

# Think Visegrad Mid-Term Review



# V4 Trust – the Czech Presidency of the Visegrad Group (2015–2016)

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*The aim of this report is to assess the first half of the Czech V4 presidency and to suggest key recommendations for the remaining time of the presidency. The assessment is based on the Presidency's own priorities, but also on the overall context in which the Presidency is taking place.*

*The report is based on individual opinions of the authors above and also, partly, on existing analyses provided by Think Visegrad throughout the year 2015.*

# I. BACKGROUND AND OVERALL CONTEXT

The Czech Republic took over the Visegrad presidency from Slovakia during perhaps the most turbulent times in the Group's history. Severe multiple crises hit Europe and the world since 2014, when the Czechs prepared their presidency, and these crises further escalated in 2015, when in July, the Czech Republic officially assumed its presidency role. An overarching theme of the crisis can be termed as a growing and deepening deficit of confidence, solidarity and trust within Europe and across the globe. The multiple geopolitical stresses on the V4 contributed to a divergence among the V4 countries. But the Visegrad Group proved to remain a key platform for debating differences.

The Czech presidency aims to concentrate on a **few key issues** that have a **concrete and practical impact** and, as a consequence, lead to a further increase of trust within the group.<sup>1</sup> The priorities in the Czech V4 Presidency programme are framed by the need to increase the V4's **togetherness and internal cohesion**, which are demonstrated especially through the group's multi-level and multisector cooperation and the **International Visegrad Fund**. The programme has a robust **security and defense** cooperation agenda; meanwhile, the **European Neighborhood Policy** and the group's development and transformation policies with related projects focused primarily on the **South-Eastern countries' Energy Policy**. There is also a strong continuity between the priority areas of the Czech V4 Presidency and those of the previous Slovak Presidency.

The nature of the programme notwithstanding, the external world recently faced some developments that only a few individuals if any were ready to forecast in. The first half of 2015 (the second half of the Slovak presidency) was still heavily influenced by the negative development in Eastern Ukraine caused by the **aggressive Russian behavior** and the continuing uncertainty

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<sup>1</sup> V4 Trust – Program for the Czech Presidency of the Visegrad Group (July 2015–June 2016). Online: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/documents/presidency-programs/20152016-czech>.

with regard to the Greek Eurozone membership. But the most visible agenda of the second half of the year then gave way to reacting to **the growing influx of immigrants** that stirred many public and political tensions across Europe and across different political camps. Then the Russian engagement in the Syrian war and the horrific terrorist attacks in Paris in November 2015 further inflated the already mounting pressure on European confidence, security and stability.

Throughout its history, the V4 endorsed a world-view that stressed internationalism and multilateralism, efforts to overcome national and mental boundaries and the spread of the notion of cooperative security, mutually shared stability, prosperity and peace. Since late 2013, however, the **Visegrad countries had to re-adjust to the new security and political environment** within and around Europe. Because of this, the Visegrad Group currently faces tough questions about its future in the European Union. One of these questions is **“How to strike the right balance between properly and credibly contributing to the European, regional and national security on the one hand and not compromising the Group’s commitment to cooperative security, openness and internationalism on the other?”** The last two years clearly demonstrated that the **job of ending the division of Europe is far from finished**. On the contrary, multiple divisions are deepening and they cut through the geographic, national, socioeconomic and political lines. The crucial and immediate task for the V4 is to figure out **how to set a positive and constructive agenda with the rest of the EU under the conditions of the growing divisive mood**. What if the confidence building measures among the V4 countries fail, and individual and national agendas prevail over regional solidarity? **Is it then still possible to at least keep and appreciate the Visegrad Group as a platform for an open dialogue even about the differences individual countries might have?**

Given these conditions, the Czech Presidency so far **managed to steer the Visegrad Group in the right direction** by sticking to its own priorities and prudently reacting to the need to recalibrate the overall agenda for the V4.

Especially the **issue of immigration** heavily influenced the agenda and the high-level meetings programme. On September 11<sup>th</sup>, the V4 Ministers of Foreign Affairs met in Prague together with their counterparts from of Luxembourg (the EU Council presiding country at the time) and Germany. The issue that was debated was immigration and the divisive mood between the member countries on this issue. The Joint Communiqué<sup>2</sup> from the meeting presents an example of how to attempt to tackle a very sensitive political issue in the midst of growing intra-EU disenchantment. It is in this spirit that the V4 should further communicate with its European partners: **it should stress the fact that the European Union faces common challenges and that an EU-wide dialogue, instead of mutual blaming, is the way to go.** Immigration and terrorist-related threats also influenced the December summit of Prime Ministers and their joint declaration,<sup>3</sup> and the V4 also called for a special summit of the Ministers of Interior (which is also to be attended by Macedonia, Serbia and Slovenia) in connection with these issues<sup>4</sup>.

## II. COHESION AND TRUST

The overarching theme of the Czech Presidency is **an internal cohesion and trust**. The dramatic events of the last two years put extra strain on the region, and **the V4 needs to utilize all its creativity, political determination and will to withstand this stress**. To the issue of intra-regional cohesion and trust building, we can also add another term, which is **intra-regional permeability and inter-connectedness**. This is a very complex task and issue and it is extremely difficult for a one-year presidency to make a substantive headway in it. Nevertheless, here the V4 has made a step in the right direction by signing the

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<sup>2</sup> Online: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/2015/joint-communicue-of-the-150911>.

<sup>3</sup> Online: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/2015/joint-statement-of-the-151204>.

<sup>4</sup> Online: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/2016/joint-declaration-of>.

*Memorandum of Understanding for Regional Cooperation in the Areas of Innovation and Startups* (October 2015) by the Visegrad ministers responsible for economy.

In the time remaining for the Czech Presidency there are several areas where further progress can be made. First, the **regional cohesion** was so far presented in rather technical and administrative terms, but the related issues **need to be backed with a robust political impulse and a public awareness**. Second, in terms of concrete proposals, the Czech Presidency might include the following issues into its activities for the remaining time (and consult them with the upcoming Polish presidency):

1. The development of **transport infrastructure** plays a substantial role in the deepening of the internal cohesion of the V4. The status quo as regards **cross-border connections is, however, still very unsatisfactory**, which has a highly negative impact on the intensification of trade and also on people to people contacts. In 2014 a *High-Level Working Group in Transport Infrastructure* was established. The idea to establish additional mechanisms of cooperation which would ease the exchange of information on the implementation of cross-border transport projects is of a great value; however, **these platforms need constant attention and follow-ups** so that the initiatives do not get buried in bureaucratic procedures and inertias.

2. The same applies to the aim to better coordinate national territorial development documents. Since transport and territorial planning projects are long-term goals, **close cooperation with the forthcoming Polish V4 Presidency in this area is a must**.

3. The Czech Presidency should explore ways to launch a concrete dialogue about strengthening the focus on **education, research and development** and the digital economy.

4. The Czech Presidency should focus on **interlinking the V4 government with businesses** (small and medium enterprises – SME's) and also on interlinking the businesses.

5. The V4 countries should consider how to further support a **responsible and active civil society** at large, which is an element that is still severely lacking in the V4 in comparison to the countries to the west of the V4.

6. It is also possible to further develop the concept of the network of cooperation, which was previously formed as grassroots/bottom-up initiatives in response to specific sectoral challenges (like the V4 High Level Group for Energy Security).

7. The Czech Presidency should further support **the parliamentary cooperation**, following previous activities and efforts. The parliamentary dimension of the V4 is an ideal platform for: 1) discussing the role of a national parliament within the EU and sharing experiences which might contribute to enhancing the trust of the public towards the EU in general; 2) debating the deepening lack of trust in the political parties and in parliamentary democracy in general; and 3) creating trust across political boundaries, and thus contributing to balancing the overtly executive nature of the Visegrad cooperation. Czech V4 Pres should still make an effort towards institutionalisation of V4 MEP caucus in the EP, as stated in its program. An effectively working V4 caucus in the EP could in the future translate some specific joint regional interests into various pieces of EU legislation.

8. The role of the **International Visegrad Fund** is unquestionable. To continue its mission even more efficiently, the Fund needs to work out its own **mid- and long-term development strategy** and a **bigger autonomy** for itself in the decision-making. The Czech V4 Presidency could possibly use the occasion of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary

of the Visegrad Group to initiate an **in-depth assessment/analysis** of the International Visegrad Fund's achievements and future, with the participation of the representatives of the most successful grant applicants.

9. While the civil society at large in Central Europe lags behind in its ambitions to influence public and political debates and processes, and the V4 should initiate a debate about how to change this (see above), the Visegrad Group can take pride in an excellent, unique and quite unmatched level of **engagement with the NGO institutions and think tanks**; it achieved this level by continually contributing to an informal network of trust-based relationships between the various state administration branches and the non-governmental sector. The **Think Visegrad – V4 Think Tank Platform** itself is an example of cooperation and coordination among various think tanks in the V4 area. Another example of close co-operation between the Czech V4 presidency and think tanks was the successful creation of the so-called **Prague European Summit** – a platform for strategic dialogue about common responses to new challenges for the EU. Also, internationally renowned forum GLOBSEC 2016 (April 15–17 in Bratislava) will again include a panel of Prime Ministers which provides a chance to convey important messages on the key V4 and EU developments.

This depth and width of engagement between – and among – various sets of actors might be also communicated to the “non-Visegrad world” as a **positive example of the region's achievements**. Furthermore, the last two years have shown a growing gap in perceptions and opinions of how to handle different crisis situations in the EU and the EU neighborhood between the V4 countries on one side and the “old” member states and EU institutions on the other. The activities of the V4 think tanks have the potential to mitigate possible conflicts and **to contribute to a better mutual understanding**. Nonetheless, there is a lack of opportunities and space for V4 think tanks to influence the

policy debate in Brussels. The V4 governments might consider supporting the **creation of a Think Visegrad representation in Brussels** that (similarly as in the case of business representations) would be able to fill this space in Brussels for the promotion of the V4 interests in the center of EU decision making.

### III. DEFENSE

Despite – or precisely because of – the existing differences in threat perception across the region, the Czech Presidency set out a rather ambitious outline of the **defense and security related cooperation**. The Czech Presidency aimed at providing room for particular achievements, following the already agreed highest-level political declaration from 2014. The cooperation among the Ministries of Defense benefits from well established procedures of meetings and working groups. The presidency programme was discussed in detail during the Defense Political Directors' meeting in September. Later, the Deputy Ministers of Defense met with the NORDEFECO representatives in December, and an extraordinary meeting of the Defense Ministers of the V4 followed only a week later.

The most prominent topic, naturally, is **the establishment of a V4 Battle Group**. It has been concurred that the V4BG capacity **should be maintained after June 2016**, and that the V4BG should serve as a modular force in order to contribute to NATO and EU Rapid Reaction Forces as well as to crisis management operations; however, it remains unspecified what kind of cooperation it would involve. The defense ministries agreed, however, that the V4BG would serve on standby again in the second semester of 2019.

Among the other defense issues, these stand out most notably: the **air cross border operations**, which are considered to be the most promising area of cooperation within the V4 format; the establishment of a **Central European aviation training center**; the **V4 Modular Force**; an active involvement of the V4 in implementing the individual measures of the *Readiness Action Plan* with an emphasis on the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF); further

strengthening of the role of the **Multinational Corps Northeast in Szczecin**; and the Visegrad Group Military Education Platform (VIGMILEP). Also the implementation of the European Council conclusions concerning the CSDP was high on the presidency agenda. However, with the shift from updating/rewriting the *European Security Strategy* to the goal of working out a *European Global Strategy*, this agenda has shifted (see below).

The V4 was active and ambitious prior to the 2012 Chicago summit. The Czech Presidency programme promised that the Czech Presidency would facilitate a **strong political declaration at a Prime Minister level prior to the Warsaw NATO summit in July 2016**. It is essential that such a declaration will materialize. The so-called Bucharest Declaration (November 2015) might serve as a reasonable guideline for such a declaration.

It is somewhat a tradition in the defense cooperation that any progress can usually be measured in **glacial-pace units**. It is important, however, that none of the above mentioned goals were abandoned. **The remaining months of the Czech Presidency should be used for making palpable progress in this respect, especially after the new Polish administration has settled in.**

## **IV. THE BALKANS AND THE BALKAN FUND**

The **migration and refugee crisis** brought the Western Balkans into the focus of the EU again, but from a perspective other than that of enlargement. The so-called Balkan way has been used extensively by migrants from the EU's southern neighborhood, which puts the Western Balkan countries and the **stability of the whole region into a difficult situation**. Taking into consideration the **fragile political and economic stability** of the region and the decreasing eagerness of the EU countries to accept new members, the related mission for the V4 is ever more demanding. Most of the Western Balkan countries are facing a **decrease of popular support for the EU membership**, and the governments of particular countries are more or less delayed in the im-

plementation of important reforms. The EU itself is challenged by several crises, which also has an impact on the ranking of its priorities. Thus, besides its **continuing support for the integration ambitions** of the Western Balkan countries, the V4 also needs to maintain the **enlargement policy in the focus of other EU member states**.

Besides the V4's political support to the region, the two sides' collaboration should become **more intensive in the field of sectoral cooperation**. The V4 already proved to be successful in terms of procedural know-how transfer. The official establishment of the *Western Balkan Fund* in October 2015 can be naturally perceived as a flagship project of the current Czech V4 Presidency, especially while taking into consideration that the last Czech V4 Presidency (2011–2012) initiated this project. Credit must go also to the Slovak V4 Presidency (2014–2015), which turned this idea into action, and facilitated key agreements among Balkan partners on the Fund's statute and its seat in Tirana. Nevertheless, besides the continuous political and financial support on the side of the Western Balkan countries, the successful development of the Fund would also **require an active involvement of the V4 countries and the IVF**.

## V. UKRAINE

The V4 put a special emphasis on its support for Ukraine in the last 2 years. Unfortunately both the governmental and civil society initiatives in this respect brought only **limited results**. Irrespective of the political situation in Ukraine, the issue of **intensifying the economic cooperation** should be addressed at the meetings of the EU. **Postponing the implementation of the Association Agreement** with Ukraine will have a **negative impact** both on Ukraine as well as on the Eastern Partnership countries in general. The V4 countries should also strive for closer economic relations between the EU and Ukraine. **Closer V4-Ukraine economic ties are also needed for achieving the general aim of strengthening the bonds that tie Ukraine to the West**.

Despite the difficult political situation in Ukraine, the V4 countries should ensure that the EU continues the **EU-Ukraine visa dialogue**. The EU should not punish the Ukrainian society for the policy of its government or Russia's activities in Ukraine.

As in the case of the Western Balkans, the countries of the V4 (and the entire EU) should seek to continue and **develop a sectorial cooperation** in the areas which are of particular interest both to the EU and to Ukraine.

The energy issue – **the security of energy supplies** – is of the utmost importance to Ukraine. In addition to the interconnectors (between the V4 and Ukraine) which may increase the security of supplies of raw materials to Ukraine, training and counselling in energy saving are vital to the country. The Ukrainian economy is one of the **most energy-inefficient economies** in the world, so **reducing its energy consumption by providing know-how is an important task and a challenge to be faced by the EU** (and not only the V4 states).

Assistance is needed for the populations of the **southern and eastern regions of Ukraine** (humanitarian aid); assistance and support should also be provided to the media and civic activists in Crimea to help the area to preserve its links with the rest of Ukraine.

The **review of the Ukraine-related V4 projects** is necessary to further plan the Visegrad support, which could still be carried out by the Czech Presidency. While the continuation of the “roadshow” without Ukrainian support has only a limited cost-benefit logic, other programmes that involve **direct Ukrainian participation**, such as **providing grants for Ukrainian university students** through the Visegrad Fund or the **Civil Servant Mobility Programme** of the Think Visegrad platform proved to be successful and effective. In the present situation, the V4 states should **increase the number of scholarships for Ukrainian students** who could enroll in universities in the V4 countries (e.g. under Erasmus+). The opportunity to study at V4 universities would – in the long term – bring about a change in the way of thinking of those young

people and benefit the conditions of their country. Moreover, the spending on **civic education for Ukrainian citizens** should be expanded. Theoretically, one way of doing this is to jointly increase the tranche in the IVF budget for scholarships for Ukrainian students.

## VI. EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

The Eastern Partnership finds itself in a state of limbo, and it is the ultimate task of the V4 to figure out ways of how to **either re-energize this concept or come up with a new and more politically sound and motivating project**. The effectiveness of the EU's eastern policy depends on the EU itself as well. EU decision-makers perceive the eastern neighbors in a **technocratic manner, and they are insensitive towards the addressees** of the Community's initiatives. History has proved that the perspective of integration was the greatest guarantee of successful internal changes in the applicant countries. Unfortunately, the **EU is unable to ensure memberships for countries of the eastern neighbourhood**, even in the long-term perspective. Moreover, the EU is perceived in a negative light by eastern decision-makers and citizens due to the visa regime, which resulted in the emergence of a "glass curtain" on the eastern borders of the Community. The V4 should help to find ways to improve the EU's attractiveness in the eyes of eastern societies. According to Vít Dostál, *"the EaP needs to be approached as a policy, not as a tool."*<sup>5</sup>

## VII. THE EXTERNAL DIMENSION OF THE VISEGRAD COOPERATION: THE V4 PLUS

The maintenance of the balance between internal cohesion and cooperation with external partners is the task for any V4 Presidency, including the current

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<sup>5</sup> V. Dostál, *Searching for a New Narrative, "New Eastern Europe"*, No. 5 (XVIII), September–October 2015, pp. 110–111.

one. The V4 countries should remain open to cooperation with any interested partner (a country or a group of countries), but it would perhaps be useful to introduce a certain **categorization of partners that would correspond with their respective levels of importance for the V4.**

Under the recent conditions, the V4 should use the V4+ format more to **develop cooperation and trust with northern and western EU member states,** so that the V4 and its allies could jointly work on policies that could help to solve the current crisis.

## **VIII. THE DEBATE ON THE FUTURE OF THE EU AND THE V4'S PERCEPTION IN THE "OLD MEMBER" COUNTRIES**

**The image of the V4 has deteriorated** due to the reluctance of the V4 countries to accept redistribution quotas as part of the solution of the migration crisis. Though an increasing number of EU members share a similar skepticism, **the V4 as the whole** – and unjustly so, given the overall record of the V4 cooperation – **started to be perceived as a coalition known for obstructing practices.** The Czech Presidency should find ways to **find and highlight a pro-active and constructive agenda** that would involve other EU member states, especially those from the northern and western parts of the continent. The V4's significant contribution to the EU Crisis Fund for Africa, and the symbolic creation of the group of Friends of Schengen can be considered as moves in the right direction. The V4 Prime Ministers, in their December 3, 2015 meeting in Prague, stressed that they are fully supporting the enhanced protection of the EU's external borders and urged the EU to utilize the full potential of Frontex. The V4 members also reiterated their commitment to support the countries of the Western Balkans by providing technical assistance to help them deal with migratory pressures.

Further, **the future of the EU Cohesion Funds is crucial for the region.** In connection with the funds, a platform of like-minded groups met in Prague

based on a V4 initiative at the end of January. This coalition has now to work out a plan how to adapt cohesion funds for current challenges (including migration crisis). This is important especially as the European Commission is to issue a mid-term review of the current EU financial framework this year and some member states want to shift part of cohesion funds to the migration related projects. The mid-term review practically launches discussion about the future of the cohesion policy after 2020, therefore the V4, together with like-minded countries, has to prepare its own proposal in this matter. It is clear, however, that **without a meaningful support of other European policies, including the various proposals related to migration policy, the chances of a continuation of the Cohesion Funds are jeopardized.** The „Friends of Cohesion“ initiative now consists only of the CEE countries and it should seek a dialogue and allies among the western and northern member states in order to avoid simplifying poor east vs. rich west division. However, without a balanced and a “basket deal approach” the new Friends of Cohesion group can only further undermine the perception of the Central European EU members.

The V4 members are regarded as one of the bottlenecks for the **British EU-reform proposals** because free movement of people remains one of the most sensitive topics for all the V4 governments. Recent declarations of the V4 Prime Ministers made clear that they are open to discuss the British proposals to meaningfully reform the European Union; however, **all four V4 members oppose discrimination and the limitation of free movement.** In the light of EUCO President Donald Tusk’s recent letter to PM Cameron, the **V4 members should engage in seeking a constructive dialogue to secure their interests and avoid any forms of discrimination of EU citizens.** On the other hand, the **V4 members might more easily elect to support the three other pillars of the British proposals** in order to provide a cooperative image for themselves on the European level. Considering that PM Cameron is supposed to engage all V4 Prime Ministers on this issue shortly, a constructive approach (and maybe a viable *quid pro quo*) may alter the developing image of the V4 as the “naysayers” within the EU.

## IX. THE EUROPEAN GLOBAL STRATEGY

The December 2015 short term analysis produced by the Think Visegrad authors urged the V4 to present a joint **rich input into the EGS drafting**. According to the short term analysis, the V4 should concentrate on several key areas of the EGS: the concept of the Battle Group, enhancing capabilities for stabilization of the neighborhood and working out a credible approach to the EU enlargement. An area where the V4 is also potentially strong (and united, as opposed to some other areas) is that of the *capacity-building operations* in third countries. The Visegrad Group, in the meantime, came up with a joint position which stressed promotion of a **rule-based international order, re-invigorating the CFSP/CSDP, strengthening the Transatlantic partnership and ensuring a stable and prosperous neighborhood in the East, South and South-East**. The joint position is remarkably strong, and the Czech Presidency and the V4 should make sure that the V4 position is taken into account and follow it throughout the remaining process of the EGS drafting.

## X. ENERGY POLICY AND ENERGY SECURITY

Cooperation on energy has been one of the top sectoral priorities of the past V4 Presidencies. The Czech V4 Presidency also put energy high on its list of priorities and continued coordinating the positions of the V4 countries towards the **Energy Union and the development of the regional gas market**. Also, representatives of all the V4 countries participated in the 9<sup>th</sup> *Central European Energy Conference*, which was held under the auspices of the Czech V4 Presidency in Bratislava in the beginning of November. On the other hand, the V4 countries seemed to **occupy different positions towards the proposed project of the Nordstream 2 pipeline**. Unlike the ministers from the other Visegrad partners, the Czech minister did not sign the letter of the ministers responsible for energy issues addressed to the European Commission, in which they expressed their concerns. One concern was related to

the negative economic impact on the countries that profit from the gas transmission, especially Slovakia, but the main political objection was that the new pipeline would bypass Ukraine. Despite the fact that the Czech minister did not sign the letter, considering Nordstream 2 to be predominantly a business project, the Czech Republic, together with its V4 partners, has continued supporting the idea of the **diversification of transit routes and sources of gas**.

## XI. MIGRATION

A significant aspect of the V4's emerging negative perception in the EU is related to migration and the ways the V4 members have reacted to the challenge. Even though as of now none of the V4 members are significantly affected by migration flows, **multiple political forces began to use this phenomenon to build a distinctive political profile (and produce new cleavages)** within their respective nations and the EU. Therefore the question arises how the **Visegrad Group under the Czech auspices will react to this emerging negative image**, can we produce a damage control, and what steps can be taken to make the rift between the older and newer member states smaller.

From the V4 perspective the **Western Balkans migration route stands out**. The crises brought an intensified cooperation of the V4 and the Western Balkans' interior ministries. The V4 countries contributed police forces to Macedonia, Serbia and Slovenia. Furthermore, the foundation of the Western Balkan Fund gives the V4 an opportunity to initiate common projects and support these countries in dealing with the migration crises in other fields as well. **By highlighting these constructive steps**, the Czech Presidency might add to the current – somewhat biased – European discussion and defeat some conventional wisdoms circulating on the European level.

## List of meetings:

- 26/08/2015 The Meeting of the V4 Ministers of Agriculture, České Budějovice
- 04/09/2015 The Summit of the Prime Ministers of the Visegrad Group Countries, Prague –Joint Statement/Joint Statement
- 11/09/2015 The Meeting of the V4 Foreign Ministers with their Counterparts from the Luxembourg Presidency and Germany, Prague – Joint Communiqué
- 19–20/09/2015 The Meeting of the Defence Policy Directors of the Visegrad Group, Ostrava – Article
- 21/09/2015 An Informal Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Visegrad Group Countries and Luxembourg and Latvia, Prague
- 06/10/2015 The Meeting of the V4 Ministers Responsible for Energy, Ostrava – Joint Declaration
- 08/10/2015 The Meeting of the Presidents of Visegrad Group Countries and Croatia, Balatonfüred
- 12/10/2015 The Meeting of the V4 Trade/Economy Ministers, Prague – Memorandum of Understanding in the Areas of Innovation and Startups
- 11/11/2015 A Joint Article of V4 Foreign Ministers – “We Offer You Our Helping Hand on the EU Path”, Prague
- 03/12/2015 The Summit of the V4 Prime Ministers + the President of the Republic of Korea, Prague – Joint Statement of V4 Prime Ministers
- 03/12/2015 The Summit of V4 Prime Ministers and the President of the Republic of Korea, Prague – Joint Statement...

- 11/12/2015 The Meeting of the Senior Group of V4 Defence Officials, Prague – Article
- 17/12/2015 The V4 Countries’ Progress in Defence Cooperation – The Report from an Extraordinary Session of the V4 Defence Ministers, Prague
- 17/12/2015 The V4 Joint Declaration Regarding European Council Issues, Brussels
- 19/01/2016 The Meeting of the Interior Ministers in the V4 + Slovenia, Serbia and Macedonia, Prague – Joint Declaration

**The Think Visegrad – V4 Think Tank Platform** is a **network for a structured dialogue** on issues of strategic regional importance. 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 willingness of Central European think-tanks to enhance their cooperation within the Visegrad Group and deepen its cohesion and also their long-term interest in doing so. Think Visegrad was established in 2012 by eight V4 research centers and institutes, and is funded by the International Visegrad Fund. The core network of its think-tanks includes these founding institutions with their coordinating abilities. Think Visegrad remains, however, an open platform for cooperation with other think-tanks from all the V4 countries.

The network analyzes key issues for the Visegrad Group (V4), and provides recommendations to the governments of the V4 countries, the annual presidencies of the group, and the International Visegrad Fund. Think Visegrad covers the thematic priorities of the V4, including energy security, the V4's internal cohesion, EU institutions and politics, the Western Balkans, relations with Eastern Partnership countries, development assistance, hard security, environmental protection, Roma-related issues, migration, and transport.

Through its various activities aimed at non-V4 countries (e.g. non-V4 fellowships, the Civil Servants Mobility Programme), *Think Visegrad* also contributes to widening the network of initiatives and activities already established within the Visegrad Group.

The *Presidency Mid-Term Review* and the *V4 Presidency Conference* are part of the latest initiative of making the work of the Think Visegrad platform more publicly accessible.