

accommodation methods such as AirBnb and its negative effects on housing availability in Prague.

In the afternoon, we continued by a meeting with **Zdeňka Šrédlová**, Director of Section for Modern Hiking Trails of Czech Hikers Club who introduced us to the idea of modern hiking and its development in the countries of Central and Western Europe. The idea of modern hiking connects classical hiking trails with modern technologies and digitalization. Although the idea impressed the participants, they stated that Albania is still lacking the basic hiking infrastructure and that this method can only be implemented later on in their country.

On the next day, we met with **Zuzana Kvitková**, Professor at Faculty of Tourism, University of Economics in Prague. She was very communicative and enjoyed sharing years of experience in the field of tourism. Ms. Kvitková introduced the group to the historical development of tourism in Czechoslovakia and Czech Republic, pointing out the differences between the structure of tourists in two different eras, as during the Czechoslovakia times, majority of tourists were locals, while nowadays, at around two thirds of accommodated tourists in Czech Republic are foreigners. She also showed us the methods of education in the field of tourism and presented some ideas for future developments. For the second part of the day, group enjoyed a guided tour of the historical centre of Prague.

During the third working day of this study programme, the delegation traveled to South Bohemia region for a day trip during which it visited one of the most popular tourist spots in Czech Republic, the historical town of Český Krumlov, where we first met with **Eva Vaněčková** from the Department of Management and Marketing of Český Krumlov Town Hall. The discussion revolved around the rise of popularity of the town connected with both positive and negative effects on the local population and infrastructure. Ms. Vaněčková presented us with some statistics of the visits, pointing out the main problem of the town is that tourists only visit for one day, not staying overnight which means that although the city is overcrowded over the day, it does not benefit financially from the inflow of tourists. For the second meeting of the day, Albanian delegation met with **Jaromír Polášek**, Director of South Bohemian Office of Tourism, České Budějovice. Mr. Polášek explained the regional division in the Czech Republic, funding of touristic activities and the promotion of the region nationally and internationally through the CzechTourism.

Next day, on Thursday, the group met with **Pavel Přílepek** Director of Hiking Trails, Czech Hikers Club, who explained thoroughly how Czech hikers mark hiking trails, showed us all the sign and techniques of the work and presented long history of hiking in Czech Republic. This was one of the most interesting meetings as it was highly beneficial for the Albanian delegation in terms of knowledge and contacts, as they started to plan a trip for Mr. Přílepek to Albania, where he could help them with the new system of marking. For the second part of the day, the delegation met with **Kateřina Pavlitová**, Strategy Director at Prague City Tourism. The organization represents Municipality of Prague in the field of promotion and marketing of tourism in Prague. Ms Pavlitová was talking mainly about the current situation in Prague and the ideas on how to work the huge inflow of tourists into the cities. She explained the tactics of presenting the tourists with different parts of Prague and getting them out of

historical center, where most of tourists stay. She also touched the topic of negative effects of tourism and how to tackle them, for example Prague does not advertise tourism in China anymore, as their visitors don't spend much time in Prague and rather focuses on tourists from neighboring countries such as Germany, Austria or Poland.

On the last working day of the study trip, group had meeting with **Markéta Vogelová**, Director of Institute of Tourism, CzechTourism which was one of the most important meetings of the week as CzechTourism acts as the leading organization in the promotion of tourism in Czech Republic internationally. She presented marketing techniques and strategies of the organization in the last years, told the group how CzechTourism works with the topics and the stories of the country to promote it. We also got a presentation on how CzechTourism is funded and how does it use its finances to present all the regions equally.

Feedback: Overall, the program of this study trip and the meetings received very positive feedback from Albanian delegation. Visitors were highly satisfied with the meetings arranged, with most of them being rated with the highest mark of 5 points. Especially meetings with Mr. Přílepek and at Prague City Tourism were highly praised by each member of the delegation. Over the course of study trip, participants received a thorough picture of Czech tourism and were very satisfied for getting to know their counterparts in the Czech Republic, allowing them to build a base for a future cooperation among these countries. All in all, each participant gave the program and its organization an excellent feedback, rating it with 5/5 points. This included the accommodation facility, as well as the accompanying free-time program.

Prague, 8 – 14 December 2019 (Ukraine)

Participants: **Hanna Hryshchenko**, Expert on pre-secondary and secondary education at Directorate General, Ministry of Education and Science, Ukraine; **Anna Putsova**, Expert on pre-secondary and secondary education at Directorate General, Ministry of Education and Science, Ukraine; **Olena Linnik**, Expert on pre-secondary and secondary education at Directorate General, Ministry of Education and Science, Ukraine; **Mariia Drobot**, Expert on pre-secondary and secondary education at Directorate General, Ministry of Education and Science, Ukraine

The study trip for a delegation of Ukraine under Civil Servants Mobility Programme was organized in Prague by EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy. The main focus of the programme was **sharing the experience gained by the Czech Republic in the field of preschool education**. Main topics of the meetings were Legal Framework of Preschool Education, Accessibility of Preschool Education, State Supervision and Organization of Different Forms of Preschool Education. To provide participants with a wide reach of expertise, both state representatives and professionals from non-governmental sector were selected for the meetings. Moreover, two onsite meetings at kindergartens were arranged, two show a difference between state and private managed kindergarten. General emphasis was put on

Czech educational reforms and a framework, under which Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports operates.

Starting their study trip, Ukrainian delegation met with **Soňa Kořátková**, Professor of Preschool Education at Faculty of Education, Charles University. This meeting was focused to present the participants with a general picture of education structure in Czech Republic with a stressing of historical development and transition of the system after the fall of the communist regime. Ms. Kořátková highlighted the importance of universities in this transition and introduced participants to the to structure of courses for future pedagogues.

The following day, we continued by a meeting with **Jana Hegerová**, Principal at Masná Kindergarten, who showed us the premises of the kindergarten, explained how their organization works and how many children are enrolled. Ms. Hegerová introduced us to some and of the teachers, explained us the functioning of school canteen and later shared the information about financing of their activities, process of cooperation with Ministry for Education and City Administration of Prague 1. Later, we met with **Iveta Němečková**, Head of Department for Education at City Administration of Prague 3. She was very communicative and enjoyed sharing her 30 years of experience in the field of education, that consisted of working at the Ministry, Municipal and Local level of Prague administration, while also serving as a teacher and later a principal at a high school. Ms. Němečková described the role of Local administration in the financing of kindergartens and introduced us to other possibilities of financing educational projects, especially through European social funds. Also, she introduced us to the role of Local administration, told us about how many kindergartens and primary schools fall under her administration and stressed the necessity of communication with principals of schools. For the last meeting of the day, we were hosted by **Galina Jarolímková**, Director at Educational Psychology Center for Prague 1, 2 and 4. This meeting was focused on the importance of providing children with psychological support, activities included in the process and the connection between schools and their institution.

During the third working day of this study trip, the delegation met with **Ivana Blažková**, Head of Department of Preschool Education at Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of Czech Republic. The discussion revolved around legal framework of education, types of education in general and presented the legal obligations for preschool education while introducing the participants to the structure of cooperation system applied for kindergartens. For the second meeting of the day, Ukrainian delegation met with **Zuzana Ramajzlová** from Czech NGO People in Need (Člověk v Tísni). The topic of the discussion was focused on children from socially excluded families and the ways of supporting these children and their inclusion into the education system.

On the last working day of the study trip, group had an onsite meeting with **Jana Stárková**, principal at Vyšehrádek kindergarten, a Montessori type of preschool education. Participants had a chance to compare the facilities and the ways of education with their previous visit to Masná kindergarten. Ms. Stárková explained the ideas behind a Montessori type of education, the difference between state and private type of preschool and its benefits for

children. This meeting received the highest rating from the whole study trip as it was very informative.

Feedback: Overall, the program of this study trip and the meetings received highly positive feedback from Ukrainian delegation. Visitors were very satisfied with the meetings arranged, with most of them being rated with the highest mark of 5 points. Especially onsite meetings at kindergartens very highly praised by each member of the delegation. Over the course of study trip, participants received a thorough picture of Czech Education system and were very satisfied for getting to know their counterparts in the Czech Republic, allowing them to build a base for a future cooperation among these countries. All in all, each participant gave the program and its organization an excellent feedback, rating it with 5/5 points. This included the accommodation facility, as well as the accompanying free-time program.

Part 4 – Slovakia

Bratislava, 23 – 26 June 2019 (Ukraine)

Participants: **Bogdana Galimuk**, Chief Specialist, International Cooperation and the EU Integration Office, Dpt. of Strategic Development, State Agency on Energy Efficiency and Energy Saving of Ukraine, **Serhii Gerasymov**, Head, Cooperation with International Organizations and European countries, International Cooperation Dpt., Ministry of Energy and Coal Industry of Ukraine, **Anastasiia Hryhorenko**, State Expert, Expert Group on Strategic Planning, Information-Analytical Monitoring, Impact Assessment and Reporting Preparation, Directorate on Strategic Development and European Integration, Ministry of Energy and Coal Industry of Ukraine, **Olena Ivanova**, State Expert, Expert Group on Foreign Energy Policy, European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, Directorate on Strategic Development and European Integration, Ministry of Energy and Coal Industry of Ukraine, **Olha Stoliar**, Chief Specialist, Monitoring and Energy Balance Office, Dpt. of Strategic Development, State Agency on Energy Efficiency and Energy Saving of Ukraine

The main focus of the study trip of five civil servants in Slovakia was the Energy efficiency and use of renewables. During the meetings, they gained knowledge about the institutional and legislative framework as well as governance in the field, reform experience and the current measures of the respective institutions, including their competencies and interaction.

The official working program for the expert group was organized into five working days and combined various meetings in order for the Ukrainian delegation to share not only governmental experience, i.e. state organizations, ministries and their agencies, but also the

experience of companies that work in the field and have the first-hand experience with reality of legislative and institutional framework in practice as well as independent experts. The program of the study trip thus consisted of a series of meetings with leading representatives and experts of the official Slovak institutions, governmental agencies, companies (focused on using innovative solutions) and independent experts.

The team of Ukrainian experts was officially briefed and received by the RC SFPA director, *Mr Alexander Duleba*, and analyst of economic and development policy program *Mr Peter Brezáni* upon arrival during the orientation meeting.

The first day was opened with the meeting at the **Slovak Innovation and Energy Agency**. The goal of the 3 hour-long meeting was to give an official perspective on innovations and energy efficiency environment (raising awareness, legislation, regulation and financial support for various projects) in Slovakia, as well as to share problems and issues stemming from introduction of the changes. The delegation was received by *Mr Artur Bobovnický*, **Director, Innovation and the International Cooperation Directorate**; *Ms Kvetoslava Šoltésová*, Director, Legislation, Methodology and Education Dpt.. **In order to explain the financial mechanism of support for insulation of apartment buildings, Ms Zuzana Petrášová of Housing Development Fund gave presentation about the Fund and its mechanisms.**

In the afternoon participants visited **Ministry of Economy** of the Slovak Republic, DG for Energy Policy. During the meeting with *Ms Alena Žáková*, **Director, Dpt. of International Relations in Energy** and her two colleagues *Mr Miroslav Mariaš*, **Counselor, Dpt. of International Relations in Energy** and *Mr Juraj Rokfalusy*, **Counselor, Dpt. of International Relations in Energy**, the participants discussed various aspects of Slovakia's energy policy. **During the meetings they discussed policies, program and targets with special focus on National integrated energy and climate plan (energy part).**

The second working day started with meeting at the **Ministry of Environment** of the Slovak Republic. At the Ministry, delegation was received by *Mr Norbert Kurilla*, State Secretary of the Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic and *Mr Milan Chrenko*, Director General, Environmental Policy, EU and International Relations Department. After the brief introduction to the roles and responsibilities of the MoE, the discussion continued with *Mr Mário Gnida*, Emission Trading Department, Directorate for Climate Change and Air Protection, *Ms Viera Špalková*, Waste Management and Integrated Prevention Department, Directorate for Environmental Assessment and Waste Management, *Mr Ivan Kapitáň*, Waste Management Information System Division, Directorate for Environmental Assessment and Waste Management and *Mr Martin Gergely*, International Relations Department, Directorate for Environmental Policy, EU and International Relations. The topics included energy efficiency and the use of renewables from the perspective of environmentalists, waste management, and environment protection in the context of a climate policy of the EU and Slovakia and debate also included the **National integrated energy and climate plan (climate part).**

Meeting at **Regulatory Office for Network Industries** touched upon various issues related with the regulation of energy efficiency and use of renewables (incentive tariffs, non-tariff regulation). The goal of the meeting was to give an official perspective on regulatory policy in Slovakia, as well as to share problems and issues stemming from introduction of the regulatory measures. The delegation was received by **Mr Marian Záhora, Director, Dpt. of the International Cooperation; Ms Mária Bronišová Dpt. of the International Cooperation, Mr Marián Parkányi, Director, Dpt. of the Non-Tariff Regulation and Mr Martin Voda, Head of the Non-Tariff Regulation Unit.**

The last meeting of the day took part at the **Building Testing and Research Institute** with *professor Zuzana Sternová*, Director of the Institute. The meeting solely focused on energy performance of buildings, renewal of existing buildings, materials and presentation of the concrete project of complex and deep renewal of the existing apartment panel building in Devínska Nová Ves.

The third day was dedicated to discussion with practitioners. It started with *Ms Hana Ovesná* of **Slovak Green Building Council** who discussed the practical side of institutional and legislative framework in green building sector.

The meeting with Mr Radoslav Kňazúr of company **DATATHERM** focused on use of biomass for district central heating system in municipalities. The meeting was especially important, as Ukraine would like to officially reduce the use of gas for heating and sees biomass as one of the main source. The presentation of the application of modern western technologies to rather similar infrastructure was perceived as very useful.

The day ended with rather vivid and open discussion with representatives of the **Slovak Association of the Heat Producers, Mr Stanislav Janiš, Chairman, Board of Directors and Mr. Ivan Ďud'ák of Intechenergo. The meeting opened a lot of questions due to rather huge difference between Slovakia/V4 and Ukraine in the field of heating system.**

On Thursday, the meeting with the representative of company **Engul**, Mr Ľubomír Jančošek and representatives of company **Veolia** (Mr Peter Kurilla, operation manager) took part in Petržalka, in one of the installed cogeneration units (heating and electricity production). Participants could have experienced one of the 21 district heating plants at work with solutions constructed by the Slovak company.

The Ukrainian delegation then continued to **Slovak Association of Photovoltaic Industry and Renewables (SAPI)** and met the representatives of the law firm Evershed Sutherland Dvorak Hager – that cooperates closely with SAPI – *Ms Annamária Tóthová, and Mr Ján Macej. They discussed* energy regulatory framework as seen by association and its members (generations from renewables) and compared situation in Slovakia and Ukraine.

The last meeting of the day took place at **Union of Towns and Cities in Slovakia** as well as **Energy Management Dpt of Bratislava city**. At meeting, *Mr Milan Galanda*, Secretary-General, Union of Towns and Cities in Slovakia presented the activities of the Union, its projects and *Mr Miroslav Muška*, from the Energy Management Department, Bratislava-city, presented the energy policy of the capital. Meeting was concluded by *Ms Natália Šovkoplías*, National Platform of Covenant of Mayors coordinator, Union of Towns and Cities with the presentation of activities of Union within Covenant of Mayors.

The last meeting was a site visit to the Incineration site of **OLO Company**. Delegation received the complete tour of the site and discussed the use of waste for energy generation (heat and electricity) issues and options for Ukraine.

Feedback: In overall, Ukrainian delegation positively assess the structure of the program, the meetings and their information value as well as quality of experts. Participants were active, asked a lot of practical questions and expressed their will to continue in the cooperation in future. After the meeting with *Mr Andor Dávid* they stressed the necessity of the Civil Servants Mobility Programme for Ukraine as they see the exchange of experience as one of the crucial part of their reform effort. They suggested to organize program and concrete projects more specifically – only for specific institutions and/or departments, i.e. not mixing the institutions but rather just departments of one institution.

Bratislava, 9 – 15 February 2020 (Albania)

Participants: **Marjel Frroku**, Local Finances Directorate, Ministry of Finance and Economy of Albania, **Marjus Borokoci**, Public Debt Directorate, Ministry of Finance and Economy of Albania, **Eva Doda**, Directorate for Macroeconomic Policies, Ministry of Finance and Economy of Albania, **Doriana Toro**, Directorate for Fiscal Policies, Ministry of Finance and Economy of Albania, **Erla Kadiu**, Public Debt Directorate, Ministry of Finance and Economy of Albania

Main focus of the study trip of five civil servants in Slovakia was public finance and public debt. The five participants got acquainted with the institutional and legislative framework, as well as the governance in the field, concrete projects (at municipal level), and the current activities of the respective institutions, including their competencies and interaction.

The official working program for the expert group was organized into five working days and combined various meetings for the Albanian delegation to share not only governmental experience, i.e. the Ministry of Finance, but also the experience of various independent institutions, i.e. NGOs as well as the private sector. The program of the study trip thus consisted of a series of meetings with leading representatives and experts of the official Slovak institutions, governmental agencies, non-governmental institutions, institutes and banks.

The team of Albanian experts was officially briefed and received by the RC SFPA analyst of Economic and development policy program *Mr Peter Brezáni* and another RC SFPA analyst of Central and Southeastern Europe program *Ms Tatiana Chovancová* upon arrival.

The whole study trip officially commenced on Monday by the meeting at the **Debt and Liquidity Management Agency** where the participants learned about establishment of the agency, about its responsibilities and its position within the legal framework. The participants were hosted by *Mr Daniel Bytčánek*, the Director of ARDAL, *Mr Peter Šoltýs*, Head of the Debt Management Department, and *Mr Peter Šándor*, Head of Liquidity Management and Hedging Operations Department. The meeting that lasted four hours was very lively and interactive and met with a positive feedback from the Albanian participants, who also received a tour of the whole premises of the agency. In the afternoon, the program continued with the visit to **Slovenská sporiteľňa bank**, where the participants met with *Mrs Katarína Muchová*, Macroeconomic and Fixed Income Analyst at the Department of Market Research, to discuss planning and management of public resources, cooperation with major employers and other topics.

The second working day of the program commenced with first of many meetings at the **Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic**. These meetings were of key importance for the participants, as they were eager to learn know-how that could be used at their respective Ministry of Finance and Economy of Albania. First, the participants met with *Mr Juraj Šuchta*, Head of Fiscal Analyses Department of the **Institute for Financial Policy**, who explained how the institute began its existence and what its main role is, and then continued to discuss the topic of expenditure ceilings with the participants. After a short break, the participants were introduced to yet another fairly new unit of the Ministry, the **Value for Money unit**. *Mr Matej Kurian*, Team leader and Deputy Head, as well as *Mr Juraj Mach*, Team Leader and Director of Investment Evaluation Department, shared their knowledge of review of expenditures and assessment of investment projects. Albanian participants were especially eager to understand the position of these two units and its relative independence from the Ministry, as the Albanian Ministry currently does not operate on such level.

Second part of the day was dedicated first to the **Institute of Economic and Social Studies**, where the participants talked to the Director *Mr Richard Ďurana*. The engaging discussion was aimed at the topics of public finance and its possible reforms, debt crisis, budget responsibility and also various projects that the organization has introduced, such as The Price of the State. The last meeting on Tuesday was held with *Mr Ivan Mikloš*, President of the organization **Mesa 10** and more importantly, former Minister of Finance of Slovakia, and *Mr Martin Valentovič*, Senior Fellow at Mesa 10. The participants expressed strong gratitude for having an opportunity to talk to Mr Mikloš, who was one of the lead figures in the reforms at the Ministry of Finance. The participants thus had a chance to hear firsthand the details of such complex transformation and gained useful know-how that can be implemented in their country.

The third working day of the program commenced by returning to the Ministry of Finance, where the participants had two meetings with the **Department of Tax and Customs**. The first meeting was held with *Mrs Lubica Adame*, Director of Direct Taxes, *Mr Toško Beran*, Director of Financial and Tax Administration Legislation, and *Mrs Eva Mihálová* from the Department of Indirect Taxes. These three experts from the Ministry presented the topics of the Slovak tax system, income tax and transposition of direct tax directives, and VAT. The Albanian participants were interested to learn various curiosities of the Slovak tax system, for example the taxation of dogs. The second meeting was held with the experts *Mrs Mária Valachová*, Department of Tax and Customs, and *Mr Marek Kulka*, also from the Department of Tax and Customs. This meeting was focused more on the institutional arrangement regarding taxes – the relationship between the Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic and the Financial Directorate of the Slovak Republic (Financial Administration Act). These topics brought lively discussion since the Albanian tax system is more centralized, so the participants used this opportunity to learn how the system could be transformed more similarly to current Slovak system. This meeting was also the official end of the third working day.

The fourth working day was dedicated to the last meeting at the Ministry of Finance, with the **Department of Government Reporting**. *Mr Peter Ivánek*, Director of State Accounting and Reporting Department, and *Mrs Dana Czíkóová*, Head of Public Sector Financial Statistics Unit explained to the Albanian participants the ESA methodology and talked more generally about accounting and reporting at the Ministry. In the afternoon, the group of Albanian experts had a chance to visit the **Institute for Economic and Social Reforms** and meet with its Director, *Mr Peter Goliaš*. This meeting was a bit less formal but very informative and interactive, since Mr Goliaš introduced some of their most influential projects and how these projects slowly forced various public institutions to work more efficiently and transparently. This gave the participants a lot of inspiration from a very different perspective and thus provided a complex view on public finance in Slovakia.

The fifth and the last working day started at the **Bratislava Self-Governing Region**, where the Albanian participants met with *Mr Marek Vlčej*, Head of the Budget Department. Mr Vlčej provided an invaluable insight into the system of public finances on the regional level, thus offering the five experts even more wholesome knowledge of public finance in Slovakia. It was a pleasure to finish the whole program by meeting at the **International Visegrad Fund**, where the participants were greeted by the Director of IVF, *Mr Andor F. Dávid*. Mr Dávid introduced the Civil Servants Mobility Program to the Albanian group and also presented other influential projects.

Feedback: But the most critical part of the meeting was the discussion about the participants' impressions of the whole week. The Albanian experts expressed gratitude for receiving the opportunity to be a part of the CSMP program, since it offered them invaluable know-how and useful knowledge from various fields, thus fulfilling the aim of the program. The participants especially valued that the meetings were varied, offering the views and knowledge of the Ministry, various agencies, departments, but also of regional bodies as well as non-governmental organizations and the private sector. This offered a wholesome experience that

the Albanian experts can use after returning to their ministry. The eagerness to further use the presented knowledge could also be seen via the amount of questions the participants asked throughout the whole week. This resulted in five days full of engaging and interactive meetings that fulfilled the program's mission.

Bratislava, 23 – 28 February 2020 (North Macedonia)

Participants: **Stojan SLAVESKI**, Director, Directorate for Security of Classified Information, **Daniel TRENCHOV**, Head of Unit for Coordination and Support of Director's Cabinet, Directorate for Security of Classified Information, **Ivica GJORGJEVSKI**, Head of Unit for Communication and Information Security, Directorate for Security of Classified Information, **Mustafa MUSLIU**, Advisor, Department for Legal Affairs, Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic North Macedonia, **Marko AVRAMOVSKI**, Associate in the Interoperability Department, Ministry of Information Society and Administration of the Rep. North Macedonia.

On **February 24 – 28, 2020** GLOBSEC hosted group of experts from **North Macedonia** (further just MKD) dealing with cybersecurity, data and information security, digitalization of the public administration and protection of the critical digital infrastructure, that visited Slovakia as a part of the “**Civil Servants Mobility Programme**“ (CSMP) supported by the **International Visegrad Fund**. The background of experts was information security and digitalization, these topics were identified as potentially beneficial for North Macedonia from the point of view of developing own capacities within the public administration. The goal of the mobility was to share Slovak experience in these areas from the point of view of different interlocutors/specialists.

The agenda of the CSMP Study Trip to Slovakia was a good mixture of official meetings with Slovak experts from state institutions, NGOs and think-tanks as well as from the business.

The agenda of the Study visit started with the series of meetings at the **National Security Authority of the Slovak Republic** (NBÚ SR) on morning of FEB 24. There they met with the Director of the **National Cyber Security Center (SK CERT) Mr. Rastislav Janota**, who explained them the division of work at the NBÚ SR, which part does what, he also spoke about his main domain - the working of the Slovak CERT, including legal framework, operational experience as well as responses to cyber threats endangering the Slovak Internet networks. The Macedonian guests had also opportunity to see the operational center of the Slovak CERT and discuss with Slovak experts about handling of potentially dangerous situation in the cyber space. They discussed also the challenges posed by the intelligent industry (industry 4.0) and about the security of digitally provided state services to its customers – i.e. citizens. E-GOV without secured connection and without cyber security does not make sense. After that the delegation from MKD met with group of NBU SR experts that deal with the classified information protection, who gave them briefing on the Slovak legislature and

approaches to the protection of the classified information. The Macedonian guests were especially interested in the system cooperation with the NATO, as their country is expected to join the Alliance soon and they will be on the receiving end of classified information shared with Allies.

After that the delegation moved to the premises of **the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic**, where they met with **Amb. Ján Pšenica**, Director of the Department for the Western Balkans and Turkey and **Mr. Lánik** from the same Department responsible for MKD. Amb. Pšenica introduced reforms and transformation changes that Slovakia had to undergo during the accession period and made parallel with the situation where North Macedonia stands now. Appreciated the agreements with neighbours especially with Greece and Bulgaria, that cleared the way for potential opening of accession talks with MKD. He also assured Macedonian guests, that Slovakia stands firmly in supporting the enlargement process of the EU. At the same time Slovakia supports the NATO enlargement and congratulated to guests that within weeks maximum months North Macedonia will become the 30th Ally. He also mentioned assistance that Slovakia could offer to MKD in form of sharing expertise and know-how. At this point he mentioned programme Sharing Slovak Experience by the SlovakAid. As the Director of the Western Balkan Department he is not satisfied with the volume of the Slovak trade with the region, that constitutes only 1% of the total Slovak export and that is way too less for the region that is of such a strategic value for the Slovak Republic. But to enhance the trade between Slovakia and the region is a task for business-people to pay attention to. The Macedonian delegation was interested especially in the Slovakia's position towards the new methodology for the EU Enlargement proposed by France. They were also interested whether Slovakia sees the possibility of starting the accession negotiation with North Macedonia and Albania soon. Amb. Pšenica declared that Slovakia supports opening negotiation chapters already in March and we are receiving some positive signals also from Paris, that France will not block the process again, but the decision will still depend on the European Commission's evaluation of progress of MKD and ALB (Progress report).

After the meeting at the MFEA SR, the delegation met with **Mr. Ronald Blaško**, Executive Director of the **AmCham Slovakia**, who introduced to them the initiative **SlovakAI** as a tool to enhance introduction of artificial intelligence in Slovakia in all those sectors, where it could be beneficial and could lead to better effectivity, saving human's work and foster further technological development.

The second day the delegation started with series of meetings in the **Office of the Vice-Prime Minister for Investments and Informatization**. First they met with **Mr. Ján Majtán**, Director General of the Cyber Security Division who was accompanied with couple of cyber security experts from the Slovak GOV CERT and CSIRT. GOV CERT is responsible for cyber security of the most, of the public administration, it has over 300.000 clients – from towns and cities, through state institutions, state offices and state companies. Of course, not all of its “clients” are endangered by cyber threats equally – some are more exposed than the others. The Office sets also rules for the Governance in the public administration cyber security area. As an example of their work he mentioned countering of DoD attacks on Slovak government

web-pages, that hit Slovakia during the Slovak Presidency in the Council of the EU in 2016. He spoke also about close cooperation of main bodies responsible for cyber security of Slovakia: Military Intelligence, SIS, NBU and the GOV CERT under the Office of the Vice-PM. His colleagues from the technical department explained the structure of GOV CERT, that has 3 departments: technical (that provides so called 1st and 2nd line (back-up) of defence; analytical department that evaluates the traffic and incidents on the government network and the forensic department that does the evaluation of cyber incidents and malware evaluation.

The meeting continued with the presentation by **Mr. Juraj Kubica**, expert from the Department of Digital Agenda, Office of the Vice-Prime Minister, who spoke about the digitalization of the public administration as a mean to save resources – human work, finances as well as time. He introduced main programmes their Department is responsible for such as “emerging technologies”, AI in public administration, use of blockchain in public administration. The Macedonian guests were interested how Slovak side is motivating people to embrace digitalization/informatization of the public administration. In North Macedonia there are also these initiatives to digitalize the public administration, but significant part of public servants are opposing changes and do not want to give up on paper. Slovakia has introduced laws and regulations and more or less forced its citizens as well as clerks to digitalize. That is also a motivation, on the other hand, however, the Office of the Vice-PM tries to promote digitalization and make PR campaigns in order people know how the public administration changed and how much money have been saved already.

After these meetings the delegation moved to the offices of the company **ESET**, where they met with representatives of watch-dog organization **Slovensko.digital** – founders **Mr. Gabriel Lachmann** and **Mr. Eubor Illek**. They introduced the activities of the organization as well as their modus operandi. Highlighted the lack of transparency in the Slovak IT-related procurements in the past, when money were not used effectively or for projects that would even work the way, they were supposed to work. They started to point out mismanagements in the public procurements related to the IT equipment and were trying to prevent these shady deals with committing technological providers to ethical code of conduct that was meant to fight the corruption in the sector. Now, Slovensko.digital is also an advisory body, that is being invited also by the state institutions that are interested in open and fair procurements. Apart from that, the organization is active also in area of raising awareness about the working of the public administration and operates number of web-portals intended for entrepreneurs but also common citizens to gain simple, step-by-step information on how to deal with different life situations (most recently famous app for registering to vote from abroad in the parliamentary elections in Slovakia).

The last meeting of the day was with representatives of the think-tank the **Slovak Security Policy Institute Ms. Monika Masaryková**, Director and **Mr. Viliam Kaliňák** editor of the **CyberSec.sk Portal**. They spoke about their information portal on cyber-security CyberSec.sk as well as their international projects in the areas of cyber security involving Visegrad countries as well as some NATO partners.

The day 3 started with the meeting at the Ministry of Defence of the Slovak Republic, where the delegation met with the Deputy Minister **Mr. Robert Ondrejčák**. Deputy Minister

welcomed guests from MKD with saying that Slovakia and he personally is glad North Macedonia is joining the NATO soon as the 30th Ally, finally. He also stated that it is in Slovakia's utmost interest that the accession negotiations with MKD start as soon as possible. Macedonian guests were interested in the Slovak military handling of the cyber threats. Deputy minister informed about the cyber security strategy that was adopted 10 years ago and started as a small cell at the Ministry of Finance, that transformed into the current system of number of operation centres aligned under the main SK CERT that is under the NBU SR. The operational institution dealing with the cyber defence of Slovakia is, however, the Military Intelligence, that is under the Ministry of Defence. He also explained that cyber security capabilities of the Slovak Armed Forces were just recently shifted under the new Special Operations Command, that integrates all special capabilities needed to tackle current hybrid threats. These cyber security capabilities are however only meant for the deployed Slovak soldiers in missions and operations abroad, they are not meant for the direct cyber defence of Slovakia. That is in responsibility of the Military Intelligence actually. Macedonian guests were also interested in learning about the deployment of the Slovak Armed Forces personnel in missions abroad, cooperation with the Western Balkan and about NATO initiatives in the cyber security domain.

After that followed meeting with **Mr. Emil Fírtoš**, President of the IT Association of Slovakia (ITAS) and **Mr. Pavol Frič**, Vice-President of ITAS. ITAS incorporates companies that deal with the IT sector in Slovakia, it has 106 members starting from small innovative start-ups all the way to the IT giants such as Microsoft, Dell, Oracle etc. Their topic of presentation was the digitalization of the Slovak public administration especially from the point of view of providers and tech-companies. They also explained the legal framework for the digitalization of the state institutions – to which ITAS experts contributed years ago. They shared Slovak experience with the digitalization – suggested number of best and worst practices. Digitalization in Slovakia was marred by bad projects or bad solutions and there has been number of failed projects that did not manage to deliver the service needed for the customers – those being either citizens or public administration employees. Macedonian guests were especially interested in how Slovakia copes with trainings and education of future IT experts as they are in a great need. The IT business sector has to – according to the President of ITAS – closely work with universities and try to attract smart students already at their early stages of study and motivate them with scholarships and internships. Unfortunately, less and less young people are studying relevant IT-connected majors in Slovakia, therefore IT companies have to go even to high-schools to scout for smart potential employees there and shape their interest in IT through events like hackathons.

Then the delegation moved to the GLOBSEC premises, where they met with representatives of the **National Agency for Network and Electronic Services (NASES)**, which is the state agency responsible for the e-Government and managing as well as protecting the digital public administration in Slovakia. Their experts – **Ms. Silvia Sekáčová**, head of the eGOV, democracy and open government department, **Mr. Juraj Rehák**, head of the department of security as well as **Ms. Eva Miková**, director of the office of the Director General of NASES – shared Slovak experience with implementation of the eGovernment in Slovakia; presented the features of Slovensko.sk central portal of the Slovak Public

Administration and discussed with Macedonian guests about providing digital services for citizens. They had opportunity to compare two countries e-GOV systems as North Macedonia is just building one and Slovakia is already refurbishing the existing one – Slovensko.sk. Second part of the presentation was about the protection of the Slovak e-GOV infrastructure and how the NASES is serving as the CERT for the e-GOV part of the cyber infrastructure of the Slovak public and state administration.

Marathon of meetings continued with representatives of **SOVVA**, which is basically an NGO oriented on supporting Research and Development (R&D) and fostering innovations. The topic of the discussion with Macedonian guests were digitalization solutions for industry, business and governments.

The fourth day started with the meeting at the **International Visegrad Fund**, where **the Macedonian delegation met with Ms. Marianna Neupauerova**, Deputy Executive Director of the Fund. Ms. Neupauerova introduced to the Macedonian guests goals and the functioning and history of the Fund. Explained different programmes and opportunities for experts and civil servants also from the Western Balkans and the Eastern neighbourhood countries. She mentioned also the **Western Balkan Fund**, modelled after the IVF, that is working in the region and supporting projects there.

Then continued with the meeting with **Mr. Matúš Šesták**, Director of the Analytical-Methodological Unit of the Public Administration Department. The topic of discussion was the digitalization of the Slovak public administration and electronic services for citizens of the Slovak Republic that are provided to citizens of Slovakia – eGovernment – but from the point of view of the Ministry of Interior SR as the main provider of the “content”. The meeting well connected with the previous meeting with the NASES, that is mostly the provider and up-keeper of the eGOV, whereas Min. of Interior is responsible for content of significant part of the e-GOV, but sharing it with for example the Financial Directorate (Finančná správa) as well as health providers and the Social insurance. Director Šesták explained system of evaluation and modelling of life situations and how they try to make e-GOV more user friendly, more effective and streamlined.

After that the delegation met with representatives of company **T-SOFT a.s.**, **Mr. Jaroslav Pejčoch**, Chairman of the Board and **Mr. Michal Zugárek**, Project manager, who introduced the Macedonian guests their solutions for the digitalization of the public administration and cybersecurity in specific area of national security.

Last meeting of the day took place at GLOBSEC premises, where Macedonian delegation met with **Ms. Alisa Muzergues**, head of the European Neighbourhood Programme, GLOBSEC Policy Institute and **Mr. Jan Cingel**, Research Fellow for the European Neighbourhood, GLOBSEC Policy Institute, who introduced them projects of GLOBSEC in the Western Balkan region in the past, current ones as well as intentions for the future. GLOBSEC representatives also used this opportunity to get feedback from participants about their study trip a their evaluations.

The fifth and the last day of the Study trip - the delegation departed for the International Airport in Vienna/Schwechat and returned back to Skopje.

Feedback: There were a few takeaways from this programme for the participants. First, North Macedonia's DBKI and Slovak NBU SR established first in person relations at the level of the Directors, they agreed to strengthen the cooperation and the Macedonian side even suggested one concrete TAEX project, they need a partner from the EU countries for. There is a perspective for cooperation in number of aspects of work of national security authorities, that were touched upon at the initial meeting.

Also, North Macedonia is very interested in learning more about Slovak experience (best and worst practices) with implementation of the e-GOV (Slovensko.sk) and share their own experience. The e-platform used in MKD is at the moment voluntary and it lacks stronger security authorization. It consists of just basic features, on the other hand it can be used also on mobile platforms, which Slovak portal Slovensko.sk can not do at the moment, but there is development in process to come up also with a solution for cellphones and tablets.

Furthermore, Macedonian side was very interested in learning more about the EU legislature that they need to adopt in area of e-GOV and digitalization and were also interested in benefiting from pre-accession funds aimed at this sector. For that they would be interested in partnering with Slovak institutions and companies to develop joint project. And last but not least, There was an interest from the side of Slovak IT association (ITAS) to develop contacts with the Macedonian counterpart – MASIT (Macedonian Chamber of Commerce for Information and Communication Technologies).