

Think  
Visegrad  
V4 Think-Tank Platform

# NEWSLETTER

2018 March-April

Think Visegrad in Brussels

## Editorial



Dear colleagues,

You are reading the second newsletter of the “Think Visegrad in Brussels” in 2018. As usual, we are bringing you news concerning activities of our platform, both in Brussels and in the Central Europe.

Think Visegrad in Brussels has started its series of 2018 events with an expert workshop on PESCO and European Strategic Autonomy, held on April 9<sup>th</sup>. Next event will be a debate titled “Echoes of the EU – Western Balkans summit: New beginning?” assessing the outcomes of the Sofia summit between the EU and Western Balkans states – join us on May 23<sup>rd</sup> in the European Parliament! We would also like to invite you for an conference “New transatlanticism in Central Europe: the V4 and NATO in question”, which will take place on June 7<sup>th</sup>.

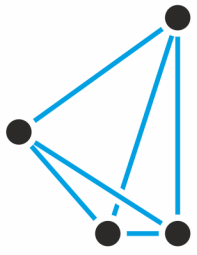
I would also like to draw your attention to activities of our member institutes. In the March-April newsletter you will find various publications on current topics (such as the post-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework, Western Balkans or Rule of law), invitations and reports of events (don't miss a debate with Lt. Gen. Frederick Ben Hodges in Budapest on May 8<sup>th</sup>!) and even information about career opportunities (Institute for International Relations is looking for a Research Director and Senior Researcher).

We have also updated our website with all the information about our 2018 events, you can find it [here](#).

I wish you all a great spring and hope to see you at our events in Brussels!

Kind Regards  
Zuzana Stuchlíková  
Head of Brussels Office. EUROPEUM





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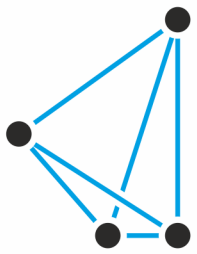
## In this Issue:

- **Past events**
- **Upcoming public events**
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- **What is the 'Think Visegrad in Brussels' project?**

## Past events:

[PESCO: What role for the V4 in developing European Strategic Autonomy](#)

The expert roundtable titled 'PESCO: What role for the V4 in developing European Strategic Autonomy' took place on Monday 9th of April 2018 at the Permanent Representation of the Czech Republic to the EU. The event was hosted by Ambassador Tomáš Szunyog, Permanent Representative to the Political and Security Committee who was joined in the panel by Gergely Varga (IFAT) and Justyna Gotkowska (OSW). The event aimed at bringing forward opinions and ideas from different actors within the EU, regarding contributions to the PESCO projects and the vision of European Strategic Autonomy. You can find more information and a report from the event [here](#).



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## Upcoming events:

### **Echoes of the EU – Western Balkans summit: New beginning?**

When: **23 May 2018, 14:00-16:00**

Where: **European Parliament**

About: The announced year of possible EU membership of Serbia and Montenegro in 2025, as well as plan to open the accession talks with Albania and FYROM, has changed the substance of EU-Western Balkans relations significantly. What kind of substantial change did the Sofia Summit bring? What should be next steps in follow up of the summit? How the EU should facilitate the substantial challenges that Western Balkan countries face? Those are the key questions we will try to tackle.

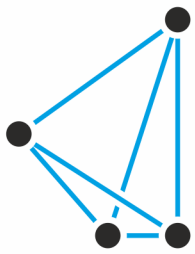
### **New transatlanticism in Central Europe: the V4 and NATO in question.**

When: **7 June 2018, 17:00 – 19:00**

Where: **German Marshall Fund, Residence Palace, Rue de la Loi 155, 1040 Bruxelles, Belgium**

About: The Visegrad Four countries will, at the occasion of the 2018 NATO Summit, celebrate between 15 and 20 years of NATO membership. This represents a good opportunity to understand what the Atlantic Alliance has brought to these countries and how it continues to be perceived today. NATO remains the cornerstone of the four countries' security, but different perceptions of American leadership in the last few years, and also security perceptions that have diverged in view of Russian activism mean that these countries have not only different expectations from NATO, but also from the European Union as a security provider.

This event will therefore explore the expectations of Central European countries from the next NATO Summit but also from the Alliance beyond July. V4 countries of course remain committed to long-term deterrence measures towards Russia but seem to be at a loss to contributing significantly given their lacklustre levels of defence spending, and also other commitments in other frameworks – the EU, for example



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## From our members:

### IFAT

#### Events:

##### Strategic challenges on NATO's Eastern Flank

Time: **Tuesday, May 8, 2018 3:30 PM - 5:00 PM**

Location: **Institute for Foreign Affairs and Trade - 1016 Budapest, 13-15. Bérc Street, Hungary**

About: The Institute for Foreign Affairs and Trade has the pleasure to invite you to its upcoming event titled **Strategic challenges on NATO's Eastern Flank with Lt. Gen. Frederick Ben Hodges** (US Army, Ret.), Pershing Chair in Strategic Studies Center for European Policy Analysis (CEPA), Washington DC, USA; Former Commanding General of US Army Europe.

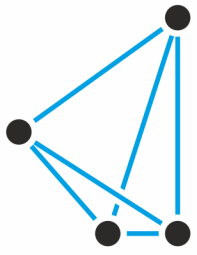
##### Returning from violence: How to tackle the foreign fighters' problem in the Western Balkans?

Time: Thursday, April 26, 2018 10:00 AM - 5:30 PM

Location: Institute for Foreign Affairs and Trade - 1016 Budapest, 13-15. Bérc street, Hungary

About: The Institute for Foreign Affairs and Trade, in cooperation with the Slovak Foreign Policy Association, the EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy and the Warsaw Institute for Strategic Initiatives organized a conference on 26 April as part of the project entitled "Returning from violence: How to tackle the foreign fighters' problem in the Western Balkans?" which is implemented with the financial support of the International Visegrad Fund. The conference brought together experts from the Visegrad and the Western Balkan countries in order to analyse the foreign fighter phenomenon from thematic and country-specific perspectives.

In accordance with the comprehensive approach of the project, the panellists covered various aspects of the phenomenon, including recent trends, propaganda and recruiting in the cyber domain, EU approach to the issue, conflicts (Syria/Iraq, Ukraine) and the measures that were put in place in the countries to decrease the outflow of these people and to manage the challenges related to returnees. The experts drew attention also to the changing dynamics of these outflow depending on the phases and international contexts of the conflicts in concern and the discrepancies in the application of criminal code that might have further implications for the Western Balkan region



## EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy

### Publications:

- „New MFF – Five Challenges for the Czech Republic“, Vít Havelka

The paper is based on the presumption that the main interests of the Czech Republic are to prevent radical cuts in the Czech cohesion policy envelop, to maintain the current CAP direct payments system, and to strengthen the budget areas devoted to border protection, defence, internal security, and development aid. This cannot, however, be achieved without an increase in the total size of the new MFF, meaning that the financial contributions of the member states will have to be increased.

- Eastern Monitor „Enlargement to the Western Balkans: Finally Ready to Commit?“, Jana Juzová

The release of the European Commission’s “Enlargement Strategy” represents an attempt by the EU to demonstrate its commitment to the region’s future inside the EU and to motivate Western Balkan leaders to accelerate the adoption and implementation of the necessary reforms.

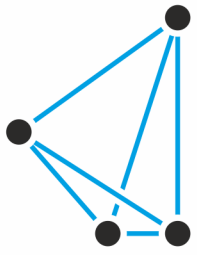
The Strategy represents a breaking point after a decade of enlargement fatigue because it offers, for the first time, a clear date for possible accession of the “frontrunners”. However, it fails to address some of the most problematic obstacles the enlargement to the Western Balkans currently faces.

- Eastern Monitor „Serbia on the EU path: A troublesome journey through uncharted territory“, Marko Stojič

The Commission has recently published the Enlargement Strategy for the Western Balkan candidates which, for the first time, outlines an indicative plan for the accession of the two frontrunners – Serbia and Montenegro.

The Strategy specifies that ‘with strong political will, the delivery of real and sustained reforms, and definitive solutions to disputes with neighbours’, the two countries could potentially be ready for membership in a 2025 perspective. At the same time, both countries still face considerable challenges on their protracted EU paths.

How realistic is 2025 as a potential year for Serbian EU accession, and what are the remaining major obstacles to achieving this ambitious goal?



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- [Brussels Monitor „Europe awaits: German GroKo and what it means for European partners“](#). Martin Michelot and Vít Havelka

Vít Havelka and Martin Michelot explore the impacts on German policy towards the EU after a Grand coalition of SPD and CDU/CSU. They examine in detail, how the new German government envisions Europe, and what implications this vision may have for the Czech Republic in particular and for Europe in general. This is especially relevant given European elections coming up in 2019, which will be pivotal in shaping the future of the European Union.

- [„To dig or not to dig: three reasons why coal is the fuel of the past“](#), Kateřina Davidová

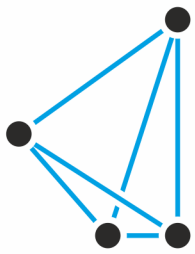
Kateřina Davidová wrote a policy paper on the topic "To dig or not to dig: three reasons why coal is the fuel of the past", which served as a background material for the fourth debate from our project 'Prague Climate Talks'. The event took place on April 19th, 2018.

The world of energy is transforming at a fast pace and it is becoming increasingly clear that out of all the currently available sources of energy, coal will be at the receiving end of this global shift. There are three main reasons for this trend: falling global demand, decreasing global investment into new projects, and an increasing pressure to make the coal industry comply with climate and pollution regulations.

- [„Hungary, Poland: the difficult choices ahead for the European Union“](#), Nicolas Bouchet

Confrontation within the EU over its liberal democratic standards will not go away soon. Europe's illiberal trend is not reversing. Illiberal governments or parties want no limits from EU membership on how they conduct domestic politics.

The strategy to achieve this is to build a non-interference coalition and reframe the EU discourse on democracy. This would change the essence of the union as a community of values and could one day confront members with an existential choice between the community or the values.



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## Events:

### Prague European Summit

Fourth annual Prague European Summit will be held on 19 - 21 June 2018. Once again, Prague will become centre of a strategic and open debate on the future of the European Union. The conference is organized by the EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy and Institute of International Relations, with the institutional support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic and the Representation of the European Commission in the Czech Republic. More details will be revealed soon.

### European Summer School

Traditional 16<sup>th</sup> summer school will take place from July 14 to July 24, 2018. Applications for the summer program are now opened, apply [here](#).

## **Public consultations by the European Commission:**

### The European Heritage Label action

Consultation period: 2 March 2018 - 24 May 2018

Topic: Culture and media

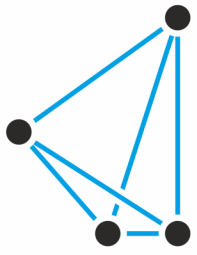
About: The aim of this public consultation is to gather the views of all interested citizens and organisations on the role that cultural heritage can play in bringing European citizens closer to the Union, specifically through the European Heritage Label action. A second aim is to receive additional information about the operation and results of the action during the first six years since its creation (2011-2017), which could not be gathered through desk research.

### Public Consultation on the Evaluation of the European Union's Policy Coherence for Development (2009-2016)

Consultation period: 20 February 2018 - 31 May 2018

Topic: International cooperation and development

About: The Council and the European Parliament have requested an independent assessment of progress regarding the EU's Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) commitment. An external evaluation has been commissioned by DG DEVCO to cover the period 2009-2016 and will provide stakeholders with an overall independent assessment of the EU's actions on PCD. It will also serve to identify key lessons and produce recommendations to improve current actions and inform future choices for the EU's approach to PCD.



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## Public consultation on integration of long-term unemployed into the labour market

Consultation period: 2 May 2018 - 31 July 2018

Topic: Employment and social affairs

About: The aim of this consultation is to gather views on the measures proposed in the Council Recommendation on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market (2016/C 67/01), and on their implementation, as well as to shed light on future possible action to support the long-term unemployed.

Addressing long-term unemployment - unemployment lasting more than 12 months - is a key political priority of the Commission's jobs and growth strategy. On 15 February 2016, the Council adopted the Recommendation.

## Think Visegrad platform

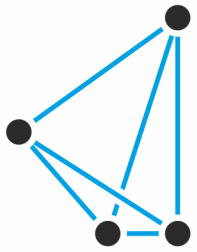
Think Visegrad – V4 Think Tank Platform is a network for structured dialog on issues of strategic regional importance. The network analyses key issues for the Visegrad Group (V4), and provides recommendations to the governments of V4 countries, the annual presidencies of the group, and the International Visegrad Fund. Think Visegrad covers thematic priorities of V4 including V4's internal cohesion, EU institutions and politics, the Western Balkans, relations with Eastern Partnership countries, development assistance, migration, security, energy security, environmental protection, energy security etc.

The formation of the network of V4 think-tanks was one of the priorities of the Czech Presidency in the Visegrad Group of 2011–2012. This idea reflected the long-term interest and willingness of Central European think tanks to enhance their cooperation within the Visegrad Group and to deepen its cohesion. Think Visegrad was established in 2012 by eight V4 research centres and institutes, and is funded by the International Visegrad Fund.

The project brings together all the members of the Think Visegrad network, namely:

- Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association (RC SFPA), Bratislava (main coordinator)
- Central European Policy Institute (CEPI), Bratislava
- Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW), Warsaw
- Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM), Warsaw
- Institute for Foreign Affairs and Trade (IFAT), Budapest
- Centre for Euro-Atlantic Integration and Democracy (CEID), Budapest
- EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy, Prague
- Institute of International Relations (IIR), Prague





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## What is the 'Think Visegrad in Brussels' project?

In the first half of 2016, the Think Visegrad platform members agreed on the idea proposed by the EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy, to create a common representation office in Brussels. The main motivation for it is the need to encourage debate on issues of common interest to the EU and the V4 and explain the positions of the V4 to a wide audience. We would like to project an image of constructive partners, to explain the dynamics of the debates within our regions and to highlight our active contributions to EU policy-making. With this view and with the aim to boost discussions specifically on the Czech Republic and the EU, EUROPEUM has opened its Brussels office in January 2016.

The pilot project run in the second half of 2016 and consisted of many interesting and successful events. The second part of the project was approved in June 2017 and continued until the end of the year. Third phase of the project will be realized throughout 2018.

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 Visegrad Fund



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