

Think  
Visegrad  
V4 Think-Tank Platform

# NEWSLETTER

2019/01

Think Visegrad in Brussels

## Editorial



Dear colleagues,

Welcome to the first think Visegrad in Brussels newsletter of 2019. We are happy to announce that the Think Visegrad in Brussels project has been supported by the International Visegrad Fund again and will continue to bring Central European experts to Brussels debates also in 2019.

With the new year come also new opportunities and I would like to bring your attention to a call for application for eight Visiting Fellowships at the Think Visegrad institutes, available for non-V4 experts during Summer and Autumn of 2019.

This newsletter also brings you tips for many interesting readings from our researchers. Jana Jůzová (EUROPEUM) looks into the role of the Visegrad countries in the Western Balkans. Kamil Frymark (OSW) focuses on the new political dynamics between the Visegrad states and Germany. Daniel Šitera (IIR) and Tomáš Madleňák (SFPA) focus, in their respective papers, on economic topics – Šitera's paper focuses on Visegrad added value in the new Cohesion Policy and Madleňák tackles a reform of the Economic and Monetary Union. You can find many more recommendations in the section "From our members".

We will continue following the latest developments both in Central Europe and in Brussels and we are currently working on events calendar for 2019. Keep following the website of the Brussels office of EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy for more updates and details.

We are looking forward to seeing you at our events!

Kind Regards  
Zuzana Stuchlíková  
Head of Brussels Office. EUROPEUM

 EUROPEUM  
Brussels Office

#### In this Issue:

- **Upcoming events**
- **Call for applications**
- **Publications**
- **From our members**
- **Public consultations by the European Commission**
- **Think Visegrad platform**
- **What is the 'Think Visegrad in Brussels' project?**

#### Upcoming events

In 2019, you can look forward to many debates featuring experts from Central Europe. For more information on exact days and registration contact us at [brussels@europeum.org](mailto:brussels@europeum.org).

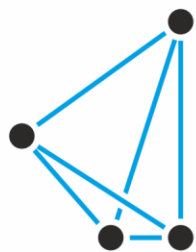
- Regional cooperation in Europe after Brexit
- Visegrad Four: 15 years in the EU
- V4 and Western Balkans
- EU/V4 and Global Protectionism
- Improving infrastructure to promote competitiveness
- The future of the EU-UK security relationship seen from central Europe
- Priorities for the new European Commission

#### Call for applications

##### Eight visiting fellowships for non-V4 experts

Think Visegrad offers Eight visiting fellowships in Summer or Autumn of 2019. Each of the core network think tanks will host one non-V4 expert fellow. Each selected visiting fellow will have the opportunity to take part in the institute's activities for a period of up to eight weeks. During this period, each fellow will be expected to develop a policy paper and deliver one public presentation on a preagreed topic. A lump sum of €3,000 will be given to each selected visiting fellow to cover all necessary costs and expenditures related to his or her stay at the hosting institute.

Expert fellows from non-Visegrad countries with at least five years experience in their field of research are eligible. Preference will be given to applicants who have already made a significant contribution in their field. Application dossiers consisting of the application form, structured CV (including the list of publications) and a motivation letter (maximum 300 words) are to be submitted to [thinktank@sfpa.sk](mailto:thinktank@sfpa.sk) by April 14, 2019.



Think  
Visegrad  
V4 Think-Tank Platform

# NEWSLETTER

2019/1

Think Visegrad in Brussels

## Publications

### [Visegrad in the Western Balkans: Losing ground?](#)

Jana Juzová, as part of the project Think Visegrad, published a policy brief on the role of the V4 group in the Western Balkans.

The Visegrad countries have since their own accession to the EU been one of the most active European actors advocating for further EU enlargement towards South- Eastern Europe. On the joint Visegrad-level as well as in their own foreign policies, the Western Balkans have a special position; the V4 countries provided them support on their path of European integration with transfer of know-how based on the V4's own successful experience with economic and political transformation, regional cooperation and Euro-Atlantic integration. In spite of the positive impact of the Visegrad policy towards Western Balkans, recent trends, such as Hungarian PM Orbán's connections to autocratic leaders in the region are weakening not only Visegrad's legitimacy as advocate for transformation of the region and its integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures, but also the normative power of the EU.

### [Finding a Visegrad added value in the new Cohesion Policy, 2021-27](#)

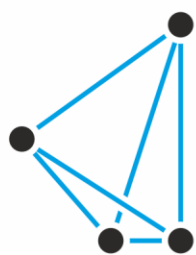
Daniel Šitera, as part of the project Think Visegrad, published a policy brief on the V4 cooperation within the new Cohesion Policy.

The EU's budgetary negotiations have historically been a case of lowering the capabilities and increasing the expectations of the Cohesion Policy. The proposal for the programming and budgetary period of 2021-27 only reasserts this historical trend when compared with the period of 2014-20. The gap is growing along a 'do more with less'-logic because the volume of budgetary allocation is once again decreasing on the capabilities side, while the strategic content on the expectations side is being simultaneously expanded with aims unrelated to the original purpose of promoting socio-economic cohesion between less and more developed EU regions and, in effect, member states. The widening capability-expectations gap in the Cohesion Policy thus remains unfavourable to the Visegrád states as net-recipients in the new MFF. This begs the question, on what is the Visegrád added value constituted in the new Cohesion Policy, and how can it be reconciled with the EU added value in general.

### [Germany and the V4: renewed cooperation opportunities in the new political context](#)

Kamil Frymark, as part of the project Think Visegrad, published a policy brief on the V4-German cooperation.

Germany's collaboration with the Visegrad Group (V4) is often perceived through the prism of political differences that have arisen from divergent visions of the future EU migration policy and debates on the rule of law. Simultaneously, new opportunities to deepen the already existing cooperation may appear due to the turmoil in Germany's domestic politics as well as the international environment. The greatest challenge for Germany is Washington's behaviour. However, Berlin is also aware of the significance



Think  
Visegrad  
V4 Think-Tank Platform

# NEWSLETTER

2019/1

Think Visegrad in Brussels

of its economic and defence ties with the US. The V4 countries may also be facing a similar dilemma with a difficult choice between their most important trading partner, Germany, and the US. With Brexit, however, an opportunity to strengthen collaboration between Germany and Central Europe has emerged. It could prompt the government in Berlin to seek new political alliances among the V4 countries in order to balance the influence of France in the EU on such areas as the vision of reforming the EU or the EU enlargement to the Western Balkans.

## EMU reform as a case-study for multispeed integration

Tomáš Madleňák, as part of the project Think Visegrad, published a policy brief on the reform of the Economic and Monetary Union.

Ever since the Juncker's Commission opened the "Future of Europe" debate with the White Paper of identical name, in which the "multispeed EU" was officially presented as a viable option, several more or less ambitious ideas were presented on the most exposed area, in which the multispeed (or two-speed) approach has been in use for quite some time already – the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU). In this short paper I will summarise some of these ideas, try to present and explain the positions of the V4 countries on them based on my on and off-record conversations with V4 representatives in Brussel; and present some basic recommendations on how to progress with the multispeed approach in this and other areas without alienating these countries, which decide not to join since the beginning.

## From our members

### Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich (OSW, Centre for Eastern Studies), Warsaw, Poland

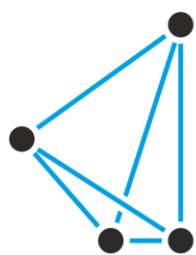
#### ***Publications:***

#### EU support for synchronising the Baltic states' power grids

Joanna Hyndle-Hussein (Senior Fellow, Department for Germany and Northern Europe) talks the perspectives and obstacles to the future synchronization of Baltic states' power grids with UCTE networks in the synchronous area of Continental Europe, scheduled for 2025. The integration of the Baltic and European networks will be bolstered by the construction of a new maritime connection between Poland and Lithuania.

#### The Czech-Chinese dispute over Huawei and ZTE

Members of Central European Department and China Research Programme comment on possible threats to national security posed by the manufacturers of Chinese telecommunications equipment. The warning issued in December by National Cyber and Information Security Agency (NÚKIB) was prepared largely in connection with the planned investments in 5G network technology and the ongoing computerisation of



Think  
Visegrad

V4 Think-Tank Platform

# NEWSLETTER

2019/1

Think Visegrad in Brussels

public administration in the Czech Republic. The guidelines published subsequently by the government call Huawei's planned investments in the Czech Republic into question.

## Hungary's response to the offer to improve US-Hungarian relations

Łukasz Frynia (Research Fellow, Central European Department) remarks on the aftermath of the US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo visit to Budapest. In exchange for actions that fit in with the implementation of its strategic goals, the USA is ready to reduce the pressure it used to apply to Budapest in the area of domestic policy. However, the Hungarian government has already announced that it will carry on developing its close co-operation with Russia and China.

## Putin in Belgrade: enthusiasm instead of specifics

Marta Szpala and Witold Rodkiewicz (Senior Fellows of – respectively – Central European and Russian Departments) comment the consequences of Vladimir Putin's official visit to Serbia. Both Russia and Serbia are willing to demonstrate their close relations, but the results of the visit were far from spectacular. For Serbia, Putin's visit was important to deflect the pressure from the US and EU to normalise its relations with Kosovo. The declaration that Russia is ready to invest US\$1.4 billion in a transit gas pipeline in Serbia was also well-received in Serbia. However, Moscow's efforts to weaken Serbia's cooperation with the EU and NATO seem to have little chance of bearing fruit.

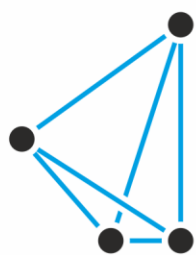
## Russia's game of shadows around the INF

Marek Menkiszak (the Head of the Russian Department) deconstructs the Russia's narration about its suspension of the participation in the NF Peace Treaty. In his opinion, Russian decisions announced on 2 February merely formalise the security situation in Europe which has existed for several years. Kremlin's actions and declaration are mostly a form of psychological warfare targeted at the political elites and societies of the most important countries in Western Europe (especially Germany, France and Italy). The aim is to provoke fear of an 'arms race', i.e. the escalation of Russian-Western tensions and an increase in the nuclear threat.

## Putin's welfare address

The Russian Department's team assessment of the Vladimir Putin's annual address to the Federal Assembly. This year's President's message saw a distinct change of emphasis compared with that of last year, which was dominated by anti-Western messages. This year's message was primarily social in nature. This change in the Kremlin's rhetoric is a response to the shift in the Russian people's attitudes and demands, including a marked decline in approval for Putin himself. However, this rhetorical switch is conditioned by the domestic political tactics and does not indicate a revision of Russia's foreign policy.





Think  
Visegrad  
V4 Think-Tank Platform

# NEWSLETTER

2019/1

Think Visegrad in Brussels

## ***Commentaries and reports:***

### **A 'last-minute' transit contract? Russia-Ukraine-EU gas talks**

The team consisting of experts on energy policy (Agata Łoskot-Strachota), Russian affairs (Szymon Kardaś) and Ukrainian affairs (Sławomir Matuszak) discusses the long-term goals and interests of Ukraine and Russia regarding the gas transit policy, divergent interests of the negotiating parties, and the possible scenarios of the talks.

### **Russia vis-à-vis Iran**

Witold Rodkiewicz comments on the latest developments of the Moscow- Tehran alliance that is almost entirely based on geopolitical assumptions. Both states are interested in weakening the position the United States holds in the region; both have a common enemy in the form of Sunni extremism. The present growing differences between Russia and Turkey on how to resolve the conflict in Syria and the increased intensity of Israeli strikes on Iranian targets in Syria will force Tehran and Moscow to further tighten their cooperation.

## **GLOBSEC**

### ***Event:***

#### **GLOBSEC Young Leaders Forum**

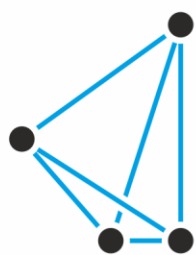
GLOBSEC Young Leaders Forum allows young professionals to take advantage of the parallel GLOBSEC Bratislava Forum. The interconnection between both events gives them an opportunity to participate in different sessions and conduct discussions with high-profile politicians, decision-makers, opinion-builders, prominent analysts and think-tankers. Because GYLF 2019 will take place at the same venue as GLOBSEC 2019, young professionals will also have the chance to actively participate in several main sessions of the GLOBSEC Forum and engage in the Q&A parts of debates. Read more [here](#) and you can submit your application [here](#).

## **Institute for International Relations**

### ***Event:***

#### **International Symposium on the Czech Foreign Policy: Fostering Multilateralism**

The 11th International Symposium on the Czech Foreign Policy: Fostering Multilateralism taking place at Czernin Palace on 23rd-24th September 2019, explores the theme of effective multilateralism as one of the important approaches to strengthening the Czech role within various multilateral platforms. The focus is on proactive participation in finding constructive solutions when discussing the future of the European Union, supporting the stabilisation and reconstruction efforts in the near neighbourhood of the EU, Africa or the Middle East. The success of the Czech participation greatly relies on quality strategic partnerships and dialogues. The Symposium, therefore, aims to assess selected partnerships by taking in consideration the current domestic and international developments. It also sets out to commemorate



Think  
Visegrad

V4 Think-Tank Platform

# NEWSLETTER

2019/1

Think Visegrad in Brussels

important anniversaries, such as the 15th anniversary of joining the European Union, 30 years from the Velvet Revolution and 20 years of joining NATO. The program is going to include discussions on multilateralism in relation to Visegrad Group, the European Union, NATO, or thematically in reference to international law, trade, international security, gender, space, as well as assessing specific partnerships. You can find more information and a registration form [here](#).

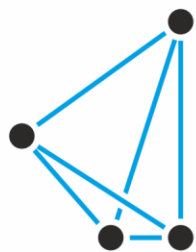
## ***Publications:***

### Hybrid Warriors: Transforming Czech Security through the 'Russian Hybrid Warfare' Assemblage

Jan Daniel and Jakub Eberle analyse the ascent of 'Russian hybrid warfare' (RHW) as a notion that transformed the understanding of national security in the Czech Republic in the short period of 2014–2016. It argues that the emergence of RHW as a specifically understood prime security threat was the result of contingent and often unruly social interactions across different settings, rather than a linear and centralised response to Russia's actions. To capture this process, the concept of 'assemblage' is introduced and then defined as a temporary constellation of a variety of different actors, both public and private. Building on research interviews and documents produced in the RHW field, the authors then proceed in three steps. First, they chronologically trace the gradual emergence of the Czech RHW assemblage from a variety of different actors—bureaucrats, NGOs, academics, journalists—after Russia's attack on Ukraine in 2014. Second, they unpack the inner workings of the assemblage by identifying the key actors and asking who did the assembling and how. Third, they look at how different actors were able to reinforce and/or transform their identities by being part of the assemblage, with an emphasis on the effects this had for the distinction between the public and the private.

### The Battle for The Truth

The rise of 'information disorder' that undermines Western political principles has become one of the key political concerns in today's Europe and United States and led to searching for new solutions to the problem of how to fight the spread of mis- and disinformation. The challenges of information disorder, however, are increasingly perceived as a part of the information war – which involves the intentional Russian propaganda using new media. Yet who gets to help our societies build resilience against the information war? This research looks at how this novel problematization of security affects the politics of security expertise. Or, who gains power in this 'battle for truth'? Building on sociological approaches in security studies, this paper focuses on the Czech Republic as a country that has become very active in the fight against disinformation and analyses the network of actors recognized as providing security expertise on information warfare. Based on social network analysis, the research maps the structure of social relations among actors recognized as experts and points out the empowerment of think tanks and journalists, who are able to build social capital, mobilize their knowledge of Russian politics and the new media environment, and design new practices to make the society resilient towards information warfare.



Think  
Visegrad  
V4 Think-Tank Platform

# NEWSLETTER

2019/1

Think Visegrad in Brussels

## EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy

### *Publications:*

#### Visegrad Four & differentiation in the European Union

Agnieszka Cianciara authored a policy paper on the topic of differentiation in the EU from the standpoint of the Visegrad Group.

Differentiation is a principle that has been applied to polity and policies of the European Union (EU) since its creation. Some elements were already integrated into the Rome Treaty, but the political idea (in the form of two-speed Europe) dates back to the 1975 'Tindemans report'. More discussion on differentiated integration (DI) was triggered by the UK's accession and took place at the end of 1970s. It was Ralf Dahrendorf who coined the term 'Europe à la carte' to account for an integration model, where common policies only follow common interests without additional constraints for those who are not able or willing to join them.

#### Taking Stock on Future of the EU According to Macron: Perspective from the V4

Matěj Navrátil is the author of a new policy paper on the Macron's vision of the European Union and its comparison with the V4's idea of the European future.

Macron's success in the 2017 French presidential elections halted the upsurge of Euroscepticism throughout the continent with the clearly pro-EU candidate defeating the nationalist, proponent of French exit from the Eurozone and outspoken protectionist Marine LePen. Macron's positive campaign and optimistic vision of the EU were arguably bedrocks of his success.

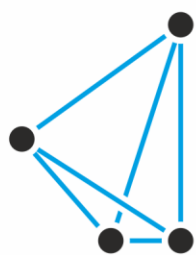
It was clear already throughout the campaign that Macron would bring an equally energizing and positive agenda for reform at the EU's home front and to Brussels. It did not take too long for French president to present his ideas on future of the EU's institutional framework and France's role in it. In his speech entitled "Initiative for Europe" delivered on the 26th of September 2017 at the Sorbonne University, Macron outlined his ambition to reinvigorate the Franco-German relationship and attempts for major reform of the EU.

#### Western Balkans in the loop: Reshaping regional cooperation in times of uncertainty

Gentiola Madhi authored, within the Think Visegrad Non-V4 Fellowship programme, an analysis on the state of the affairs of regional cooperation in the Western Balkans.

Over the past years, EU enlargement policy has gone through a process of nationalization and intricate accession negotiation technicalities, which have raised perplexities regarding the Union's genuine interest in the Western Balkans and weakened its credibility. The declaration of Juncker in 2014, stating that there would not be any further enlargement during his mandate as President of the Commission was only the first of a series of mixed signals sent by the EU to the region. As such, 2018 was marked by deep divisions between EU Member States, and particularly with regards to the process of opening and/or advancement of the accession negotiations





Think  
Visegrad  
V4 Think-Tank Platform

# NEWSLETTER

2019/1

Think Visegrad in Brussels

with the Western Balkan countries. For instance, France (backed by the Netherlands) showed a firm determination to postpone this process after the European Parliament elections due to fears of stoking anti-immigrant sentiments at the domestic level.

## Public consultations by the European Commission

### Evaluation of the Schengen Facility Instrument for Croatia

Consultation period: 04 January 2019 - 29 March 2019

Topics: Migration and asylum

About: The Schengen Facility Croatia was created as a temporary funding instrument to support Croatia between the date of its accession to the EU and the end of 2014. It has to be evaluated to fulfil the legal obligation set out by the financial regulation and to ensure transparency and accountability. The evaluation will examine the implementation of the actions financed and assess their relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and EU added-value.

### Evaluation of the provisions in the Directive 2006/54/EC implementing the Treaty principle on 'equal pay'

Consultation period: 11 January 2019 - 05 April 2019

Topics: Employment and social affairs

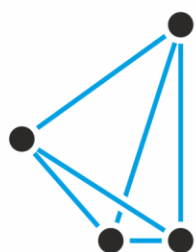
About: Although the EU legal framework prescribes equal pay, its effective implementation and enforcement remain an important challenge. This evaluation will assess the extent to which the provisions of Directive 2006/54/EC implementing the Treaty provisions on equal pay (Article 157(1-2) TFEU), as strengthened by the 2014 Commission Recommendation on pay transparency, can be deemed relevant, effective, efficient, coherent with other EU policies and of added value, as per the Better Regulation rules.

### Evaluation of the Consumer Credit Directive

Consultation period: 14 January 2019 - 08 April 2019

Topics: Competition

About: The evaluation will assess the effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, relevance and EU added value of the Consumer Credit Directive. It will focus on progress made to date, costs and benefits in relation to different stakeholders and whether original objectives and tools of the Directive correspond to current needs. It will also monitor how the Directive works together with other pieces of legislation and whether the EU intervention has delivered additional added value.



Think  
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V4 Think-Tank Platform

# NEWSLETTER

2019/1

Think Visegrad in Brussels

## Emissions trading scheme State aid guidelines – update

Consultation period: 21 February 2019 - 16 May 2019

Topics: Competition

About: EU Member States can compensate some companies in sectors with high electricity consumption (electro-intensive users), for part of the higher electricity costs arising from the EU emissions trading scheme. The compensation minimises the risk of carbon leakage, which occurs when emission costs cause EU companies to relocate their production to non-EU countries that have less ambitious climate measures. The rules allowing for compensation will be updated to ensure that they are adapted to the new emissions trading scheme for 2021-2030.

## EU competition rules on vertical agreements – evaluation

Consultation period: 14 February 2019 - 27 May 2019

Topics: Competition

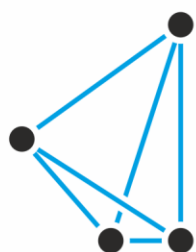
About: The Vertical Block Exemption Regulation, which exempts certain agreements and practices from the EU's general competition rules, expires on 31 May 2022. This evaluation will check whether the Regulation is still effective, efficient, relevant, in line with other EU legislation and adds value. The Commission will use the evaluation to decide whether to let the Regulation lapse, to prolong or to revise it.

## 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 centers and institutes, and is funded by the International Visegrad Fund.

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



Think  
Visegrad  
V4 Think-Tank Platform

# NEWSLETTER

2019/1

Think Visegrad in Brussels

- 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

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

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.

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