

Dear Polyglots, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great honour to welcome you to Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia, at your world “Polyglots Gathering”, taking place in our country for the first time.

This special event is a unique opportunity to tell you the story of our young and modern country. We wish to show you its multi-lingual and multi-cultural character, rich history, breath-taking sights, but particularly its innovative and warm-hearted people.

It has been said that languages are the pedigree of nations. They are a major part of the world cultural heritage, and they need to be protected, promoted and further developed. Big or small, all languages deserve our attention. For that to happen we need to seek innovative methods to improve foreign language teaching, both at schools and through various non-formal forms of teaching.

Since its accession to the European Union in 2004 Slovakia has put together an inclusive discussion platform on the European Union, the so called “National Convention on the European Union”. It *inter alia* tackled at different levels the complex and unresolved problems of language communication in our common European house. It looked at it from its multi-lingual, multi-cultural and multi-religious angle seeking effective and widely accepted solutions. As a result a V4 conference on language policy (*Perspectives of language communication in the European Union*) took place in July 2016 as a major event of the Slovak EU Presidency. Its conclusions in the *Nitra Declaration* and together three papers (citizens’ integration in Europe, economic integration, the improvement of language learning and communication) are viewed as our innovative contribution to the on-going debate on the future of Europe. They are indeed food for thought and they should be widely studied.

I hope that through your discussions you will find many inspiring ideas and suggestions to maintain and develop our common linguistic heritage and to seek ways for better mutual language, interethnic and intercultural understanding of all people anywhere in the world.

*Dear visitors,*

I wish you a pleasant stay in our capital. I am confident that you will enjoy your stay and come back for a visit to discover in depth Slovakia’s many diverse sights and sounds exactly as its brand has it – “Good Idea Slovakia”.

Miroslav Lajčák  
Minister of Foreign and European Affairs  
of the Slovak Republic