Concept of Communications Campaign before Slovakia's entry into the North Atlantic Alliance

Background

Entry into NATO is in conformity with the national interests of Slovakia, as defined by all Slovak governments, as it presents an optimum safeguard for the country's external security.

So far, no information campaign on NATO and entry of Slovakia into NATO has taken place.

Public support for Slovakia's membership in NATO fell twice – after the parliamentary elections and following NATO campaign against Yugoslavia – and currently oscillates around 40%.

Euro-Atlantic integration and membership of Slovakia in NATO are defined as being in the country's national interests and standing above party lines, whose active pursuit requires the consensus and cooperation of political parties.

Rather than *ad hoc* solutions to situations that arise all of a sudden, PR work is a systemic effort based on continuous monitoring, indispensable in defining the campaign's objectives.

In designing and implementing a public awareness campaign, we must be aware of the existing constraints in terms of human resources, money and time (before NATO member states invite Slovakia to sign the Washington Treaty) involved. In order to ensure success in achieving the goals of our strategy, it is necessary to utilise the available resources most efficiently and maximise the coordination of individual actors.

This concept is compatible with the overall concept for Slovakia's integration (EU) and it may have a multiplier effect in the future. Implementation of this concept may lay one of the basic cornerstones of a modern identity of the state as a whole, which will be professionally defined and communicated.

The concept is open-ended and may be updated and supplemented along the way to reflect the needs identified from public opinion research.

The concept focuses on "Slovakia's entry into NATO", and not on forming attitudes toward NATO or EU. It is, therefore, highly pragmatic and specifically focused.

Structure of the Concept

I.

Public Opinion Analysis

Analysis of public opinion represents a key factor of success in the overall communication strategy. When it comes to such a complex issue, public opinion trends are often influenced by factors that are not at first obvious even to an experienced observer. The underlying principle is: the greater the scope for improvisation in PR work, the higher the likelihood of mistakes and the costs of remedying those mistakes. This is why the overall communication strategy must be built on a detailed and comprehensive public opinion survey that provides maximum precision in determining individual target groups and communication procedures. The formulation of hypotheses, as starting points of the survey, is a must in the preparatory stage. Based on the surveys carried out thus far, some hypotheses can be formulated already today; however, they must be verified and rectified through feedback from the focus groups to be formed before the main survey takes place. Organisation of focus groups appears necessary also due to the absence of a detailed public opinion survey on this particular topic. Absence of focus groups might, at a later stage when the communications strategy is implemented, invite an improvisational approach – which must be avoided as much as possible. In forming focus groups and preparing scenarios, it is necessary to grasp the broadest possible variety of environments. We consider 6 focus groups for the entire Slovakia as an optimum number. Focus groups will enable us to formulate good hypotheses for the main sociological research based on which the typology of target groups and communications instruments will be developed. During practical implementation of the communications strategy, it will be necessary (also in the interest of avoiding undesirable improvisation) to keep a close eye on the feedback from the public and on the activities pursued within the framework of this strategy. Based on the experience from neighbouring countries and PR experts in Slovakia, the follow-up surveys of public opinions should be carried out regularly, on a quarterly basis, to ensure appropriate feedback on how the implemented strategy has influenced public opinion. These follow-up surveys, conducted approximately until the year 2002, i.e. during the period defined by the National Programme for Preparation of Slovakia for NATO Membership, will enable us to fine-tune the focus of the strategy and thus eliminate inaccuracies and mistakes as much as possible.

Work with the Slovak Army

The Slovak Army represents a specific target audience of the PR effort. Even though there is a separate PR project falling under the Ministry of Defence, the NATO entry campaign plays a significant role within the framework of the overall concept of communications strategy. The public at large perceives NATO in direct correlation with the military and thus the image and performance of the military represents one of the most important factors in the formation of public opinion. Specific attention must be paid to professional soldiers, their education and training. In order to obtain a comprehensive and up-to-date picture of opinions on Slovakia's entry into the Alliance, it will be necessary to prepare and carry out a survey among professional soldiers and update it on a regular basis. The second part of the PR effort represents the positive educational influence of that the army environment has on conscripts, similarly as in developed democratic countries whose modern armies play an important role in the socialisation of individuals - in conformity with the principles and values of a democratic society. The long-term goal in this respect is to achieve a high level of integration of the army into society and attain a modern and pro-European identity for the Slovak Army.

Hypotheses for public opinion analysis and goals of the strategy

In the interest of proper implementation, it is necessary to formulate certain hypotheses that will help us keep the focus of the survey on qualitative rather than quantitative information. These hypotheses may be formulated on the basis of previous surveys on the same topic, knowledge of the Slovak political scene and the experiences from the neighbouring countries (Czech Republic, Hungary). Nevertheless, their verification through focus groups appears to be necessary.

Hypotheses:

- The theme of Slovakia's membership in the Alliance stands no longer above party lines (as mentioned earlier), because it was heavily politicised during the pre-referendum and presidential campaign. In spite of that, the theme can still be raised above party lines and gradually underpinned.
- A high percentage of popular support for entry into NATO can be achieved of the basis of emotional identification with this goal.
- Women, rural communities and the elderly show lower rates of support for entry into the Alliance. On the other hand, younger generation and people with higher education are more supportive.
- The word "Alliance", or "North Atlantic Alliance" is perceived more positively than "NATO".
- Since a large portion of the Slovak population prefers Slovakia's inclusion in the "pan-European security system" to entry into NATO, there is a potential to transform this support into preferences for the Alliance.
- The simplest way to bring popular support for entry into North Atlantic Alliance back to the 50% level is to win back those who 'retreated' after the elections of 1999 and during the Kosovo crisis. It is possible that this group does not harbour a permanent dislike for Slovakia's membership in NATO, nor has it defected to the camp of those who support other security

orientations for the Slovak Republic (neutrality, alliance with another state or grouping of states).

- A large portion of the population believes that membership in the Alliance is more expensive than non-membership.

Objectives of the Survey:

- To identify the image of NATO among the public (positives and negatives, reactions of people to individual topics). Subsequently, differences between the general and professional public must be identified.
- To identify the myths that influence the image of NATO among public.
- To identify target groups.
- To determine the grade of influence of individual opinion-formers on the public and on target groups.
- To determine whether to put NATO in the context of military or non-military issues.

Goals of the Strategy:

- People associate the entry of Slovakia into NATO mostly with the military and security-policy dimension. The strategy must focus on accentuating other areas than security policy. It will be necessary to carry out an analysis of the relationship between Slovakia's security policy and its economic situation.
- People perceive security policy issues rather emotionally and thus base their attitudes more on impressions than facts. Communications strategy must respect this emotional dimension, however, it should strive to bring a rational element into public discussions. Moreover, emotional themes cannot be communicated for an indefinite period of time; on the other hand, a rational dimension being there at all times creates a stable framework for the themes to be communicated on an ongoing basis. At the same time however, it is also necessary to coordinate the gradual use of emotional themes
- Entry of Slovakia into the Alliance should be presented as part of the overall integration, democratisation and economic processes in Europe and the CEE region in particular (EU, V4, CEFTA) and should form part of the image of a successful foreign policy. Slovak citizens must believe that Slovakia has a firm place in these processes and that it is interesting to other countries.
- It is necessary to start a systemic education of the population on this topic.

II.

Media Analysis

The quality of cooperation with representatives of individual media depends on the depth of our knowledge about their attitudes toward Slovakia's integration into NATO. Similarly, appropriate focus of our campaign requires knowledge about how the media present the topic to their audiences. Only based on a detailed picture of presented facts it is possible to design the correct focus communication activities.

Analysis of the media will give us an objective picture of how the media present the topic of SR-NATO within the context of the country's integration ambitions. The analysis should give answers also to the following questions:

- how much time the media devote to the topic,
- how frequently the media deal with the topic,
- what characteristics (attitudes, facts) prevail in media presentations connected with the NATO issue (or integration process),
- what attitudes are presented by government officials, ruling parties, opposition parties, NGOs, experts, armed forces, etc.,
- whether the coverage is restricted to news reporting, or the media also include commentaries and analytical features,
- to what extent the media interlink the topic of NATO membership with that of EU integration,
- what is the grade of emotionality (vs. rationality) in media presentations and under what circumstances,
- how individual media and their journalists identify themselves in the fields relevant to the topic,
- where journalists obtain most information for their presentations.

The analysis must cover the entire spectrum of the media - national, regional and electronic. In terms of quality, the analysis must go beyond being just a mere monitoring of media coverage - it must give interpretation of contents analysis, bring ideas for further communications and provide continuous feedback on the success of the strategy. We, therefore, recommend a combination of resources in the form of data and the staff of public administration plus independent experts. Therefore, we recommend to combine the data and experts from the state administration as well as independent agencies.

Media analysis should take place in two blocks:

1. retrospective view on the year 1999,
2. continuous monitoring in the period 2000-2001.

The analysis should cover all the relevant domestic electronic and print media (newspapers and selected magazines, circulated regionally and nationally).

The data collection will be ensured by NCMK, in cooperation with the Press and Information Centre of MoD or the Communications Department of the Office of Government. The sorting of data, based on instructions issued by the analytical team, will be ensured by NCMK in cooperation with MFA and MoD. The qualitative analysis will be ensured by a team of experts. Apart from analysing individual periods, the analysis will also contain recommendations for the formation of communication strategy (specified for individual communication channels) provided to the strategic team that will lead the entire project.

III.

Actors

Implementation of the communications strategy will require interaction of a large number of actors, whose efforts should be coordinated. Since the strategy is in the national interest of the Slovak Republic, its implementation must be supported by an active involvement of many institutions and organisations. Non-government organisations (NGOs) should play a major role in this. However, they must rely on interaction and cooperation with the Government's Committee for the Preparation of Slovakia's Entry into NATO, as well as with individual ministers, ministries and agencies of public administration who participate in the implementation of the NP PRENAME. Since the goal stands above party lines, it is necessary to ensure coordination between the MPs representing ruling coalition and opposition regardless of their political allegiances, as well as among political parties, as they always play a significant role when it comes to forming public opinion. Last but not least, the strategy must be implemented with the participation of individuals - personalities of political social or cultural life - who are interested in cooperating in the effort.

Government Officials

Government officials will bear the main responsibility for the presentation of the proposed strategy. The key figures here include the Prime Minister, and the ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defence (and the State Secretaries of these ministries). However, participation of other government officials will be indispensable to the strategy's success. One of the goals of the strategy is to present the entry of Slovakia into NATO as an affair that will influence all of Slovak society and whose relevance is not confined solely to the Slovak military. Cooperation of economic ministries will also be important, as will be the support and cooperation of other constitutional representatives, particularly the President.

Slovak Army

People tend to be influenced by personalities that the public identifies as experts in a particular field. Since the public associates entry into NATO mainly with the Slovak Army, experts in uniform are most likely to be able to influence public opinions. Their participation in various discussions will enable them to communicate to the public their involvement in peacekeeping operations under the auspices of NATO and the importance of such missions based on the experience of direct participants.

Spokespersons of Ministries

Spokespersons of individual ministries will be in direct contact with the Communications Strategy Centre. Their mission will be to distribute communications material prepared by the Centre in order to facilitate an expedient and coordinated dissemination of information. A high level of coordination will be particularly desirable among the spokespersons of the Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Office of the Government. Since entry into NATO is an issue that effects the whole nation, it is necessary to ensure coordination with all others sectors

influenced by preparations for NATO membership. Spokespersons of all ministries will be familiarised with the Communications Strategy and its updates.

Parliamentary Group

No concept of a public relations campaign can do without direct contacts of influential personalities with the public. Apart from media appearance, these personalities should also be in direct touch with people by traversing villages and smaller towns. In order to facilitate organisation and multiply the benefits of the effort, it will be appropriate to create two groups of personalities, who will be presented to the public and who will act in compliance with this concept and the recommendations of expert groups. The first, so-called "Parliamentary Group", will consist of MPs who are convinced about the need for Slovakia to become a NATO member. The group should encompass the broadest possible political representation (both coalition and opposition) so that its membership spans across the various political streams that exist on the Slovak political scene. The number of members should not be high (approximately 10) so that the audience is able to identify individuals with the mission of the entire group. Their common image should stem from perceptions like: "These people are determined to serve Slovakia as best they can, and this is what brings them together". The group should comprise political personalities of consensual type, acceptable not only to their supporters by also to the supporters of other political parties.

Friends of the Alliance

The second appropriate grouping for public appearances could be the so-called "Friends of the Alliance" association. This would be an informal institution associating personalities of political and social life who are prepared to promote and advocate the entry of Slovakia into the Alliance. It could be led by an honorary chairman or president, who should be a renowned, apolitical and generally acceptable figure (representative from the sphere of culture, a woman if possible, might be very appropriate). Other members of the association should include other well-known personalities, including government officials, NGOs, schools, churches, and the like. Involvement of security experts will also be desirable. The role of the association would be to instigate public interest in the issue during the first stage. In the second stage, with the public prepared to pay attention to the issue, the association should hold public discussions involving experts. Another role of the association will be to present a brief, yet convincing list or arguments in support of NATO entry; the tenets of the association could be used as such in a list. Members of the association should make combined public appearances (e.g. a politician and film actor) in order to accentuate the universal dimension of the topic.

One of the roles of the association will be to 'shape up' and promote the image of non-political experts. It would be very appropriate to shape up several such Slovak experts, plus one or two foreigners, who would become generally known in Slovakia.

Non-government Organisations

Non-government organisations should play a decisive role, give the whole topic a strong non-partisan dimension and bring it closer to citizens. NGOs have a large

experience from their previous activities, adequate human resources and ability to raise funds from supplementary sources. Moreover, NGOs can organise various events at universities and academic institutions. Their involvement would represent another step toward the development of a civil society, which is important also in terms of Slovakia's integration ambitions.

IV.

Target Groups

A thorough definition of target groups represents the key factor of success in the implementation of this concept. Target groups can be specified in advance, based on certain characteristics that may influence their attitudes toward entry into NATO or a tendency to change their positions. Specification can be done on the basis of existing attitudes:

- supporters of entry into NATO based on positive attitudes toward "pro-European" integration;
- opponents to entry into NATO based on positive attitudes toward "pro-European" integration;
- opponents to entry into NATO based on partisan identification,
- opponents to entry into NATO based on sentiments from the Yugoslavia/Kosovo crisis,
- former supporters, now opponents or undecided,
- young people of pro-European orientation, yet with "pacifistic" sentiments,

and the like.

Target groups may also be divided according to age, gender, political allegiances, former attitudes, current attitudes, etc.

V.

Work with the Media

Core to the deficiencies that persist in PR work is the lack of accurate information coming from the media. The misinformation means that not only the public at large does not quite understand the substance of Slovakia's integration endeavours, but also journalists show gaps in their comprehension (as analyses of individual media have shown) and are thus in need of a more comprehensive and accurate picture of the process of Slovakia's integration into trans-Atlantic structures.

Based on the aforementioned, the first and the most important step is to work with the media community. Government officials and experts from individual ministries should, therefore, maintain an open, direct and frequent communication with journalists. Building relations with the media is a long-term and ongoing process,

whose planning and coordination will also involve the PR centre of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In addition to press conferences and press releases, the flow of information can be maximised also by using a broad spectrum of activities aimed at increasing awareness among the media, e.g. informal discussions of journalists with experts from the state administration. Relevant authorities of state administration will lay the foundation for a system of permanent communication with journalists aimed at preventing the spread of unverified information, the subsequent denials or explanation of which would require extensive amounts of energy and resources. Public institutions should help journalists in mediating contacts abroad and selecting appropriate sources of information.

Cooperation with the regional media constitutes an integral part of the effort. It is necessary to ensure, subject to budgetary constraints, that regional media become as familiar as possible with the work and goals of the North Atlantic Alliance. Regional media are closer to the citizen than the national media and thus play a significant role in the development of a sound regionalism.

Work with journalists will require:

1. in cooperation with NGOs, to create a club of journalists covering international politics and specialising in security issues; in this sense, the club would represent a "foreign-policy community", where journalists might meet with experts from NGOs, members of parliament, particularly members of the Foreign Affairs Committee and Committee for Defence and Security;
2. the club should also be open to the journalists who cover domestic affairs, to ensure that the topic of entry into NATO gets onto the front pages of newspapers;
3. the club of foreign-policy journalists should be interlinked with the existing Army Club of the Slovak Syndicate of Journalists;
4. regular and frequent "OFF-THE-RECORD" meetings of journalists with (**mainly**) the Minister of Foreign Affairs, State Secretary of the Foreign Affairs Ministry and Chief Negotiator of the Slovak Republic, Minister of Defence and State Secretary of the Ministry of Defence. Later, such meetings could involve lower tiers of ministerial administration, e.g. directors of relevant sections and departments of ministries;
5. regular (as opposed to *ad hoc*) issuance of statements and positions on issues related to entry into NATO (in active cooperation with press agencies); sharing these statements and positions with journalists will reduce the incidence of misunderstandings and misinformation;
6. in cooperation with the Information and Press Department of the NATO HQ, to organise (twice a year) visits of selected Slovak journalists to NATO headquarters in Brussels; the visits should take place from the beginning of the next summit and their programme – prepared in cooperation with the Slovak mission to NATO – should also involve interviews with senior NATO representatives, whose publication will be in the interest of both sides;

a. it is also necessary to focus on journalists from regional periodicals and electronic media, because their rating among Slovak recipients is very high and their influence on the formation of public opinion is thus remarkable;
b. since the "women group" appears to be problematic (women are mostly against violence and wars), particular attention should be paid to female journalists who work with magazines for women;
c. organise visits of journalists to army regiments and other military establishments, meetings with the Slovak military and participation of journalists in various exercises of the Slovak military.

With the "community" of journalists and experts in international politics established, their relations and communication processes toward the public will take on a new dimension in terms of quality. Since the media have a major impact on the formation of public opinion, we will initiate public discussion on all aspects of Slovakia's entry into NATO through them. As channels of communication, we will use equally the print media, electronic media and Internet.

Print media

In our work with the print media, it will be necessary:

1. based on the "schedule of events" of NATO, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and Ministry of Defence (MoD), to ensure the publication of articles dealing with Slovakia's entry into the Alliance, particularly in those periodicals that are read by undecided voters or opponents;
2. to conclude an agreement on the publication of regular columns (pages) in one of the major nationally circulated daily papers;
3. to ensure regular publication of articles of individual political leaders and independent experts from the MoD and the Slovak Army on the pages of Slovak daily papers;
4. to hold regular press conferences (not only after business trips to in Brussels) regarding the dialogue on "Entry of Slovakia into NATO";
5. in cooperation with major opinion-making weekly papers, to help journalists arrange interviews and the coverage of interesting events of direct or indirect relevance to the issues of security policy;
6. to cooperate also with magazines read mostly by women and with periodicals of religious orientation;
7. to pay specific attention to cooperation with the regional media and journalists (press conferences during tours, provision of information directly from NATO HQ)

Electronic media

Apart from providing information, electronic media should also create room for discussion. Participants in round-table discussions should include both supporters and opponents of Slovakia's membership in NATO, because variety of opinions makes such programmes more attractive. Moreover, contradictory nature of discussion will enable us to highlight a number of facts and arguments that would otherwise remain unnoticed. Participation of experts will increase the credibility of information communicated to the audience. The public will be able to form opinions based on

arguments for and against. Should the opponents of NATO membership choose not to participate in discussions, their arguments "against" will not disappear from public life and experts will lose the possibility to uproot them in the public eye.

In cooperation with the public-service electronic media (Slovak Radio, Slovak TV), it will be necessary:

1. to participate in the production of programmes on the entry of Slovakia into NATO (from 1st September, Slovak Radio runs a programme entitled "Integration Talks" initiated by the MFA; something similar could be done also in the Slovak TV);
2. apart from narrowly specialised programmes, attention should also be paid to programmes for women and juveniles – these programmes should accentuate positive aspects, yet, it is also important to mention the negative or controversial ones, because in this way they can be properly explained

Internet

Internet is the only medium that enables direct transfer of information without mediation or editorialising by journalists. The home pages of individual ministries (MFA, MoD) must contain maximum information on the effort of Slovakia to become a NATO member, as well as information on NATO and its contemporary activities. Direct cooperation with the NATO and WEU Department of the MFA will be indispensable to ensuring regular access to up-to-date information. It will be necessary:

1. to create a special page dealing with the entry of Slovakia into NATO;
2. to set up e-mail boxes for the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Defence that will be used for direct on-line discussions with the leading officials of the two ministries responsible for integration into NATO.

VI.

Direct Communication

In the interest of a smooth and direct communication with citizens, it is desirable:

1. to set up a telephone line (answering machine) for citizens to drop in their messages and questions addressed to specific people – experts in the subject matter. Their answers would be later published in selected media (subject to agreement);
2. to sep up a "live" telephone line through which a specific political representative would chat, e.g. for one hour, with citizens calling in. The telephone number(s) would be published in agreement with journalists in the print and/or electronic media. Alternatively, the hot line could be operated by designated desk officers from the MFA and MoD who are competent to provide basic information and answer the incoming questions;

3. in cooperation with other public authorities and NGOs, to prepare displays of photographs featuring "pro-integration" theme that should be strongly emotional (even controversial); the display could be promoted, e.g. at schools, and through various accompanying events;
4. to prepare an analysis of the relationship between the security and economic policy of the state, which can be used as a supportive argument; the analysis should be preceded by a seminar attended by leading domestic and foreign experts who would deliberate on the issue;
5. to prepare a concise analysis of arguments presented by NATO supporters and opponents and take all the measures necessary to prevent the risks connected with the communication strategy;
6. in the spring (April-May 2000), to start a "tour" of Slovakia, to be replicated in regular waves, e.g. once every 2-3 months:

a. the highest representatives responsible for entry into NATO (Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defence) should be the first to go on the stump; the minister should be accompanied by a representative of an NGO and one celebrity, e.g. from the field of culture (consideration should be given to engaging some celebrities from the Czech Republic); the tour of one region could take approximately three days, during which the campaigners would hold meetings with secondary schools, universities, local offices of NGOs and municipal police, stage press conferences for regional journalists and give exclusive interviews to local TV or radio stations;
b. later on, the touring team would comprise state secretaries, MPs from the **parliamentary group,** and experts from NGOs**;**
c. due to the fact that women are a more sensitive audience, we suggest to engage women-politicians, representatives of NGOs (foreign policy), journalists and artists, who could also be on touring teams.

Work with teachers

Since the level of information among teachers (who teach civics) about Slovakia's ambition to become a NATO member is inadequate, we suggest that specific attention be also paid to this specific group. Information seminars for secondary school teachers should be held prior to the first wave of touring (as described above). These one-day seminars could take place twice a year in three largest cities – Bratislava, Banská Bystrica and Koąice (being 3 major catchment areas). Such seminars will provide an ample opportunity for teachers to meet and discuss with the highest government officials responsible for Slovakia's entry into NATO (MFA, MoD and Ministry of Education), experts from NGOs, Slovak Army and journalists.

At seminars, teachers would receive synoptic and concise brochures describing NATO organisation and the process of Slovakia's integration, to be issued in cooperation with NGOs. It would be most appropriate to have these seminars co-lectured by female lecturers (since most teachers of civics are women) in order to get the message across.

Further to the information seminars for secondary school teachers, discussions with secondary school students would take place (as part of the "tour"). With the first wave of "information campaign" accomplished (training of teachers, meetings with

students), it will be possible to announce a contest for the best essay on or about NATO among students; authors of ten winning essays could then spend several days at NATO HQ to attend interesting meetings with selected NATO representatives, prepared in cooperation with the Slovak mission to NATO.

Consideration should be given to organising other activities at universities in cooperation with NGOs.

Cooperation with opinion makers

The basic groups of public opinion makers in this particular field include:

a. journalists
b. politicians
c. academic community and experts
d. NGO representatives
e. representatives of industries (not only defence industry)

Our communication strategy must focus on the above-outline groups of opinion makers, as it is the most efficient way for communicating information to the public. Opinion makers must feel fully engaged in the dialogue about the entry of Slovakia into the Alliance and our communication strategy must be flexible enough to react to the feedback from these groups. Unless supported by opinion makers, communication strategy may not be successful.

Cooperation with public administration

Active participation of public administration is critical to achieving overall success in the implementation of the National Programme for Entry of Slovakia into NATO. The objective is to achieve clear identification of public officials at all levels with this foreign policy priority of Slovakia. Obvious lack of information on the Alliance itself and the reasons behind Slovakia's interest in becoming its member present the major problems of today. It is, therefore, desirable to issue a publication on the Alliance designed for public administration (the same publication as the one for schools can be used – the basic criterion is the use of plain language).

VII.

Division of Responsibilities

Activities of the PR working group, which was established on the basis of the Executive Program of Preparation of Slovakia for NATO Membership (EP PRENAME), must be supported not only by government and public officials, but also by independent PR experts. The overall strategy will be developed in close cooperation between these two parts of the working group. The working group will have two sub-groups: expert sub-group (comprehensive preparation of the concept) and communication sub-group (actual implementation). Until the working group is set up and fully functioning, some of its responsibilities will have to be assumed by the

relevant departments at individual ministries that will be later involved in the implementation of the communication strategy in interaction with the working group. These responsibilities include preparations for the implementation of specific objectives of the concept (MFA), regular monitoring on NATO and provision of information to members of the working group (MoD), or the preparation of a web-page (MoD, Office of the Government, MFA). It will also be necessary to make cooperation arrangements with NGOs (MFA) and start approaching those personalities who are willing to become engaged in the process of strategy implementation (MFA). At the same time, it is necessary to begin the publication of a concise periodical bulletin for journalists on Slovakia's entry into the Alliance (MFA, MoD, Secretariat of CG PRENAME).

1) Expert sub-group

This sub-group should comprise a Strategic Team and Analytical Centre.

a) Strategic Team

The role of the team is to design communication campaign as a complex communication project, participate in the preparation of the analytical part, evaluate and apply the outcome of analyses in developing communication strategy and integrate the suggestions brought forward by the PR Centre (see below).

The output of the Team's work should involve: messages, key themes, specification of target groups, definition of key forms of communication, definition of argumentation chains and focused emotional charges of communication, definition of weak links in communication and argumentation chains, timing of communication, media plans, topics for communication processes, topics for managed events, "direct political" and "apolitical" communication, procedures for reacting to "anti-propaganda".

The Team will also be responsible for campaign coordination, continuous monitoring and provision of feedback to those who implement communication outputs, proposals for corrective measures, suggestions, and monitoring of progress vis-ŕ-vis set objectives.

We suggest that activities of the Team be coordinated by the Department of Analyses and Planning of the MFA and Team members include representatives of MFA, MoD, Analytical Centre, PR Centre and advisors for strategic communication.

b) Analytical Centre

Analytical Centre will work in close interaction with the Strategic Team. The role of the Centre will be to analyse the existing analytical inputs, process the analytical tools necessary for the campaign, analysis of public opinion and media before the launch of the campaign – specifications for target groups, public opinion analysis and media analysis during the campaign, provision of feedback and suggestions to the Strategic Team. The Centre should comprise representatives of MFA, MoD and a processor of analyses.

2) Communication sub-group

If the work of the Strategic Team and Analytical Centre is to yield required results, it must be interconnected with the target recipient – the citizen. This is only possible provided that the composition of the communication centre (also referred to as "PR Centre") and plan of its activities are designed properly.

PR Centre

Also PR centre must operate in close interaction with the Strategic Team. The role of the PR Centre is to provide creative suggestions for implementation in line with the strategy (!), ensure implementation of communication outputs in cooperation with ministries and other entities, provide the Strategic Team with feedback on ongoing processes, and ensure efficient and effective implementation of communication outputs through direct events and support provided to political and non-political carriers of communication.

The Centre will comprise representatives of relevant departments at individual ministries and selected agencies.

VIII.

Timetable and allocation of funds

The timetable is subordinate to the overall goal of the concept, i.e. to ensure a general consensus on the issue among the public by the time Slovakia receives formal invitation to enter the Alliance. By the time of invitation, all the misinformation and counter-arguments will have been discussed and explained. The purpose is to avoid any negative surprises that might suddenly change the views of the public in the case of a referendum on entry into NATO. In the second phase, (immediately before entry into the Alliance) the communication strategy should present the topic as a success of the Slovak foreign policy rather than a struggle of arguments "for" and "against".

It is, therefore, necessary to carry out a public opinion survey (as soon as possible) that would verify and complement the working hypotheses of this concept and determine target groups. If necessary, it possible to find out approximate date prior to the survey by using focus groups. This sociological research must be prepared and evaluated by a group of experts (sociologists). The design of the sociological research must be such that it provides for regular updates and feedback. Information should be updated 4 times a year. During this phase of strategy preparation, cooperation with the National Centre for Media Communication (NCMC) will be important; the NCMC will evaluate and analyse the NATO-relevant public opinion surveys carried out thus far, conduct a continuous research of attitudes toward NATO membership among adult population, prepare scenarios for new surveys that will react to the needs and requirements of the PR Centre (e.g. attitudes of individual target groups requiring specific attention, motivation problems, explanation of individual types of attitudinal structures and their position in the system of values, etc.), formulation of conclusions and recommendations for the work of the PR Centre based on the results of surveys

and analysis of obtained information (correlation between the media preferences of population and attitudinal structures, socio-demographic composition of population and attitudinal structures, etc.).

It is necessary to immediately initiate activities toward the community of journalists; these activities must start already before the preparation of the basic public opinion survey. Since journalists mediate information to the public, state authorities and public institutions must cooperate with the media on the basis of maximum openness and accessibility.

Public opinion surveys and cooperation with journalists must start immediately. Subsequent stages are described in the preceding chapters (particularly "Division of Responsibilities") and the tables at the end of this document.

Sufficient funding is necessary precondition to the successful implementation of the communication strategy. This concept outlines financial coverage of those activities that can be foreseen at this stage. We propose that the funds allocated for the projects and activities performed on the basis of this Concept be added to the funds already earmarked for the implementation of NP PRENAME. These are off-budgetary funds (MoU type of funding) to be raised from privatisation and allocated to support development programmes of individual ministries (Government Resolution No. 985 dated 11 November 1999, sections C21 a 22). We propose that these funds be allocated to the budgets of individual ministries as follows:

Ministry of Culture of the SR: For the research part and communication strategy, allocation should be made to the Ministry of Culture, which will transfer the funds to the National Centre for Media Communication.

Ministry of Education of the SR: For the organisation of seminars for teachers, allocation should be made to the Ministry of Education, which may organise seminars through its methodological centres. Publication of materials for schools is also the competence of the Ministry of Education.

Ministry of Defence of the SR: Allocation of necessary funds will have to be made to support a bi-monthly in the English language entitled "Slovak Army Review", for information brochures to Slovak Army, for the publication entitled "National Security of Slovakia 2000" in Slovak and English, a manual of NATO designed for the so-called "security community", a promotional CD-ROM and VCR cassette on Slovakia and NATO. Other projects will be funded from the MoD budget.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the SR: Allocation of funds to the MFA to support the issue of a special publication on the preparation of Slovakia for NATO membership, information materials for defined target groups and start-up funds for the Friends of the Alliance association. For the security-economic analysis, allocation should be made to the MFA, which will transfer the funds to the Slovak Institute for International Studies (SIIS).

Apart from the above-outlined activities of individual ministries, the Concept envisages active collaboration with **non-government organisations** and organisations that receive funding on a contractual basis. It is necessary to allocate

certain amount of funds for the projects to be submitted by NGOs to the Committee of the Government for Preparation of Slovakia for NATO Membership. Although these funds would be technically allocated to MFA, decisions on their spending should be that of the Government Committee based on recommendations of the PR Centre, since the project will fall within the framework of NP PRENAME. This mode of funding has been proposed based on international experiences, particularly from the neighbouring countries. The projects to be submitted for approval to the Government Committee should be co-funded by NGOs, which can raise funds also from foreign donors and create the so-called "matching funds". Through an arrangement like this, the ministries will be able to save considerable amount of funds. In order to provide for **transparency in decision-making,** all decisions on the application of funds should be taken by the Government Committee. Tables below show the proposed application of funds. Quantification of budgetary consequences is in conformity with §51 of Act No. 303 Coll. on Budgetary Rules. Authors of this Concept propose increased allocations to chapters relevant to NP PRENAME in amounts indicated in Table 6 below.

Table 1: Ministry of Culture – Year 2000

Task	In cooperation with:	When	'000 SKK
Retroactive media analysis	specialised agency	February 2000	350,0
Continuous media analysis	specialised agency	monthly	75,0
Focus groups - 6x (implementation, evaluation, presentation)	Strategic Team, Analytical Team, PR Centre	February 2000	300,0
Initial sociological research	Strategic & Analytical Teams	March - April 2000	660,0
Continuous researches	Strategic & Analytical Teams	continually	750,0
Remuneration of external experts			150,0
Communication Strategy	Strategic & Analytical Teams	April 2000	300,0
Strategy updates	Strategic & Analytical Teams	continually	500,0
Total funding			**3 085,0**

Table 2: Ministry of Defence – Year 2000

Task	In cooperation with:	When	'000 SKK
Slovak Army Review magazine		6 times a year	1 800,0
Information materials for soldiers (2 types)		June 2000	600,0
Publication "National Security of SR"		December 2000	200,0
Information leaflets on NATO for general public	PR Centre	May 2000	600,0
Handbook on NATO for MoD, industrial and academic circles, journalists, etc.	PR Centre	September 2000	300,0
Promotional CD-ROM	PR Centre	July 2000	200,0
Promotional video		September 2000	250,0
Total funding			**3 950,0**

Table 3: Ministry of Foreign Affairs - Year 2000

(also activities of the PR Centre)

Task	Responsible:	In cooperation with:	When	'000 SKK
Information meetings with journalists	MZV SR		forthwith	-
Work with selected groups of journalists	PR Centre		March 2000	-
Special publication on Slovakia and NATO	PR Centre	MZV SR, ÚV SR, MO SR	September 2000	1500,0
Information materials for defined target groups	PR Centre	MZV SR, ÚV SR, MO SR	June 2000	1200,0
Formation of the Parliamentary Group	MFA, Parliament		February 2000	-
Formation of the "Friends of the Alliance" association	PR Centre	MZV SR, MVO	March 2000	50,0
Tours of personalities	PR Centre		May 2000	-
Tours of experts	PR Centre		May, September 2000	-
Security-economic analysis	SIIS	MH SR, MO SR, MZV SR	September 2000	100,0
Approval of NGO projects	Government Committee PRENAME	PR Centre	throughout 2000	15 000,0
Total funding				**17 850,0**

Table 4: Ministry of Education - Year 2000

Task	In cooperation with:	When	'000 SKK
Publication for schools	MFA, Office of the Government, PR Centre	March 2000	2 000,0
Handbook for teachers focusing on foreign and security policy	PR Centre, MoD, MFA	March 2000	2 000,0
Seminars for teachers	PR Centre, NGO	April and October 2000	1500,0
Total funding			**5 500,0**

Table 5: Total funding required in the year 2000

Sector	'000 SKK
Ministry of Culture	3 085,0
Ministry of Education	5 500,0
Ministry of Defence	3 950,0
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government Committee for preparation of SR for NATO membership	17 850,0
Total	30 385,0

Table 6. Increased financial costs for NP PRENAME in the year 2000.

Sector	Projected financial costs ('000 SKK)	Additional costs ('000 SKK)	Total adjusted financial costs for 2000 ('000 SKK)
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	5 390,0	17 850,0	23 240,0
Ministry of Defence	785 242,7	3 950,0	789 192,7
Ministry of Culture	-	3 085,0	3 085,0
Ministry of Education	1 000,0	5 500,0	6 500,0
Ministry of Finance	337,0	-	337,0
Ministry of Economy	88 000,0	-	88 000,0
Ministry of the Interior	393 520,3	-	393 520,3
Ministry of the Environment	560,0	-	560,0
State Reserves Administration	900,0	-	900,0
Office of the Government	50,0	-	50,0
Total	1 275 000,0	30 385,0	1 305 385,0