

Hungarian-Slovak Network to Reset Political Dialogue and Improve Bilateral Relations

July 20, 2010

The recent election of new governments in Hungary and Slovakia affords a perfect opportunity to reset relations between the two states. Both new administrations declared that improving bilateral relations is on the top of their policy agendas. We welcome these intentions as a good chance to restart Hungarian-Slovakian relations. Recent political discourse between these two EU and NATO neighbours has failed to meet the standards that their citizens demand. Paradoxically, relations between Hungary and Slovakia have been the Achilles' heel of regional diplomacy in the last few years even though their interests closely overlap, especially with respect to energy policy and the future of the EU.

The July 20 meeting of the four prime ministers from the Visegrad Group – Hungary, Slovakia, Poland and the Czech Republic – in Budapest offers a good first step toward mending fences. A new spirit of partnership between Slovakia and Hungary would also be a historic opportunity to use Visegrad cooperation as a tool for reconciliation at a time of crisis across the EU. It would strengthen ties between all Visegrad members, especially as Slovakia currently holds the presidency of the V4 and Hungary is preparing to take over the European Union presidency next January.

In order to take full advantage of the moment, political analysts, researchers and members of civil organisations in Slovakia and Hungary have created an open network to stimulate dialogue on issues that affect the entire Visegrad region. Members held their first meeting on July 19 to discuss perspectives on bilateral relations after the elections. Network members intend to build on the success of this first discussion by launching a series of public policy events in both countries' capitals starting in Autumn 2010. These discussions will seek to challenge political leaders, suggest policy standards and rejuvenate the neglected dialogue across the Danube.

The activity of radical nationalists and extremists in Slovakia and Hungary undermine their countries' reputations in the international arena. Our people deserve better than this. Central and Eastern European nations share a history and mentality that is bound to unite their citizens in a common destiny, not divide them.

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