

IN FOCUS

1st Issue
Free of Charge



ANTALL JÓZSEF
KNOWLEDGE CENTRE

25 years of the Visegrad Cooperation



- ☐ V4 – Past and Future
- ☐ Society
- ☐ Culture
- ☐ International Affairs
- ☐ Antall József Knowledge Centre

Cover Picture:
The Signature of the Founders of the Visegrad Cooperation
(From top to bottom:
Lech Wałęsa, President of the Republic of Poland;
Václav Havel, President of the Czechoslovak Republic;
and József Antall, Prime Minister of the Republic of Hungary)

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① WELCOME



WELCOMING WORDS FROM THE PUBLISHER

DEAR READERS

The Antall József Knowledge Centre is starting a new chapter in its history.

In the past six years, the Knowledge Centre has published several books and organised a variety of events in the field of social sciences, with special regard to international relations. Our institutional network has also been expanded: beside our headquarters in Budapest, we now have offices in Pécs, Győr, and Brussels.

We hope that additional cities in and outside of our borders will be added to this network in the future.

One of the main goals of the coming years is to establish an internationally-recognised research community, which will not only examine current global affairs, but will also be able to present their findings to the wider international community.

The publication of our magazine *In Focus*, where you may read about our research results and our activities, is an important part of this initiative.

In Focus will be available in Hungarian and English, in printed and electronic versions as well.

I wish the editors and writers of the publication good luck, and you, dear readers, a good read.

Péter Antall
Responsible Publisher
Director of the Antall József Knowledge Centre



LECTORI SALUTEM!

There are considerable changes in our world and in our lives.

Although we could argue about the extent and quality of these changes, it is for the most part accepted worldwide that the fourth industrial revolution is underway, the resources of our planet and the icecaps are drastically diminishing, and Europe's population is ageing, while in Asia and Africa it is explosively increasing. The role of politics and economy, as well as the relationship of their actors is changing, so is that of the individual, family, and society. The ties between the scientific, innovative, and profit-oriented enterprises are starting to have a fresh basis. Each country responds to the challenges and dilemmas outlined above differently. We hope that we will be able to introduce many of these solutions in this publication.

When launching a magazine, the primary goals of any editor-in-chief are to determine its main focus and the target audience. The main reason of publishing *In Focus* is to introduce certain countries, regions, or institutions to readers interested in international relations on the occasion of significant events or anniversaries. The scientific magazine presents all aspects of the topic selected aiming to spread knowledge.

This year, we commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Visegrad Cooperation; an alliance which in fact has a 700-year-old history. The first issue of *In Focus* therefore provides an overview of the history of the cooperation and the political, economic, and social processes of the member states, as well as underlines future challenges ahead of the four countries.

The first quarter century of the Cooperation is analysed by Dr Géza Jeszenszky, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Antall government. The ambassadors of the Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovakia, as well as the Hungarian State Secretary for EU Affairs in turn discuss the current situation of the V4 Countries. Through the first issue, readers have the opportunity to learn more about the most prominent personalities and the cultural heritage of the four countries, as well as the most remarkable places in the region.

The first issue of *In Focus* was compiled by the colleagues of the Knowledge Centre and the former students of the Antall József Summer School, whose assistance is greatly appreciated.

Ádám Kégler
Editor-in-Chief
Deputy Director
Antall József Knowledge Centre

② V4 – PAST AND FUTURE

JÓZSEF ANTALL, THE INITIATOR OF THE VISEGRAD COOPERATION



Three historic kingdoms constitute the core of Central Europe: the Polish, the Czech (or Bohemian), and the Hungarian. For their existence and freedom, they had to fight many wars with the Great Powers surrounding them. The congress held at the Visegrád Palace in 1335, which was perhaps the first European summit, already revealed that these countries could promote their interests better if acting together. We Hungarians also believed in the captivating motto of the Polish legions shedding their blood in vain during the Napoleonic wars, "For your freedom and for ours," not only in 1848 but also during the revolution of 1956 and the peaceful regime change in 1989. Politicians, writers, and authors – who in the past 200 years have supported the friendship and cooperation of people living between the Baltic region and the Adria, between the Germans and Russians, instead of seeking world powers as

patrons and backstabbing each other, joined their forces to fight against threats effectively – were driven by their need of identifying the source of and redressing common problems, perpetual problems as it were.

At the beginning of 1990, the democratic politicians of Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, who had been actively fighting against Communism, and the freely-elected governments were determined to preserve solidarity and advocate coordinated or joint actions. In November 1990 when the Paris Charter recording the basic principles of a new Europe after the Cold War was signed, Hungarian Prime Minister József Antall proposed to his Polish and Czech partners that the leading politicians of the three countries should meet at the beginning of the following year in Visegrád. In the Solemn Declaration adopted at the summit on 15 February 1991, Prime Minister Antall,

Czechoslovakian President Václav Havel, and Polish President Lech Wałęsa stated the common political and economic ambitions of their countries, as well as their intention of reconciling their politics on the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, a means of Soviet power, and fully taking part in European integration. The Declaration joyfully stated that “the historic sense of togetherness of our nations and the need for it can from now on freely be manifested in accordance with the true interests of our people on the highest level of political will.” Mikhail Gorbachev, President of the Soviet Union, afterwards accepted the termination of the Warsaw Pact, an alliance having never been approved by the people of the member states, on 1 July in Prague. Had the four nations of the three countries not chosen the path of common understanding and joint actions, the three countries neighbouring Hungary, having a large number of Hungarians as national minorities, would have easily been tempted to form some sort of a coalition against Hungary’s effort to promote minority rights. The so-called Little Entente, the unholy alliance of Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia between the two world wars formed against Hungary, was not forgotten.

Due to the joint efforts of the leaders of the Visegrad Group, association agreements were signed with the European Communities on 16 December 1991; while the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) was created in the following year. The Visegrad Countries worked together for their NATO membership guaranteeing security. They achieved that aim on 12 March 1999. (Slovakia was left out, due to the interior and Russia-sympathetic foreign policy of former Slovakian Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar.) Accession negotiations with the EU were initially also conducted together.

At the turn of the millennium, when the Visegrad Countries were led by centre-right governments dedicated to the Atlantic Alliance, the cooperation gained new momentum with the declaration concerning the coordination of politics as members of the European Union, signed in 2004 in the Czech city of Kroměříž.

In the past, the unity of Central Europe manifested itself in culture creating everlasting contributions.

“Visegrad can serve as a good example for other groups of countries that are rivals or even show hostility towards each other.”

The Visegrad Fund was established in 2000 for its preservation. Its joint programmes realised with the help of grants are becoming more and more popular; creating a sense of belonging together in the younger generation.

The V4 has no separate apparatus; its policies are coordinated through the regular meetings of the group’s leaders. Visegrad is not a closed group. In many matters including the Eastern Partnership, they act jointly with the Baltic and Western Balkan states or the five northern countries. The solidarity of the four Central European countries seems to be effective at the time of growing Euroscepticism and with regard to the large inflow of refugees.

Last but not least, Visegrad can serve as a good example for other groups of countries that are rivals or even show hostility towards each other. The group’s name itself is of Slavic origin; it means a high castle, an acropolis. Let this high castle be a strong castle, a lighthouse guiding the V4 and other countries.



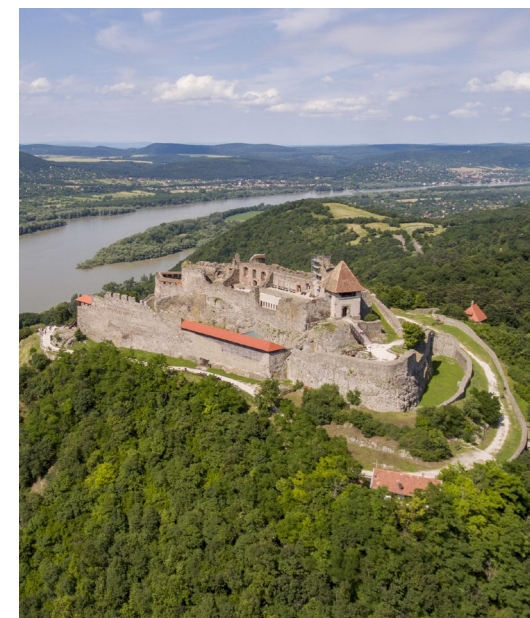
Written by
Dr Géza Jeszenszky,
former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Hungary

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT – VISEGRAD 2016+

The transition to democracy that reached its peak from 1989 to 1990 has changed the whole European geopolitical setting. Although the iron curtain disappeared and the division of Europe was over, Central Europe could not help drifting into a power vacuum. Everybody agreed that this power vacuum in the region cannot be maintained in the long term. While the extension of the NATO was a taboo at that time – actually Washington was thinking about its liquidation¹ – the Americans were planning to realize a zone of neutral states from the Balkans to Finland.² In the view of Hungary, this idea had its own antecedents, since the main hope of the country in 1956 was to achieve the neutral status. However, this experience proved the impossibility of the idea to the Hungarian prime minister – József Antall. As he said: “neutrality has never been a proclamation made by any country during history, but it was an opportunity, which was born by agreements of world politics and current circumstances.”³

“A new Central European order needed to be institutionalized. That was the Visegrad Cooperation.”

Power vacuum carries many dangers: becoming defenceless against a possibly resurging Soviet Union, an eventual German-Soviet rapprochement, a new alliance unfolding around Hungary from the “Little Entente” states, or the expansion of the Yugoslav War and the insecurity it engenders. Concerning the first problem from the four, József Antall urged the early withdrawal of the Soviet



troops from Hungary.⁴ Building a particularly good relationship with Helmut Kohl and improving ties with Boris Yeltsin’s Russia was Antall’s key to avoid the possibility of becoming a Soviet–German buffer zone.⁵ He thought that averting the resurrection of the Little Entente spirit could be ensured by supporting each other, taking joint actions and, above all, by mutually respecting the human rights of minority status citizens in each country.⁶ Nevertheless, this was not enough: a new Central European order needed to be institutionalised.

The new Central European order was created by a Hungarian initiative and was based on the idea of József Antall – on the strong Visegrad Cooperation.⁷ The original agreement signed at the Congress of Visegrad (1335) reflected the power reality of medieval Europe, when the

¹ Solomon, G. B. (1998). *The NATO Enlargement Debate. Blessings of Liberty, 1990–1997*. Centre for Strategic and International Studies, Washington D.C., pp. 6–19.

² Sharing the Experiences of Visegrad Cooperation in the Western Balkans and the Eastern Neighbourhood Countries, 2010. International Centre for Democratic Transition. Available: <http://www.icdt.hu/documents/publications/GUAM-Project-Preparatory-Study.pdf>. [downloaded: 1 February 2016].

³ Antall, J. (2015). *Modell és valóság. II.* Antall József Tudásközpont, Budapest. pp. 377.

⁴ “Antall József miniszterelnöknek a koalíciós képviselőcsoportok zártkörű ülésén elhangzott beszédéből” Available: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0tR3URo9lpl>. [downloaded: 1 February 2016].

⁵ Antall, J. (2015), p. 549.

⁶ Antall, J. (2015), p. 494, 706.

⁷ Antall, J. (2015), p. 675.

kingdoms of the region were not only independent states, but also among the most stable ones of the continent. The concept of Visegrad reached back to this ideal state, when it imagined an alliance of independent and strong countries, whose main aim was furthering the European integration and linking into the process. According to József Antall, the Visegrad Cooperation could not become the alternative of the NATO or the accession to the European Union, moreover neither it could become their long-lasting anteroom, nor their “dental waiting room.” The Central European countries made it clear that their integration should be interpreted as a component of a stepping stone to the broader European integration.⁸

At first, Antall's concept proved to be flexible enough to solve problems, and this made the cooperation strong against the problems. There were numerous difficulties: the dissolution of Czechoslovakia, the ethnic tensions, the economic problems, or just the fact that more countries would have joined to the cooperation. The V4 lasted because it did not become overcentralized, did not create a huge bureaucracy and the politicians of the early times handled the occurring problems well. The Central European Basic Treaties and the inclusive regional networks like the Central European Initiative (earlier: Pentagonale, then Hexagonale) took away the narrow exclusivity of the Visegrad Cooperation.⁹ Also, the basic treaties, the accommodation to the Helsinki framework, and the calm and stable policy of minority protection helped significantly to manage the growing ethnic nationalism. The cooperation had not been shaken either by the “Velvet Divorce” of Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

“The V4 has stood the test of time because it remained flexible.”

József Antall was not only the one who had came up with the idea of the Visegrad Cooperation but he was its most consistent advocate and protector as well. After he died, the Cooperation lost from its relevance due to the changing foreign policy priorities of the Gyula Horn government¹⁰

⁸ Antall, J. (2015), p. 505, 616–17.

⁹ Antall, J. (2015), pp. 736–37.

¹⁰ Dunay, P. (2004). Az átmenet magyar külpolitikája.

and to the Slovak and Czech stubbornness. The V4 only regained its importance when the preliminaries to join NATO and EU reached a peak in 1998. Creating the International Visegrad Fund was a huge step in 2000 which finally provided stable and systematic funding for the objectives. The V4 reached the original goals of Antall as throughout the 1990s, the stability of the region was admired and the countries have managed to avoid being part of malicious power plays or ethnic commotions. The foresight of Antall was proven true in reaching the main aim: the V4 cooperation became a stepping stone for the NATO and EU integration, it did not become an obstacle or worse, an alternative to them.

When measuring the future of the V4 it must be stressed that the cooperation has fulfilled its original purpose as being the common forum of accession to the NATO and EU. Since 2000, the International Visegrad Fund offers funding to a variety of common projects. After the success of the 1990s, the concept of the V4 weakened and it was only in the second part of the 2010s that it regained its central role. Nowadays the Visegrad Cooperation became a popular phrase in policy papers, studies, and university courses – today, there is no Eastern European Studies without the V4.

In 1999 (and, for that matter, also in 1335) it was the political reality that made the creation of the Visegrad Cooperation possible, and today is also a point when we must be able to measure the reality well. There is largely a consensus among geopolitical authors about the idea that Central Europe is a geographically vulnerable place, laying at the crossroads of big powers (Russia, Germany, and potentially Turkey) – all of which could be a challenge in the future. Another challenge could be the instability in the neighbourhood: although the weapons have fallen silent in the Balkans, the Middle East and Turkey is hardly stable, and the migration flow which started in 2015 creates further tension. George Friedman described this delicate geographical-political situation with the concept of “borderlands.”¹¹

Mozgó világ, Vol. 30, No. 2.

¹¹ Friedman, G. (2015). *Gyulladáspontok*, New Wave Media, Budapest.

The V4 area being a “borderland” is not only a geographical concept but also a political one, i.e. it depends on what it borders. It is hardly a premature conclusion that if Russia, the Middle East and Western Europe are cooperative, that has an immensely positive effect on the Visegrad Countries as well. Unfortunately, nowadays the cooperation is not flawless among these partners. Moreover, the future of the European Union, which creates a framework for the V4 Cooperation, has become unclear. How the EU will react to the Brexit and to the long-lasting effects of the financial crisis that begun in 2008 are still questions that loom large. If the “two-speed” Europe will become a reality then the V4 could find itself in the “borderland” again. But a more continental and homogeneous Europe would be advantageous for the V4 as well. Our interest is a strong Europe. However, the interests of the Western and Eastern member states can be radically different (as the interest of the Northern and Southern member states as well) and a stronger Union would tip the balance towards the stronger Western countries. So the interest of the V4 would not be a federalist Europe but a strong, multifaceted integration that is based on the sovereignty of the nation-states. Compromises with Turkey and Russia are also necessary so that we do not find ourselves in the middle of a buffer zone of conflicting interests but in the middle of a prospering union.¹² It seems that the Visegrad Cooperation is substantial (if selective) and resilient against such external challenges. We can expect that this union will be able to participate in EU politics as an independent actor, but we can also expect disagreements between the members in cases of conflicting interests. It is undeniable that the V4 Countries have strong, stable governments and they are reliable business partners which is an important trait for the primus inter pares Germany. However underpublicized it is, the economic cooperation between Germany and the V4 is still one of the

¹² Csepregi, Zs. (2016) “Nem lehetünk többé határvidék” – Magyarország geopolitikai érdekei. *Diplomaci Blog*. Available: http://diplomaci.blog.hu/2015/09/23/_nem_lehetunk_tobbe_hatarvidek_magyarorszag_geopolitikai_erdekei. [Available: 23. August 2016].

EU's most vital factors and it seems that it is going to remain so.¹³

One of the most important questions about the future is whether the form of the V4 will stay the same or does it need to become a more regular, more structured cooperation. Although there would be a lot of benefits, there are also some disadvantages in this regard. It would be pointless to deny that there are many disagreements between the V4 countries which are not likely to disappear. The current structure of the V4 is flexible and “soft” enough to absorb the “vibrations.”¹⁴ At the same time, a tougher appearance which would no longer be considered *ad hoc* in the eyes of the stronger actors (Germany–France tandem, Russia etc.) could potentially trigger resistance.¹⁵

In conclusion, the V4 will be useful for the nation-states of the region in the years to come, but moot points among its members will still recur. The prosperity of the region do not only depend on cooperation but also on how our geopolitical context would change. The most competitive structure that could manage future problems and explore opportunities is most likely one that is more integrative on a sectoral level, but largely unchanged and retains its flexible, “Visegradian” character.



Written by
Tamás Péter Baranyi
Head of Research
AJKC

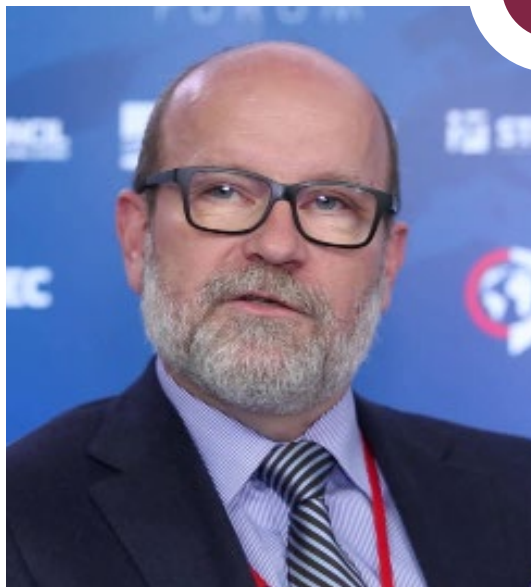
¹³ McDonagh, K. (2014). A View on Central Europe III: Does the V4 Have a Future? *Globsec Policy Institute*. Available: <http://www.cepolicy.org/publications/view-central-europe-iii-does-v4-have-future-0>. [Downloaded: 24 July 2016].

¹⁴ Strážay, T. (2015). Exploring Possibilities of Deepening the Internal Cohesion of the V4: Polish and Slovak Perspectives. *Slovak Foreign Policy Association*. Available: http://www.sfpa.sk/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Internal-Cohesion-of-the-V4_SK-and-PL-perspectives.pdf. [Downloaded: 24 August 2016].

¹⁵ McDonagh, 2014.

INTERVIEWS

The interviews were conducted with HE Juraj Chmiel, Czech Ambassador to Hungary; HE Roman Kowalski, Polish Ambassador to Hungary; HE Rastislav Káčer, Slovak Ambassador to Hungary; and Szabolcs Takács, State Secretary for European Union Affairs, Hungary in August-September 2016.



1. HE Juraj Chmiel, Czech Ambassador to Hungary
3. HE Rastislav Káčer, Slovak Ambassador to Hungary

2. HE Roman Kowalski, Polish Ambassador to Hungary
4. Szabolcs Takács, State Secretary for European Union Affairs

GLOBAL ISSUES

May I ask you to name those global processes which you think profoundly affect the V4 countries?

R. Kowalski

Naturally, I regard the continuously intensifying migration wave – which is caused by a variety of reasons: wars and conflicts, the devastating effect of climate change, the destruction of the environment, or just the search for a better life – as the global process that affects the V4 Group and Europe the most. The handling of this problem currently poses an enormous challenge to the Visegrad Countries. The new economic crises can also have a global effect, potentially causing sensitive damage to our economies that are still on the level of rebuilding and strengthening. The decrease of global security, the outbreak of more frequent and geographically closer armed conflicts and the spread of terrorism are also of great importance. We undeniably have to face too many challenges.

Sz. Takács

The flow of migrants fleeing war zones caused problems in the European continent, Australia, as well as the countries of Asia and Africa. By now, illegal migration has become a global challenge which affects the Visegrad Region too. It is, therefore easy to understand that, among all the global processes, it is the migration crisis that our countries have focused on.

V4 AND EU

Where are the Visegrad Countries making progress with special regard to their position in the EU and EU institutions?

Sz. Takács

In my opinion, we as a group are determined, strong, and dedicated enough to make commitments to reinforce the European idea, similarly to those the French and German cooperation made after World War II.

J. Chmiel

The Visegrad Cooperation is gradually becoming stronger and more attractive to other EU countries. The V4 as a whole is able to promote its interests better than its member states individually. I think the V4 is stronger, which is manifested through their unanimous answer to the migration crisis. As a result, we have been in the focus of sometimes unreasonable criticism. We formulated an idea which was entirely different from the one pushed by other countries. Therefore, I believe the reason we are stronger is that we are able to articulate our disagreement with an EU stance or decision, as well as express criticism and come forward with a unique proposal when the ideas presented do not match our visions.

“We undeniably have to face too many challenges”

R. Kowalski

R. Káčer

Visegrad is a good story. No single country or region has the same interests. However, the strength of a cooperation lies in its ability to find compromises. I think that the Visegrad Region should be driven by the intension of making Europe better and stronger and this is the message we should deliver to our citizens and partners. In the Visegrad Region, we speak of Visegrad unity. I have been at many Visegrad meetings since its inception, therefore, I know that member states do not have a common standpoint in certain questions. However, this is absolutely normal, we should not be preoccupied with our differences. We should concentrate on common interests and values and build our cooperation around that. So we are not unanimous, but we are unique. Introducing any kind of “them (EU) and us (Central Europe)” as something too unique would be deadly for us, as we are all part of the EU.

R. Kowalski

We are an integral part of the European Union. We promised to fulfil certain obligations, our influence on processes within the EU is growing and at the same time we are also responsible for the future of the whole of Europe. I hope that our voice will become even more audible and that we can have a large and positive impact on the creation of a strong and successful Europe, as – in the end – our future also depends on this.

“The Visegrad Cooperation is gradually becoming stronger and more attractive to other EU countries”

J. Chmiel

Sz. Takács

I consider myself lucky as I have a very good relationship with my Visegrad colleagues thanks to the high-level meetings we hold to reconcile our interests and ensure the well-being of our citizens. The common standpoints we negotiate make our cooperation stronger which is of crucial importance, even for the next generations.

BREXIT

In your opinion, what impact does Brexit have on the Visegrad Region?

R. Kowalski

It is difficult to give a straight answer to this question today, since currently we only have a decision to deal with. We still speak about a possible scenario which in the case of its eventual realisation – I personally still hope that this will not happen – will have a very serious effect on not only Poland, but on all of our countries. Let me just mention the most important problems: Great Britain is currently the second largest economy within the EU that contributes a serious sum to the EU's joint budget – from which we are net beneficiaries. At the same time, it is a country

where a large number of young people have emigrated to from our states, while it is also an immensely important security policy partner that in many cases shares our point of view regarding the future of the EU. In my opinion, the weakening of the ties with London is an unfavourable scenario for our countries.

Sz. Takács:

Many of our citizens work in the United Kingdom and there are several British companies present in Hungary, which also demonstrates that, with the decision of the UK, the Union is losing one of its pillars. We hope to find the best solution for the new relationship between the UK and the EU without affecting the markets. If we dare ask the questions that led to this decision by the UK, we will be able to guide the EU in a better direction. We think it is important for the citizens to identify themselves with the EU institutions and their decisions, as they are working for the citizens and not vice versa.

J. Chmiel

The Czech Republic will be affected by Brexit as well, as we also have numerous people working in the UK. There arises also the question of how Scotland and Northern Ireland will react to not being part of the European Union. Perhaps we will witness more turbulent developments. When it comes to that, politicians and the markets should react appropriately and avoid hysteria.

“The Union is losing one of its pillars”

Sz. Takács

R. Káčer

As for the priorities, a lot of internal debate is going on about Brexit, which was a vis major, having occurred at the beginning of our presidency. We stress the importance of economy, with special regard to the ways in which the single market can be enhanced.

PUBLIC OPINION ABOUT THE V4

When compiling the first issue of In Focus, we asked the Czech, Slovak, Polish and Hungarian participants of the Antall József Summer School whether or not a Visegrad identity exists. Their reply was that there was no Visegrad identity as such, but they had precious memories of cities such as Prague, Banská Bystrica, Cracow or Szeged. Despite the fact that it is very successful on the political level, the Visegrad Cooperation has no relevance in the everyday life of people. How do you see the public opinion on the V4, especially among young people?

“We just have to follow a path that is constructive”

R. Káčer

R. Káčer

We should be patient, as forming a common identity does not happen overnight. That is the result of long years of daily investment, which should start with politics. Good politics influence community building positively, so we need to encourage our political leaders to do that. Common practical projects including cancellation of roaming fees, as well as the recognition of university degrees in all the member states supporting the movement of labour can also have a positive effect. Accordingly, political communication needs to convey positive instead of deconstructive messages. Through business culture and education, a strong unity can be formed which occurs spontaneously, step by step. We do not have to force such a cooperation, we just have to follow a path that is constructive. Today, we live in a world that is burdened by a horribly negative agenda. We see that this view, and the frustration accompanying it, is sometimes reinforced in the attitude of politicians. It needs to be changed, particularly in the Visegrad Region, by the means of introducing pro-cooperation, pro-openness, and a positive outlook.

Sz. Takács

However, the migration of youth in pursuit of job opportunities is an important question that is yet to be solved.

R. Kowalski

When it comes to young people – if we take into account the whole Visegrad Group – the number of those leaving behind our countries in search for a better life has already by far exceeded two million people. This is a serious problem that gives us already many reasons to think and a problem that can lead to very significant difficulties in the future. First of all, this shows the mobility and the braveness of our youth, the fact that they are well prepared for such a challenge and that they are able to make use of the possibilities that the accession of our countries into the EU presented to them. On the other hand, it indicates that, despite the extraordinary achievements of the last 25 years regarding life standards and the fulfilment of personal goals, there are still far too big differences between our countries and the so-called old EU member states. We have to believe that the equalisation of these differences will be realised more rapidly in the future.

SECURITY POLICY

Do you think that current security challenges could have such effects that would improve the position of our region internationally?

Sz. Takács

Right now, we can clearly see that only the enhanced cooperation of the law enforcement and security services of the member states and international authorities can successfully prevent terror attacks. In order to tackle this problem, the long-term imperfections of EU databases need to be rectified and a complete EU-wide exchange of information should be realised as soon as possible. We attach great importance to the development of the Passenger Name Record (PNR) system units. To this end, Hungary established its national PNR unit long before other member states.

R. Káčer

For me, the growth of political extremism is more dangerous because of the false perception of threats. Naturally, I do not want to imply that all problems with terrorism or the threat of uncontrolled migration to Europe are neglectable but I do want to put it on the right scale of threats and perception. We should make sure that, by hysteria, we do not create more home-grown problems, we do not contribute to the radicalisation of non-radical populations, and we do not help to create another type of extremism. Therefore, we should truly be cautious about how we run politics.

ECONOMICS

What are the economic perspectives of your country? What is the volume of foreign investments?

J. Chmiel

I would say that the shape of the Czech economy is good. The Czech Republic had a great advantage for quite a long time. When a few years ago, the world experienced a turbulence caused by the economic recession of 2008, we had the healthiest banks in the world, because we had undergone all these crises in the 90s and drawn appropriate conclusions. At that time, our central bank developed very serious protective and guiding measures. Therefore, I think our economy is doing very well, we have a very strong automotive industry, which is still blooming despite the crises. However, our aim is to expand and diversify the portfolio of Czech products exported.

R. Kowalski

Poland finds itself on an uninterrupted path of economic growth since 21 years – that is, since 84 consecutive financial quarters. As the surveys of the OECD (See table ‘Quarterly National Accounts: Quarterly Growth Rates of real GDP, change over previous quarter’ on the following [link: https://stats.oecd.org/index.aspx?queryid=350#](https://stats.oecd.org/index.aspx?queryid=350#).) show only Australia has achieved a slightly better

result than this. All this is the result of the joint effort of the Polish people. It constitutes a stable platform for the future which – hopefully – will enable us to maintain this economic growth in the subsequent period. From the economic perspective, future investments are of key importance. Therefore, we would like to maintain their level as high as possible.

Sz. Takács

In recent years, the most significant investments occurred in the field of car and machinery manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, as well as the processing industry. However, we are making a constant effort to revive other sectors such as digitalisation. Hungary aims to encourage the development of a national, regional, and European digital agenda. In this spirit, Budapest is home to the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) and aims to attract the European Medicines Agency (EMA), with a total of 900 employees, to relocate its seat from London to the Hungarian capital.

“From the economic perspective, future investments are of key importance”

R. Kowalski

R. Káčer

For Slovakia, accession to the EU was an economic improvement, so was joining the Eurozone. This helped us to survive during the crisis. However, we should not forget that our growth potential, to a large degree, is linked to our EU membership. Increasing isolation, leaving the EU or the single market, as well as abolishing Schengen would have a negative economic impact. Therefore, our region is a good story because of our success in cooperation.

PAST 25

Regarding achievements of the Visegrad Countries as a whole, what do you think is the biggest result of the past 25 years of the cooperation?

“We created and strengthened a true brand – the Visegrad Four”

R. Kowalski

J. Chmiel

Many achievements have been made during the past 25 years, with the most notable ones being accession to NATO, the European Union, and the Schengen zone. The creation of the International Visegrad Fund is without a doubt a great achievement of the Visegrad Cooperation. When it held the rotating presidency of the Visegrad Group in 2011-2012, the Czech Republic proposed that a similar fund aiding the Western Balkans should be established, and I am very proud to say that this idea has now become reality. Yet another area we should mention is defence cooperation. The four countries have recently had many accomplishments in the area of cyber security. Furthermore, it was during the Czech presidency that the Visegrad Battlegroup was finally put into operation. Scientific cooperation in fields such as research and development, innovation, and applied research bears us fruit as our startups are represented in Silicon Valley. Seven years in the making, the Visegrad Patent Institute has just become operational, which I think is a remarkable success. It is not a frequently-mentioned issue but it was the initiative of the Czech Republic that a closer cooperation should be established in the field of tax fraud evasion. Upon the persuasion of the V4, the EU started to consider the issue more seriously.

R. Kowalski

We created and strengthened a true brand – the Visegrad Four – which is by now globally recognised and a source of inspiration to many of our partners. I think that the establishment of the V4 Group made it possible for us to jointly avoid some mistakes in the past. I also hope that our cooperation will continuously contribute in the future to the strengthening of our region's position.

NEXT 25

What priorities or goals do you think the Visegrad Cooperation shall set for the next 25 years to come?

R. Káčer

I am of the opinion that we need more Europe, which is smart and good, not the other way around. We need a Europe citizens can associate with, where market is even more open and competitive. I do not think that, by promoting pro-European solutions, we would lose our freedom and national heritage. On the contrary, Visegrad member states should become creators of ideas, thereby constructively inspiring the rest of Europe.

“The cooperation shall cover all possible segments in the future”

Sz. Takács

Sz. Takács

The cooperation shall cover all possible segments in the future, like the one between France and Germany does. I also find it important to deepen our cooperation in the field of education. We should also focus on better mobility between Visegrad universities in order to make Bratislava, Prague, Warsaw, and Budapest as attractive for students as Vienna or Munich.

BILATERAL RELATIONS AND THEIR EVALUATION

Which typical product of your home country do you miss in Hungary?

R. Kowalski

It is hard to tell. Maybe the herring. Although my Hungarian friends are not impressed with its taste and the most delicious versions of it cannot be easily bought in Hungary. On a more serious note, I have to admit that Polish products are doing really well on the Hungarian market.

J. Chmiel

Although I miss many Czech products, naming the one most undervalued is a difficult task. However, I am very happy to see that there are more and more Škoda cars on the Hungarian streets. There are lot of food products I miss but if I were to list just a few, I would say the typical *zabjačka* (home-made from fresh pork), and some special dairy products, or cakes.

R. Káčer

For the first time in my diplomatic career of 25 years, I do not feel like living abroad, I feel like at home. Essentially, I can get any Slovak product I am used to here in Hungary. Taking into account that Hungary in Latin means old kingdom [Regnum Hungariae – ed.] where Slovaks and Hungarians lived together, it is no coincidence that there are so many similarities. Yet, there are some differences. So far I have only discovered one, as we are part of a geese and duck culture. However, in Slovakia, we eat duck with *lokša*, which is a thin pancake-like dish made out of potato, flour and egg without using any yeast. It is like Italian flatbread. I do not find it in Hungary.

“For the first time in my diplomatic career of 25 years, I do not feel like living abroad, I feel like at home”

As outgoing ambassador, how do you evaluate your diplomatic career in Hungary?

R. Kowalski

Briefly, in just a few words I can say that both professionally and privately this period was a particularly rich one in my life. In my preliminary plans – that each candidate ambassador has to submit before taking their post – I set out two main goals: the activation of youth contacts and the improvement of economic ties. We managed to realise the Memorandum project supporting youth initiatives which had already achieved amazing results. Our cooperation also flourishes with universities, schools and such excellent institutions as the Antall József Knowledge Centre. To our great satisfaction, the vividness of contacts between youths from different countries can be easily observed now. As far as the strengthening of the economic ties are concerned, the numbers speak for themselves – during the last few years we managed to double the level of economic turnover between our countries which by now surpassed the record amount of 8 billion euros. All this gives us ample reason to be satisfied. However, this does not mean that we have nothing to do in the future. There is still a lot to be done, as the relations between our countries offer many opportunities for further cooperation.

R. Káčer

③ SOCIETY

IS THERE A VISEGRAD IDENTITY? IF YES WHERE DO WE FIND ITS TRACES?

Identity means self-consciousness or self-determination, of which we speak when we completely identify ourselves with a set of values or a role. This consciousness develops through human interactions. Its formation is a life-long process or, in the case of community identity, a process that lasts through generations. It is the result of our personal character development and socialisation.¹

If we look at the “Visegradness” of the citizens of the Visegrad Countries we can name a large number of jointly experienced and decisive historical situations as well as life events. Such identity forming situations also exist, if in the given region there were only occasional and partial strives to achieve cultural cohesion, and the important cultural interferences were rather incidental and personal than state supported. It can be said that the majority of the Czech, Polish, Slovak and Hungarian citizens cannot identify themselves as “Visegradian” since they do not have a personal experience that could help the formation of a common self-image.²

¹ Manuel Castells created three categories for the description of this notion i) people organise themselves around primary identity(s), such as religious, ethnical, territorial and national determination. According to Castells primary identity is the most beautiful force through which we can achieve personal security and communal mobility. ii) Secondly identity forms against something. This is the identity of opposition. It often happens that instead of a positive self-identification we are more certain about who oppresses us, who we are not, what we do not agree with, or what we do not accept. iii) Finally Castells describes the notion of project identity which he uses when he wants to describe a group of people who want to change existing structures and define themselves according to these planned changes (e.g. „I am green” – environmental organisations, „I am a woman” – feminists).

² According to the interviews recorded by the Antall

The concept of “being Visegradian” is used by the political and academic world alike. Although Visegrad citizens legitimise the use of this notion, 17-54% of the Visegrad Countries’ population have not heard about this cooperation nor they have such an identity. At most they have had some personal experiences in connection with the other three Visegrad Countries or with a product originating from there.³

The common destiny of the Visegrad citizens is that, although the political framework of the states they lived in often changed, the population remained the same.

The lack of cultural coherence and communal awareness of the Visegrad citizens might be surprising when we think about the dynastical relations that existed since the Árpád era. Hungary and Poland had three, the Czech state and Hungary had 23 common monarchs, while the lists of the Hungarian and Slovak kings mutually overlap each other. Although after the dissolution of the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy the interests of the newly created states in the region diverged from each other, after 1948 all of them found themselves under Soviet and communist rule. Therefore, the citizens of the Visegrad Countries could gain similar experiences – for example about the rule of the proletarian dictatorship. Isolation was also a common experience, as was the desire for Western integration and the need for the products of consumer society; together, at the same time they managed to transform to a free market economy and multiparty political

József Knowledge Centre.

³ 54% of Slovaks, 37% of Czechs, 26% of Hungarians, 17% of Poles, Source: International Visegrad Fund 2001, 2015



Public Opinion on V4 Identity



Štefan (Czech, 50, pilot)

These four nations were always relatives not only due to their being neighbours, but also because of their similar histories. We had common kings and later a common emperor. Our cultures are similar, as are our national mentalities. Naturally, due to the changes in the political systems, our relations were turbulent from time to time.



Anna (Hungarian, 26, international relations manager)

Although I don't have a Visegrad identity, whenever I'm in an international group, I do feel that I am closer to Visegrad people and am more open towards them.

Marek (Polish, 31, political scientist, journalist)

What exist are a common history and similar perception of reality on many levels. A community with similar experience, mostly historical and political experience. There are nations which are more connected than others—Poles and Hungarians, for example. Polish people really love Hungarians, and Hungarians probably love Poles as well. Also with Slovaks and Czechs, Poles feel a cultural closeness. If there is a V4 identity, it is based on common political, historical, and perhaps cultural experiences. V4 citizens certainly feel more familiar with each other than with other Western European or Eastern European nations.



Karin (Slovak, 30, lawyer)

I see myself more like a citizen of the European Union, rather than that of the Visegrad Region.



Stanislav (27, Polish, lawyer)

To be honest, I do not feel that I have a strong Visegrad identity. I think it could play a much more important role than it does now but there just seems to be too many conflicting interests in the four states. In my view, many people do not have a strong V4 identity and they do not feel that the group has had an impact.

system, while later on they also succeeded to jointly gain access into the Western military and political alliances.⁴

The concept of European identity and the value system on which it is based has already been examined in many surveys. According to the findings, the most important values for those who consider themselves European are in descending order the following: peace, human rights and the respect for human life. According to the statistics of the Eurobarometer⁵, peace and the respect for human rights are the most important values for those living in the countries of the Visegrad Region. When asked, 51% of Hungarians and 53% of Slovaks found peace to be the most important value, while Czechs consider peace and human rights equally important values (both stand at 40%). According to Poles the respect of human rights (50%) is the most important European value. This shows that the Visegrad states perfectly fit into the value system "of being European". But are there any character traits of being "Visegradian" that could distinguish us from the other Europeans? Which are those common components that bind together this linguistically divided region? Why do we feel similar to each other when we find ourselves in the company of people from other Visegrad Countries?

I. If we look for the Visegrad identity it is worth recalling the common historical nodes of the Visegrad states that shaped our system of values, our emotional stance and interests. Although this year we are celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Visegrad cooperation, the history of our relations is at least 700 years long. The recallable events, that happened when the threads of our history intertwined, were primary incidental:

- The first milestone of the Visegrad Cooperation was the Congress of Visegrad in 1335 that was organised on the highest diplomatic level.⁶ The meeting resulted in the formation of an

⁴ Bottoni, S. (2014). *A várva várt Nyugat. Kelet-Európa története 1944-től napjainkig*. MTA Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont, Budapest.

⁵ Values of Europeans (2008). Eurobarometers 69 [online]. Available: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb69/eb69_values_en.pdf [downloaded: 28 August 2016.], p. 16.

⁶ Visegrad means a castle (hrad) upon a hill (výše),



Saint Hedwig of Silesia

alliance between the Hungarian, Bohemian and Polish kingdoms, which was enforced by the ensuing economic cooperation. The alliance was directed against external threats, primarily against the Habsburgs. The aligning kingdoms agreed to provide mutual military alliance to each other against the Habsburgs, settled their territorial disputes and designed new trade routes in order to avoid Vienna and the staple right imposed there by the Habsburgs.

With the evaluation of the historical situation that led to the start of the cooperation we can find circumstances that are relevant even today, the most important ones being our countries were wedged in between the foreign political territorial aspirations of the Habsburg and Russian empires, while also constituting the outmost border of the western world.

there are more cities with the same name in the region e.g. Vyšehrad or Višegrad, but for example one of the historical districts of Prague, where among others the cemetery of the Czech heroes can also be found, also bears this name. In slavic languages the word castle (hrad, grad) can be found in the name of several cities (e.g. Beograd, Novy Hrad etc.)

- We can look back at the coronation of Louis I of Hungary as one of the most important nodes determining our common identity. After the discontinuation of the Polish royal (Piast) dynasty Louis I of Hungary was invited to the Polish throne (1370). After his death the throne passed to his daughter Hedwig. As the Polish people were afraid of the spread of the German influence they did not support Hedwig's marriage to William of Austria. Therefore, Hedwig broke off her engagement and married the son of the Grand Duke of Lithuania, who was much older than she and pagan. Subsequently he was crowned the king of Poland under the name of Władysław II Jagiełło. Fulfilling the conditions of his enthronement Jagiełło converted to the Christian faith together with his people. The conversion of the Lithuanians is thus in some form our joint historical achievement.

Our Christian conviction is still basic Visegradian value today, although it is still arguable whether we consider it a primary or secondary identity.⁷ The creation of the so-called "frontier identity" dates back to the times of the Ottoman wars. Almost all of us share the idea that we were the ones who had to defend Europe, therefore the bell tolls at midday for our martyrs.⁸ In the case of the Polish romantics the "frontier identity" even evolved into the idea of sacrificial messianism.⁹

Experiencing identity through such a role makes us all proud. However, the modification of the Visegrad states' "frontier status" is naturally the general goal and interest of all of the four countries.¹⁰

⁷ In the case of the Czech Republic it has to be mentioned that it showed a specific form of historical development within the world of Christian culture: the destiny of the country and the development of national identity was mostly influenced by Hussism, which can be seen as a prelude to Protestantism.

⁸ The midday chime is a bell call that can be heard every day at 12 p.m. and summons Christians for the Angelus prayer. This custom can be observed worldwide and commemorates the victory at Nándorfehérvár (Belgrade) against the invading Turkish forces on 22 July 1456. The Pope declared the day the news of the victory reached the Vatican, 6 August, a major holiday and in a papal decree ordered a celebratory mess to be held at 12 p.m., which was to be accompanied by bell rings.

⁹ Mickiewicz's famous poem "To a Polish Mother" is a perfect example for this.

¹⁰ Csepregi, Zs. (2015). „Nem lehetünk többé határvidék” – Magyarország geopolitikai érdekei, *Diplo-*

-From the second half of the 14th century, the states of the Visegrad Region were bound together by the Jagiellonian Empire, established with the marriage of Vladislaus and Jadwiga: The Jagiellons were also the kings of the Bohemians, Hungarians, and Poles until 1526, when Louis II, the 20-year-old Jagiellonian king of Bohemia and Hungary, drowned in the Csele river when fleeing from the Battle of Mohács, and the Bohemian orders elected Ferdinand Habsburg as king. Ferdinand later came to rule both the Western and Eastern parts of Hungary after the country was torn apart under Turkish occupation.

The collapse of the Kingdom of Hungary in 1526 at Mohács also buried the Bohemian-Hungarian branch of the House of Jagiełło, while under Sigismund I the Old (reign: 1506-1548), Poland entered a new age of prosperity. Although the fate of Poland took a more favorable turn than Hungary's, the lively Hungarian-Bohemian and Polish diplomatic ties remained intact: Sigismund I of Poland not only gave up his claim to the throne in favour of John Szapolyai, but also became one of his biggest supporters. When, with the death of his son, the Polish branch of the Jagiellonian dynasty also died out, Poland elected a Transylvanian prince as king of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.¹¹

The lesser nobility's support for Báthory and the cross-regional cooperation between the Poles and Hungarians regarding the succession to the throne is another example of an *ad hoc* political action, which was once again motivated by the fear of German and Russian influence.

- In Bohemia, the time was marked by the spread of Hussitism: 1618 was the year of the Defenestration of Prague, where the leaders of the Bohemian estates threw the supreme burgrave represent-

Maci blog [on-line]. Available: http://diplomaci.blog.hu/2015/09/23/_nem_lehetunk_tobbe_hatarvidek_magyarorszag_geopolitikai_erdekei [downloaded: 20 September 2016].

¹¹ At the time, the most likely heir was Emperor and King Maximilian from the House of Habsburg, but then Ivan the Terrible also announced his claim. Meanwhile, the Poles not only had a potential Turkish invasion to fear, but also had reason to be wary of German and Russian attempts to partition their country among them. Although the lords in the Senate reacted to this situation by electing Maximilian, the more powerful lesser nobility ended up supporting Stephen Báthory on 12 December 1575.

ing the Habsburgs out the window, along with the grand prior and their secretary, Fabricius. The defenestration marked the beginning of the Thirty Years' War. In the Battle of White Mountain, the army Protestant Bohemian Estates was defeated by Habsburg Emperor Ferdinand II and his supporters, the Catholic League. With this, the Kingdom of Bohemia became a permanent Habsburg province. After the battle, Ferdinand had the Bohemian leaders executed, and replaced Czech with German as the official language. On a Hungarian territory, such centralising efforts took place only in the wake of the 1849 Surrender at Világos, and only for a short time. Czech statehood, however, was temporarily abolished, which also resulted in the suppression of Czech culture—still a major trauma in Czech national consciousness.¹²

- By the late 1600s, the forces of the Holy League reclaimed the territories of the medieval Kingdom of Hungary under Turkish occupation. Transylvania also came under Habsburg control, but remained administratively separate from other Hungarian areas. From that point on, the entire Kingdom of Hungary was a part of the Habsburg Empire. Against the Austrian Catholic influence, Protestantism—protecting the Hungarian identity—became prevalent especially in the Eastern part of the country. Some of the most genuine artifacts of this process are the folk tales and songs belonging to the Kuruc culture. The rebels and freedom fighters of the age—similarly to the political refugees of ages past—once again found refuge in Poland.¹³

- The 18th century saw Poland decline, come under foreign occupation, and get partitioned three times. Polish statehood was restored during the Napoleonic Wars, with the establishment of the Duchy of Warsaw. During the uprisings of 1830-31 and 1863-64, the Poles tried unsuccessfully

¹² This disharmony was best illustrated by Jaroslav Hašek three centuries later via the character and humor of Švejk.

¹³ Thanks to the relationship of John Sobieski and Imre Thököly, Poland represented a safe haven. In November 1701, when Francis II Rákóczi escaped from his prison in Wiener Neustadt, he fled to Poland. He lived in Krakow and Warsaw, and his years in hiding were spent in the company of Miklós Bercsényi. When he returned home in 1703, he was aided by Poles.

to reclaim their country's independence. The uprisings were suppressed, and the Kingdom of Poland was degraded to a Russian province as retribution. A large number of Poles fled in the aftermath of the failed freedom fights, thereby giving birth to the culturally thriving and politically influential global Polish diaspora.

Thus, Czechs, Poles, and Hungarians have all experienced oppression, disenfranchisement, and statelessness, which represent a common identity-shaping experience.¹⁴

During the Spring of Nations, in March 1848, Lajos Kossuth demanded a modern constitution for Hungary and the Hereditary Provinces. The Hungarian Revolution of 1848, which made the eventual social transition possible, is one of the most notable and brightest chapters in the history of Poland and Hungary: under the leadership of generals Józef Bem and Henryk Dembiński, thousands of Polish officers and linemen participated in the Hungarian freedom fight. Poles living in Hungary welcomed the revolution with great enthusiasm, and the representatives of the Galician Poles arriving in Pest to establish contact with the Hungarian government were greeted with a torchlight procession. The freedom fighters only laid down their arms in front of the Russian Tsar's invasion army. The Hungarians' request to reinforce the constitutional rights of the Hereditary Provinces is an example of a spontaneous effort against the Habsburgs to promote our common interests.

II. 18 years after the revolution was put down, the Austro-Hungarian Compromise established a dual monarchy that was nonetheless multinational, and which represented the first institutional effort at creating an identity within a common framework. It is to the credit of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy that the general atmosphere in the region did not culminate in conflict—the territory's different people and their different languages, ethnicities, and religions were held together by Austro-Hungary. Hungarians, Czechs, Slovaks, and Silesian Poles all considered themselves citizens of the Monarchy. However, by the turn of the century,

¹⁴ Mihály Munkácsy's Death Row debuted at the Salon in Paris in 1870, where it won the grand gold medal, as well as the admiration of the Courbet Group.



Sándor Wágner: The Self-Sacrifice of Titusz Dugovics

these people, as well as the Italians, Austrians, Slovenians, Romans, and so on, had come to identify with separate national aims, which they later pursued in World War I. With the dissolution of the Monarchy in 1918, the Czechoslovak Republic came into being, while Hungary and Poland regained their independence.

III. The witty and self-critical description of István Bibó¹⁵ offers a good introduction to the period leading up to the end of World War I. Bibó's reading of our shared history—which he calls “the lesson of becoming a nation” but essentially characterises as a series of failure of institutional cooperation—is worth remembering even in moments of optimism and celebration:

- Poland (between 1772 and 1794), Hungary (between 1825 and 1848), and Czechoslovakia (between 1918 and 1938) all reacted to the European democratic and patriotic movement, but were unable to fill their inherited historical territories with a uniform national consciousness or manage them according to a federalist model. Leaders of each country believed that, just like in the French model, the forces of democracy and freedom would bind their factious populations. After a period of suspended animation, the states of Eastern Europe struggled with the difficulties of existence, and in this situation their hopes in the power of democracy

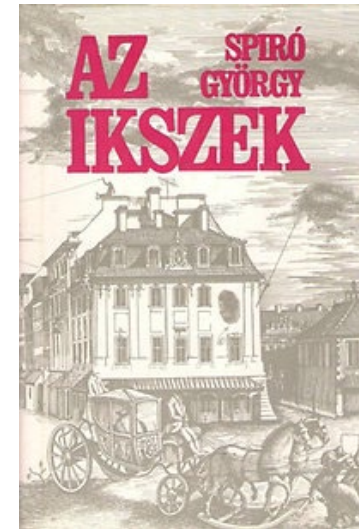
and freedom failed to become reality, and the result was the complete partition of Poland, the failure of the Hungarian Revolution, the Trianon Treaty, as well as the 1938-39 partition of Czechoslovakia.

- In all these instances, all three countries (who were fighting the European status quo powers) came in conflict with their disaffected minorities. They also had good reason to feel abandoned by Europe: the Poles with regard to the creation of an independent Poland, the Czechs because of the annexation of the Sudetenland, and the Hungarians due to the failures of their freedom fights and the catastrophe of Trianon. The political interests of the Visegrad Countries have never been further apart than during these times.¹⁶

- During World War I, the need to gain further allies and stir up the “hinterlands” led the Entente powers to lend support for creating an independ-

¹⁵ István Bibó was a Hungarian lawyer, professor and corresponding member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, vice-president of the Eastern European Institute, librarian, and political prisoner. His work as the greatest 20th century democratic political thinker in Hungary is outstanding even by international standards. As Minister of State in the Imre Nagy government in 1956, he opposed the Soviet occupation of Hungary.

¹⁶ Cf. Bibó, I. (2011). *A kelet-európai kisállamok nyomorúsága*. Argumentum Kiadó és Nyomda, Budapest, pp. 2–198.



Czesław Miłosz receiving the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1980

ent Polish state. The tiny new state, formed from territories of those on the losing side, have later gained real, legitimate statehood after they defeated the Bolshevik Soviet-Russia. In the interwar years, however, it became clear that independence is not an antidote for everything: economic hardships and a growing mistrust in democracy was widely felt in this region. It became common sense that no one can rely on the West to solve their own problems. The Visegradians experienced a sense of betrayal again and again, they grew disillusioned with Western Europe and Western democracy – which they otherwise respect as an ideal.

- Although Poland and Czechoslovakia were winners, and Hungary was a loser of World War I, all Visegrad Countries held territorial resentments, given that these new states were created not on the basis of the abstract principle of national self-determination, but on realities of power and on perceived give-and-take mentality. As Visegrad Countries clung to their historical borders, efforts to revise the post-WWI treaties were emphatic in their political plans. Democracy and international law was overtook by the territorial principle and regional rivalry as a driving force – though it was not a general rule, see the example of Denmark.¹⁷ All the three countries found themselves in a posi-

tion that they felt they have something to demand from the world.

- World War II brought about terrible suffering to Poland. During the Nazi and Soviet occupations, the Poles created a parallel administration, an underground state. The Polish Home Army sparked off the Warsaw Rising to liberate their capital alone, prior to the interference of the Soviet, so as to put their underground government in power. According to the calculations of the insurgents, liberation should have last for a couple of days, since the Soviet Army already reached the bank of the Vistula. The Soviets, however, did not intervene in the fighting on the Polish side, moreover, they did not let their allies land to help the insurgents. Instead, they watched as bystanders while Warsaw was being razed to the ground. In Polish behavior and self-perception, the manifestation of societal responsibility through self-management is still a defining trait.

- After the end of World War II, the territory of Poland was shifted to the West. The Allies restored Czechoslovakia as a state with its 1938 borders. Discriminatory measures were taken against the Hungarians. With shifting the borders, to a certain extent Europe admitted to its earlier negligence of the Visegrad Countries. The status that we can accept our limits with complete psychological serenity was only reached in the next century, with

¹⁷ Denmark announced in 1919 that it do not want to get back historical Danish territories except through popular referendum.

our accession to the European Union.¹⁸

- Following World War II the East Central Europe-an region became part of the Soviet bloc. Some progress in social mobility notwithstanding, democracy and the rule of law withered away, social advancement faltered. Resistance acts against the communist regimes, which began with the Soviet invasion, is depicted in the Gdańsk Solidarity Museum as a joint phonocardiogram – resistance reached peaks in Hungary in 1956, in Czechoslovakia in 1968, and in Poland in the 1980s. *Solidarność* contributed seriously to the undermining of the power of the Polish United Workers' Party. In 1989, it won the first (quasi-) democratic elections which put its candidate, Lech Wałęsa, to the presidential seat. He was to become the third party, alongside József Antall and Václav Havel, to sign the Visegrad Cooperation. The socialist bloc failed to construct a common identity. A common legacy of this era is that the social services became accessible for the poorest, education became a tool to uplift those left behind, or for instance the maternity pay introduced in 1967. On the other hand, some of our ambivalent characteristics are rooted in this era: the slowly easing sense of being secondary citizens, the lack of self-confidence or language command, cautious scepticism, pessimism, etc.

- With the Soviet bloc falling apart in 1989, the Visegrad Countries adopted market economy and multi-party systems. Our common goal was the European integration which has been fulfilled with our accession to NATO (most in 1999, Slovakia in 2004) and the European Union (2004). In the meantime, the velvet divorce of the Czech and Slovak Republics also took place. Our present-day economic and legal framework was set up in this era, and issues of material compensation as well as liability of communist crimes came into the fore.

- After the successful European accession in 2004 the prime ministers of the V4 states signed a memorandum stating that they will continue their cooperation within the frameworks of the EU and NATO. At the same time they institutionalised the

political form of the Visegrad Cooperation and introduced the rotational, one year long presidency system.

Visegrad Countries are thus bound together by these common historical events. Their relationship, the feelings their citizens have towards each other are largely determined by these interactions. Historical events have shaped cultural, religious, language identities, through which a shared set of values can be detected. On this ground, based on this identity of values and lessons of history, the Visegrad people can move forward effectively and wisely, as our shared traditions, our similar developmental levels and economic performance make us natural allies.

This year's greatest big turn, the Brexit brought about changes that might impact our cooperation. Our strength and effectivity might be boosted with the EU's shifting weight to the East. It is discernible that the Visegrad Countries are now redefining their position within their narrow environment, in the EU, and thus they contribute to the whole recontuction of the EU. In this transforming behaviour – to use Castell's framework – manifest sit-self the project identity of the Visegrad Countries that makes their primary identities – Christian, defender of Europe, disillusioned, authoritarian, freedom-loving, committed truth-seeker – complete.

IV. The events of the past 700 years outlined above, our cultural determinations, shared values, proposed solutions for shared problems, occasional joint actions, however, did not encompass the whole regional structure. We need converging institutions to strengthen our shared identity, to enhance our mutual friendship, for instance in the fields of education, trade and energy security. Our institutional systems have only been periodically successful so far. Today the question is what can we build together.



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¹⁸ Our most extensive everyday connections are still through European Union intitutions, like the Erasmus programme.

VISEGRAD AS REGIONAL IDENTITY

In 1991 the Visegrad Three (which later became the Visegrad Four) agreed on a common goal; to re-join Europe after the decades of socialism. They established five political aims within the framework of the Visegrad Cooperation: the restoration of democracy and freedom, the elimination of totalitarian regimes, the embracing of the market economy, the rule of law, and parliamentary democracy, as well as European integration.¹

Regionalism, which involves the cooperation of regions, is one of the most important strategies of the European Union to improve its competitiveness and is the source of the EU's inner cohesion.² Therefore, this paper aims to examine whether there is a "Visegrad identity" that could strengthen the foremost political collaboration between the V4 countries.

For the purpose of this essay, Jan Assman's definition of collective identity will be used. According to him, collective identity is defined through a kind of identificatory determination in a positive ("we are this") sense.³ Collective identity means recognizing the common features and the characteristics that distinguish the group from others.⁴ Its materialisation is through socialisation in micro-communities (family, friends, workplace) and through centrally influenced methods (parties, media, school).⁵ It also must be highlighted that identity is not given

¹ Visegrad Declaration, 1991. Available: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/documents/visegrad-declarations/visegrad-declaration-110412> [downloaded: 20 September 2016].

² Palkó, K. (2011). Az identitás területi dimenziói a politika tükrében, PhD dissertation, *Faculty of Economics, University of Pecs*, p. 2.

³ Assman, J. (1998). Kollektives Gedächtnis und kulturelle Identität. In: Assman, J. és Hölscher, T. (eds.) *Kultur und Gedächtnis, Suhrkamp*, Frankfurt a. M., p. 13.

⁴ Palkó, K. (2011), p. 1.

⁵ Ibid.

by birth but via a constantly changing process, and thus the paper will attempt to touch upon future possibilities as well. ⁶

The essay will examine the ties between the people of the Visegrad countries to see if together they could compose a Visegrad identity. The topics discussed will not only focus on territorial connections because being Visegradian means more than just coming from the region. It means identifying with the unique natural landscape, the history, the culture, and the habits and customs of local societies.⁷

In 2015 the International Visegrad Fund and the Institute for Public Affairs published a research paper (Gyárfášová, O., Mesežnikov, G. (2016)) about the public view of the Visegrad Cooperation for the 25th anniversary of the Visegrad Declaration. People from the V4 Countries were polled on different topics, such as whether they have friends or family in other V4 countries, buy things from the V4 partners, and so on. The resulting statistics paint an interesting picture about the elements of the collective identity. First, the essay will discuss the elements realised in micro-communities.

The most fundamental indicator is the level of personal connections between the citizens of the V4 Countries. The historically and culturally close relationship between the Czechs and Slovaks has been shown by several polls regarding friendships and family ties between the two countries. Considering that the dissolution of Czechoslovakia happened only 24 years ago, these close ties are understandable.⁸ The second closest connection was between Hungary and Slovakia thanks to the significant Hungarian population in Slovakia.

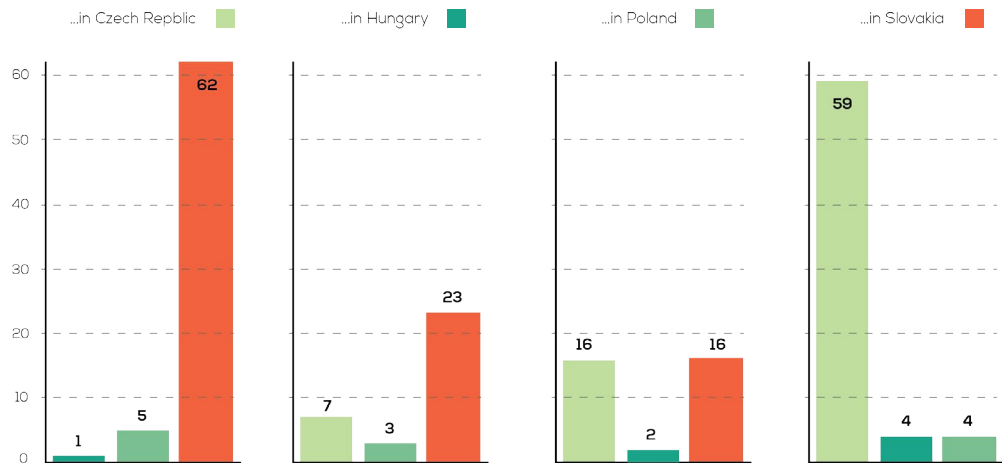
However, if we look at the number of visits between the countries, we can see that the connection within the V4 is not as close as they would seem at first. The only exception is the Slovak-Czech connection, where about 70%

⁶ See e.g. The construction of identities. (2005), In: *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales*. Vol. 60, No. 1., pp. 163–228.

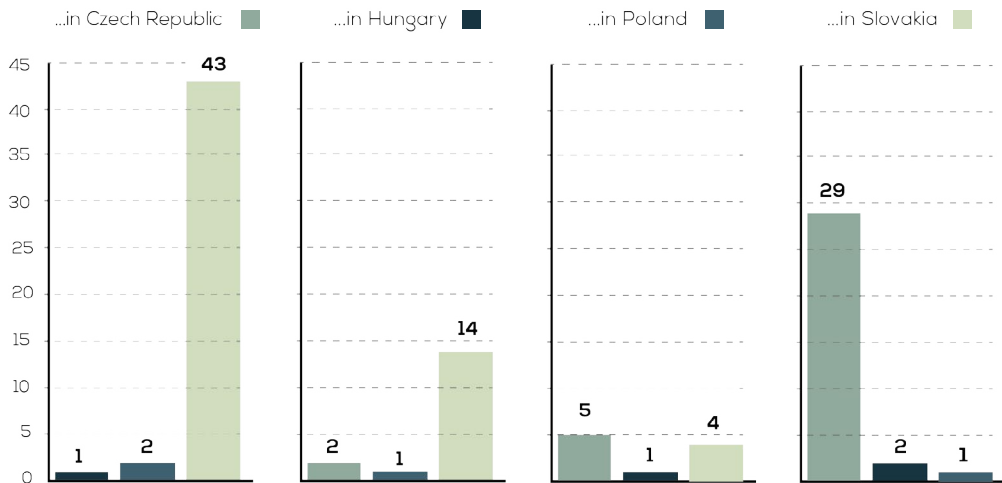
⁷ Enyedi, Gy. (2001). Tájak, régiók, települések Magyarországon. *Ezredforduló*. Vol. 4., pp. 19–23.

⁸ Dissolution of Czechoslovakia: 31 December 1992.

“Do you have friends or acquaintances among the Czechs/ Hungarians/ Poles/ Slovaks? (in %)
Source: Gyárfášová, O., Mesežnikov, G. (2016). 25 years of the V4 as Seen by the Public, p. 24.



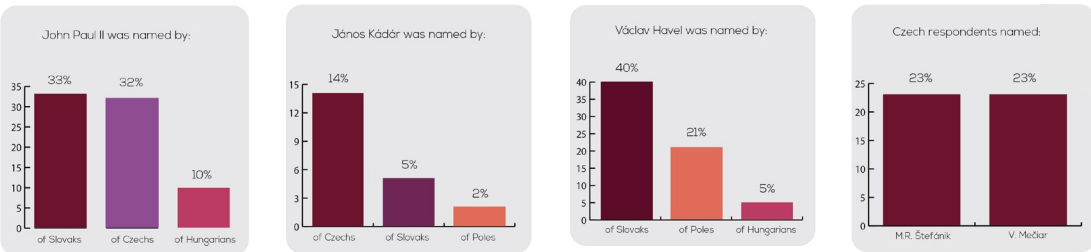
“Is there anybody in your family – in broader kinship – who lives in the Czech Republic/ Hungary/ Poland/ Slovakia?” (in %)
Source: Gyárfášová, O., Mesežnikov, G. (2016), p. 25.



“Have you ever visited the Czech Republic/ Hungary/ Poland/ Slovakia for touristic or recreational reasons?”
(% of answers “yes”) Source: Gyárfášová, O., Mesežnikov, G. (2016), p. 26

	Czechs	Hungarians	Poles	Slovaks
Czech Republic	x	21	35	75
Hungary	46	x	18	60
Poland	43	18	x	49
Slovakia	76	31	27	x

“Which important personalities come to your mind when you think of the Hungarian/ Czech/ Polish/ Slovak history?”
Source: Gyárfášová, O. (2011). Do we know each other? Conference presentation.



of the population has visited the other country before. The Hungarian-Slovak link came in second once again, but the relationship is one-sided. While two-thirds of Slovaks have been to Hungary, only about 30% of Hungarians have visited Slovakia before. In other relations, the average is around 20-30%.⁹

The examined topic showed a definite link between the V4 Countries (even if the extent of that link varies), and it would, therefore make sense to assume that we know each other’s cultures as well. The close Slovak-Czech connection can be seen here as well, as the majority of people have seen movies/plays and read books made in the other country. There is also a significant number of people in Slovakia who read Hungarian books or watch Hungarian films. Surprisingly, in other combinations the level of knowledge about each other’s culture was low.¹⁰ This aspect is important, as besides history, culture is the other factor that can create the strongest personal connections between different peoples.

If we look at deliberate ways of identity-construction, we must also discuss the level of knowledge about the Visegrad Cooperation, as its aim is to give the people as much information as possible to create a feeling of solidarity and common memories. Many things can be examined for this purpose: the presence of the Visegrad Cooperation in political parties’ programmes, the inclusion of the

partner countries in local news, etc. Keeping in mind that identity cannot be discussed using only statistical data, this paper will focus on two aspects to give an overview: how much we know about each other’s history and how much we know about the Visegrad Cooperation.

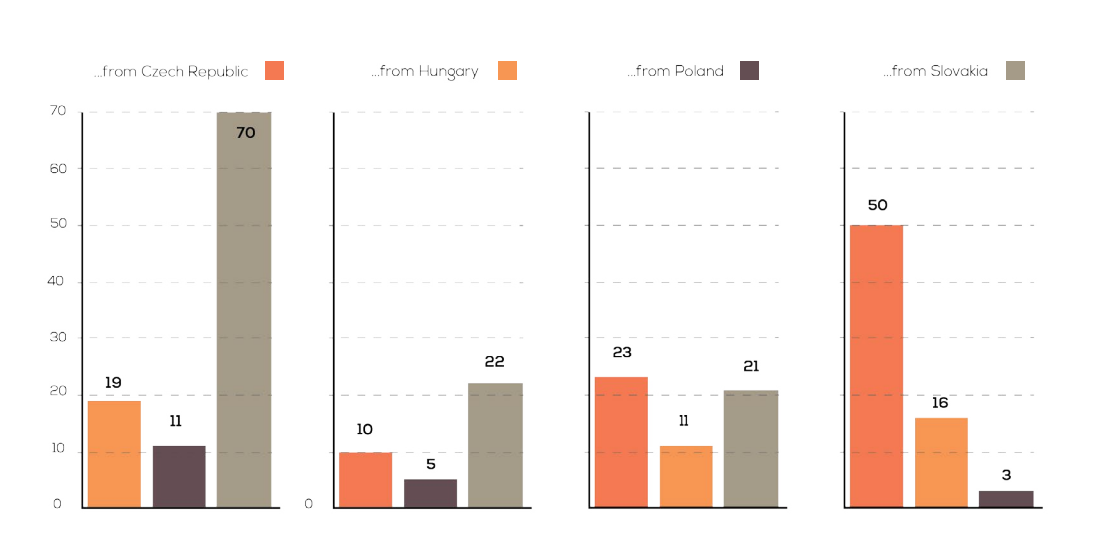
As seen on the graph, the number of people who have heard about the Visegrad Cooperation has changed over the time. This may be the influence of the changing attitude of political elites towards the cooperation. Among the four countries of the V4, the most known is Slovakia, with the number barely changing between 2001 and 2015.¹¹ In contrast, in Hungary and Poland, the number of people who know about the V4 has decreased. The Czech Republic was the only country where the percentage has risen.¹²

When looking at the issue of history, the Slovak-Czech connection is the strongest again thanks to the long period of shared history. If we look at the results from all four countries, we can conclude that most of the people could not name a historical figure from the history of the partner countries. Those who could, named someone from the last century, even though, over the course of history, the countries had

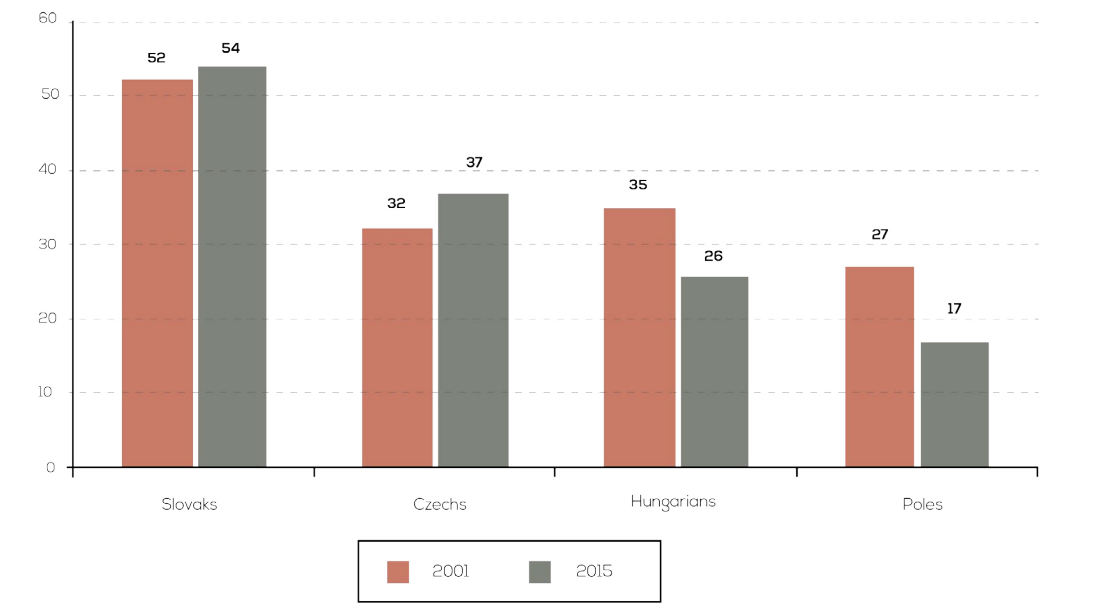
⁹ Gyárfášová, O., Mesežnikov, G. (2016). 25 years of the V4 as Seen by the Public, *Institute for Public Affairs* [online]. Available: http://www.ivo.sk/buxus/docs/publikacie/subory/25_Years_of_the_V4_as_Seen_by_the_Public.pdf [downloaded: 3 September 2016]. p. 25.
¹⁰ Gyárfášová, O., Mesežnikov, G. (2016), p. 28.

¹¹ This can be attributed to the fact that active participation in the V4 became a part of their closing-up strategy after the government of Vladimir Mečiar, who did not support the European integration.
¹² The change of interest can be traced back to several factors. Poland has recently become an important player in the field of EU politics thanks to its strategic location next to Russia, while the Czech Republic became more interested in the V4 after joining the EU, as it lost its status a “model student.” See Gyárfášová, O., Mesežnikov, G. (2016), pp. 9–10.

“In last years have you seen a movie, a theatre performance or have you read a book by author/s coming from Czech Republic/ Hungary/ Poland/ Slovakia?” (in%) **Source:** Gyárfášová, O., Mesežnikov, G. (2016), p.28



„Have you heard about a group of countries, called Visegrad Four?” (in %)
Source: Gyárfášová, O., Mesežnikov, G. (2016), p. 10.



common monarchs several times, and, therefore some historical figures were taught in schools in all states.

If we compare the spontaneous and centrally-influenced methods of identity-construction, we can conclude that spontaneously created ties are stronger between the countries. The Visegrad Cooperation is based primarily on political grounds, and since building a Visegrad identity has not been its aim, this result is hardly surprising. In its introduction, the present paper highlighted the importance of a homogeneous economic, political, and societal region in creating a collective identity. But this interdependence is also true when reversed: collective identity can be a useful “tool” in creating a homogeneous region.¹³

Thus, developing this field could be beneficial in the long term as a feeling of togetherness and belonging could spur economic cooperation. It would be desirable if visiting the V4 Countries on holidays, looking for business partners there, and going on shopping trips would become second nature. Deliberate construction of identity must be carried out in order to make the V4 more than a political cooperation. People must be given the opportunity to have first-hand experiences about the partner states so that they can have a personal connection with the concept of being Visegradian. This could be done through extensive educational programmes, supporting tourism, producing movies together, and so on. Although there is a long way ahead of us if we take into account that the Visegrad Cooperation is only 25 years old, the change in the connection between the countries is enormous. For example the Slovak-Hungarian relationship, which has formerly been called the “Achilles-heel” of the V4, has improved noticeably during this time.¹⁴ The V4 has recognised the challenges of today’s Europe and in response turned towards deepening the cooperation. This is also implied by the announcement of the possibility of V4 television channel.¹⁵ This is definitely an interesting

and important achievement which in the end could lead to a regional identity.

tember [on-line]. Available: http://index.hu/kulfold/2016/09/06/kozoz_tevecsatornat_indith-atnak_a_visegradi_oroszagok/ [downloaded: 7 September 2016].



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¹³ Palkó, K. (2011), p. 2.

¹⁴ See e.g. Gyárfášová, O., Mesežnikov, G. (2016), p. 19.

¹⁵ Kovács, M. D. (2016). Közös tévécsatornát indíthatnak a visegrádi országok. *Index*, 6 Sep-

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Alphonse Mucha – A Czech Art Nouveau painter, whose best-known painting, the *Slav Epic* depicts the history of Slavic people on 20 large canvases.



Tomáš Sedláček – Former economic advisor of Vaclav Havel, today he is one of the 'Young guns – 5 hot Minds in Economics' according to the *Yale Economic Review*.

CZECH REPUBLIC



Bohumil Hrabal - One of the most prominent Czech writers in the 20th century. Among his best-known works we can find *Dancing Lessons for the Advanced in Age* (a story written in a single sentence), *Closely Watched Trains* or *I Served the King of England*.



Bedřich Smetana – The Father of Czech Music is best known for his opera *The Bartered Bride*.



Jiří Menzel – His film *Closely Watched Trains* won the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. In his is dark comedy, *My Sweet Little Village*, which was also nominated for an Oscar, the main role was played by a Hungarian actor, János Bán.



Milan Kundera – One of the leading figures of Prague Spring, today lives in incognito. His best-known work, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* was translated into Czech only 25 years after its success in the West.



Miloš Forman – The movie *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* is considered to be one of the greatest films ever made was directed by Forman.



Jan Palach - A 20 years old student who set himself on fire on Wenceslas Square to protest against the Soviet invasion of communist Czechoslovakia in 1968.



Jaromír Jágr – As a professional ice hockey right winger playing in NHL, he is the leading all-time point scorer among active NHL players.



Jakub Kryštof Rad - The creator of the very first cube-shaped sweetener in the small town of Dačice.



Povidla - Thick plum jam.



Václav Havel - A world-renowned playwright and human rights activist, spokesman of Charter 77 who was elected as the first president of Czech Republic in 1993.



Svíčková - Beef sirloin with cream sauce and bread dumplings.



Kyselice - Traditional soup based on sourdough and mushrooms.



Kryštof – This Czech rock band, founded in 1994 is still at the top of Czech hit lists.



Antonín Dvořák – The worldwide recognised Czech composer employed elements from folk music of Moravia and Bohemia.



Lucie – The symbol of Czech rock music was founded in 1985.



Knedlo-vepřo-zelo - Roast pork with dumplings and cabbage.

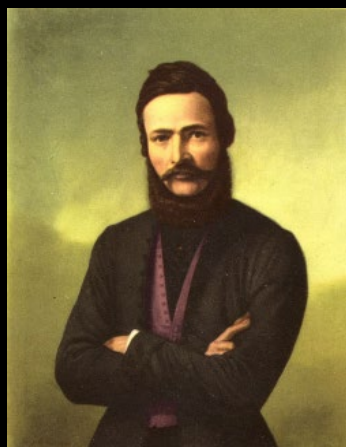


Markéta Irglová – Her song *Falling Slowly* won the Academy Award for Best Original Song in 2007, featured in the movie *Once*.

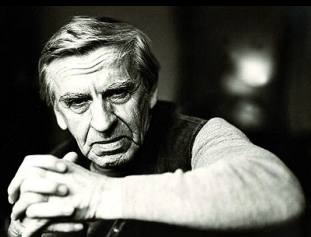
Becherovka – A well-known herbal liqueur produced by Jan Becher in Karlovy Vary.

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Ľudovít Štúr – Slovak philosopher, poet and politician; the leader of the Slovak national revival in the 19th century. He was also the author of the Slovak language standards.



Jozef Kroner – Starred in *The Shop on Main Street*, he is the most famous Slovak actor nowadays. The Jozef Kroner Awards was established after his death.

SLOVAKIA



Iveta Radičová – Was the very first woman Prime Minister of Slovakia from 2010 to 2012. The Woman of the Year (2010) also received AIPES Freedom Award in 2013.



Peter Sagan – Considered one of cycling's greatest talents; Sagan won seven stages in Tour de France and four stages in other Grand Tours. His nickname is Travolta.



Štefan Banič – Inventor who patented an early parachute design.



Andrej Kiska – A Slovak businessman and philanthropist, who has been President of Slovakia since 2014. His non-profit charitable organization, Good Angel helps families in difficult financial situation.



The Shop on Main Street – The highest rated film in the history of Slovak cinema. The story about Tono Brtko, a Slovak carpenter, won an Oscar in 1966.



Žinčica – Traditional Slovak drink made of sheep's milk whey.



Margita Figuli – *Three Chestnut Horses* is a gem of Slovak naturalism written in 1940. The novel takes us into a Slovak village where we can witness the triumph of pure love.



Laczo Déczi – The Slovak trumpet player, composer and band leader living in the United States.



Parenica – Steamed and smoked Slovak cheese.



Tatranský čaj (Tatra Tea) – Tea-based herbal liqueur from High Tatras; it has 11 flavours, all differing in alcohol by volume.



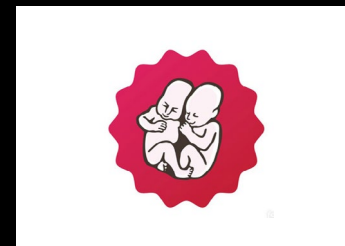
Peter Dvorský – With his unique lyrical voice with an elastic tone, he is the 'legitimate successor' of Luciano Pavarotti.



The House – The best Slovak movie of the last years is telling a story of young and ambitious Eva, who is planning to leave behind her small village and move to London, but her father is building her a house in the backyard...



Borovička – Slovak alcoholic beverage flavoured with juniper berries.



Pohoda Festival – The biggest open-air music festival in Slovakia organised annually on Trenčín Airport.



Tibor Bártfay – Was among outstanding personalities of Slovak art and modern sculpting. He received the UNESCO Prize for his humane approach to life in 1985, and the World Peace Council medal one year later.



Bryndzové halušky – Slovak potato dumplings with bryndza cheese.



Funny Fellows – This Slovak old-time band brings back 20s-40s music with original instrument and costumes.



Karpatské Chrbáty – They began performing in 1982, however, state authorities banned their music. Four years later they changed the band's name and since then, they are popular alternative rock band, not only in Slovakia.

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Sziget Festival – Island of freedom is the biggest multicultural event in Europe which attracts almost half million fans from all over the world.



Chimney Cake – A sweet spiral bread from Transylvania, often rolled in cinnamon, cocoa or nuts.



Robert Capa – The Hungarian photo journalist who redefined war time photojournalism with his action photographs, portraying the violence of war.

HUNGARY



Ferenc Puskás – The most well-known and popular Hungarian person is still a role-model for millions of young football player.



Imre Kertész – The first Hungarian, who won Nobel Prize in Literature for his novel *Fatelessness*.



Tankcsapda – The most famous Hungarian hard-rock band from Debrecen.



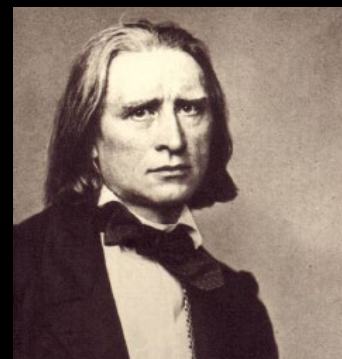
József Antall – The first democratically-elected Prime Minister of Hungary. In recognition of his work, one of the buildings of the European Parliament in Brussels was named after him in 2008.



Ernő Rubik – The Hungarian inventor is best known for the invention of the Rubik's cube.



Csík Band – Mixing traditional Hungarian peasant folk music with rock, jazz and classical music, and the band received the title "Excellent Folk Art Ensemble" in 1992.



Ferenc Liszt – Universally recognised Hungarian musician from 19th century is still one of the greatest in the world.



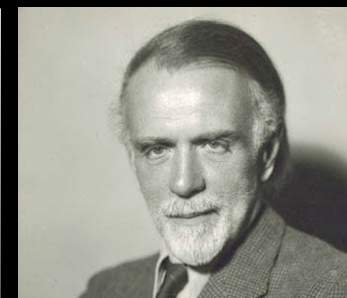
Gulyás – Traditional Hungarian soup originated from the 9th century. by



Szeged Contemporary Dance Company – With their incredibly various and unique repertoire, this contemporary ballet ensemble have won the recognition of national and international audiences as well.



Győző Vársárhelyi – The most famous French-Hungarian painter, the leader of the op art movement. He is well-known as Victor Vasarely.



Zoltán Kodály – The prominent composer and authority on Hungarian folk music, who developed the worldwide famous Kodaly concept, which is an integration of many of the best techniques and approaches to music education.



István Szabó – The internationally well-known Hungarian filmmaker won the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film with *Mephisto*.



Dobos Cake – The famous Hungarian sponge cake is layered with chocolate buttercream and topped with crystallised caramel.

Lángos – A plate sized fried dough smothered with sour cream, cheese and garlic sauce.



Emery Róth – Hungarian architect designed many of the impressive buildings in New York incorporating Beaux-Arts and Art Deco in his works. His company, Emery Róth & Sons designed also the iconic building of the World Trade Center.



Katinka Hosszú – Hungary's Iron Lady was the Best Female Swimmer in the World in 2015 and currently she is the 9th Most Valuable Athlete in Europe.



Fisherman's soup – A traditional Hungarian soup of paprika-spiced broth and thick cuts of fish.



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Adam Mickiewicz – His collection of poems opened the romantic era in Polish literature.



Hey – Their songs were hugely influential in 90s and the Polish indie music was shaped mainly by them.

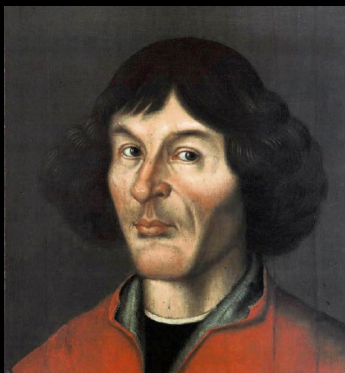
POLAND



Ida – The movie directed by Pawel Pawlikowski won the 2015 Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film.



Kasia Stankiewicz – As former lead singer of Varius Manx, she became a solo artist moving the boundaries of Polish music with her progressive art.



Nicolaus Copernicus – The founder of modern astronomy from Torun is famous for his heliocentric planetary theory.



Roman Polański – One of the most famous Polish directors, whose first feature movie, *Knife in the Water* (Nóż w wodzie) was nominated for Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film.



Fryderyk Chopin – A Romantic composer who changed the world of keyboard music forever.



Barszcz – Traditional Polish soup from red beetroot, onions, garlic and other vegetables.



Republika – This art-punk band from Torun showed new direction to Polish guitar scene.



Zbigniew Brzezinski – The national security advisor to the president of the United States from 1977 to 1981 later received the Presidential Medal of Freedom.



Pope John Paul II (born Karol Wojtyła) – The first non-Italian pope in 455 years, is probably the most famous Pole ever, who modernised the papacy.



Żurek – Polish sour rye soup traditionally eaten at Easter.



Pierogi – Dumplings, usually filled with sauerkraut, mushrooms, meat, potato, savoury cheese.



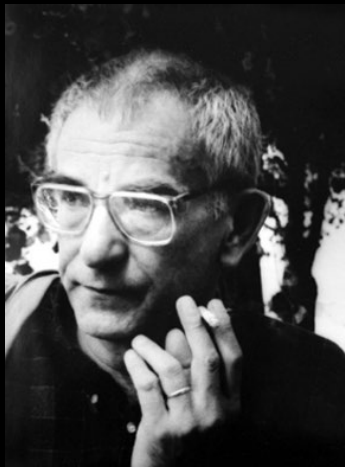
Lech Wałęsa – This electrician from Gdansk shaped the end of the 20th century as the leader of the Solidarity movement.



Maria Skłodowska-Curie – She paved the way for nuclear physics and cancer by discovering radium.



Monika Brodka – The winner of Polish Pop Idol, she is considered as the most exciting European pop star in a generation.



Krzysztof Kieślowski – This influential Polish film director is known internationally for *Dekalog*, *The Double Life of Veronique*.



Żubrówka – The Polish bison grass vodka.



Placki ziemniaczane – A thin pancake made with grated onion, parsnips and other vegetables.



Myslovitz – The biggest Polish alternative rock band from a small Silesian town.

VISEGRAD CITIES



ERIKA KOVÁCSOVÁ



SYLVIE WAGNEROVÁ



LILIANA GUEVARA
OPINSKA



MAŁGORZATA ŚLIWA

BRNO, CZECH REPUBLIC

Brno was listed by *The Guardian* as one of the top ten alternative city “breaks” of Europe in 2016. Alongside Mexico City and Toronto, it also appears on the list recommending 52 cities to visit by *The New York Times*. In addition, Brno made it onto the 2016 list of must-see cities compiled by *National Geographic*. Brno is one of the most underrated cities in Europe, but I do believe that it is exactly what gives its appeal.

What impressed me most about Brno was the number of cultural places available. Národní Divadlo Brno-Janáčkovo Divadlo (Brno’s National Theatre) is a perfect concert venue. Mahenovo Divadlo (Mahen Theatre), which was built in 1882, is the first theatre in Europe to be lit entirely by electric light. In addition, it hosted the premiers of some of the greatest works of composer Leoš Janáček. Besides the theatres, I would suggest that you visit the opera, as well as attend the performances of the Brno Philharmonic Orchestra or the national ballet company which provide a nice opportunity to indulge in a unique cultural experience. As a ballet enthusiast, I must highlight the city’s national ballet company for their rich repertoire and committed artists, which also runs a recreational programme of the highest quality for adults.

When discussing the cultural events Brno has to offer, the Moravian Gallery should also be mentioned. It encompasses five different buildings and constitutes the second largest art museum in the Czech Republic (The National Gallery in Prague being the largest). My favorite building located within the Moravian Gallery is the Pražák Palace, which presents collections of modern and contemporary art, with special regard to the works by Czech avant-garde groups such as Osma (The Eight), Tvrdšíjní (The Obstinate) and The Group of Visual Artists. The courtyard of Pražák Palace contains interesting sculptures; it transforms into a concert venue on Friday nights. There is a nice coffee shop right beside Pražák Palace that attracts lovers of art.

The Governor’s Palace, a former Augustinian monastery, is yet another building belonging to the



Moravian Gallery. This building contains various art collections ranging from the Gothic to the 19th century, while also housing the ArtMap bookstore and MORGAL Café. The other buildings of the Moravian Gallery include the Museum of Applied Arts, the Jurkovič House, and Josef Hoffmann Museum.

Brno’s Museum of Romani Culture, located in the heart of the local Romani community, is outstanding. It contains a vast permanent exhibition on the history and culture of the Roma people, as well as their situation in the Czech lands from 1945 to 1989. The Mendel Museum, which commemorates Johann Mendel, the father of genetics, is also worth visiting while in Brno. Mendel spent a substantial part of his life at St. Thomas’s Abbey having conducted most of his crucial experiments this city.



National Theatre of Brno



The Moravian Gallery

CRACOW, POLAND

Cracow, which recently hosted the *2016 World Youth Days*, is an exciting, culturally rich city, a true Polish gem. Cracow, situated in Lesser Poland by the Vistula River, is the second largest and one of the oldest cities in Poland. For centuries, it was the centre of Polish cultural and artistic life that also had important economic role. Cracow has long academic tradition as well. In 1364, the Jagiellonian University, one of the oldest universities in the world, was founded by Casimir III the Great. You should visit the oldest and most beautiful building of the university called Collegium Maius. The large, fourteenth-century courtyard surrounded by arcades is magnificent and so is the Old Library Chamber that can be visited on a tour.

Every historical period made its mark on Cracow. You can marvel at the diverse architecture, walk through the Old Town, climb up to the Wawel Hill and visit Royal Castle, engage in deep contemplation in the Church of the Virgin Mary (Kościół Mariacki), or discover the Cracow Historical Museum in Old Market Underground.

To experience Polish cultural heritage, you should also pay a visit to at least one of the many art museums Cracow has in order to learn more about the extraordinary works of Polish painters of the Young Poland movement (a modernist period in Polish art lasting approximately from 1890 to 1918). Visitors staying for a shorter time are recommended to go to see "Gallery of the 19th-century Polish Art: The Sukiennice" (The Cloth Hall) first. The Sukiennice is the central building of the main market square which has been part of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites since 1978.

Contemporary art enthusiasts are recommended to visit the Museum of Contemporary Art in Cracow or MOC AK. MOC AK, just like the Oskar Schindler Enamel Factory, is located on the southern flank of the Vistula River. The intensive tour at museums can be followed by a delicious lunch at BAL. The huge industrial building transformed into a café frequently hosts cultural events includ-

ing movie screenings and dance performances.

It is worth considering to go to MOC AK, Schindler Factory, or BAL by streetcar as the memorial commemorating the Jewish Ghetto is located right behind one of its stops. When arriving to the square, you will see a monument consisting of a large number of fixed, metallic chairs all facing in the same direction.

Lastly, you do not truly experience Cracow until you have been to the Jewish quarter, Kazimierz, which is in heart of Cracow's cultural, social and night life. Kazimierz gives home to many coffee shops, restaurants, bars, pubs, and clubs. It is a part of the

city most frequented by locals and tourists on Friday and Saturday nights. There is a hint of nostalgia to all of these places, as most of them are decorated with antique furniture and paintings, as well as black and white photographs.

In Wieliczka, there is a salt mine, while in Oświęcim nearby, there is an Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum (Polish: Państwowe Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau) that commemorates those losing their lives in concentration camps during World War II.



Wawel



MOC AK



Collegium Maius



Museum of Romani Culture



Cloth Hall

PRAGUE, CZECH REPUBLIC

Every time I speak to foreigners about visiting Prague, I notice that those who are brave enough to go off 'the beaten track' and those who just follow guided tours and tourist books have a very different impression of the city. There are many remarkable places beyond the city centre, for instance in the districts Vinohrady, Letná, Holešovice, or Karlín, where visitors can enjoy a perfect walk or refresh themselves in one of the cosy cafes or restaurants. The city has a unique variety of architectural styles, as the Czech Republic is the only country in the world where cubism was applied in street architecture. The Czech capital provides many opportunities for theatre fans, even for non-Czech speakers,



because there are many theatres presenting performances in English. Moreover, the Opera House and the globally-recognised Czech Philharmonic Orchestra offer a lifetime experience for enthusiasts of classical music – on reasonable prices.

A calm afternoon is guaranteed when visiting Vyšehrad and its fort, as well as the St. George's Basilica, which provides an amazing view over Prague and the beautiful cemetery, the final resting place of many famous Czech personalities. To see a thoughtful contemporary art exhibition, pay a visit to the DOX gallery; to learn more about recent Czech history, visit the Václav Havel Library. If you look for an outdoor space with live music to end your day, Náplavka, an area by the river which is always vivid on warm summer nights, is a must-see.

SLOVAKIAN CITIES AND OTHER ATTRACTIVE PLACES

Slovakia is a small country located in Central Europe. The capital, Bratislava, is a popular place to visit during the whole year. The most attractive area of the city is Old Town, where most of the historic sites, such as St. Michael's Tower, as well as cultural institutions and restaurants can be found. The symbol of the city is the deservedly famous Castle of Bratislava, which is situated in the close vicinity of the Danube.

The second largest town of Slovakia is Košice, which is in the centre of the eastern part of the country. It has the biggest church, the gothic St. Elisabeth Cathedral.

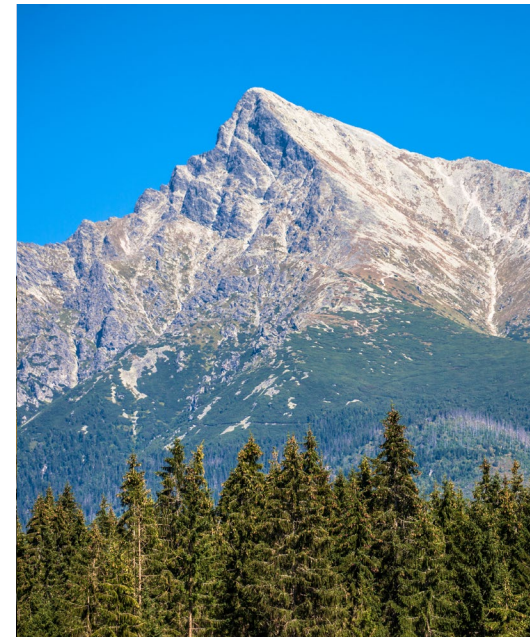
The most prestigious universities are to be found in these cities, such as Comenius University in Bratislava and the Pavol Josef Safarik University in Košice. However, there are many popular universities in other towns including Prešov, Trnava, Žilina, Nitra, and Banská Bystrica.



When talking about Slovakia, we should not forget to mention nature and folk traditions. Those interested in folklore should visit Vlkolínec, a little village included in the UNESCO world heritage list, to learn more about Slovak traditions and architecture. Traditional food is also worth mentioning.

Although it is simple, it is excellent as it usually contains very basic ingredients such as milk, potato, or cabbage. The most famous national meal, *bryndzové halušky*, is a must-try for everyone visiting Slovakia.

One of the peculiarities of the country is nature. One of the protected areas is the National Park of the Tatra Mountains (TANAP) in the north of Slovakia covering the high-mountain area of the Tatras. The tallest mountain of Slovakia is one of the peaks of the High Tatras, Gerlachovský štít (2,655 m). The symbol of the country is the mountain, Kriváň, which is also depicted on the 1 and 2 euro cent coins. In the winter, Slovaks and tourists visit the Tatra Mountains to ski, while in the summer they go for hiking and tracking. There are also many unique caves available for the public.



Kriváň



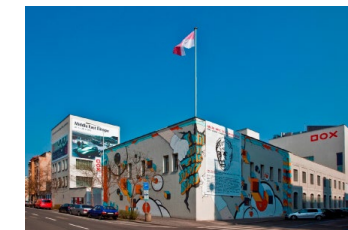
St. Michael's Tower



Prague Castle



Vlkolínec



DOX Gallery



St. George's Basilica

INTERVIEW WITH VERONIKA ANTALL-HORVÁTH, FORMER TRUSTEE FOR HUNGARY, INTERNATIONAL VISEGRAD FUND

As the International Visegrad Fund's (IVF) Former Trustee for Hungary, how would you sum up the Fund's work and aims?

If it is not a problem, I would like to start with the organisation's history: the International Visegrad Fund was established on 9 June 2000 with the aim to tighten the educational, research, scientific, and civil cooperation between the countries of the Visegrad Group – a group whose creation was envisaged by Prime Minister József Antall. The International Visegrad Fund (IVF) is the only institutionalised organisation of the Visegrad Co-operation whose goal, at the time of its creation, was to support non-governmental, civil initiatives. The Fund's headquarters is in Bratislava.

Who can apply for the grants offered by the Fund?

If we look at the applicants, we can see that the grants are available to everybody, the only criteria are that the event has to focus on a V4 related topic and it has to involve one or more V4 institutions. On the other hand, it is also important to emphasise that governmental institutions cannot apply for grants. That means that a completely government-funded institution cannot hand in applications. For example, the Polish Embassy in Budapest can neither apply, nor be a participating partner in the projects realised with the help of the grants, as the primary focus is on civil cooperation. The most important objective of the Fund is to strengthen the internal cohesion of the V4 through different projects and mobility tools.

What are the main programme types that are realised with the help of the Fund?

Grant possibilities are divided into three main groups: "Grants", "Scholarships" focusing on re-



search grants, and the "Residencies" programmes which mostly offer financial support to art fellowships. Within the three main groups, 20 additional grants are available.

What are those areas where the Fund has developed the most?

We are equally proud of all of our projects and achievements. However, I personally would like to highlight the importance of the Fund's different grants, as in my opinion the collection of personal experiences is a truly important aspect, while feedback also shows that this is the most popular area of the Fund's work.

"Overall, it seems to me that the Fund has lived up to all expectations, while the Visegrad point of view is increasingly present in the civil sector."

"The most important objective of the Fund is to strengthen the internal cohesion of the V4 through different projects and mobility tools."

At the time of its establishment, the main task of the International Visegrad Fund was to strengthen the cooperation between the citizens and institutions of the Visegrad region. Looking back at the past 15 years of the Fund's work, would you say that this goal was achieved?

Definitely! Inasmuch that if we look back at the establishment of the Visegrad Fund we can see that the member states initially contributed 250 thousand euros per country to the joint budget whereas today, this sum reaches two million euros. This means that the Fund currently has an 8-million-euro budget. All this made it possible for the IVF to support the realisation of thousands of projects since its creation. In addition, the successful work of the Fund is also highlighted by the fact that, since 2004 – besides the initiatives focusing on the V4 region – the IVF has also supported projects in the countries of the Eastern Partnership and the Western Balkans. This slightly increased the scale of possibly implementable projects. These not only include the organisation of different conferences and workshops, but – mostly in the case of projects realised in the countries of the Eastern Partnership and the Western Balkans – also the exchange and transfer of experience, as well as the presentation of different research results in order to help the efficient operation of the democratic institutions of these countries. That is also the reason why there are more than one-year-long, practice-oriented projects as well. Naturally, we also support scientific research. As a part of this, the Fund backs the publication of scientific papers and articles, as well as provides different grants to those students and researchers planning to pursue their master's programme or

conduct research in the countries of the Eastern Partnership, V4, and Western Balkans. The successful work of the Visegrad Fund is also proven by the fact that in November 2015 the Western Balkan Fund was set up along the lines of the IVF.

As the IVF's Former Trustee for Hungary, how would you describe the functioning of the Hungarian NGOs? How active are the civil organisations in Hungary?

The number of applications submitted to the Fund is continuously growing, but, due to the scale of differences, less people know about the possible projects and scholarships financed by us than about the EU grants and Erasmus scholarships. At the same time, we have a number of "revisiting" applicants who have for years successfully realised Visegrad projects. One of the most common misconceptions about the Fund is that it is able to finance maintenance costs. However, an NGO cannot operate on the long run if it wants to sustain itself only through Fund's Visegrad related projects.

Overall, it seems to me that the Fund has lived up to all expectations, while the Visegrad point of view is increasingly present in the civil sector. Moreover, with the help of the programmes supported by us, more and more people start to relate to this kind of regional identity. It was a great honour and pleasure to personally participate in this work and I would like to wish good luck to the next Hungarian trustee who will take on this colourful and interesting task.



The interview was conducted in October 2016 by **Péter Dobrowiecki, Head of the V4 and CEI Office of AJKC.**

UNITY IN DIVERSITY (?) - V4 IN THE EU



On 15th February this year, the Visegrad Cooperation celebrated the 25th anniversary of its establishment. Since 1991 the Visegrad Group went through several changes and only a few believed that this group will become one day a remarkable form of regional cooperation. During these 25 years the V4 became a significant regional group and has contributed to the sustainability of stability in the Central and Eastern European Region.

While evaluating these 25 years, one should ask, why the Visegrad Cooperation is still relevant in the European Union today and what the aim and purpose of this cooperation should be after the post-accession period?

When the presidents of the three countries (Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland) met informally in Prague at the beginning of the 90s, their main aim was to discuss “the ‘coordination of policies’ and ‘synchronisation of steps’

on the road to Europe.”¹ The developments in the Baltic States in January 1991 convinced even more the presidents of the Visegrad states to the necessity of the establishment of a joint cooperation framework which was ultimately manifested in the signing of the Visegrad Declaration. The document highlighted that “the similarity of the situation which arose in the course of the past decades compels the three states to work toward the achievement of identical goals.”² The venue itself (the Castle of Visegrád), where the declaration was signed has a strong symbolic meaning, as more than 650 years ago, the then rulers of the region, the kings of Poland

¹ Cottey, A. (1999). *Subregional Cooperation in the New Europe*, Palgrave MacMillan, London. p. 70.

² Visegrad Declaration, 1991. Available: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/documents/visegrad-declarations/visegrad-declaration-110412> [downloaded: 20 September 2016].

(Casimir III), Bohemia (John of Luxemburg) and Hungary (Charles I) met there to establish the cornerstones of possible cooperation between these countries.

At the very beginning the Visegrad Cooperation focused on two main objectives: the dissolution of the integrating structures of the communist system of which they were once part of and the accession to the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. The main aim of the economic cooperation was the creation of a free trade area, as it was expressed in the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) signed on 21 December 1992 in Cracow.³ These first years of cooperation were also influenced by the Prague Summit in 1992, during which the basics of political cooperation – based on the “new model of relations” – were laid down.⁴ Due to these priorities, the cooperation took the form of intergovernmental meetings and focused mainly on issues connected to foreign policy. EU membership, as the number one priority, required intensive preparation during which the most important aim was to establish democratic institutions and to advance the rule of law. It can be said that at the very beginning the aim of the Cooperation was to prove that this group of post-communist countries consists of members that are able to cooperate with each other in order to achieve the above mentioned targets, while also building up an image of a group of countries which are worthy of EU accession. This kind of collective approach to the EU played a significant role in the signing of the European Agreements with the Visegrad Group countries in 1991.

From 1993 on, however, due to some negative political developments, a period of decline could be observed which were especially strong in Slovakia. Slovakia was in a special situation after 1993, because as a newly independent country, it had to identify herself from

³ The CEFTA membership of the V4 countries ended after their accession to the EU.

⁴ Dienstbier, J. Visegrad – The First Phase. Available: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/the-visegrad-book/dienstbier-jiri-visegrad> [downloaded: 21 September 2016].

the very basics in a tense political atmosphere. During this process the (re)definition of its foreign relations, especially those with its neighbours was particularly important, as these formed the key elements of its integration into the EU and NATO. Although the European Agreement with the EU was signed on 4 October 1993, the unstable political situation and the huge deficit reported in the area of human and minority rights, as well as the lack of democratic principles in the country's political, legal and social system resulted in the postponement of the start of the accession negotiations with the EU. The other three Visegrad Countries however, were more successful. Hungary and Poland were the leaders of the transformation process in the Central European region. Contrary to other countries in the region, Hungary had been a member of GATT (General Agreement of Tariffs and Trade) since 1975, and it was the first country in 1994 which officially submitted its formal application for EU membership. Poland, as the first former Eastern Bloc country with a non-communist led government in Central Europe was also among the first countries on the path of political transition in the region. Poland presented its official application for EU membership also in 1994 and four years later together with the Czech Republic and Hungary it was invited by the European Commission to the start of accession negotiations. In 1997 all of the V4 Countries except Slovakia were selected as prime candidates to join the NATO. The exclusion from the NATO integration process was a wake-up call for Slovakia and the elections in 1998 caused fundamental changes in its internal political climate. In order to meet the Copenhagen membership criteria, the new Slovak government initiated a number of political and economic reforms. The result of this intensive catch up period was that Slovakia, slowly but steadily, fulfilled all membership criteria which eventually led to the country's invitation to open accession negotiations.⁵ Five and half years after

⁵ Nič, M., Slobodník, M. and Šimečka M. (2014). Slovakia in the EU: An Unexpected Success Story?, *DGAP Analyse* [on-line]. Available: http://www.cepolicy.org/sites/cepolicy.org/files/attachments/2014_06_dgapanalyse_slovakia_www_final.pdf [downloaded: 1 October 2016].

the end of Mečiar-era, Slovakia was able to finish the accession talks on time, and all four V4 countries were able to join the EU together in 2004.

The EU and NATO membership, however, did not weaken the importance of the V4 Cooperation.

Despite “the key objectives set in the 1991 Visegrad Declaration have been achieved”⁶, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland declared their commitment to “continue developing the cooperation of the Visegrad Group countries” in the Kroměříž Declaration signed in 2004, after the EU accession of the V4 Countries. This declaration is important not only because it determines the V4’s new identity within the EU and the NATO, but also because it introduced the rotating one year presidency during which each country prepares its own presidency program in the spirit of continuity and long-term V4 Cooperation. What’s more, EU accession has helped to boost the already existing ties between these countries, while in the same it also opened new channels for further cooperation. The most visible results of the EU membership are the economic improvements: Slovakia and Poland have more than doubled their GDP per capita while the export of the V4 Group grew three times faster than the export of the EU 15 which means that currently the V4 is the fourth largest exporter in the EU.⁷ The V4 states gained economically a lot from the EU accession, but they are not only stronger from an economic point of view today. From the V4’s point of view, it was also particularly important that the former prime minister of Poland, Jerzy Buzek was elected as the first president of the European Parliament with

a Central and Eastern European background,⁸ with Donald Tusk’s delegation to the presidential seat of the European Council having the same effect in 2014.

Following the V4 states’ accession, the Czech Republic was the first country from the Group which took over the presidency of the EU Council in 2009. The presidency itself is a great chance for a country to receive extra attention, to present itself and represent the European Union on the international scene. It was a difficult period, however, for the Czech Republic, which was negatively marked by the financial crisis, the Russian-Georgian conflict and the end of the term of office of the European Commission and the European Parliament. As a good crisis manager, the Czech Republic was able to handle the natural gas crisis, made valuable contribution to the EU’s Eastern Neighbourhood Policy by launching the Eastern Partnership Program at the Prague Summit, and the 3rd Energy Liberalisation Package⁹ was also signed. The failed ratification of the Lisbon Treaty in the Czech Republic before the presidency, on the other hand, caused concerns among other member states.¹⁰

The main priorities of the Hungarian presidency in 2011 were the further enlargement of the EU, the neighbourhood policy and the EU Strategy for the Danube Region. The unquestionable success of the Hungarian presidency was showed by the fact that some additional negotiation chapters with Croatia were closed – while the accession treaty itself was signed during the Polish presidency.¹¹ During its presidency Poland focused on

the enhancement of stability and security, increased cooperation with the EU’s neighbouring regions and the enhancement of economic growth. The biggest success of the Polish presidency in the second half of 2011 was the acceptance of the so-called six-pack of bills on economic governance, which for instance included preventive sanctions that could force member states to correct their macroeconomic policy. Despite the fact that Poland is the co-founder and the biggest supporter of the Eastern Partnership Programme, the failed signing of the long-anticipated association agreement with Ukraine caused headaches during (and after) the presidency as well.¹² However, the signing of the membership treaty with Croatia in December was accepted as a success.

The Slovak presidency constitutes the middle stage of the 18-month common work programme of the Netherlands, Slovakia and Malta. Despite the fact that it may be too early to evaluate the results of the presidency, there are already some developments worthy of mentioning. One of them is the so called “flexible solidarity” announced during the Bratislava Summit in September 2016, as part of the Joint Paper of the V4,¹³ which provides an alternative to the relocation of refugees and migrant quotas.¹⁴ Another big result of the ongoing Slovak presidency is the acceptance of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s membership application by the EU.

The V4 Countries play an important role in the EU’s foreign relations, mainly in the relations with the Western Balkans and the Post-Soviet region. According to the data from OECD’s online database, the most important recipients of Czech, Hungarian, Slovakian and Polish ODA (Official

Development Aid) are Ukraine, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova and Serbia.¹⁵ The aim of this form of foreign policy is to share their own so called transition experience and to help create more stable democracies in the region.

Although some scholars argue that the V4 works mainly on those issues that do not require too much political capital,¹⁶ the above mentioned examples show us, that slowly but steadily this trend is changing. Due to the extended activities in the region, the Visegrad Cooperation is an acknowledged brand today, which can be looked upon as a pillar for the further cooperation in the broader region.



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2016].

⁶ Declaration of Prime Ministers of the Czech Republic, the Republic of Hungary, the Republic of Poland and the Slovak Republic on cooperation of the Visegrad Group countries after their accession to the European Union. 12 May 2004. Available: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/2004/declaration-of-prime>. [downloaded: 27 September 2016].

⁷ Erste Group (2014). Visegrad Countries – 10 years of EU membership: plenty to celebrate, yet more work ahead to become key European players. Available: https://www.erstebank.hu/static/internet/download/140423_Visegrad_Four___10_years_of_EU_membership__eng_.pdf [downloaded: 20 September 2016].

⁸ Jerzy Buzek was the president of the European Parliament between 2009 and 2014.

⁹ The aim of this package is to improve costumer rights, separate supply and production from transition activities and promote regional solidarity in emergence situations.

¹⁰ Dostál, V. (2014). From Integration to Differentiation: The Czech Republic in the European Union Ten Years On, *DGAP analyse* [on-line]. Available: http://www.cepolicy.org/sites/cepolicy.org/files/attachments/2014_09_dgapanalyse_dostal_www_final.pdf [downloaded: 2 October 2016].

¹¹ Romsics, G. (2011). An Interim Review of the 2011 Hungarian Presidency: Finding a New Niche for the Rotating Presidency in Times of Storm and Stress, *Swedish Institute for European Policy Studies* [on-line]. Available:

http://www.sieps.se/sites/default/files/2011_1op.pdf [downloaded: 3 October 2016].

¹² Karelowski, I. P., Mehlhausen, T. and Sus, M. (2014). Poland’s EU-Council Presidency under Evaluation, Nomos, Baden-Baden.

¹³ Joint Statement of the Heads of Governments of the V4 Countries. 16 September 2016. Available: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/2016/joint-statement-of-the-160919> [downloaded: 30 September 2016].

¹⁴ The flexible solidarity should enable member states to voluntarily decide on the forms of their contribution in the handling the refugee crisis.

¹⁵ OECD.Stat data: <http://stats.oecd.org/>.

¹⁶ See e.g.: Lucas, E. (2013). Visegrád – hezký, ale postradatelný, *Hospodářské Noviny*, 22 April. Available: <http://nazory.ihned.cz/komentare/c1-59716840-visegrad-hezky-ale-postradatelný> [downloaded: 3 October 2016].

V4 PERCEPTION ON REFORMS OF THE EUROPEAN MIGRATION AND ASYLUM POLICY

Due to the unexpected increase of asylum seekers on the Western Balkan routes in the summer of 2015, traditional immigration countries in Western Europe developed a reform agenda on EU immigration and asylum policy. CEE countries had been more or less unaffected in terms of immigration and asylum in the past decades, but now they articulated their different viewpoint on the matter. During the course of the Czech presidency of the V4 Group, numerous declarations were published about migration, while most of the times Hungary was the main actor beyond these initiations, which declined to support resettlement and relocation plans of the European Commission and openly criticized the Dublin Regulations. In order to promote a strong East European voice on migration in the EU decision-making process it was of utmost importance for Budapest to have the support of the V4 states. Although Poland was absent from the vote about EU emergency relocation plans in the summer of 2015, the newly-elected PiS government expressed its full-fledged support to Hungary rejecting propositions about any kind of voluntary or involuntary quotas that aimed to distribute refugees in member states. This common position is far from being self-evident, while Hungary is the country that has been the most affected by the asylum inflow since 2015, the other V4 Countries had literally no experience with the phenomena previously. It remains a question for the future whether the present cooperation will be a long-lasting one or not. We should also ask what the motivations are beyond their actions and how domestic politics influence their foreign policy behaviour.

Slovakia

According to Prime Minister Robert Fico, 95% of asylum seekers in Slovakia are economic migrants, whose presence is a threat to the welfare of fellow

Slovaks and the economy of the country.¹ The fear from economically motivated immigration is not the only aspect of the Slovak understanding on migration. The image of Jihadist terrorists hiding in refugee camps appears from time to time in the Slovak public discourse.^{2, 3}

After the 2015 Paris terrorist attacks PM Fico announced to restrict detention conditions and implement forced returns, when necessary. According to him, Slovak authorities monitor and conduct surveillance on every Muslim in the country, because the safety of Slovak citizens is the primary concern of the government.⁴ On the other hand it is worth mentioning that the Slovak government supports Christian refugees.⁵

There was a huge protest against the proposal of the European Commission in May 2016, which aimed to enforce relocation plans with a potential sanction of 250.000 euros per person if one member

¹ Pavelková, Z. (2016). Can the Wizards and Witches Fix Slovak Asylum and Migration Policy? *Visegrad Revue* [online]. Available: <http://visegradrevue.eu/can-the-wizards-and-witches-fix-slovak-asylum-and-migration-policy/> [downloaded: 12 September 2016].

² Religious differences dominated the discourse on migration as you can see the comments of Ivan Netik, spokesperson of Slovak Interior Ministry: "Slovakia will accept migrants if they are Christians, he argued. Muslims should not come to Slovakia, because its Christian society is not able and not willing to integrate them."

³ O'Grady, S. (2015). Slovakia to EU: We'll take Migrants if they are Christians, Foreign Policy [online]. Available: <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/08/19/slovakia-to-eu-well-take-migrants-if-theyre-christians/> [downloaded: 19 September 2016].

⁴ Pavelková, Z. (2016), p. 7.

⁵ Although only 15 from 150 persons were granted refugee status, 12 procedures were discontinued and nobody got Slovak citizenship in 2016, 149 Christians from Iraq got subsidiary protection, which is a clear sign of support towards Christians.

state rejects to comply.⁶ According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Slovakia did not find this recommendation as a viable tool for handling the migration crisis.⁷ This 250.000 euros fee is a nightmare said Vladimír Maňka, Member of the European Parliament of SMER. He is convinced that the EP will not support the idea and hopes to see more and more member states who would reject this, because they realized how wrong the recent recommendations of the European Commission were. The EU member states should find a joint solution based on solidarity instead of blaming each other. It is not hard to understand why right wing and populist movements are stronger, while Europe only tries to react on the crisis and is not able to find a long-term solution. Now – according to SMER – they realized how important it is to address the real issues and Maňka welcomes the EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan and readmission agreements with safe third countries.⁸

Extremist movements gained support from certain borders incidents too.⁹ In order to prevent further confrontations, the Interior Ministry built a mobile fence at the green border and PM Fico announced that it seems inevitable that Slovakia is going to turn into a transit country of immigration,

⁶ Along with the tentative Council decision, member-states shall pay a 250.000 euros fee, if they do not implement relocation mechanism of asylum-seekers. This amount of money is equal with the total amount of average Slovakian pension (414 euros) if the given person would live 50 years longer than his or her retirement age.

⁷ Je zjavné, že Slovensko nepodporí bruselský plán na výkupné za utečencov (2016). *Pravda*, 4 May. [online]. Available: <http://europa.pravda.sk/aktuality/clanok/392003-je-zjavne-ze-slovensko-nepodpori-bruselsky-plan-na-vykupne-za-utecencov/> [downloaded: 10 September 2016].

⁸ Mimovládsky: Do integrácie utečencov treba viac zapájať samosprávy (2016). *Pravda*, 7 May. [online]. Available: <http://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/392372-mimovladky-do-integracie-utecencov-treba-viac-zapajat-samospravy/> [downloaded: 13 September 2016].

⁹ Tensions were growing at the Slovakian-Hungarian border in May 2016 after the Austrian border closure. In the area of Veľký Meder and Dunajská Streda the police stopped four vehicles which were used to smuggle Afghan and Syrian nationals, but one tried to escape, therefore police shot its rear tires after multiple warning shots.

thus the government must be prepared for the inflow of asylum seekers.¹⁰ It is the cornerstone of the fight against illegal migration to implement a readmission agreement and a consistent return policy, according to the representatives of the Slovak Presidency of the V4 Group. We cannot accept any proposal, which is not working in order just receive Brussel's praise. The flaws of former EU proposals are also shown by the fact that only a limited number of asylum seekers were relocated so far. Slovakia is going to support proposals which work, PM Fico argued.¹¹

Czech Republic

The Czech Republic cannot be regarded as a main destination point for refugees.¹² In the summer of 2015, a massive inflow of asylum seekers appeared in Greece, Italy and Hungary but the political agenda has not remained unaffected in the Czech Republic as well and migration became a top priority.¹³ Reacting to the 2015 Paris attacks, Prime Minister Sobotka expressed Czech willingness to

¹⁰ Pri Veľkom Mederi strieľali na prevádzáčov, zasiahli sýrsku utečenku (2016). *Pravda*, 9 May. [online]. Available: <http://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/392490-policia-zadrzala-styri-auta-migrantov-jednu-migrantku-postrelili/> [downloaded: 13 September 2016].

¹¹ Kaliňák: Ukazuje sa, že postoje SR k migračnej kríze boli správne (2016). *Pravda*, 20 May. [online]. Available: <http://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/393716-kalinak-ukazuje-sa-ze-postoje-sr-k-migracnej-krize-boli-spravne/> [downloaded: 13 September 2016].

¹² Less than 1000 people got refugee status in the Czech Republic one decade after the separation of Czechoslovakia. 18.094 new asylum applications were submitted in the peak year of 2001, but from the large number of discontinued procedures we can presume that most of the applicants left the country before they would have been recognised as refugees.

¹³ Minister of Interior Milan Chovněc (CSSD) visited the reception facility of Zastávka u Brna and Posrtona in Breclav. He highlighted that the Czech Republic is still a transit country for refugees, who want to reach Germany. This whole phenomena can be understood from the point of view of security. This becomes clear if we consider that Sobotka took part in the meeting of National Security Council right after these visits and argued that the office is going to deal with migration issues only. After a joint visit to the Zastávce refugee camp policy chief Tomas and PM Sobotka announced to detain all the people without residence permits and that this task requires significant financial support and manpower.

help those in need, but warned that Czechs will think of their own security first. Without the major rethinking of the Schengen system, member states shall deal with the increasing pressure of migration on their own. According to Sobotka it is essential to sign a good agreement with Turkey, to continue talks on Syria and fight against ISIL.¹⁴ In the same time the PM implied to continue the support of the Iraqi government and the Peshmerga forces, thereby giving the mandate to MoD Stropnický (ANO) to make plans for the future help for Kurds and Jordanian forces. Earlier the Czech Republic transported arms and equipment to Peshmerga forces. Úsvit (Dawn) leader Miroslav Lidinský quoted some of the ISIL statements about sending more than 5000 jihadist warriors to Europe, reminding that migration and terrorism are interconnected.¹⁵

Harassment of German women by young Muslim men in Cologne in December 2015 resulted again in a heated debate about the cultural and religious differences of Muslims.¹⁶ PM Sobotka repeated his wish to strengthen European border control and set up a common coast guard agency.¹⁷ In March 16 Twitter post of PM Sobotka highlighted the Czech viewpoint about a deal with Turkey that aimed to establish a mechanism in order to expel

newly arriving migrants from Greece to Turkey as soon as possible. According to the statement of the ministerial cabinet, “the goal of the government is to reject any kind of proposal, which could result in legal obligations in terms of mandatory relocation of asylum seekers or resettlement of refugees into other member states.”¹⁸ The EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan will be able to stop the uncontrolled movement of people and it helps the fight against smuggling networks. As a result of the agreement the number of arrivals dropped significantly and shifted again to the Central Mediterranean route stretching from Libya to Italy. When expressing their opinion on the EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan, far-right extremist Dawn- National Coalition party members (Úsvit – Národní koalice) stressed how big a mistake it would be, according to them, if the revision of the accession talks would result in an agreement that would guarantee visa-free entrance of Turkish citizens into the EU. It is a pact with the devil, thus suggestions of the European Commission should be rejected and they called for a referendum on this subject.¹⁹

The government rejects the quota proposals as well as the tentative plan to sanction each member state with 250.000 euros per person fee, if it does not want to comply with the relocation mechanism. Milan Chovanec, Minister of Interior argued that he does not see any good coming from such proposals. “It changes nothing, while we cannot buy and sell human rights obligations as humans cannot be looked upon as a burden or exchangeable goods on a stock market.” Unofficial reports revealed, Minister Chovanec asked for a broad mandate from the PM to be able to reject such quota proposals. In terms of the deal with Turkey, which indeed reduced temporarily the arrival of new asylum seekers, PM Sobotka emphasised

that he is willing to support visa liberalisation only if Turkey complies with EU requirements. Marek Ženíšek, leader of the opposition party TOP 09 also shares this idea as he argued that one of the biggest mistakes of the EU during recent years was to forget to take seriously its own rules. If the EU allows visa free entry of Turkish citizens into the EU without the fulfilment of all the requirements by Turkey, it would be the continuation of recent trends of non-compliance.²⁰

In regards to refugees, President Miloš Zeman also raised his concerns from time to time since the beginning of the crisis. According to him it would be necessary to expel every single irregular migrant in order to reduce the terror threat level in the Czech Republic. It is easy to condemn the terrorist attacks in Paris and Brussels but it is hard to do something about it and get rid of the root causes. Czechs must arm in order to be able to defend themselves when the time comes. Furthermore, he suggested the strengthening of border control and the building of physical barriers on the southern border. Zeman highlighted that even the Prague Castle can be a potential target for terrorists, thus he increases security measures in an amount of 100 million Czech koruna. These measures are required, according to him, due to the fact that a significant amount of asylum seekers are jihadists. “The solution would be the readmission of those who do not have a real chance to acquire refugee status and as we all know this is true in the case of many migrants.” Zeman would also expel Imams who spread hatred in mosques. Concerning border control he argued it would be important to build a high-voltage electric fence in order to protect the law enforcement officers, border guards and army personnel. Repeating his former comment about the need to arm Czech citizens he expressed that certain Czechs already possess small arms legally and strict legal and practical procedure apply to them. However, “these people better get used to the idea that they might have to shoot with their weapons instead of looking at it as a sort of

souvenir”.²¹ Before the Paris and Cologne attacks Zeman’s position on arms possession was rather negative and he was not fond of the idea to be able to acquire guns freely in the Czech Republic, but after recent events he re-evaluated his position in that regard.

Poland

In the modern history of Poland the first wave of immigration (800 persons) originates from the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union. Back then the government established the plenipotentiary for refugees and the Asylum Office in the Ministry of Interior on 27 September 1991.²² Although Poland has been a transit rather than a destination country for immigrants, a significant amount of asylum seekers (approx. 100.000 persons) crossed its territory in the 1990s, while only a few hundred applied for refugee status. Even after the EU accession, the amount of applications in Poland – a country with a population of 40 million – is only twice as much as in Slovakia.²³ The exact number of refugees was unknown as a significant number of foreigners living in the country, as well as in Warsaw, was unknown at that time. However, the political debates on migration arrived to Poland too in 2015. The main reason of this was that the number of asylum seekers to be relocated on the basis of the Council’s decision exceeded 7000 persons, which was perceived as a relatively big number compared to the previous years when the Poles thought to be unaffected by migration. The Polish parliamentary elections also influenced the public debate on the issues of immigration and asylum.

According to Mariusz Błaszczak (PiS), Prime Minister Kopacz (PO) behaved like a child in the

¹⁴ PM Sobotka argued that the EU requires a common border control and coast guard unit, but he denied the implementation of an anti-terrorism legislation and an account registry. According to Mezan Hassan, Syrian born Czech senator, solution for the crisis must be found within Syria.

¹⁵ Sobotka: Junckerova slova o nezměněném přístupu k migraci zklamala (2015). *České Noviny*, November 15. [online]. Available: <http://www.ceskenoviny.cz/zpravy/sobotka-junckerova-slova-o-nezmenenem-pristupu-k-migraci-zklamala/1281743> [downloaded: 10 September 2016].

¹⁶ Every Muslim criminal shall be expelled immediately stated PM Sobotka in a press conference in January. The results of events last week [in Cologne] revealed the security aspects of immigration. It is essential to insist on the strengthening of border protection, while we ensure effective protection for those who need it. However those, who do not respect this generous offer and commit different crimes in the host states, must be expelled from the territory of the European Union.

¹⁷ Sobotka: Uprchlíci páchající trestné činy mají být vyhoštěni z EU (2016), *České Noviny*, 8 January. [online]. Available: <http://www.ceskenoviny.cz/zpravy/sobotka-uprchlici-pachajici-trestne-ciny-maji-byt-vyhosteni-z-eu/1300774> [downloaded: 10 September 2016].

¹⁸ Sobotka má na summitu prosazovat rychlé vracení migrantů z Řecka (2016), *České Noviny*, 16 March. [online]. Available: <http://www.ceskenoviny.cz/zpravy/sobotka-ma-na-summitu-prosazovat-rychle-vraceni-migrantu-z-recka/1327127> [downloaded: 10 September 2016].

¹⁹ Sobotka: Česko nabízí Řecku azylové odborníky a policisty (2016), *České Noviny*, 22 May. [online]. Available: <http://www.ceskenoviny.cz/zpravy/sobotka-cesko-nabizi-recku-azylove-odborniky-a-policisty/1329798> [downloaded: 10 September 2016].

²⁰ Sobotka: Turecko musí pro uvolnění vízového styku splnit podmínky. (2016), *Deník.cz*, 3 May. [online]. Available: http://www.denik.cz/z_domova/sobotka-turecko-musi-pro-uvolneni-vizoveho-styku-splnit-podminky-20160503.html [downloaded: 10 September 2016].

²¹ Zeman: Czechs should arm themselves over threat of terrorism. (2016), *Radio.cz*, 31 July. [online]. Available: <http://www.radio.cz/en/section/news/zeman-czechs-should-arm-themselves-over-threat-of-terrorism> [downloaded: 19 October 2016].

²² Chlebny, J. és Trojan, W. (2000). The refugee status determination procedure in Poland, *International Journal of Refugee Law*, Vol. 12, No. 2, p. 213.

²³ United Nations High Commission for Refugees (2005) Statistical Yearbook. Trends in Displacement, Protection and Solutions [online]. Available: <http://www.unhcr.org/statistics/country/464478a72/unhcr-statistical-yearbook-2005.html> [downloaded: 12 September 2016].

fog (dziecko we mgle) and rejected to give clear answers on the exact number of people to be relocated in Poland. “It is really a dangerous act in such chaotic times,” he said. Answering a question about who is going to pay the costs of relocation an MP from PO replied that the Polish government is sure that the EU institutions are going to find the necessary budget for the tasks. In contrary, Mariusz Błaszczak expressed his concerns that the aforementioned people would like to reach Germany, where the multiculturalism has already collapsed. He suggested that Poland should not follow the bad example.²⁴

Although the new arrivals did not cause a major increase of the refugee population, the public discourse on immigration an asylum started to turn into a heated debate. Media all around the world echoed the words of President Duda about his perceived or genuine obligation to defend citizens from reappearing illnesses like parasites and protozoa carried by refugees. Furthermore, the leader of PiS party Jarosław Kaczyński stated that refugees will carry already cured and eradicated diseases into Europe, such as dysentery or typhus. Duda reacted on Kaczyński’s remarks that the main task of the Polish government is to defend its people. Duda’s position could be understood as a political declaration to support PiS instead of the European Council led by former PO President Donald Tusk. Tusk however asked member states to seek for solidarity and common solutions instead of building fences.²⁵

Newly elected Prime Minister Beata Szydło tried to emphasise the difference between states fighting with the southern challenges (terrorism, failed-states and Muslim asylum seekers) and Poland, which helped refugees arriving from the war-torn

Eastern-Ukraine and Crimea. As a reaction Ms. Ewa Piechota argued that PM Szydło overestimated the significance of the refugee issue in Poland, while it is true that more than 500.000 foreign workers live in the country, the number of people who have acquired refugee status is less than a dozen. Despite of this, PiS leaders are still talking about millions of refugees. Ukrainian Ambassador Andrii Deshchytsia said that Ukrainian citizens are living in Poland only for employment reasons and stated that the resourceful Ukrainian workers helped to increase the Polish GDP significantly.²⁶

Beside the problem of Ukrainian refugees, the EU migration reform dominated the public discourse since January 2016. The former PO government made a pledge to relocate 7000 people in the framework of the EU emergency mechanism in a JHA Council Decision in June 2016, which caused a heated debate. Jakub Kulesza, leader of the movement, Stop the refugees, argued in favour of a prerogative that would determine which individuals might enter the country. He started to gain public support and called for a referendum on this subject in Lublin on 25 January 2016. Kulesza as party member of Kukiz ’15 argued that they want to call for a referendum about EU emergency relocation mechanism, because people have the right to express their will, whether they want to accept refugees or not. “Generally speaking, we do not want refugees here,” added Wojciech Rowiński, representative of National Movement (Ruch Narodowy). “We cannot let our country to become a refugee camp,” stressed Kulesza and moved even further by saying “Poles have a long history with Germans building camps in their country and we all know how it ended”. This later reference that mixed up Nazi crimes and the recent suggestions of Chancellor Merkel shows how toxic the atmosphere of the public debate about refugees is today.²⁷

²⁴ Do Polski trafi 12 tysięcy uchodźców? “Był kłopot, żeby z Donbasu przyjąć 200 osób” (2015) *TVN24* [video]. Available: http://www.tvn24.pl/wideo/z-anteny/do-polski-trafi-12-tysiecy-uchodzcow-byl-klopot-zeby-z-donbasu-przyjac-200-osob,1459560.html?playlist_id=20158 [downloaded: 10 September 2016].

²⁵ Prezydent Duda i “choroby uchodźców” na nagłówkach światowych mediów. “Skojarzenia z retoryką nazistowską” (2015), *Wyborcza*, 19 October [online]. Available: <http://wyborcza.pl/1,75399,19044509,duda-i-choroby-uchodzcow-na-naglowkach-swiatowych-mediow.html?disableRedirects=true> [downloaded: 12 September 2016].

²⁶ Co robią u nas Ukraińcy (2016), *Dziennik Polski*, 21 January [online]. Available: <http://www.dziennikpolski24.pl/artykul/9312402,co-robia-u-nas-ukraincy,id,t.html> [downloaded: 12 September 2016].

²⁷ Akcja Stop uchodźcom w Lublinie: Nie chcą przyjąć imigrantów do Polski (2016), *Kurier Lubelski*, 25 September [online]. Available: <http://www.kurierlubelski.pl/aktualnosci/art/9328008,akcja-stop-uchodzcom-w-lublinie-nie-chca-przyjac-imigrantow-do-polski,id,t.html> [downloaded: 13 September 2016].

The PiS party opposed the common EU solutions since the very beginning of its political campaign. They rejected the plans due to the uncertainty of the identity of asylum seekers. There is no evidence that they are people in need of protection or jihadist warriors of ISIL. Due to the recent events the new government rejected to implement the pledge of the former one. The focus is on the term recent events, which suggest that their actions are temporary. Currently we do not know on what terms and conditions Poland would accept EU proposals. “Analysing the words they use, we can conclude that until the point when the applicant can prove that he or she is not a threat for national security they will not be allow to enter,” argued Rafał Bochenek, spokesperson of the Office of PM. According to Jacek Sasis, PiS deputy leader, it is a huge question whether it will be ever possible to identify refugees with sufficiently high level of certainty. MEP Rafał Trzaskowski responded to these remarks of the governing party that the Polish governments have in the past never represented such a position that would endanger Polish citizens. On the other hand, he finds the timing of PiS’s statements quite bad concerning the fact that in the atmosphere of the Brussels terrorist attacks, such comments will raise fear and anti-immigration sentiment across the country. PM Szydło initially promised to maintain the pledges made by the PO at the first place, but she changed her position in January when she offered space for approximately 100 refugees, then argued in March that nobody will be acknowledged as a refugee due to recent situation and national security concerns. As the result of the JHA Council Meeting in June, Poland theoretically should relocate and resettle 7000 people. 1100 refugees shall be resettled and 5900 asylum seekers shall be included into the asylum procedure in Poland on the basis of 22 September Council Decision, which was not vetoed by Warsaw.²⁸

European Commission presented a rather inflexible viewpoint on the matter and nothing shows this

²⁸ Szydło uszywnia stanowisko. Miało być 100 uchodźców, nie będzie żadnego. (2016), *Wiadomości*, 24 March. [online]. Available: <http://wiadomosci.dziennik.pl/polityka/artykuly/516410,beata-szydlo-rzad-pis-uchodzcy-imigranci-stanowisko-zamachy-bruksel-belgia.html> [downloaded: 13 September 2016].

better more than the plan to impose a 250.000 fee as a sanction for each member state, that fails to comply with the relocation mechanism.²⁹ Regarding this topic, President Duda emphasised for the Canadian magazine *Maclean’s* that Poland is able and willing to integrate anybody who really needs protection, but we should not forget that only a few people see Poland as a destination for international protection. The Commission’s proposal to transfer people from one country to another by force is inhuman and unacceptable. Hence Poland strongly rejects the plans to pay a 250.000 euro fee for every single not-relocated asylum seeker. He repeated his words in Naples in June, where he stated that Poland is willing to help, but if somebody would like to leave the country they will not detain them, because such imprisonment is inhuman and degrading.³⁰

PiS deputy leader and Minister of Interior Mariusz Błaszczak made a statement to TV24 in June, when he praised his government which was able to defend Poland from terrorist attacks unlike its French counterpart. However, he noted that it is not easy to handle the situation, because of the irresponsible pledges of the PO government. Several responses showed that the reality is that not only President Duda, but also Minister for Foreign Affairs Witold Waszczykowski expressed his willingness to help those, who need it, while PM Szydło constantly evades to make her position clear. Although she promised to let 100 refugees in, she altered her position only after a while.³¹ The visit of Pope Francis in Warsaw raised the tensions again, while the Holy Father argued that it is the moral responsibility of catholic states to help refugees.

²⁹ Prezydent Duda za przyjmowaniem uchodźców, ale pod pewnymi warunkami (2016), *Nie Dla Islamizacji Europy*, 16 May. [online]. Available: <https://ndie.pl/prezydent-duda-przyjmowaniem-uchodzcow-pewnymi-warunkami/> [downloaded: 10 September 2016].

³⁰ Prezydent Duda za przyjmowaniem uchodźców, ale pod pewnymi warunkami (2016), *Nie Dla Islamizacji Europy*, 16 May. [online]. Available: <https://ndie.pl/prezydent-duda-przyjmowaniem-uchodzcow-pewnymi-warunkami/> [downloaded: 10 September 2016].

³¹ Fantazje Błaszczaka. PiS uratowało Polskę przed uchodźcami (2016), *Ośrodek Kontroli Obywatelskiej*, 18 July. [online]. Available: <https://oko.press/fantazje-blaszczaka-pis-uratowalo-polske-uchodzcam/> [downloaded: 12 September 2016].

PM Szydło told that Warsaw supports all initiatives, which can help those who are suffering, thus they welcome the EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan in order to solve the Syrian refugee crisis. Furthermore, she reminded that Ukrainians continuously welcome to live in Poland. On the columns of *Süddeutsche Zeitung* Florian Hassal evaluated the remarks of Pope Francis as too liberal for most of the Poles. "Muslims in Poland: It is the apocalypse," Hassal concluded.³²

Conclusion

Tension around asylum and immigration has grown in all of the Visegrad states since 2015. Far-right movements appeared in all countries and tried to gain advantage and political capital from the situation. We can say that these movements are not popular enough to be considered a possible governing force in any of these countries, however, their statements and arguments naturally influence the public debate. It is common sense in the region that refugees with different religious beliefs and culture have to integrate into Eastern European societies. While most of the asylum seekers do not have the intention to have a permanent residence here, thus all V4 Countries reject the idea of a quota system and the relocation of people from Western countries to the CEE region. However, if we look closer we can find differences in the terms of the exact contents of this rejection. Poland did not veto the decision on the relocation mechanism on 22 September during the JHA Council Meeting, while the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia (and also Romania) did. Warsaw made pledges to implement the decision. However, the new government tried to alter its position. It is a common feature of their foreign policy that they stress the need for the protection of their own citizens from terrorism and public health risks that – according to them – can be caused by uncontrolled immigration. In contrast to Western societies, national identity is essential to V4 societies, but it does not necessarily

result in a trend of renationalisation. From the viewpoint of domestic politics, we can see that extremist movements and the governmental reactions on these matters influenced the political debate, thereby assisting in the creation of an anti-immigration sentiment. Instead of a deeper European cooperation, these countries prefer to invoke the principle of subsidiarity and want to return to the traditional understanding of nation-states' Europe. It also does not help that Common European Asylum System had been formulated without the active participation of the V4 Countries since the adoption of the Dublin Convention in 1999, while the V4 can feel as if it does not have its own voice that can be heard, although they are in the centre of Europe. The relative passivity of the V4 towards questions related to asylum has changed after 2015 and the plans of the European Commission raised serious concerns. It is a question for the future whether the V4 will be able to create proactive recommendations or will just maintain its rejecting position. The first positive step to a common solution has been the support of the EU-Turkey Joint Action plan by Poland, while in the Czech Republic, as well as in Slovakia, there are several parties that reject the enablement of visa-free entry of Turkish citizens into the EU. Governments still firmly maintain their positions and support this initiative. Hopefully, on the long term it will bring some results and will lead to the creation of a proper solution.



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³² Beata Szydło odniosła się do słów Franciszka o uchodźcach (2016), *Wiadomości*, 30 July. [online]. Available: <http://wiadomosci.wp.pl/kat,1329,title,Beata-Szydlo-odniosla-sie-do-slow-Franciszka-o-uchodzycach,wid,18447327,wiadomosc.html?ticaid=117ed9> [downloaded: 13 September 2016].

⑥ THE ANTALL JÓZSEF KNOWLEDGE CENTRE

BOOK REVIEW

The Fourth Revolution: The Global Race to Reinvent the State by John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge

The heated debates of the followers of clashing ideologies might be in vain, as if we look at various domestic political structures, be it a night-watchman state or a big government, democratic or authoritarian, we may observe that problems deriving from structural malfunctions are omnipresent. Despite the seeming consensus about the superiority of some elements of “Western-style” politics, including democracy and capitalism, the authors of the book entitled *The Fourth Revolution: The Global Race to Reinvent the State*, John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge, set the goal of presenting the concealed glitches of the Western political system, while also aiming to offer solutions to these weaknesses, some of which in fact are already implemented in alternative state organisations. Contrasting these alternative systems with Western liberal democracies, the writers provide a comprehensive picture of the progress of the organisation of the state in the past and the years to come.

In the first part of the book, the authors provide lay with a concise and relevant political and philosophical background. They introduce Thomas Hobbes, who described the foundations of a modern state in his book *Leviathan*. The “modern state” as depicted by Hobbes is different from the modern understanding of democratic states, but what made his book a must-read in political philosophy is how he emphasised the significance of social contract in creating a functional state. According to Micklethwait and Wooldridge, the institution of social contract moulding into the European machinery of government gave the advantage of Western countries over their competitors. (The European states created a balance, which enabled them to enforce laws and at the same time give enough freedom to their people that resulted in the people's contributions to their advancement). The book also contains references to the famous liberal, John Stuart Mill, and the ways in which he tried to further improve this state by maximising the liberty of the dwellers. Moreover, the Webbs, especially Beatrice Webb, and their endeavours to create the

English welfare state are also referenced. The authors compare the Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher administrations as well with the thoughts of George Friedman, while also analysing their most important components. Moreover, they give an account of how these “revolutions” contributed to the development of the state (structure) many of us now live in.

After an overview of the social and historical background, through presenting the first three and a half revolutions, the writers show how Western states fail, using California as an example. The authors explain that, despite the conspicuous past and present successes of the state, “behind the scenes” they struggle with severe issues including political corruption, the stalling infrastructure, or the radicalisation of party politics. Even though the state seems to not intervene in the everyday lives of the inhabitants, in practice their legislation implies a “nanny-state” behaviour. This turns the seemingly happy population into less-cooperative sceptics, which makes development more difficult. Besides the above-mentioned problems, the authors identify “sins” such as the overarching state, the confused government balance sheet, the lack of programmes to help the poor, as well as political paralysis. The state itself has realised the existence of these problems and they are quite

optimistic about dealing with them. Micklethwait and Wooldridge then continues by comparing the “Californian Dream” with Lee Kuan Yew's regime in Singapore. During his time in office, the state had such a dramatic improvement that we could almost question the efficiency of popular sovereignty. In addition, they describe the past and present of Sweden's irregular tax, education, and healthcare system, where they managed to create competition-based systems, which, after years of fine tuning, now seem to work more effectively than that of other European countries. Then the authors ponder about why multinational corporations are proportionally more successful than countries. Using all these examples, they try to conclude that both political science and politics should catch up with technological developments. Furthermore, they suggest that political scientists and politicians should rethink how effectively politics is ‘done,’ as old and known ways are not necessarily leading towards improvement.

This book would be instructive to all interested in the operation of a state, as well as those who are keen on looking at potential solutions for the glitches these states possess. It is also a good read for people who find out-of-the-box thinking in regards to politics appealing.

Written by Boglárka Antall, intern, AJKC



THE ANTALL JÓZSEF KNOWLEDGE CENTRE

The Antall József Knowledge Centre (AJKC) in Hungary, during its six years of existence, has introduced a variety of events targeting Hungarian students enrolled in higher education, as well as domestic and international professional audiences. The Knowledge Centre's main objectives, in line with the Antall philosophy, are talent management and providing students and young professionals with wide-ranging practical knowledge through various events. Having six years of experience in the field, the Knowledge Centre aims to become a regionally relevant think tank that is "unavoidable" when it comes to certain issues such as the Visegrad Cooperation, the future global role of the US, China, and Russia, security policy, sustainable development, as well as technological and social innovation.



Our institution is structured into four international offices—dealing with the V4 and the CEI region, the EU, the USA, and Asia and Africa—two thematic offices focusing on security policy and sustainable development, two regional offices in Pécs and Győr, as well as the Brussels Office, all of which are working toward strengthening institutional relations both at the national and international level, developing scholarship and internship programmes, and boosting professional cooperation via international conferences, workshops, and event series.

True to its namesake, the Antall József Knowledge Centre places special emphasis on the issues of Hungarians from beyond the borders, the Visegrad Cooperation, European integration, and Atlanticism. The Knowledge Centre is independent of parties, therefore it does not deal with contemporary Hungarian domestic politics, but always strives to remain up-to-date in global affairs. The key questions of the 21st century, foreign and security policy, sustainable development, and technological innovation are all emphasised during the planning of long-term programmes and in our research activities.

The Knowledge Centre's publishing office releases works on political and social sciences in Hungarian, thereby conveying the messages of the greatest thinkers and public figures of the world.

The publishing activities of AJKC involve releasing professional publications, scientific works on political and social sciences (with special regard to security policy and international relations), as well as university textbooks.

In our autobiographical series, prominent personalities of the Cold War period, including Ronald Reagan, George Bush, Margaret Thatcher, and Helmut Kohl recount crucial years and decisions still affecting their lives.

Reacting to significant events of political, social, and economic significance in the 21st century, the professional publications series of the Knowledge Centre is made up of works incorporating the latest results of international relations and geopolitics, the history of politics, economics, and psychology.

In spring 2015, the Brussels Office of the

Knowledge Centre was established. The bust of Prime Minister József Antall was inaugurated in the József Antall Building of the European Parliament on 31 March 2015 as part of the first instalment of the Variations on Europe conference series, which continued in May and September. The stances of the V4 countries with regard to the migration crisis were tackled during a conference held in autumn 2015. The well-received Schengen 2.0—Saving Schengen conference was realised in June 2016, while a conference revolving around European responses to terrorist attacks was held in September 2016. The latter was organised in cooperation with the Egmont Institute and the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies.

Our newest and largest event is think.BDPST. Organised by the Antall József Knowledge Centre in strategic partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary, the National Research, Development and Innovation Office of Hungary, the Hungarian Investment Promotion Agency (HIPA), and the Institute for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary, with the support of the International Visegrad Fund and MVM the Hungarian Electricity Ltd, the first instalment of Hungary's strategic conference took place on 8-10 March 2016.

The main aim of the think.BDPST project, the focus of which is innovation, new technologies, and regional development, is to put Hungary on the map of large-scale regional conferences such as GLOBSEC, Krynica Economic Forum, and the Prague European Summit, by organising the most significant innovation forum in the region, thereby facilitating a dialogue between the representatives of the economic, governmental, and scientific spheres.

The 2017 event of think.BDPST, to be held on 29-31 March, will concentrate on technological and social innovation, with special regard to their impact on education and professions, as well as the future of medicine and the pharmaceutical industry.

In addition to innovation, the Knowledge Centre puts special emphasis on sustainable development. The third event of the SUSCO Budapest conference series was held on 16 November 2016. The previous two instalments focused on

sustainable development in general and the sustainable development goals (SDGs) developed by the United Nations, as well as smart cities and sustainable transportation. This year, the topic of water and the city constituted the main theme of the conference.

The annual Foreign and Security Policy Conference invites national and international experts to discuss global security policy challenges. The first conference revolved around the new world order, the second around the relationship of the US and Russia, while the third analysed the situation in Turkey. The most popular programme series of the Knowledge Centre, Foreign and Security Policy First-hand, in turn, provides a platform to examine current issues within the field of security policy. Topics covered in autumn 2016 include old and new forms of terrorism, the relationship between the Olympic Games and politics, as well as the arms race in the South China Sea.

In 2016, the Knowledge Centre organised the fourth Antall József Summer School. Every year, 40-50 students from more than 20 countries enrolled in different MA and PhD programmes participate in the two-week event, the aim of which is to strengthen and render the Visegrad Cooperation more visible in the field of education. The Antall József Summer School provides those interested in Central European studies with the opportunity to deepen their knowledge of the V4 region and Hungary.

Our commitment to rendering the Visegrad Cooperation more visible is further evidenced by the establishment of the Visegrád Bridge Award. The Knowledge Centre and the International Visegrad Fund established the Award on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the regime changes of the region to recognise the endeavours of those who have persistently advocated the cause of the Visegrad Cooperation in the fields of politics, economy, and diplomacy. The award was first conferred upon Lech Wałęsa, former President of the Republic of Poland and one of the founders of the Visegrad Cooperation. Meanwhile, with the Antall Award, yet another decoration established by our institution, the Knowledge Centre acknowledges the activities

of those who made lasting contributions to the advancement of Hungary. In 2014, HE Roman Kowalski, Polish Ambassador to Hungary, was presented with the Antall Award for his extraordinary efforts in deepening Polish-Hungarian relations.

Just like for late Prime Minister, transborder Hungarians constitute a priority for the Knowledge Centre. Therefore, our institution takes part in the Bálványos Free University every year with programmes and provides internship opportunities for minority-status Hungarians.

The objectives of the Knowledge Centre include talent management and the establishment of higher education network. For these purposes, AJKC organises the annual Danube Regatta. The number of participating universities has grown year after year since its inception: in 2016, teams from 16 Hungarian and two British universities, Oxford and Cambridge, competed against each other in rowing eights and dragon boat races. Other aims of the Regatta include encouraging a diverse use of the Danube and improving the image of Hungary.



think.BDPST

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BÁLNA BUDAPEST, HUNGARY

THE ANTALL JÓZSEF SUMMER SCHOOL

The Antall József Summer School was launched in 2013 with the aim of strengthening the Visegrad Cooperation and rendering it more visible also in the field of education. In accordance with the Antall tradition, we find it of crucial importance to emphasise that, by joining forces, the Visegrad Countries are able to more effectively promote their interests both on the political and economic level. It is a vital part of promoting the Antall tradition to properly educate and disseminate information among the young generation – which are the principles behind establishing the Summer School.

Each year, 50 students (selected upon criteria such as motivation, degree of interest taken in the V4, as well as professional and educational background) are admitted into the two-week educational programme. Not only is the high number of applications, many times the number of places available, indicative of the growing significance of the Visegrad Cooperation, but the diversity of the participants too as there have been students of American, Costa Rican, Japanese, Qatari, Chinese, Kuwaiti, Russian, and Italian origin present at four instalments of the Summer School.

At the event, issues most relevant to the region are discussed from various aspects including history, economy, financial policy, foreign and security policy, energy policy, innovation, tourism, culture, and the question of sustainability, thereby providing a comprehensive picture on the Cooperation. The high degree of interest students take in the topics at hand can be deduced from the number of questions asked and the active participation in the discussions after the lectures. It is a great honour for the Knowledge Centre to have welcomed many dignities, professors, and experts during the four years of the Summer School's existence.

In addition to the various educational programmes, students take part in cultural events that serve the purpose of facilitating intercultural dialogue. They have the opportunity to visit the House of Terror Museum and the Palace of Visegrád, which has a historic relevance, as the

very first meeting of the Cooperation was held there in 1991 upon József Antall's initiation.

The 2016 Antall József Summer School revolving around the 25th anniversary of the formation of the Visegrad Cooperation was held on 4-15 July. The main patrons of the event were the foreign ministers of the Visegrad Region: HE Miroslav Lajčák of the Slovak Republic, HE Péter Szijjártó of Hungary, HE Witold Waszczykowski of the Republic of Poland, and HE Lubomír Zaorálek of the Czech Republic.

The opening ceremony of the fourth instalment of the Summer School, held in the Grand Hall of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, featured speeches by Péter Antall, Director of the Antall József Knowledge Centre; Dr László Szabó, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary; and Frank Spengler, Resident Representative of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Hungary. The speakers of the follow-up roundtable discussion focusing on the perspectives of the Visegrad Cooperation after 25 years included Hanna Suchocka, former Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland; Mikuláš Dzurinda, former Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic; Karel Schwarzenberg, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic; and Dr János Martonyi, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Hungary. Moderation was provided by Dr Géza Jeszenszky, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Antall government.

Partners and supporters of the 2016 event included: the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Hungary, the Public Diplomacy Division of NATO, the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Budapest, Budapest Waterworks, MOL, the Slovak Security Policy Institute, EUROPEUM – Institute for European Policy, the Institute for Foreign Affairs and Trade Hungary, and the Hungarian gaming service provider Szerencsejáték Zrt.



The Visit of Dr Erwin Teufel at the Knowledge Centre

15 September 2016

Dr Erwin Teufel, Former Prime Minister of Baden-Württemberg, visited the Budapest Office of the Antall József Knowledge Centre during his stay in Hungary. At the meeting, the main activities of the Knowledge Centre were presented, with special regard to its research profile, as well as its efforts concentrated on becoming one of the most influential think tanks of the region. The former prime minister commended these endeavours and offered assistance in realising German-related activities. Dr Teufel praised József Antall, the namesake of the institution, and welcomed the operation of a foundation fostering the Antall tradition.

3 Months after Brexit

20 September 2016

Featuring His Excellency Iain Lindsay, Ambassador of the United Kingdom to Hungary, Ferenc Hörcher, Director of the Institute of Philosophy at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and Tamás Péter Baranyi, Head of Research at the Antall József Knowledge Centre, the roundtable discussion held in the lecture hall of the Knowledge Centre evaluated the Brexit. Topics covered during the talk include the events of the three months after the vote, the change of prime ministers, the expected date of the exit, and the impact of the referendum on Scotland.



SUSCO Budapest 2016 – Water and the City and Cleantech Conference: China-EU towards Sustainable, Clean Energy

16-17 November 2016



In autumn 2016, two conferences were devoted to discussing sustainability. SUSCO Budapest 2016 – Water and the City, the continuation of AJKC's conference series on sustainable development organised in cooperation with the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Hungary, focused on sustainable urban water management, reflecting upon the Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the United Nations. The conference organised in cooperation with the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies entitled Cleantech Conference: China - EU towards Sustainable, Clean Energy in turn revolved around clean energy development in China and the European Union from the policy and business perspective.



Budapest American Studies Forum and Road to the White House

29-30 November - 1 December 2016

In the second half of the autumn semester, we took a closer look at the US elections. The Knowledge Centre welcomed 20 students from East-Central Europe at the first instalment of the Budapest American Studies Forum encouraging them to share their opinion about the 2016 US presidential elections, while the How the White House Was Won roundtable discussion aimed to draw appropriate conclusions. Speakers of the latter included journalist Elizabeth Wahl; J.D. Gordon,

Director of National Security for the Trump campaign; and Zsolt Németh, Chairperson of the Hungarian National Assembly's Foreign Affairs Committee. The talk was moderated by journalist Adam LeBor.



NATO's Strategic Adaptation to the New Security Environment – Enhancing Europe's Defence

2 December 2016

One of this year's most exclusive security policy conference in Hungary offered unique insight into the future of European security. The changing of the guard in Washington, the increasing Eastern and Southern challenges breed a new security environment. Therefore, the three-panel event focused on topics such as the possible response of the North Atlantic alliance, the Trump presidency, the exact definition of the information warfare in

Europe, or the adaptability of a post-Brexit European defence strategy. The conference featured Ian Brzezinski, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Europe and NATO Policy Senior Fellow of the Atlantic Council of the United States; Paul King, Editor-in-Chief, NATO Review and NATO.tv; J.D. Gordon, Director of National Security for the Trump campaign; and Levente Benkő, Deputy State Secretary for Security Policy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary.

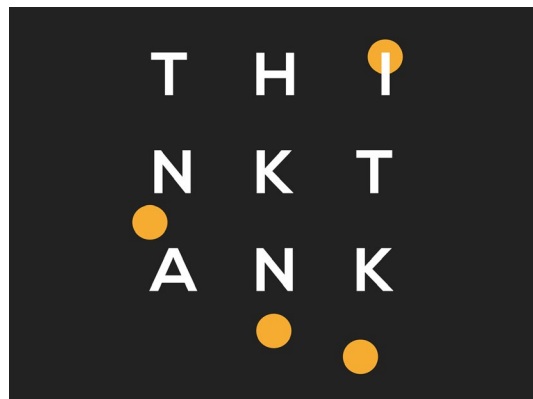
Challenges in the Age of Terror: Counter-Terrorism Agenda for Europe - 26 September 2016

Organised in cooperation with the Egmont Institute for International Relations and the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies, the conference focused on the most important features of the current wave of terrorist attacks tormenting the states of the European Union. The guest speakers discussed the possible policy steps EU organisations and member states should implement to counter this lasting danger.



Informal Meeting of Directors of V4 Think Tanks - 12 October 2016

In addition to providing think tanks with the opportunity to introduce their mission and priorities, the aim of the event was to identify possible ways of cooperation, thereby creating a common platform for think tanks focusing on the Central and Eastern European region.



Present Day Challenges of the CEE Region – The Future Perspective of the Visegrad Cooperation - 14 November 2016

To commemorate the 25th anniversary of the formation of the Visegrad Cooperation, the Knowledge Centre, in cooperation with the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies, organised a roundtable discussion which aimed to discuss questions defining the present of the cooperation, identify issues that the V4 countries should focus on in the future, as well as examine and evaluate the Co-operation from a European perspective. Speakers of the roundtable included the most notable experts on international relations, EU common policies, and economics.



think.BDPST 2017 – Connect to the Future and Young Leaders' Forum 29-31 March 2017

Hungary's strategic conference on regional development and the new perspectives of research, innovation, and future technologies returns in 2017. With the second instalment of think.BDPST, our aim is to narrow the scope of topics under discussion and go deeper into exploring specific areas of social innovation and future technologies such as employment, education, healthcare, and medicine. A side event of think.BDPST is the Young Leaders' Forum which features outstanding young professionals (aged 24-38), soon to become important actors and decision-makers in the field of innovation, political and social sciences, as well as healthcare. Registration is open. For further information, please visit think.bdpst.org.



Danube Regatta – 6 May 2017

The 2017 event of the Danube Regatta, Hungary's biggest cultural, music, and sporting event, as well as an international rowing and dragon boat competition between universities, will be organised on 6 May 2017. Eighteen teams from national and international universities will come to Hungary to face off against each other on the most beautiful stretch of the Danube. Come to Műegyetem rakpart and encourage your favourite team. For further information, please visit dunaregatta.hu.



Antall József Summer School 2017 – 4-13 July 2017

2017 is a special year for the European Union as it marks the 60th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Rome, the 25th of the Treaty of Maastricht, and the 10th of the Treaty of Lisbon. Therefore, the 2017 Antall József Summer School will mainly focus on the examination of the Visegrad Countries' position within the European Union. In addition, community-building activities are an integral part of this year's programme and the creation of an AJSS Alumni Society is an additional important aspect in 2017, as the Summer School was launched exactly five years ago. Application to AJSS 2017 will open on 1 February 2017.



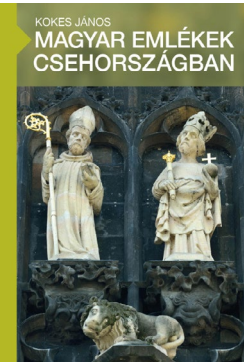
THE PUBLISHING OFFICE OF THE KNOWLEDGE CENTRE

The Antall József Knowledge Centre’s publishing office releases professional publications, scientific works on political and social sciences, with special regard to security policy and international relations, as well as university textbooks.

In autumn 2013, the Knowledge Centre’s publishing office started operating with the aim of making available professional publications higher education in Hungary is lacking. Authors, translators, and proofreaders involved in the publishing activities of the Knowledge Centre include the instructors and professors of Hungary’s greatest universities.

GUIDEBOOK SERIES

The first volume in the original guidebook series of AJKC on Hungarian memories in foreign countries is entitled *Hungarian Memories in the Czech Republic*. The next volume to be released in 2017 will explore Poland, while also offering miscellaneous historical facts about the centuries-old friendship between Poles and Hungarians.

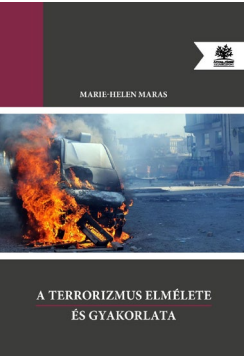


János Kokes: *Hungarian Memories in the Czech Republic*
(Release Date: 2015)

When crossing the Slovak-Czech border, few realise that they in fact pass through the historic Hungarian-Czech borders between the Kingdom of Hungary and the Kingdom of Bohemia. The unusual guidebook offers a review of the common history of Hungary and the Czech Republic, then guides the reader through seven regions while recounting the story of each Czech city, building, and location with Hungarian memories. The volume was written by János Kokes, local journalist of the Hungarian Telegraph Agency (MTI) living in Prague. Photo credit goes to Hungarian photographer Csaba Gedai.

TEXTBOOK SERIES

Reflecting the changes and new trends in the realm of international relations and security policy, our textbook series on political and social sciences includes books supplementing the primary source materials of universities. The latest piece released in the series focuses on intelligence, while the next volume to be published, entitled *The CRC Press Terrorism Reader*, revolves around terrorism.



Marie-Helen Maras: *The CRS Press Terrorism Reader*
(Release Date: 2016)

Terrorism is a global challenge. It does not take into account borders, gender, age, religion, or culture, while on the other hand it changes constantly. Terrorists are often faceless, ruthless and mostly mislead people. With the help of the newest theoretical and practical research results and her vast personal experience, the author analyses this phenomenon with academic thoroughness in a textbook format that is also interesting to read. The book offers insight into the inner world of terrorist organisations and the working methods of the most experienced anti-terrorism government agencies.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SERIES

The autobiographical series, launched in 2014, includes the memoirs and autobiographies of renowned political advisors, and dignitaries. The first volume in the series is *Vom Mauerfall zur Wiedervereinigung (From the fall of the Wall to Reunification)* by Helmut Kohl, which was accompanied by the 2016 re-release of his essay entitled *Aus Sorge um Europe – Ein Appel (Worrying about Europe – An Appeal)*



Hans-Gert Pötering: *United for the Better*
(Release Date: 2016)

Dr Hans-Gert Pötering is one of the key figures of European unification, who served as Member of the European Parliament and later as its President all the while working towards integration and building a political community uniting all of Europe.

PROFESSIONAL PUBLICATIONS

Reacting to events of political, social, and economic significance in the 21st century, the professional publications series of the Knowledge Centre is made up of works incorporating the latest results of international relations and geopolitics, the history of politics, economics, and psychology.



Ahmet Davutoğlu: *Strategic Depths*
(Release Date: 2016)

Former Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu offers a look at international relations and geopolitics in the 21st century from a new perspective: that of a state which is gradually becoming a key actor of these processes.

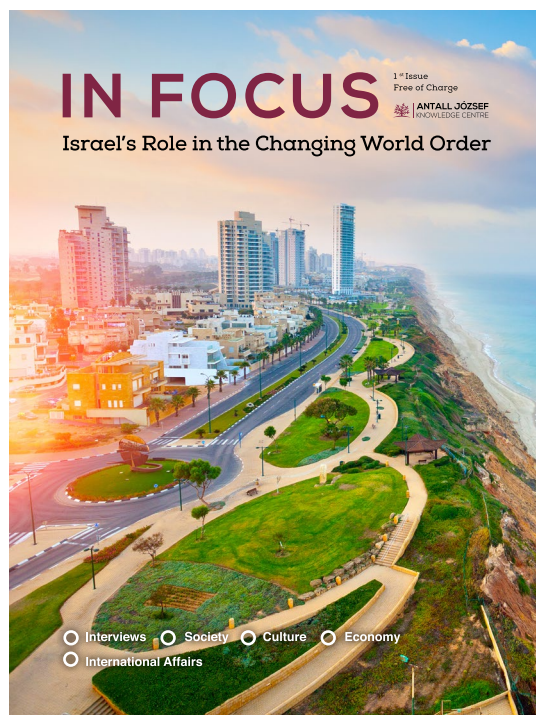
NEW RELEASE

- Condoleezza Rice: *No Higher Honor***
- Tamás Péter Baranyi - Kinga Szálkai: *The Emerging Crescent***
- Roland Dannreuther: *International Security***
- Mark Lowenthal: *Intelligence: From Secrets to Policy***
- Richard Susskind - Daniel Susskind: *The Future of the Professions***
- Carl J. Jensen, David Hughes McElreath, Melissa Graves: *Introduction to Intelligence Studies***

NEXT ISSUES

The next issues of *In Focus*, to be released in the first quarter of 2017, will revolve around the State of Israel, the United States of America, and France. In addition to highlighting their political, economic, social, and cultural relations, issues examining the latter two of the countries indicated above will pay special attention to the presidential elections and their evaluation.

ISRAEL IN FOCUS



Everyone makes different associations when thinking about the State of Israel: the three monotheistic world religions, armed conflict and technological innovation, the Mediterranean Sea and the vast desert which has been made fertile. Israel is also a land of contradictions: it has a territory four times smaller than Hungary, but it is also a leading military power in the World; while it is a prominent technological and economic player on a global scale, at the same time, the gap between the rich and poor is the widest among OECD member countries after

Mexico. The country, which is situated in the conjunction of three continents, was also living under regional boycott. However, with the gradual expansion of its diplomatic relations and the continuous merging of its interests with the Arab states, it has become a significant actor in the Middle Eastern balance of power, on its own right, not only as an ally of the United States.

2016 marks the 120th anniversary of the publishing of *The Jewish State* written by Theodor Herzl, born in Pest, Kingdom of Hungary, a book which laid down the state ideological foundations of the modern State of Israel. This anniversary provides an opportunity to consider the role Israel plays in the regional and global politics. We are undertaking this task in an era which can be characterised by the raging conflict in the Middle East affecting the security of the European Union and Hungary, while we must not forget that our South Eastern neighbourhood also provides supreme economic opportunities for us.

In the next issue of *In Focus*, we are looking beyond widely held views on Israel aiming to present the lesser understood, internal, as well as external processes shaping this unique state. We will provide a profound analysis of the system of Israeli politics, society, and economy to explain the important contradictions and questions regarding the particular regional and global role of the Jewish state. As the Antall József Knowledge Centre's main focus is on foreign affairs, our next issue will present Israel's international relations through the insights of diplomats and experts from Hungary and Israel.

Issues of *In Focus* are available on the webpage of the Knowledge Centre, www.ajtk.hu. Please kindly note that *In Focus* can be downloaded free of charge but registration on the webpage is required.

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Cover Picture: The Signature of the Founders of the Visegrad Cooperation (From top to bottom: Lech Wałęsa, President of the Republic of Poland; Václav Havel, President of the Czechoslovak Republic; and József Antall, Prime Minister of the Republic of Hungary)

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