



# **THE VISEGRAD GROUP FACING NEW CHALLENGES**

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# THE VISEGRAD GROUP FACING NEW CHALLENGES

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On the 4th of June, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade in cooperation with the Institute for Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Association of Hungarian PhD and DLA Students [DOSz] jointly organized a conference on the challenges of the Visegrad Group (V4) in the framework of the Hungarian Presidency of the Visegrad Cooperation. The conference was preceded by a call for papers in order to provide an opportunity for doctoral students, doctoral candidates and young and accomplished researchers both in Hungary and abroad to contribute to the debate on the future of the V4.

During the two panels of the conference, PhD and DLA students shared their research results with the audience. The issue of the conference concentrated on the Hungarian Presidency of the Visegrad Group, looking at the challenges and opportunities this regional format is facing.



MINISTRY OF  
FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE  
OF HUNGARY

# THE INTERACTION BETWEEN THE EU AND V4 COUNTRIES ON THE EUROPEAN REFUGEE CRISIS

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**BAYA AMOURI**

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**Abstract:** The topic of the European Refugee Crisis is probably one of the most contentious issues in the European Union. It has already been subject to considerable research from different aspects and in different contexts. The EU policy towards asylum-seekers and refugees is torn between two conflicting agendas. The approach of the Visegrád Four countries, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and the Czech Republic, basically stood against the open-door policy, attributed to the other states of the European Union. This paper examines the legislative and political issues related to policy towards asylum-seekers and refugees in the Visegrád Four which continue to be in strong opposition to compulsory refugee relocation under any scheme. This paper follows the reasons of the anti-asylum and refugee policy of these countries, while examining the political and legal aspects of the highly complex phenomena.

## INTRODUCTION

Europe has always had a high rate of legal and controlled immigration, but the current movement is completely different. In 2015 and 2016 the European Union experienced an unprecedented influx of asylum seekers, most of them fleeing from war and terror in Syria and other countries<sup>1</sup>. More than 1 million people arrived in the EU, sparking a crisis as countries struggled to cope with the influx, and creating division in the EU over how best to deal with resettling people<sup>2</sup>. With the number of challenges related to its asylum policy, the EU has adopted a set of measures to deal with the crisis. Although the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) ensured the possibility of financial compensation and supportive measures between the member

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1 Directorate-General for Communication (European Commission): „The EU and the migration crisis”. EU law and publication, <https://publications.europa.eu>, 11. October 2017.

2 Jelena von Helldorff: „The EU Migration Dilemma”. Heinrich Böll Foundation, <https://eu.boell.org/>, 3. September 2015. p 3-7.



states of the EU, no common system for a concrete and equitable distribution of refugees was accepted. As the most appropriate solution, a temporary European plan for the relocation of asylum seekers and refugees based on distribution keys was proposed. However, among the remarkable persistent objectors to such plans were the Visegrád Four who demonstrated a strong opposition.

The countries of the Visegrád Four, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and the Czech Republic, have been demonstrating a position of non-compliance with the mandatory quota system, for varying reasons. This position has caused a division between the member states on how Europe should approach the Refugee Crisis. On closer inspection, however, there is a growing divergence, particularly, between the Visegrád Four and the majority of the EU countries.

Three years after the peak of Europe's Refugee Crisis, the EU is still not able to manage it effectively because of many political troubles linked to the practical implementation of the EU legislation related to asylum, refugee and borders.

**At the legislative level**, the problem of asylum-seekers and refugees in the EU is not related to the absence of the laws that are organizing this category in the European Union, but the main problem is that the national laws relating to asylum, refugee and borders settled by the different member states of the EU, among them the Visegrád Four, are not complying with each other and sometimes those laws are striking each other, the case that makes some of the countries in the European union bear more than what other European countries are bearing. At the same time, however, it is important to emphasize the effectiveness of the Dublin Regulation 1990, reaffirmed by the Dublin treaty of 2013. This regulation suffers from a set of shortcomings. The distribution of responsibilities that had been imagined did not have the expected effects.

**At the political level**, the political tensions prevent EU countries from adopting a common migration policy. There is always a tension between countries adopting anti-asylum and refugee policy with other countries. The majority of politicians of the V4 countries did not welcome these asylum-seekers and refugee flows. For some, the link between terrorism and asylum-seekers and refugees complicates the management of the migratory crisis in Europe. With these legal and political problems, the EU is still stuck in the search for a long-term solution<sup>3</sup>. The temporary solutions are making the asylum and refugee problem get much worse. The solution is undoubtedly "legislative" in nature, to be combined with the United Nations Treaties and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. So, the challenge is considerable and the problem is ultimately European

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3 Simas, Grigonis: „EU in the face of migrant crisis : reasons for ineffective human rights protection”. International Comparative jurisprudence Online, [www.elsevier.com/locate/ICJ](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/ICJ), vol. 2. (2016) p 63-75.

and it's so complex and is not going to be solved from today to tomorrow, but there are a set of European policies that can be put together.

This paper argues for a broader understanding of the legal and political issues related to the European migrant crisis. While the first section will raise the essential legal issues in dealing with the refugee crisis, the second section will clarify some of the political issues.

## 1. Legal issues in dealing with the European Refugee Crisis

The European Union legal framework around international protection for asylum seekers is a combination of international, EU and national laws<sup>4</sup>. Currently this framework is being heavily criticized, because it seems to be no longer able to manage the Migration Crisis. And it is clear that there is a need for a radical change in European policies on asylum-seekers and refugees.

To start, the Dublin Regulation suffers from a set of shortcomings. However, the problem is that the asylum-seeker is supposed to make an asylum claim in the first European country she/he arrives at. Due to their geographical locations, countries such as Italy, Malta, and Greece receive more asylum-seekers and are therefore expected to process more asylum cases than other European countries. Another issue with the Dublin Regulation is that the standards for both the asylum processing and the practical accommodation and support vary widely among the European countries<sup>5</sup>. Moreover, the EU's Common European Asylum System was formulated as a baseline of practice to serve refugee rights in uniformity through the bloc, but in reality, asylum and refugee policies differ substantially between EU member states because their leaders have varied preparedness when it comes to admitting refugees. Thus, during the Refugee Crisis, the EU leaders found themselves divided; some of them are in favor of reinforcing the asylum system and sharing responsibility between EU countries, while others, mainly the Visegrád Four countries, protest the admission of asylum seekers and refugees in their states. Therefore, disagreements between EU members regarding border protections and refugee assistance are at the core of the EU's mismanagement of the Refugee Crisis.

On 4 May 2016 the European Commission presented proposals to reform the Common European Asylum System by creating a fairer, more efficient and more sustainable system for allocating asylum applications among Member States. The Visegrád Four countries opposed the new asylum policy as proposed by the

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4 Lambert, Hélène, Macdam, Jane and Fullerton, Maryellen: *The global reach of European refugee law*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. p 74.

5 Bendixen, Michala Clante: „The Dublin Regulation”. REFUGEEES.DK Online, <http://refugees.dk/>, 16 August 2017.



European Commission, arguing that asylum-seekers are not interested in long-term stays in Central or Eastern Europe, and would seek to move to wealthier EU member states such as Germany instead<sup>6</sup>.

Before that, in May 2015, the Council of the European Union adopted a decision in order to help Italy and Greece deal with the massive inflow of asylum-seekers<sup>7</sup>. The contested decision was an immigration Strategy where it detailed the compulsory relocation and redistribution of asylum applicants and created a quota system based on each EU countries' GNP, population, unemployment rate and previous refugee-supporting measures. The decision was adopted on the basis of Article 78(3) TFEU, which provides that 'in the event of one or more Member States being confronted by an emergency situation characterized by a sudden inflow of nationals of third countries, the Council, on a proposal from the Commission, may adopt provisional measures for the benefit of the Member State(s) concerned. It shall act after consulting the European Parliament'. Although Slovakia and Hungary, like the Czech Republic and Romania, voted against the adoption of the contested decision in the Council, the decision was approved by majority vote of member states.

Later on, Hungary and Slovakia, along with the Czech Republic and Romania, have asked the Court of Justice to annul the decision and argued that there had been procedural flaws and that the decision was neither a suitable response to the Migrant Crisis nor necessary to deal with it<sup>8</sup>. The Visegrád group considered that the decision of relocation was a violation of their sovereignty and territorial integrity. In this context, interior ministers of the Visegrád Group countries have declared that decisions on migration should be made at a prime ministerial level. According to the Hungarian Minister of Interior Sándor Pintér "The redirection of refugees should not be decided at ministerial level by the Council of the European Union, but at a higher, head of government and state level; the European Council must make a unanimous decision"<sup>9</sup>.

In addition, it is important to highlight that while Poland backed the case before the court, Belgium, Germany, Greece, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Sweden and the European Commission argued in support of the council. The European court of justice dismissed the actions brought by Slovakia and Hungary against the

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6 Gotev, Georgi, Bednárová, Lucie and Gabrizova, Zuzana: „Visegrád countries oppose Commission's revamped asylum policy". EURACTIV Online, <https://www.euractiv.com/>, 9 May 2016 (Updated: 16 February 2017)

7 The Council of the European Union. Decision no (EU) 2015/1601 establishing provisional measures in the area of international protection for the benefit of Italy and Greece (OJ 2015 L 248, p 80), 22 September 2015.

8 Smith-Spark, Laura: „Top EU court rejects Hungary and Slovakia migrant relocation case". CNN Online, <https://edition.cnn.com/>, 6 September 2017.

9 The Hungarian Government. The website of the Ministry of Interior Online, <http://www.kormany.hu/en/ministry-of-interior/>, 13 June 2017.



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provisional mechanism for the mandatory relocation of asylum seekers<sup>10</sup>. The Court considers “that the relocation mechanism provided for by the contested decision is not a measure that is manifestly inappropriate for contributing to achieving its objective, namely helping Greece and Italy to cope with the impact of the 2015 migration crisis”. The Court also holds that the measures were legally taken by the EU Council and did not require ratification by individual governments and the legality of the decision cannot be called into question on the basis of retrospective assessments of its efficacy.

It should be said that European Union divisions over the internal aspects of EU asylum and refugee policy, are still brewing even after the court’s judgment. For example the Hungarian government considers the decision by the European court “to be appalling and irresponsible.”<sup>11</sup> Also in reaction to that, the Polish prime minister declared that the decision “does not change the position of the Polish government on migration policy.”<sup>12</sup>

With this in mind, it has come to be recognized that the Visegrád group argued that the EU broke its own rules and exceeded its powers when it approved the quota system<sup>13</sup>. One of the few scholars who deal with the legality of the EU decision is Steve Peers. Focusing on the international law dimension of the issue, he touches on the legality of the decisions leading to the relocation system currently in place. Peers highlights the unprecedented character of the issue. “...The ‘emergency power’ relating to immigration issues has been in the treaties since 1993 – but was never used until this month”<sup>14</sup> Peers supports the fact that the common policy stood in compliance with both the non-refoulement and the Geneva Convention, and the fact that the terms in Article 78(3) of the Maastricht treaty, as it is mentioned in the base of the decision, were met, discussing ‘emergency situation’, ‘sudden inflow’, ‘provisional measure’ and the ‘benefit’ of Member States. The escalation, he says, qualifies as a ‘sudden’ inflow. Peers, rightly, points to the conclusion that the decision was legal<sup>15</sup>. Initially, the Visegrád group was in favor of maintaining the voluntary nature of EU solidarity and the creation of other alternatives to manage the migration crisis. Presently, the Visegrád group continues to be in strong opposition to compulsory

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10 Court of Justice of the European Union (ECJ) Judgment in Joined Cases C-643/15 and C-647/15 Slovakia and Hungary v Council.

11 Crisp, James and Day, Matthew: „European divisions over migration brutally exposed by EU court judgment on refugee quotas”. Telegraph news, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/>, 6 September 2017.

12 Ibid.

13 Brändlin, Anne-Sophie: „ Slovak Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajcak: ‘Our people haven’t been exposed to Muslims and they’re frightened’”. DW News Online, <http://www.dw.com/>, 20 July 2016.

14 Peers, Steve: “Relocation of Asylum-Seekers in the EU: Law and Policy”.EU Law Analysis Expert insight into EU law developments, <http://eulawanalysis.blogspot.hu/2015/>, 24 September 2015.

15 Ibid.



refugee under any scheme<sup>16</sup>. The Heads of the Ministries of Interior of the Visegrád Group announced on many occasions that “the question of relocation should be discussed and decided on by the European Council rather than by the Council of the European Union”, considering that “the safety of the V4 countries cannot be decided by the majority and the decisions have to be taken unanimously”<sup>17</sup>.

From a practical perspective, the V4 countries have taken a hard line on asylum-seeker and refugee policy. In the end, the EU managed to relocate almost 35,000 refugees and since the quota system expired, no permanent relocation system, voluntary or mandatory, has been introduced<sup>18</sup>. It seems that an agreement on a stable and future-proof EU on asylum and refugee policy for the long term is needed in order to manage the Refugee Crisis. However, the agreement is somewhat hard to achieve, because the political actors in the EU differ in their response to the question whether the policy toward asylum-seeker and refugee need to be reformed.

## 2. Political issues in dealing with the European Refugee Crisis

The European Migration Crisis and frequent differences of opinions between the countries in the West and the East of the EU were the source of many political tensions. Basically, the political issue started when the Visegrád Four rejected the bloc’s quota<sup>19</sup>. The Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia, as I previously explained, refused to be part of the response that Europeans have considered to deal with the European Migrant Crisis. Indeed, the political tensions between countries adopting anti-asylum and refugee policy with other countries are rising as solutions prove elusive. Within this framework, a part of the research on attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policy is rooted in Blumer’s theory of group<sup>20</sup> and Allport’s theory of prejudice<sup>21</sup>. While Blumer viewed prejudice as an expression of group identity

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16 Grimm, Andreas and My Giang, Susanne: *Solidarity in the European Union: A Fundamental Value in Crisis*. Springer International Publishing, 2017 p 83.

17 The website of the Polish Ministry of the Interior and Administration . The V4 countries speaking unanimously on migration policy, <https://mswia.gov.pl/> 4 October 2018.

18 Barigazzi, Jacopo and Randerson, James: „ What is Europe’s migration fight about? Europe can’t agree how to deal with migrants and refugees – here’s why”. Politico Online, <https://www.politico.eu/>, 22 Jun 2018.

19 Kantere, James : „European Union Asks Member Countries to Accept Quotas of Migrants”. The new York Times Online, <https://www.nytimes.com/>, 27 May 2015.

20 Blumer, Herbert: „Race Prejudice as a Sense of Group Position”. *The Pacific Sociological Review*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1958 p 3-7.

21 Allport, Gordon W.: „The Nature Of Prejudice. *American Journal of Sociology*”. Vol 61, No. 3, 1955 p 267-268.

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that emerges when conflict makes group differences salient, Allport considered prejudice to be a product of socialization that “resides in individuals’ beliefs, attitudes, and values, which can be modified by contact with members of the out-group under propitious circumstances”. This necessarily means that prejudice, ethnic effect and stereotyping are behind the refusal of asylum seekers and refugees in the Visegrád Group. And it is important to highlight, at this level, the fact that the rising rhetoric of hate speech and incitement against asylum-seekers and refugees across Europe shows how difficult the management of the Migration Crisis becomes. Hungary, like its neighbors, insists that the mostly Muslim refugees would pose a grave security risk. In refusing to accept Muslim refugees, Hungary and its neighbors in the Visegrád group have cited security concerns and the desire to preserve the Christian direction of their societies. So, Visegrád countries’ politicians are against very specific kind of asylum-seekers and refugees, but definitely not all of them. At this point, it’s important to highlight the fact that the position of the V4 group regarding the asylum seekers and refugees must not be confused with its position regarding legal migration. Admittedly, the Visegrád Group supports the legal migration and faithfulness to the existing migration rules.

In this context, the media plays a fundamental role in shaping people’s thoughts, perceptions and opinions about asylum seekers and refugees. Instead, in many cases; it acts as a powerful platform for discrimination, exclusion and incitement to hatred and violence<sup>22</sup>. It should be said that the media does not reflect necessarily the truth of the situation, it can be just propaganda. Researchers began to investigate propaganda after World War I, and by World War II major studies were being conducted in attitude research<sup>23</sup>. In political contexts, the term propaganda refers to certain efforts sponsored by governments and political groups in order to persuade the voters. Roderick Hindery argues that propaganda exists on the political left and right, as well as in mainstream centrist parties<sup>24</sup>. By examining the dataset and official statements of the V4 countries, one can deduce that the Migration Crisis has been used by the V4 countries in their political propaganda. Poland has followed during the 2015 campaign PiS the radical anti-asylum and refugee narrative of Viktor Orbán that became the distinctive feature of the whole V4. The politicization of the Migration Crisis has demonstrated how political actors construct and manipulate this issue

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22 The European Union and the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations. Hate Speech Against Migrants and Refugees in the Media Symposium. Press Releases Online ,<https://www.unaoc.org/> 26 January 2017.

23 Jowett, Garth S. , O’Donnell, Victoria: Propaganda and Persuasion. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 2014 p 115.

24 R. Hindery, Roderick: Indoctrination and Self-deception or Free and Critical Thought? Edwin Mellen Pr, 2001 p 76.



for their own political purposes which have complicated the deal with the migrant crisis in the EU. The politicization of asylum and refugee policy is a phenomenon that is growing in breadth and in severity. Consider some recent works, such as in “Politicisation of Migration” Wouter van der Brug, Gianni D’Amato, Didier Ruedin, and Joost Berkhout discussed the politicization of immigration and elucidated that “migration as a prototypical policy issue means that the concept of migration is left unpacked, and discourses about asylum seekers and refugees are missing, rendering their position, invisible as a policy and scholarly issue”<sup>25</sup>.

However, the Migration Crisis management becomes even more complicated when the policymakers of the Visegrád countries link it to international terrorism. Asylum seekers and refugees are blamed for increasing crime and terrorism in many societies and after the al Qaeda attacks of September 11, 2001 on the United States<sup>26</sup>

Although there is no current agreement regarding the universal legal definition of terrorism, almost every state has a definition in its own laws, and they might be different, but the difference in itself does not necessarily create a problem in counter-terrorism. Yet the definition of terrorism has represented an area of international law where the divergence of views between States was significant<sup>27</sup>. The division of the international community prevented the emergence of a consensus over a common definition of terrorism, but this situation did not impede the adoption of several international conventions dealing with specific aspects or forms of terrorism as well as of multiple resolutions on this issue<sup>28</sup>. At the European level, under the Council of Europe’s aegis, a framework decision on combating terrorism in the aftermath of the 11 September 2001 attacks was rapidly negotiated and adopted on 13 June 2002. The decisions define terrorist offences, as well as offences related to terrorist groups or offences linked to terrorist activities, and set down the rules for transposition in EU countries<sup>29</sup>.

With the Migration Crisis of 2015 the EU policy makers were increasingly worried about the potential danger of terrorism. However, the absence of a universal definition of terrorism has facilitated the politicization and misuse of the term terrorism. At the height of the migrant crisis in 2015 the case of Syrian Ahmed H., sentenced to seven years, convicted of terrorism for throwing

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25 van der Brug, Wouter, D’Amato, Gianni, Ruedin, Didier, and Berkhout, Joost: *The Politicisation of Migration*. London: Routledge, 2015 p 63.

26 *Ibid.* P.3.

27 Dumitriu, Eugenia: „The E.U.’s Definition of Terrorism: The Council Framework Decision on Combating Terrorism “. *German Law Journal*, Vol. 05 No. 05 (2004),p 585-602.

28 *Ibid.* p. 586.

29 The Council of the European Union. Decision no (2002/475/JHA) on combating terrorism, 13. June 2002.

stones at the police and trying to enter Hungary illegally is a perfect illustration. Hungary as a country of the V4 group has been criticized for its hard-line stance on refugees. In addition to its anti-refugee border fence, it has criminalized the act of entering Hungary illegally, a law that contravenes international asylum treaties, to which Hungary is a signatory<sup>30</sup>. In this context Eda Seyhan, Amnesty's campaigner on counter-terrorism in Europe, said: "The prosecution and ensuing conviction of Ahmed H was a blatant misuse of terrorism-related provisions against a man who was simply helping his family flee Syria"<sup>31</sup>. In interaction to the case, the European Parliament adopted a resolution listing the case as one of the reasons for a rule of law investigation into Hungary, calling it an "unfair trial"<sup>32</sup>. Under the international and the EU pressure, Ahmed H.'s jail sentence was reduced from seven to five years while upholding the conviction<sup>33</sup>.

The political linkage of the asylum-seekers and refugees to security by politicians is somehow logical because the refugee flow can be a backdoor for terrorists. Research published in 2017 by the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) has found "no concrete evidence that terrorist travellers systematically use those flows of refugees to enter Europe unnoticed"<sup>34</sup>. However, opinion polls suggest that most Europeans believe that accepting refugees will increase the chances of terrorist attacks on European soil.

In the same vein, a report by the Danish Institute for International Studies found that between January 2016 and April 2017, no refugees were involved in terror attacks in Europe<sup>35</sup>. In this report, Maja Falkentoft and Manni Crone concludes that four asylum-seekers (three of whom had their asylum requests rejected, and two of whom arrived before the refugee crisis started in 2015) were involved in attacks and consequently the vast majority of terror attacks in Europe are carried out by European citizens. Many were foreigners, and most were already known to the European authorities<sup>36</sup>. In general, the association of asylum-seekers and refugees with terrorism is often overblown for political purposes and it is used by

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30 The Guardian: „Amnesty condemns jailing of Syrian on terror charges in Hungary”. <https://www.theguardian.com/>, 30 November 2016.

31 Amnesty International UK : „Hungary: Retrial of Syrian charged with terrorism for throwing stones to conclude”. Press releases Online, <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/>, 08. January 2018

32 The European Parliament. Resolution no (2017/2656(RSP) on the situation in Hungary 17. May 2017

33 Budapest Business Journal: „Appeals court upholds Syrian rioter's terrorism conviction”. <https://bbj.hu/news/>, 21 September 2018.

34 Dearden, Lizzie: „Parsons Green attack: No evidence Isis is systematically using refugees for terror plots, research finds”. The Independent Online, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/>, 19 September 2017.

35 Crone, Manni and Falkentoft, Maja Felicia: „Europe's Refugee Crisis and the Threat of Terrorism An Extraordinary Threat? “. The Danish Institute for International Studies Online, <https://www.ft.dk/>, 2017.

36 Ibid. p. 3.



politicians to influence political contests and there-by influence policy making<sup>37</sup>. As quoted by the TVP Info, the Polish minister, Ryszard Czarnecki, proclaimed that Poland has no terrorist attacks because [it] withdrew from a plan approved by the previous government of accepting thousands of migrants, known as refugees<sup>38</sup>. It would, therefore, be possible to admit, that the political discourse of the V4 group reflects more or less the anti-asylum and refugee policy followed by those countries. As Eda Seyhan, Amnesty's campaigner on counter-terrorism in Europe observes "the Orban government have tried to justify their refusal of asylum-seekers and their ill-treatment of refugees by arguing that refugees and terrorism are in some way associated"<sup>39</sup>. In contrast, the Visegrád group which follows a policy of combating terrorism and cooperating with the international community on several platforms, need to take more significant steps within the framework of the EU in that direction to deal with the thousands of Europeans living in Europe who are part of many terrorist networks. These terrorist groups have become more proficient at using social media and modern communications tools to target recruits, build their brand and market share, and expand their reach globally. Moreover, terrorists can consume propaganda, get inspired, and learn how to execute an attack without ever leaving their homes<sup>40</sup>. The relationships between asylum-seekers, refugees and international terrorism are much more complicated and deserve much more sober analysis. The term terrorism is a broad concept, and can't be limited only to asylum-seekers and refugees. Terrorism as a global phenomenon isn't exclusive to one nation, religion or race. As a result, there are no easy solutions to this problem. In the aftermath of the latest terrorist attacks in Europe, the European council has taken extraordinary steps to try to address it and make Europe safer. On 7 March 2017, the Council adopted a directive on combating terrorism. The new rules strengthen the EU's legal framework to prevent terrorist attacks and address the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters<sup>41</sup>. Despite those strenuous efforts to make EU safer for all its citizens, terrorism remains a critical global threat.

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37 Koslowski, Rey: „Immigration, Crime, and Terrorism”. in :Oxford Handbook of the Politics of International Migration (Edit.Marc R. Rosenblum and Daniel J. Tichenor). Oxford: oxford University press, 2012 p 1-33.

38 Ciobanu, Claudia: „Poland follows Hungary's footsteps in corralling migrants: Warsaw wants asylum seekers to be housed in converted shipping containers”. Politico Online, <https://www.politico.eu/>, 20 March 2017.

39 Ridgwell, Henry: „Migrant Terror Trial Seen as Test of Fundamental Rights in Hungary”. VOA News Online, <https://www.voanews.com/>, 19 September 2018.

40 N. Green, Shannon: „Do we need a new strategy to prevent terrorist attacks on the United States?”. Center For Strategic & international studies, <https://www.csis.org/>, 15 December 2016

41 The Council of the European Union. EU strengthens rules to prevent new forms of terrorism, Press Release, 7 March 2017.

## CONCLUSION

With the massive unrest in a number of countries, with a rise of conflicts and dysfunctional states the EU is in front of the largest European Migration Crisis since the Second World War. Indeed, nobody doubts that a single state cannot cope with the Migration Crisis alone. It is also unanimously acknowledged that there is no guarantee that Western Europe would demonstrate identical patience towards any central and eastern European countries that keep drifting away from EU norms of political freedom, the rule of law and solidarity in the face of this common issue<sup>42</sup>. Moreover, the Visegrád Four' relations with the EU institutions continue to be more or less troubled. The Visegrád group is still advocating the idea that the issue of asylum-seekers and refugees should be debated by the European Council, which includes the leaders of all EU countries, and not the European Commission, which is the EU's executive arm. The EU asylum reform decisions should be taken at the level of the European Council so that governments have the right to veto.

As long as the distribution of institutional and political competences for asylum and refugee policy in the EU remains fragmented, and as long as this policy is repeatedly modified in response to each new political climate, the mere idea of working on comprehensive reform as part of a coordinated migration policy is a sign of progress. So, all the Member States of the European Union have to work more closely than ever before under the aegis of international conventions to overcome the European Refugee Crisis.

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42 Barber. Tony: „Political and ethnic tensions fuel fears of east-west split in EU“. Financial time Online, <https://www.ft.com/>, 8 May 2017.



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# THE VISEGRAD FOUR COOPERATION TOWARDS INDUSTRIAL INNOVATION AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

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**Abstract :** The primary aim of this paper is to critically examine the unique tradition of cooperation among the Visegrad Four (V4) Member States (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia) and how this cooperation may be designed to promote industrial innovation for the purpose of stimulating economic growth in the V4 economies. These four countries have great potential of robustly transforming their economies through scalable innovation systems. The big idea running throughout this paper is expressly how the V4 countries should turn technological advantage into market advantage. The paper emphasizes the need for long-range technology policy and Research and Development (R&D) investment as key factors that should underpin industrial innovation for economic progress among the V4 countries. The paper exposes weaknesses in the V4 cooperation and provides recommendations on how to strengthen the cooperation for routine innovation for sustainable production and economic progress. A cross-national overview of innovation activities among the V4 countries is provided and a longitudinal data set, 1981-2016, provided by the Innovation Policy Platform-courtesy of the OECD and the World Bank Group is exploited for descriptive statistical analysis.

## INTRODUCTION

Recent thinking on regional development stresses the critical role of knowledge and innovation activity. Scholars observe that knowledge aids regional development by promoting learning and innovation as a means of achieving competitive advantage within a knowledge-based economy (see Cooke and Morgan 1998; Storper 1997; Maskell and Malmberg 1999). The nexus between industrial innovation and economic growth goes back to classical economics with Adam Smith's "The Wealth of Nations," and is augmented by the recently crafted Lisbon strategy on attracting economic growth in Europe. Similarly,

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Malcolm Parry, the General Manager of the Surrey Research Park at the University of Surrey, UK, observes that industrial innovation is inexorably linked to wealth creation. In other words, investment in knowledge-based industrial innovation is critical to a country's economic growth. The burden of aggravating economic crisis being experienced in many countries should send sufficient signal for the V4 Member States for appropriate counter-strategy.

Innovation can be defined as the application of new ideas to the products, processes, or other aspects of the activities of a firm that lead to increased "value." There are two types of innovation, namely product innovation and process innovation. Product innovation involves the introduction of a new product or a significant qualitative change in an already existing product. Process innovation on the other hand entails the introduction of new processes for making or delivering goods and services. Innovation requires that businesses change their business models and adapt to changes in their environment so that they are better able to deliver quality products or services. Successful innovation should be part of any business strategy. Innovation can be a catalyst of economic growth, especially when it leads to the production of new products as a result of novel ideas. The V4 Group can make itself an innovation leader and a magnet for innovative businesses within the EU market and beyond.

NESTA, a leading United Kingdom innovation foundation, shows that entities that established a product innovation between 2002 and 2004 experienced a 10 percent sales growth during 2004–07, and almost doubled the rate experienced by those that did not innovate. This implies that not only does innovation serve to drive business growth, but it also provides significant benefits in creating employment, especially if it leads to creating more industries that specialize in different market products.

Although the V4 countries are still faced with considerable challenges of fully realizing their strategic objectives, they have made considerable efforts in creating additional jobs for citizens. More importantly, the V4 Group has also done well in terms of eliminating budget deficits, increasing exports, expanding existing infrastructure, and increasing investments in new technology. The existing challenges could, however, be attributed to a strategic weakness on the part of the V4 Group.

This weakness can be seen as deficit in 'strategic direction'. The lack of 'strategic direction' is the unresolved problem that requires a strategic solution. There needs to be a strategic direction capable of scientific invention and technological innovation with a goal to creating economic value (product innovation). The value added must also align with competitive market conditions. This is one way for the V4 Group to jump several stairs at once and make Central Europe become a leading force in the European Union economy. The purpose of



this paper therefore is to fill the ‘strategic direction’ gap by devoting considerable attention to a deeper understanding of the current industrial innovation landscape and its economic consequence on the Central European region, especially among the V4 economies.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows: part 2 covers stages of the innovation process; part 3 discusses the V4 cooperation; part 4 examines economic growth theory; part 5 provides strategic policy direction; part 6 looks at R&D; part 7 provides an overview of entrepreneurship and innovation in Central Europe; part 8 looks at the role of intellectual property rights; part 9 provides recommendations and a conclusion.

## STAGES OF THE INNOVATION PROCESS

Innovation can be defined as the application of new ideas to the products, processes, or other aspects of the activities of a firm that lead to increased “value.”<sup>1</sup> There are two types of innovation, namely product innovation and process innovation. Product innovation involves the introduction of new product or a significant qualitative change in an already existing product. Process innovation on the other hand entails the introduction of new processes for making or delivering goods and services.<sup>2</sup>

Innovation requires that businesses change their business models and adapt to changes in their environment so that they are better able to deliver quality products or services. Successful innovation should be part of any business strategy. Innovation can be a catalyst of economic growth, especially when it leads to the production of new products as a result of novel ideas. The V4 Group can make itself an innovation leader and a magnet for innovative businesses within the EU market and beyond. This can be achieved by identifying specific areas of need such as alternative sources of energy. This would enable internal energy markets to be created and create stability in terms of energy security. Also, the new digital environment has caused nightmare to other industries such as print media whose share of the market keeps shrinking. Innovative solutions to help publishers cope with the new digital environment would be more appropriate so that many businesses are not completely driven out of the market. Innovation to improve online subscription models could be a better alternative for print media.

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1 Christine, G., and Mark, R: Innovation, Intellectual Property, and Economic Growth. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2010.

2 See Christine, G., et al. (2010), p 4.

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It should be noted, however, that country to country experiences are unique and while innovation might be a factor in driving business growth in other environments, its replicability is not automatic. Innovation should be based upon scientific research and sound policies that provide correct information and good planning respectively. In some instances, innovation might lead to loss of jobs as opposed to creation of jobs. It is therefore important that the V4 Member States should encourage and support industrial innovation that would have both the advantage of creating new markets and also creating new employment opportunities.

## THE VISEGRAD FOUR COOPERATION

The V4 countries (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia) are part of a single civilization, sharing cultural and intellectual values. These values can be further strengthened through strategic cooperation among the Visegrad Member States. This cooperation should not, however, be seen as a challenge, but rather as an opportunity to promote economic stability within the Central European region. The contents of the V4 cooperation 1999, for example, outline substantive elements of the cooperation. One of them, which is closely related to the topic of this paper, is 'science and technology'. In implementing regional cooperation, the V4 Group should aspire to establish stable relationship in aspects of research and technological development, exchange of information, and transfer of experience and knowledge. This cooperation is needed for strengthening the Central-European economy. The common interest of the V4 Group should spur windows of opportunities aimed at promoting industrial innovation with a promise to influencing the future of the European market. The V4 Group is more likely to play a leading role in driving the European Union's economic growth through expansive innovation of valuable products and this will appreciably translate into an increase in its GDP. More importantly, there needs to be a sustainable positive economic trend anchored in a more solid foundation of industrial innovation.

The V4 cooperation should be exploited as an opportunity to boost technological productivity and create more jobs for citizens of Member States. Even though the V4 cooperation has made a major contribution in terms of cultural and political understanding, this mutual understanding should be further exploited to open new perspectives for strengthening this cooperation and applying it to innovative tasks to achieve broader objectives, especially economic growth. There is need therefore for the V4 Group to pursue a joint



approach in support of innovation policies aimed at creating new market opportunities. A stronger Central European economy would require advanced technological development that would push economic growth, and as a result fight poverty and reduce inequality.

In responding to the challenges of regional (Central European) economic growth, the V4 Group needs to develop programs to attract investments and grow companies as well as nurture opportunities necessary to foster innovation clusters. Moreover, this tradition of cooperation should be exploited to increase interdependence of the economies of the V4 Member States. This should include further expansion of innovative and entrepreneurial activities which would more likely lead to improvement of international economic relations. At the same time, sound policies aimed at achieving highest sustainable economic growth should be enacted by the V4 Member States. The V4 Group can achieve this by increasing investment targeting expansion of innovation labs. Such labs will enable the V4 Group to enhance its ecosystem by consistently and exclusively becoming focused on innovation. If the V4 Group succeeds in doing everything correctly, then the Central European region could become a leading player in ground-breaking science and innovation.

Although there already exists the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), an independent body of the European Union, based in Budapest, which enhances Europe's innovative capacity, the V4 Group has a good opportunity to compete with the EIT by filling the gaps that have been left by the EIT initiatives. First, the V4 Group should cooperate and play a leading role in supporting the Central European objectives of achieving sustainable economic growth and creating jobs by enabling entrepreneurs and innovators to translate their best ideas into products and services for Europe. This would make the Central European region earn reputation as destination for benchmarking and technological learning. There needs to be strong collaboration, however, among academic research institutions (universities), research and technology firms and business entrepreneurs so as to integrate information sharing and innovation activities.

Each and every Member State of the V4 Group should first concern itself with research activity. The input here involves financial and technical-scientific resources allocated to R&D. At the same time, intellectual activities should be fully engaged for purposes of intangible productions. The output here can be measured in terms of patent registration statistics. The level of intellectual property (IP) protection, and especially protection of patent rights, copyrights and trademarks among the V4 member states is already a good indicator that there is already a good climate for innovation activities among the V4 countries. These protections also serve as good indicators for promoting technology and

innovation by Small and Medium-size Enterprises (SMEs). This should be viewed as the actual transfer of the scientific research output. This output can then be successfully applied to industrial innovation. It is important to emphasize, however, that the inputs should be consistent in quality grades outputs. This would considerably increase the market share of products made of innovation activities. In the sub-sections below a brief treatment of each Member country's innovation activity is provided.

## 1. The Czech Republic

There are several reasons that make the Czech Republic a crucial member of the V4 Group. One attractive thing about this country is its ability to develop a strong innovative system. This system is characterized by sustained government funding of R&D. Since 2007, an ambitious reform agenda undertaken by the Czech Republic government has been implemented and has already achieved, to a large extent, the modernization of the national innovation system.<sup>3</sup> Following the adoption of the International Competitiveness Strategy for 2012-2020, the national priorities for the Czech Republic government in terms of applied R&D were revised and new supporting measures were effectively introduced.<sup>4</sup> These efforts are in line with the objective to develop innovation as the main driver of the future competitiveness of the Czech economy.

The unfortunate thing, however, is the fact that this swirl of initiatives and efforts are yet to translate into any striking improvement in the quality of the science-based output or in the number of patents produced, both of which remain very low by international standards. Despite a public R&D intensity of 0.86 %, clearly higher than the EU average, the level of scientific excellence remains markedly lower than the EU average and is not catching up.<sup>5</sup> Also, strong partnership among public partners has negatively affected the R&D activities and this has also resulted in the low number of intellectual property assets produced. This is likely attributed to limited commitment by public agents and also not being able to adequately establish public priorities when undertaking R&D activities. More worrying is the fact that there is scarcity of domestic innovation leaders and a significant amount of Business Expenditure

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3 [https://ec.europa.eu/research/innovation-union/pdf/state-of-the-union/2014/countries/czech\\_republic.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/research/innovation-union/pdf/state-of-the-union/2014/countries/czech_republic.pdf). Accessed on 4 April 2018.

4 European Commission: Research and Innovation performance in Czech Republic: Country Profile, 2014

5 [https://ec.europa.eu/research/innovation-union/pdf/state-of-the-union/2014/countries/czech\\_republic.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/research/innovation-union/pdf/state-of-the-union/2014/countries/czech_republic.pdf). Retrieved on 3 April 2018.



on R&D (BERD) is hugely dominated by foreign affiliates, especially by German entrepreneurs. In other words, there has been strong presence of R&D-performing foreign affiliates. There is urgent need therefore to encourage domestic innovation leaders who would then require sustained support by government in conjunction with public research institutions.

In recent years, there have been talks about positioning the Czech Republic towards fourth industrial revolution. This revolution is aimed at substantial exploitation of digital technology in the industrial process. This covers robotics, new materials, 3D printing, and production processes. This might see ordering of raw materials and parts, manufacturing and after care service made easier by digital technology. This is more likely to improve the innovation activities and change value creation in a more impressive fashion.

Fig. 3.1  
Direct expenditure for R&D activities, financed by government, Million NC.  
Source: The Innovation Policy Platform-courtesy  
of the OECD and the World Bank Group.

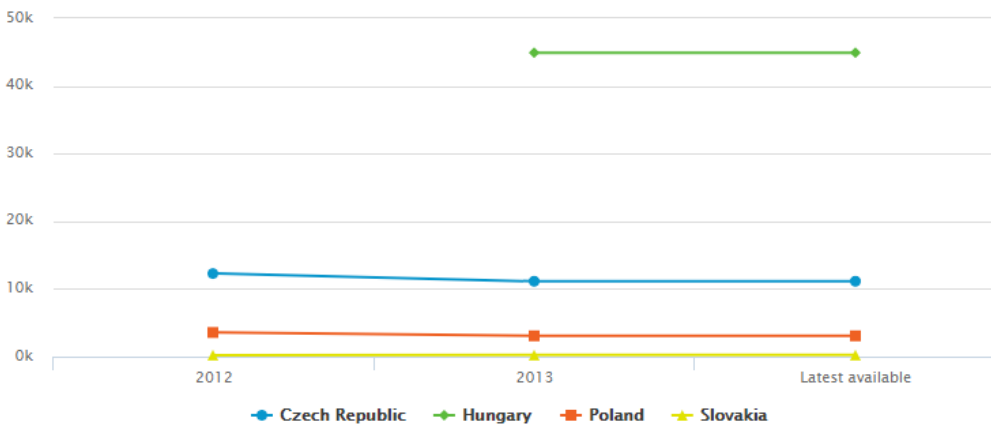


Figure 3.1 above provides clear statistics on direct expenditure for R&D activities, financed by government in Million National Currency at current prices. As can be seen, the four paths are flat between 2013 and 2014 (latest available data). In 2013, Hungary spent 44,898 million NC as direct expenditure for R&D activities, financed by government. The Czech Republic followed by 11,124 million NC, Poland followed the Czech Republic by 3,064 million NC, and finally Slovakia was last after it only spent 0.229 million NC. The same trend applied in 2014 as per the latest available data



that time. This shows that the Hungarian government is spending significantly more on R&D activities than the rest of the V4 governments with Slovakian government spending the least. What should be deduced from this illustration is that all the V4 countries' governments have similar priorities when it comes industrial innovation investments. However, spending towards industrial innovation is relative among the V4 Member States.

## 2. Hungary

Although Hungary's economy has expanded strongly in recent years due to export recovery and macroeconomic stimulus, its Gross National Income (GNI) per capita still remains among the lowest in the OECD area. This is because Hungary experiences a relatively low level of productivity. Productivity growth has decelerated for quite some time coupled with weak business investment in capital and human resources. Its R&D activities posted growth at 1.37% of GDP in 2014, but this is still considered significantly below the OECD average because of a lack of both private and public investment. Although Hungary has a strong industrial sector, business innovation capacities are concentrated in foreign-owned companies, such as German companies. Public investment in research displays 33% of GERD comparable to other European countries.<sup>6</sup>

The Hungarian government has shown some commitment towards strengthening the research and higher education system by building a strategic framework and implementing reforms. For example, in June 2013, the government adopted the National Research and Development and Innovation Strategy (2013-20) similar to the Czech Republic. This Strategy aims to stimulate Science Technology and Innovation (STI) demand, establish an efficient support and funding system, and develop an ecosystem for start-ups, especially in support of the small and medium size enterprises (SMEs). Furthermore, the 2014 Hungarian Higher Education Strategy sets ambitious targets in terms of improving teaching and learning, developing world-class research, and enhancing higher education's contribution to innovation and economic development.<sup>7</sup>

Hungary is at a stronger position in terms of research and technology because it hosts the headquarters of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT). The EIT is an independent body of the European Union founded on April 11, 2008 with an aim of spurring innovation and entrepreneurship across Europe. The EIT has

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6 <https://www.innovationpolicyplatform.org/content/hungary>. Accessed on 3 April 2018.

7 <https://www.innovationpolicyplatform.org/content/hungary>. Accessed on 3 April 2018.



an ambitious vision of empowering innovators and entrepreneurs to develop world-class solutions to create growth and jobs and Hungary needs to take advantage of this geographic opportunity.

Figure 3.2 below provides the latest available statistics on total innovation-related expenditure by the V4 countries. It captures innovation expenditure by innovative firms in each country. Expenditures are quantified in Euros. Poland spent the highest in terms of innovation expenditure (EUR 6,435,532) followed by the Czech Republic (EUR 3,242,530), Hungary (EUR 1,581,406) and Slovakia (EUR 833,081).

In terms of innovation expenditure by innovative firms in each of the V4 countries as illustrated by the statistics in figure 3.2 (a) below, it is apparent that innovative firms in Hungary still lag behind Poland and the Czech Republic in terms of committing resources towards innovation activities. Many private firms in Hungary are spending significantly less resources in both process and product innovation compared to its V4 counterparts (Poland and the Czech Republic). This suggests that in terms of level of expenditure as shown, private firms in Poland seem to be more pro-active in terms of innovative activity than the rest of the V4 Member States. Private firms in Slovakia are least innovative based on their little appetite for spending in innovative activity. It is important to put a caveat, however, that we cannot exclusively measure. Innovative firms as used in this paper refers to an entity with the capacity to become a product or process innovator. These are firms that have implemented an innovation during the period under review. Fig. 3.2 (a) provides analysis of the latest available data after 2010.

Fig. 3.2. (a)

Innovation expenditure by innovative firms, total, thousand EUR.

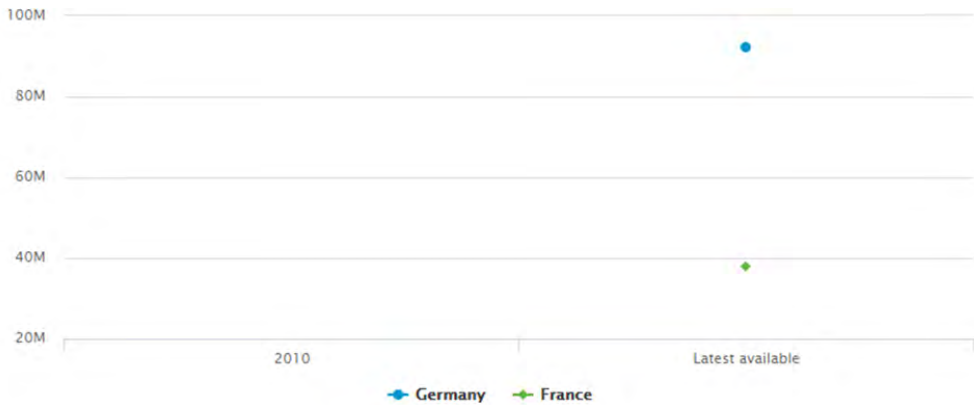
Source: The Innovation Policy Platform-courtesy of the OECD and the World Bank Group.



# The Visegrad Group Facing New Challenges

Around the same period, for example, France spent EUR 37,900,270 and Germany spent EUR 92,230,000. See figure 3.2 (b) shown below for comparison. The data used for analysis in fig. 3.2 (b) is the latest available after 2010.

Fig. 3.2 (b).  
Innovation expenditure, total, thousand EUR.  
Source: The Innovation Policy Platform-courtesy of the OECD  
and the World Bank Group.



Compared with other economies in the European Union (Germany and France), it is clear that private firms in the V4 countries spend significantly less amount of money towards innovation activities.

## 3. Poland

Poland proved to be remarkably resilient in the face of the 2009 financial crisis and has continued to grow strongly and catch up with other OECD countries in terms of GDP per capita. The annual growth rate of the country's GDP averaged 3.1% from 2007 to 2014. GERD increased from 0.56% to 0.94% of GDP between 2004 and 2014, but it is still below the OECD average (2.38%). The government aims to attain GERD of 1.7% of GDP by 2020. To continue its convergence with the most affluent OECD countries, Poland needs to strengthen its public research system, enhance business innovation and improve the innovation skills of the workforce. The main catalyzers for the country's strategic direction and policy action are the Strategy for Innovation and Efficiency of the Economy – Dynamic Poland 2020 (201320),



the Entrepreneurship Development Program (EDP) and the National Research Program (NRP). Furthermore, the Smart Growth Operational Program (201420) has been launched to boost the innovativeness and competitiveness of the economy by funding investment in research, development and innovation, with the support of the European structural funds.

Fig. 3.3  
Gross Domestic Expenditure on Research and Development (GERD), % of GDP.  
Source: The Innovation Policy Platform-courtesy of the OECD  
and the World Bank Group.

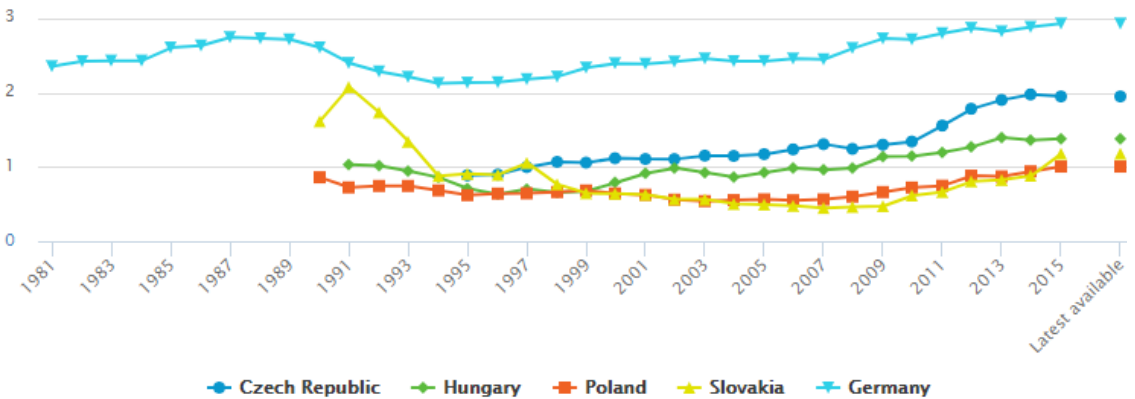


Figure 3.3 shows Research and Development expenditure by the V4 countries in terms of percentage GDP. Since Germany is one of the strongest economies within the EU, it is included for comparison with the rest of the V4 Member States. The R&D expenditure includes or is an aggregate of all sector performers (e.g. business sector, public sector, and private non-profit). In 2015, for example, Czech Republic's Gross Domestic Expenditure on Research and Development (GERD) as a percentage of the GDP was 1.95 percent, followed by Hungary at 1.38 percent, Slovakia at 1.18 percent and Poland at 1.00 percent. Germany registered the highest with 2.9 percent. Poland and Slovakia seem to be spending less of their percentage GDP on R&D compared with their counterparts-the Czech Republic and Hungary.

## 4. Slovakia

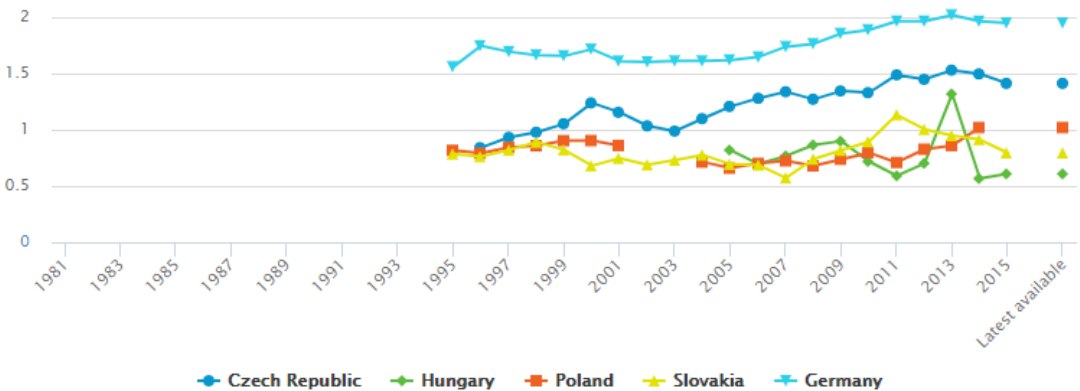
The Slovak Republic is one of Europe’s most dynamic economies. Yet, along with other post-communist countries, the country still faces major challenges in the field of innovation and in moving towards a knowledge-based economy.

Business and public R&D remain well below the OECD average. Although gross domestic expenditure on R&D (GERD) has grown steadily (at an annual rate of 16.3% over the period 2009–2014), investment in R&D as a share of GDP is far below OECD norms (table 1). Publicly financed R&D reached 0.39% of GDP in 2014, which is about 60% of the average in OECD economies.

Improvements in governance and reforms to the public research sector have continued in recent years. The current major STI policy priorities are R&D and business innovation, enhancing the transfer and impact of public research, and improving policy governance.

Fig. 3.4.

Government budget appropriations and outlays for R&D, % of the general government expenditure. Source: The Innovation Policy Platform-courtesy of the OECD and the World Bank Group.



In terms of government budget appropriations and outlays for R&D as a percentage of the general government expenditure (see fig. 3.4), the Czech Republic’s government seems to be appropriating significant budget while the rest of the V4 countries are appropriating less in terms of the percentage of government expenditure. Again, for comparison purposes, Germany seems to be spending higher than the rest of the V4 countries.



In summary, the forgoing statistical illustrations clearly indicate that the V4 countries do not have similar budget and expenditure priorities towards industrial innovation. In other words, there is need for a coherent innovative policy that would enable all the V4 Member States to prioritize more on R&D. The cooperation of the V4 Group should be robustly exploited so that their policies on industrial innovation may be redesigned and harmonized for the mutual benefit of all the V4 Member States.

## **THEORY OF ECONOMIC GROWTH**

New growth theory in economics focuses on endogenous growth process. Endogenous growth theory holds that economic growth is mainly a function of endogenous as opposed to exogenous forces. This theory holds the view that knowledge and innovation are significant contributors to economic growth. Of course this also requires investment in human capital. A study of the literature on the causes of economic growth since the Industrial Revolution has linked the importance of technological development to economic growth. This interpretation of growth has come to the fore. Historians and scholars of science, in fact, stress the correlation between scientific discoveries and the transition from a period of slow productivity growth to that of exponential expansion of growth.<sup>8</sup> In this regard, technological improvements in machinery has been linked to economic growth. For example, Adam Smith saw improvements of machinery as engines of growth as they facilitate further specialization.

In his book “The Wealth of Nations”, Adam Smith foreshadows growth in terms of technological progress (e.g division of labor, specialization and innovation). He implies that the invention of new machines and the improvement of known ones is a result of human capital driven by division of labor that is highly specialized and potentially enhances innovation activities (learning by doing, and learning by using). This creates speculative minds with power and skills to engage in research and development of new industrial designs. According to Smith, nurturing this kind of environment leads to new technical knowledge that insures market competitiveness. As more wealth is created through technological progress and production, new markets emerge or open up and enlarge existing ones and thus pushing effectual demand which translates into economic development. In other words, the invention of new machines and the improvement of known ones is clearly a function of the workers in the production sector who have had occasion to use machines.

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8 Neri, S., and Renato, B. (eds): “Innovation, Unemployment and Policy in the Theories of Growth and Distribution. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2005.

## STRATEGIC POLICY DIRECTION

The V4 Group should strive to work more towards strategic direction with regard to industrial innovation. This means that there is a need for reviewing its objectives on industrial innovation policies and finding the best means to accomplishing those objectives. This includes targeting additional resources and ensuring that those resources are employed more effectively towards achieving set objectives. Policies and strategies that can work at the basic level of development, for example, local production should be promoted with a view to spurring national development (Albuquerque, 1997).

According to Black's Law Dictionary, a strategic direction is "course of action leading to goal achievement by the strategy of an organization."<sup>9</sup> Strategic direction as stated in ISO 9001:2015 entails a course of action that affects the ability of an organization to achieve the intended results of its quality management.<sup>10</sup> A strategy on the other hand is all about integrating organizational activities and utilizing and allocating the scarce resources within the organizational environment so as to meet the present objectives.

Lack of strategic vision among the V4 countries is likely to affect the development of scientific and technological capacities. These capacities should be localized and built up gradually on a trial and error basis and feedback should be given for improvement. In this case, the focus is squarely on the V4 Member States. What strategic policy direction has the V4 Group put in place to help it achieve meaningful economic growth within the Central European region?

The strategic direction required to catapult the V4 cooperation towards technological innovation and economic growth should be based on a well-funded knowledge intensive industrial research. It should never escape our mind that the U.S. is where it is today because of knowledge creation through science and technology, which played a major role among other important considerations. Despite the fact that there are several production and service industries across the V4 countries, they still face competitive market conditions that require strategic policy direction. In general, strategic policy should prevail which advocates for "adding value" in the resources-intensive sectors and or selective policies of creation of new sectors. Responsive strategies that create economic value (add value) to market products are needed. Unless this is implemented then no significant change in terms of increase in market share and economic growth can be realized.

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9 <https://thelawdictionary.org/strategic-direction/>. Accessed on 29 March 2018

10 <http://isoconsultantpune.com/iso-90012015-strategic-planning-by-pretesh-biswas-apb-consultant/>. Accessed on 29 March 2018.



The contribution of knowledge-intensive sectors to the world economy's value added and employment cannot be overlooked. This has made innovations become a decisive element in competitiveness. For example, it is on record that the General Electric (GE) Company established the General Electric Research Laboratory in 1900 in response to competitive fears that other alternative products would adversely affect its business and market share. Similarly, the AT&T Company facing stiff competition from radio technology established Bell Laboratories to research new technology in the event that wire communications were challenged.<sup>11</sup>

An effective strategic direction requires government intervention. Research shows that governments are increasingly realizing that investing in the regional dimension of innovation is a crucial part of strategies to promote growth.<sup>12</sup> There is, however, no single formula to promote innovation in the Central European region. This means that more systematic policy analysis is required to help policy makers understand which region-level instruments would be required to generate innovation activities.

The V4 governments should have an important role to play in fostering innovation, especially private-sector innovation. Innovation and technology work conjointly and are the prime drivers of economic growth. In the absence of government support, however, firms are less likely to undertake optimal investment in technology, especially in basic research. Government support in this instance include more credit access and attractive tax incentives. The V4 governments therefore have a responsibility to address this underinvestment or market failure by providing incentives to conduct additional R&D, which will enhance economic growth.<sup>13</sup> When President Clinton was in office, he took a major step forward in 1994 in articulating the role of the government in innovation and technological process. He observed that technological progress fuels economic growth, hence the need for government to intervene in technology initiatives aimed at promoting domestic development and diffusion of growth- and productivity-enhancing technologies.<sup>14</sup> The involvement of government in innovation activities is important, especially in correcting market failures that would otherwise generate too little investment in R&D.

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11 Maryann, P. Fieldman, Albert, N. Link., Donald, S. Siegel: *The Economics of Science and Technology: An Overview of initiatives to foster innovation, Entrepreneurship, and Economic Growth*. New York: Springer Science + Business Media, LLC, 2002.

12 OECD. "Regions Matter: Economic Recovery, Innovation and Sustainable Growth." (2009).

13 See Fieldman et al. (2002).

14 See Fieldman et al. (2002).



## RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Today's economy is increasingly knowledge based, a determining factor of productivity. It is important to note that capabilities for research, creation, and appropriation of knowledge and its transformation into new technologies form part of the foundations of wealth creation in the most developed nations and largely explain their economic growth. In this regard, analysis and debate on how to generate knowledge, technological innovation, and development is a topic of utmost importance for the economic development of countries.<sup>15</sup>

There is still a gap in the V4 Group research capacity. To be able to establish a knowledge-based economy within Central Europe, the V4 Group needs more ambitious policy for research and development. For example, policies geared towards alternative sources of energy should be encouraged and should be based on collaborative research. This would create a base for knowledge creation which plays an important role in improving market competitiveness. In the long run, innovation for new sources of energy would enhance energy security among the V4 Member States. Research and Development (R&D) should be more sensitive to market demands. There should be little restriction in terms of innovative fundamental research and this can be made possible by involving a substantial number of private sector. The interface between R&D and supply and demand should be strengthened. Equally important is the need to promote a culture of science and technology. All these are possible if ambitious public policies geared at research and development are created and supported by political will.<sup>16</sup>

A section of the literature reveals that R&D is universally regarded as one of the important drivers of national economies. For instance, countries like BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) which devoted significant amounts of funding to R&D have shown major gain in their GDP and living standards.<sup>17</sup> It might not necessarily follow that increase in R&D will automatically result in GDP as was the case in some BRIC countries, but the V4 Member States should probably undertake more research on this hypothesis and come up with evidence based policies that would guide and drive future innovative activities within Central Europe. Since R&D requires financial and human resources, the V4 governments need to devote more attention to advanced technical education by training high quality researchers. At the same time, R&D tax credits should not just be directed to big corporations or undertakings with research

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15 J.M. Martínez-Piva (ed.): "Knowledge Generation and Protection." United Nations, 2009.

16 Maria Joao Rodrigues: European Policies for a Knowledge Economy. Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, Cheltenham, UK 2003.

17 Arun S. Mujumdar: R&D Needs, Challenges and Opportunities for Innovation in Drying Technology (edits Sachin V. Jangam and Bhaskar N. Thorat). 2010.



capacity, but also small businesses capable of product development and those capable of improving product quality or function. In other words, it is necessary for the V4 governments to make it reasonably easier for small and medium-size enterprises to equally qualify for R&D tax credits so that small enterprises that are interested in innovation are incentivized to invest in R&D.

## ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INNOVATION IN CENTRAL EUROPE

The basic nature of entrepreneurship is that of finding opportunities that have not yet been exploited. This can be realized by “gap-filling,” finding niche markets that are not yet supplied, or it can be made possible by gaining a share of mainstream supply to core markets. The exploitation of an idea by entrepreneurial entity entails innovation. It follows that when resources are available, many entrepreneurs would start a business for the reason of exploiting their idea. Entrepreneurial activities should be encouraged an extra level by all the V4 Member States and make it a major force behind establishment of new firms that produce new products to the market. Then the markets in which these firms operate should become the testing ground for a new generation of ideas. This is more likely to make innovation among the V4 Member States create reversal of ownership patterns of businesses from international to local proprietors.

In order for the innovation and entrepreneurship to succeed in the Central European region, inventors and entrepreneurs are needed to fully exploit their potentials. The task of inventors should focus on generating new ideas on which innovations are based. For firms to be innovative they can either employ inventors, or alternatively they can have a good access to external idea sources such as research universities. Entrepreneurs should have unmitigated opportunities to search for new ideas and exploit them commercially. Entrepreneurship in the V4 countries should mainly focus on finding opportunities that have not yet been exploited. This can be achieved by “gap-filling,” and discovering niche markets that are not yet fully exploited.<sup>18</sup> Since many entrepreneurs start businesses to exploit innovation, they are closely linked with the process of firm creation. Entrepreneurial activity is, therefore, the major force behind the creation of new firms that introduce new products or processes to the market. The markets in

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<sup>18</sup> Christine, G., and Mark, R: *Innovation, Intellectual Property, and Economic Growth*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2010.

which these firms operate become the testing ground for a new generation of ideas; successful ideas will enable firms to become part of the next generation of larger firms, either through growth or via takeover by larger firms.

## THE ROLE OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS IN INDUSTRIAL INNOVATION

The role of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) is important for industrial innovation. Intellectual property mainly refers to intangible property that is the result of creativity of the mind. This includes inventions, literary and artistic works; designs; and symbols. Intellectual property can be further divided into two components: industrial property and copyright.<sup>19</sup> This paper is mainly concerned with the former (industrial property). Intellectual property leads to inventions, which in turn stimulate innovation activities which set the stage for industrialization. The V4 Member States have put adequate legal frameworks to regulate competition and to protect intellectual property.

Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) are protective rights granted to intellectual property owners. They are property rights in something intangible. They mainly protect innovations and creations, and reward innovative and creative activities.<sup>20</sup> Article 7 of the Trade-related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) articulate that “the protection and enforcement of intellectual property rights should contribute to the promotion of technological innovation and to the transfer and dissemination of technology, to the mutual advantage of producers and users of technological knowledge and in a manner conducive to social and economic welfare, and to a balance of rights and obligations.”<sup>21</sup>

Even though they are intended to provide monetary reward to title-holders to recover investment in R&D and make a profit, exclusive rights given to the title-holders prevent third parties from commercially using the protected knowledge thereby creating barriers to the diffusion and use of knowledge.<sup>22</sup> Knowledge by its very nature is a non-rival good, but IPRs create scarcity of knowledge by making it excludable. Many companies are able to prevent their competitors from knowing their business secrets through IPRs. Economic analysis further shows that unless IPR is correctly formulated, its protection mechanisms can

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19 [http://www.wipo.int/edocs/pubdocs/en/intproperty/450/wipo\\_pub\\_450.pdf](http://www.wipo.int/edocs/pubdocs/en/intproperty/450/wipo_pub_450.pdf). Retrieved on March 20, 2018.

20 Paul Torremans: *Holyoak and Torremans Intellectual Property Law*. 7th edit. Great Clarendon Street, Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013.

21 Carlos M. Correa: *Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights: A Commentary on the TRIPS Agreement*. Great Clarendon Street, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.P.91.

22 See Carlos M. Correa (2007). P.95.



become a barrier to the entry of other innovators and an instrument to preserve monopolies, resulting in a further obstacle rather than as an incentive for research and for economic development.<sup>23</sup> The V4 Member States are obligated to use the existing EU Directives on Intellectual Property to conduct their innovation activities within the prescribed laws and regulations.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The V4 Group governments should make it even more easier for financial institutions to provide the necessary funding for innovative business for all stages of the innovation cycle. This could involve redirecting state financing towards programs that focus on innovative projects at the initial stage. There is great need to expand state support for new innovative start-up companies. In other words, the V4 Group governments should increase financial support for innovative start-up firms. This would create a lot of opportunities for small businesses and young graduates who intend to own businesses. At the same time, it would insure that start-up companies are cushioned against possible losses as a result of technology-related investments. Venture investment fund (venture financing) is crucial for substantially expanding innovation activities. When this is well implemented, then the V4 Member States will be more successful in fostering a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship.

Moreover, active goal-setting and problem-solving should be important action steps by the V4 Member States to support their much needed economic growth. This largely depends, however, on their ability to bring research and innovation to the European market. Still, cross-border coordination of innovation and strong R&D policies have the potential for interregional science and technology space which, if well exploited, could engender enduring competitive advantage. The geographical and socio-cultural similarities among the V4 countries is the proximate advantage that should be exploited for trustful relationships that make possible the exchange of technological knowledge. What is required of the V4 Member States is an industrial innovation program capable of transferring innovative ideas into products. This program will not only lead to economic growth, but will also strengthen international competitiveness, that is, the V4 domestic products will be able to compete internationally and attract huge foreign exchange earnings.

Further, there is need for the V4 Group to borrow industrial innovation ideas from best practices. In the U.S., for example, technological innovation has succeeded because of a long tradition of close ties and frequent collaboration between

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23 J.M. Martínez-Piva (ed.), "Knowledge Generation and Protection." United Nations, 2009.

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companies and a network of first-rate research universities. Underlying the success of innovation clusters such as Silicon Valley, and the Research Triangle of North Carolina are local universities with a longstanding mission of spurring economic growth by developing technology with and transferring technology to local industry and stimulating the creation of new businesses in university-centered incubators and science parks.<sup>24</sup> It is important to note that technology-intensive companies usually locate their operations closer to the best universities in particular fields of science and engineering in order to enable their internal research departments to work with leading scientists in those universities and this also enables them to recruit brilliant students. These are sound options that should be given consideration by the V4 Member States. The biggest task for the V4 Group, therefore, is to transform the foregoing challenge(s) into growth opportunities.

In conclusion, cooperation towards innovative activities among the V4 Member States is more likely to open up new markets for products. This will also go a long way in solidifying cooperation between the V4 Member States and other regional economies as a result of demands created by new markets. Countries tend to strengthen their co-operations based on regional or international trade agreements.

In terms of R&D it is important that the V4 Group leverage EU funding to boost innovative research programs. At the same time, there needs to be medium and long-term objectives put in place so that innovation policies can be effectively monitored and evaluated. All these plans require strong political commitment among the four countries so that clear policies to foster business innovation can be set out. The four countries should also endeavor to cut red-tape bureaucracy so that flexibility to stimulate innovative activities is achieved. This will lead to enhancing the capabilities of Small and Medium business Enterprises. More importantly, however, the SMEs should develop suitable capabilities that would enable them to acquire advanced skills so as to avoid creating knowledge gap in industrial innovation. This would ensure that industries are not disrupted due to lack of advanced skills required for innovation.

Taking into account the need for cooperation among the V4 Group, innovation should serve as a stepping stone for providing solutions to economic challenges. The overall objective of the V4 Group should therefore be to support member countries to develop competitive advantage so that they can become major economic players in the European market and beyond. In addition, the V4 group should create a venue for consultations and mutual learning among member states so that they foster synergies for R&D funds. In a recent World Bank report on Poland, for example, the

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<sup>24</sup> Charles W. Wessner. (edit): Best practices in State and Regional Innovation initiatives: Competing in the 21st Century. Washington DC: The National Academies Press, 2013.



Bank clearly pointed out that Poland should identify the need to strengthen her companies with innovation and entrepreneurship. This could ensure that such potential is fully used. With adequate public support, such businesses - so-called "champions" - could succeed in domestic and international markets.<sup>25</sup>

It is also important for the V4 Member States to pay attention to the relationship between innovative firms and markets so as to understand how market conditions impact on rates of innovation. This mainly involves the business sector, which is regarded as most critical in pushing for innovation activities. How does the V4 Group create opportunities for new innovative firms? Once the V4 governments are able to create favorable opportunities for the business sector by, for instance, removing hurdles that might slow down the business creation process and extending appreciable tax incentives to promising entrepreneurial firms, then entrepreneurs will have focus on their incentive structure and task themselves with surveying various aspects of the market system with a view to finding out how new products would attract market share. This is likely to set stage for major R&D so that firms are able to have competitive edge by supplying new products into the market. But the market system also needs to produce the optimal level of innovation.

Since the legal protection of innovations and creations have been put on statutes, there is hope for fair competitive environment and this will serve to reward innovation and creative activities in a competitive market. This is already a great advantage to the V4 Member States and it signals the fact that the V4 cooperation takes seriously the need to support industrial innovation within the Central European region. Even though the V4 countries have done a lot in terms of supporting innovative activities, there is still some room for improvement. The V4 Member States have the potential, based on their synergy, to develop a well-functioning innovative system that would make industrial innovation a great success in Central Europe.

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25 <http://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2016/09/19/innovation-key-to-growth-in-poland>. Retrieved on April 9, 2018.

# ELECTION OBSERVATION IN THE COUNTRIES OF THE VISEGRÁD GROUP

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## INTRODUCTION

The first ever election monitoring was in 1857 when elections in Moldova and Wallachia were observed by a group of international observers of a European commission of Austrian, British, French, Prussian, Russian and Turkish representatives<sup>1</sup> based on the Treaty of Paris, which concluded the Crimean War (1853-1856). Since the nineteenth century election observation activities of the international community have become widespread and common. However the boom in these activities only came at the beginning of the 1990s, when after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Block, the countries of the Central and Eastern European region stepped on a way towards building democracies.

Election observation since the early 1990s became an important activity of several international organizations both governmental and non-governmental. Among them we can note as the most important actors: the United Nations, the European Union, the OSCE, the OAS as international governmental organizations; the Carter Center, the International Republican Institute and the National Democratic Institute as NGOs. The OSCE and its predecessor, the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), have alone conducted 300 election observation missions in their participating states until 23 October 2015.<sup>2</sup>

Free and fair elections are widely considered a cornerstone of democracy, in fact electoral democracy is generally considered the most basic form of democracy.<sup>3</sup> International civil rights documents refer to participatory rights, including electoral rights, as the basis of democracy.<sup>4</sup> As democracy is a debated undefined concept

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1 Article 23 of the 1856 Treaty of Paris established a commission to monitor elections and the future of the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia

2 <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/193741>

3 Kurt Herndl, 'The Case-Law of the Commission as Regards the Right to Free Elections (Article 3 of protocol 1)', in *The Birth of European Human Rights Law*, Michele de Salvia and Marti E. Villiger (eds.) (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft 1998): ('the right of an individual to take part in elections is quintessential for any democratic society and any democratic State'.)

4 Charter of the Organization of American States, Preamble: 'representative democracy is an indispensable condition for the stability, peace and development of the region'; European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, Preamble: 'an effective political democracy is essential to the protection of fundamental freedoms'.



with broad and narrow interpretations, elections and electoral rights can be considered however an essential requisite of democracy that is widely agreed upon by the international community. Election observation activities of international organizations and NGOs from foreign states have become a norm in the past two decades, it seems that this international act has developed into the most visible democracy support tool of the international community.

For the countries of the Visegrád Group the election observation activities are twofold. These countries are both subject to election observation and participate in election observation activities. Both are mainly carried out through commitments in international organizations. In the following this study will introduce the election observation activities that have taken place in the Visegrád Four and how these countries participate in election observation activities by providing observers and as developed donor countries. The study focuses on the four Visegrád states because they have set out on a path of democratic reform in the early 1990s, successfully participated in the work of international organizations, and joined the EU in 2004, but are now often criticised for becoming backsliding democracies, which is also shown by the proceeding regarding the rule of law against Poland and Hungary within the EU.

The aim of the study is to explore how integrated the mechanism of international election observation is within these countries. Do they rely on these tools when creating or amending their national legislation regarding electoral processes, do the final recommendations of election observation missions get implemented? How to the Visegrád countries act in the role of states deploying election observers? Do they participate on an ad-hoc basis or consistently? Do they have a strategic approach to election observation?

## **V4 COUNTRIES AS SUBJECTS OF OBSERVATION**

The election observation activities of the Visegrád Group have been determined by the participation in international organizations and the aim of reaching the EU membership in the 1990s. All four countries are members of the European Union (EU), the Council of Europe and participate in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) all of which have standards on elections and which carry out different forms of electoral assistance. Due to the gentleman's agreement existing between the EU and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe OSCE, the EU does not deploy any election



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observation missions in the OSCE region<sup>5</sup>, thus the election observation missions that have been deployed to the V4 countries were all missions of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).

Election observation conducted by the OSCE/ODIHR in the beginning of the 1990s focused on countries emerging from a non-democratic past and have deployed full-fledged Election Observation Missions (EOM) consisting of a core team of experts, long-term observers and short-term observers deployed throughout the whole country in order for a systematic observation. With the development of the methodology and the demand to also observe elections in countries with longer democratic traditions, the ODIHR developed the so called Needs Assessment Mission (NAM), which consists of a small expert team making recommendations for the elections as well as regarding the type of observation. If necessary, the NAM may recommend an EOM capable of systematic observation of election day or a Limited Election Observation Mission (LEOM) consisting of a core team of experts and long-term observers able to observe the electoral process, but not systematically observe election day, or an Election Assessment Mission (EAM) only consisting of a team of experts based in the capital city. The NAM may also decide not to recommend any election observation missions.

The first OSCE/ODIHR election observation missions to the V4 were in 1998 and have since become regular due to the fact that the countries respecting their OSCE commitments based on the Charter of Paris for a New Europe<sup>6</sup> have invited the ODIHR to deploy election observation missions. All together there were 22 election observations in the four countries.<sup>7</sup> In the Czech Republic there were 6, out of which 4 were parliamentary elections (1998: EOM, 2002: EOM, 2010: NAM, 2017: EAM), 2 were presidential elections (2013: EAM, 2018: NAM). In Hungary there were 5 election observation missions for parliamentary elections (1998: EOM, 2002: EOM, 2010: EAM, 2014: LEOM, 2018: LEOM). In Poland there were 4 missions, 3 for parliamentary elections (2007: EAM, 2011: EAM, 2015: EAM) and one presidential election (2015: NAM). Slovakia had the most missions, seven altogether, consisting of 5 parliamentary elections (1998: EOM, 2002: EOM, 2010: EAM, 2012: NAM, 2016: EAM) and two presidentials (1999: EOM, 2004: EAM).

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5 Special report No 22/2017: Election Observation Missions – efforts made to follow up recommendations but better monitoring needed; European Court of Auditors, page 12. Paragraph 19.: “The ODIHR carries out election observation in OSCE participating States. The EU and the ODIHR use comparable methodology. For these reasons the EU does not usually observe elections in the OSCE region. Dating back to the early 2000s, this gentleman’s agreement between the EU and the OSCE is not based on a written agreement.”

6 Charter of Paris for a New Europe, 21 November 1990, Second CSCE Summit of Heads of State or Government

7 <https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections>



Based on those numbers and the dates of these missions, it is already possible to draw some simple observations. The clear difference between the electoral system of Hungary and the other three countries can be seen, meaning that in Hungary the head of state is elected indirectly by Parliament and no direct presidential elections are organized. Another difference that can be noted by the numbers is the regularity of elections. In Slovakia's case there have been early parliamentary elections, thus adding to the number of elections to be observed.

Beyond simply looking at numbers, there seem to be a few topical themes that are challenging for all four countries since the beginning of the election observation activities. Most notably these are the changing legislation and the ongoing reform processes, the situation of the media with a special focus on the public broadcasters and challenges regarding procedures of central electoral bodies.

*The observations below are based on the final reports of parliamentary elections in the Visegrád Group.*

## 1. Legislation

In terms of the developing legislation it can be seen through the reports of the observation missions that legislation has changed over time in all four countries. Most recently Slovakia introduced a new electoral code in 2014<sup>8</sup>, Hungary introduced new legislation on elections in 2011<sup>9</sup>, Poland adopted a new consolidated electoral legislative act, the Election Code, on 5 January 2011<sup>10</sup> and the Czech Republic last amended the 1995 Law on Parliamentary Elections in 2017.<sup>11</sup>

One of the reasons for this can be the fact that the testing of electoral systems takes time and the legislation originally adopted in the early 1990s needed reflection and improvement. On a positive note we have to add that as it is observed the new pieces of legislation do in fact address questions that have been previously raised by the ODIHR observation missions. One good example is the introduction of a new campaign finance oversight mechanism in the Czech Republic<sup>12</sup>, which addressed ODIHR and GRECO<sup>13</sup> recommendations regarding campaign financing.

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8 Act No. 180/2014 of 29 May 2014 On the Conditions of Electoral Law and change and completion of certain laws

9 Act CCIII of 2011 on Elections of Members of Parliament and Act XXXVI of 2013 on Election Procedures  
10 Republic of Poland, Parliamentary Elections, 25 October 2015, OSCE/ODIHR EAM Report; page 5.

11 The Czech Republic, Parliamentary Elections, 20-21 October 2017, OSCE/ODIHR EAM Final Report; page 3.

12 The Czech Republic, Parliamentary Elections, 20-21 October 2017, OSCE/ODIHR EAM Final Report; page 11.

13 The Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) is the Council of Europe anti-corruption body.

However in some cases the OSCE's concerns remained unaddressed, or there are new problematic points raised by recent election legislation, which are signalled in the observation reports following the first elections when the new laws are applied. One such case is the new Hungarian legislation that was tested for the first time in 2014 and where several elements were found to be problematic by the limited election observation mission (LEOM)<sup>14</sup>. Another example regarding the unified Election Code of Poland was the introduction of proxy voting which was criticised from the aspect of the secrecy of the vote in the 2011 report of the ODIHR mission<sup>15</sup>.

Another question regarding legislation that comes up in reports is the timing of changing the electoral laws. This, according to the OSCE observers, makes it difficult for voters, political parties and candidates to adopt to the changes and raises questions of stability. Such problems were noted in the 2011 report on the Polish parliamentary elections stating that late amendments to the unified Election Code were not in line with the principle of stability of the electoral law stated in the Venice Commission's Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters, which provides that electoral legislation should not be fundamentally changed within the last year before an election<sup>16</sup>.

## 2. Media

In terms of media pluralism, critical observations can be found in all four countries especially regarding the role of the public broadcaster or the state media. It is a recurring subject in the reports that the oversight of the public media is insufficient, not effective or influenced heavily by the governing party<sup>17</sup>.

Possible misuse of financial resources for campaigning have been noted and it is a common phenomenon that the state media is biased towards the governing party<sup>18</sup>, while commercial media outlets can also be biased towards the opposition<sup>19</sup> creating less balanced media environments. As noted in the case of Slovakia in the 2016 report, this is due to the fact that concentrated media ownership exists. This raises several questions about the editorial indepen-

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14 Hungary, Parliamentary Elections, 6 April 2014, OSCE/ODIHR LEOM Final Report; page 5.

15 Republic of Poland, Parliamentary Elections, 9 October 2011, OSCE/ODIHR EAM Final Report; page 8.

16 Republic of Poland, Parliamentary Elections, 9 October 2011, OSCE/ODIHR EAM Final Report; page 4.

17 Republic of Poland, Early Parliamentary Elections, 21 October 2007, OSCE/ODIHR EAM Final Report; Hungary, Parliamentary Elections, 6 April 2014, OSCE/ODIHR LEOM Final Report; Republic of Hungary, Parliamentary Elections, 7 and 21 April 2002, OSCE/ODIHR EOM Final Report;

18 The Slovak Republic, Parliamentary Elections, 25 and 26 September 1998, OSCE/ODIHR EOM Final Report: page 18; Hungary, Parliamentary Elections, 6 April 2014, OSCE/ODIHR LEOM Final Report: page 16;

19 The Slovak Republic, Parliamentary Elections, 25 and 26 September 1998, OSCE/ODIHR EOM Final Report: page 18; The Slovak Republic, Parliamentary Elections, 20-21 September 2002, OSCE/ODIHR EOM Final Report: page 12; Hungary, Parliamentary Elections, 6 April 2014, OSCE/ODIHR LEOM Final Report: page 16;



dence of journalists. In Slovakia's case it has been noted that the print media generally preferred the opposition, while the television channels showed a bias for the government.<sup>20</sup>

In case of Hungary besides criticism related to the state media bias towards the government, it is noted that media outlets funded by municipalities were campaigning in favour of the party or candidate in power in the respective region. It is thus noted by the observers that the independent news sources existing on the internet are contributing to the media pluralism.<sup>21</sup>

Media ownership is also a key issue noted by the final report of the Election Assessment Mission (EAM) of the 2017 Czech parliamentary elections. The report notes that, while public broadcaster seemed equitable in treating the different political parties, the interlocutors mentioned a lack of such approach from some private broadcasters. This issue can also be connected to the fact that media ownership transparency may need further improvement, since cross-ownership between different types of media outlets can lead to greater media ownership concentration<sup>22</sup>. In the priority recommendation of the report it is reflected that the authorities should consider amending the legislation in this regard.<sup>23</sup>

### 3. Central electoral bodies

Another recurring topic is the binding force of the decisions of central electoral bodies. Though it can only be assumed, most probably the aim of legislators in the early 1990s was a certain level of decentralization and to give more freedom to different levels of the administration also regarding election management. This has resulted in the fact that both in Slovakia<sup>24</sup> and Poland<sup>25</sup> the electoral bodies' decisions were not unified and the decision of the central electoral bodies was not clearly binding for lower levels.

Similar situation is noted with respect to the National Election Board of the Czech Republic regarding the parliamentary elections of 1998. In the final report of the ODIHR the recommendation has been formulated that authority on giving binding instructions regarding the implementation of the election law has to be given to the National Election Board.<sup>26</sup>

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20 The Slovak Republic, Parliamentary Elections, 5 March 2016, OSCE/ODIHR EAM Final Report: page 13: "Several OSCE/ODIHR EAM interlocutors expressed an opinion that while most print media were predominantly critical of the government, they noted that several TV channels, and especially the TA3, favoured the incumbents in their news coverage."

21 Hungary, Parliamentary Elections, 6 April 2014, OSCE/ODIHR LEOM Final Report: page 16.

22 The Czech Republic, Parliamentary Elections, 20-21 October 2017, OSCE/ODIHR EAM Final Report; page 13.

23 The Czech Republic, Parliamentary Elections, 20-21 October 2017, OSCE/ODIHR EAM Final Report, page 19.

24 The Slovak Republic, Parliamentary Elections, 20-21 September 2002, OSCE/ODIHR EOM Final Report: page 4.

25 Republic of Poland, Early Parliamentary Elections, 21 October 2007, OSCE/ODIHR EAM Final Report: page 8.

26 The Czech Republic, Parliamentary Elections, 19-20 June 1998, OSCE/ODIHR EOM Final Report: page 16.

The need for clear roles for electoral bodies is also highlighted in the 2002 report on Hungary where the decision-making lines between the media authority (ORTT) and the National Election Commission are not clear enough according to the observers.<sup>27</sup> The law procedural provided that the Media Law was to be applied for participation of media in the election campaign. This caused a controversy resulting in the transfer of complaints back and forth between the two bodies, whom deferred the cases citing they do not have competence.

## ELECTION OBSERVATION AS DONOR COUNTRIES

Since the early 1990s the Visegrád Countries have also become donor countries and are participating in development cooperation activities both through multi-lateral schemes within the EU and OECD, but also on a bilateral basis with their partner countries. All four countries have developed legislation on development cooperation activities and have strategies for their aid programmes. This study has examined all four to determine if election observation and democracy assistance are of special significance in them.

In the case of the Czech Republic the Act on Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid<sup>28</sup> enlists under chapter III: “The main objectives and priorities in development cooperation and humanitarian sectors of the Czech Republic”. Within this list good democratic governance can be found as connected to the United Nations Sustainable Development goal number 16 that is: “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”. Their development cooperation programmes are organized through the CzechAid<sup>29</sup>, however currently no information on democratic governance projects can be found on that site.

Hungary adopted its international development cooperation strategy policy and humanitarian aid policy concept in 2014 with a span until 2020.<sup>30</sup> Within this strategy the detailed goals mention a focus on developing democratic institutions. On the official website no development cooperation projects specifically focusing on elections can be found. The Center for Democracy Public Foundation (DEMKK in Hungarian) is a legal entity financed by the Hungarian Ministry

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27 Republic of Hungary, Parliamentary Elections, 7 and 21 April 2002, OSCE/ODIHR EOM Final Report: page 10.

28 Act 151 of 21 April 2010 on Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid of the Czech Republic

29 [www.czechaid.cz](http://www.czechaid.cz)

30 1182/2014. (III.27.) Hungarian Government decree



of Foreign Affairs and Trade, which also carries out such projects<sup>31</sup>, using Hungarian experiences from the early 1990s of transforming to a democracy. Until 2018 the International Centre for Democratic Transition (ICDT) carried out some projects focusing on the development of democratic societies, mainly on the civil society and some focusing on the capacity building of national parliaments (2013 Myanmar<sup>32</sup>), however not specifically regarding elections. The same is true for the Office of the Hungarian National Assembly, who in 2010 carried out a capacity building project in Laos, Vietnam, Moldova, Serbia, Ukraine, Egypt, India, Kenya, South Africa and Thailand<sup>33</sup> and also had plans to renew these projects in 2015 with one specific project carried out in Laos<sup>34</sup> with the focus of enhancing the internal procedures of the respective parliaments and not focusing on elections.

The Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs explicitly states on its website that it would like to capitalise on the experiences Poland has in democratic transitions.<sup>35</sup> In the Multiannual Development Cooperation Programme of Poland 6 priority areas are listed, one of which is “good governance, democracy and human rights”. It is under this priority area that in the 2017 Development Cooperation Plan of Poland<sup>36</sup> there is a point on supporting electoral processes in 2017 with ODIHR. This is the only strategy in the V4 countries that specifically focuses on election observation as means of development cooperation. In 2017 Poland decided to financially support the election observation missions of ODIHR to Kyrgyzstan and Armenia. It may also be assumed that Poland’s special interest with supporting the electoral activity of ODIHR is due to the fact that its headquarters are based in Warsaw.

Slovakia has also adopted legislation on development cooperation<sup>37</sup>, based on which similarly to Hungary’s DEMKK and the Polish Aid website also states on the website of the Slovak Aid that it wishes to contribute by sharing its own experiences through the “Transformation Experience Sharing Program”<sup>38</sup>, however this programme does not focus on elections and electoral processes. The Slovak Republic has programmes that focus on the public finances within democratic societies and aim at helping their partner countries in the Balkans and the Eastern Partnership of the EU in this regard.<sup>39</sup>

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31 <http://www.demkk.hu/>

32 <http://nefe.kormany.hu/download/1/3c/d0000/HONLAPRA%20-%20Kormanyjelentés%202013%20évi%20beszámoló%20-%202764NEFEFO.pdf>

33 [http://nefe.kormany.hu/download/a/38/d0000/Beszámoló2010NEFE%20\(JAV\(TOTT\).pdf](http://nefe.kormany.hu/download/a/38/d0000/Beszámoló2010NEFE%20(JAV(TOTT).pdf)

34 [http://nefe.kormany.hu/download/a/16/a1000/NEFE\\_beszamolo\\_2015.pdf](http://nefe.kormany.hu/download/a/16/a1000/NEFE_beszamolo_2015.pdf)

35 [www.msz.gov.pl/en/foreign\\_policy/polish\\_aid/partner\\_countries](http://www.msz.gov.pl/en/foreign_policy/polish_aid/partner_countries)

36 2017 Development Cooperation Plan of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland, page 16, 1.3. Supporting the electoral process

37 2015 Act on Official Development Cooperation (Act No.392/2015 Coll.) of the Slovak Republic

38 [www.slovakaid.sk/en/transformation-experience](http://www.slovakaid.sk/en/transformation-experience)

39 Medium-Term Strategy for Development Cooperation of the Slovak Republic for 2014-2018

## PARTICIPATION OF V4 COUNTRIES IN ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSIONS

The participation in election observation missions takes several forms and the application process differs with the type of missions. While for the observation mission of the EU the application is conducted on two levels with national and EU level selection process, the OSCE/ODIHR missions consist of long-term and short-term observers selected by member states. Expert level observers are selected by the ODIHR (NAM, EAM, core team). Thus, to examine if there is any systematic or strategic planning in the participation of the V4 states in election observation missions, the most useful data comes from the number of short-term and long-term observers in OSCE/ODIHR EOM and LEOM missions. It must be noted that another significant difference between the EU and OSCE/ODIHR missions lies in the financing. Observers in the OSCE framework, with the exception of the expert level are seconded by the member states, thus the states deploying the observers also take financial decisions when deciding on the number of observers.

Another source of information regarding the possible strategic planning is the data available on the observation missions of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA) and the observation missions of the European Parliament. In these cases the politicians themselves have to apply through their respective party groups to participate, thus also indicating to some extent foreign aims.

To look at the possibilities of strategic planning regarding the participation of V4 member states in election observation missions, this study has explored the levels of participation in OSCE/ODIHR LEOM and EOM missions from 2015 to 2018<sup>40</sup>, and by the parliamentarians of the Visegrád Group in the observation mission of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA) and the observation missions of the European Parliament.

For the purpose of this study all the list of observers in final reports of LEOM and EOM missions of the OSCE/ODIHR were reviewed. In 2015 there were six EOMs<sup>41</sup> and four LEOMs<sup>42</sup>, in 2016 there were eleven EOMs<sup>43</sup> and one LEOM<sup>44</sup>, in 2017 there were four EOMs<sup>45</sup>, two LEOMs<sup>46</sup> and a Limited Referendum Observation Mission (LROM)

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40 The OSCE/ODIHR publishes the names of observers in the final reports of the observation missions since 2015. Data is available on the ODIHR elections website (<https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/>) in all final reports since 2015 with the exception of the Uzbekistan mission of 2015, for short-term observers the 2016 mission to FYROM and the 2018 mission to Azerbaijan.

41 Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Albania, Kyrgyzstan, Belarus and Ukraine.

42 Uzbekistan, Turkey, Moldova, Turkey.

43 Kazakhstan, FYROM, Mongolia, Belarus, Russia, Montenegro, Georgia, Moldova, USA, Uzbekistan, FYROM.

44 Serbia

45 Armenia, Albania, FYROM, Georgia

46 Bulgaria, Mongolia



in Turkey, in 2018 the final report is available for four EOMs<sup>47</sup> and one LEOM<sup>48</sup>. After reviewing all the lists of observers the first and foremost conclusion that can be drawn is that there are great differences between the approach of the Visegrád Countries to deploying observers to election observation missions. A great difference can already be noted with regard to overall participation: out of the 32<sup>49</sup> missions reviewed there were only four missions without any observers from the Czech Republic<sup>50</sup>, while Slovakia participated in only 13 missions of the 32.

It can be noted that out of the four countries the Czech Republic has the most stable policy of deploying observers and this difference is especially well shown with regards to the long-term observers (LTOs). There have been Czech LTOs consistently in all missions (with the exception of the above mentioned four), in 2015-2016 one LTO per mission, from 2017 onwards 2 LTOs per mission. With regard to short-term observers (STOs), the Czech Republic has deployed an average of 8 STOs with two 2015 missions having a significantly higher number: Belarus presidential elections 15 STOs, and Ukraine local elections 23. It can be seen that the pattern with regard to the Czech Republic is not focusing on specific regions, but rather a continuous support for the work of the election observation missions.

After the Czech Republic Hungary has participated in most missions, almost always deploying STOs, however only participating once with an LTO in the 2016 LEOM to Serbia. In general Hungary participated in the missions with a number lower than the Czech Republic. It is difficult to find any pattern, however some conclusions can still be drawn. Just as for the Czech Republic the largest number of STOs were deployed to the 2015 mission to Ukraine (17 STOs), the second largest number of deployment (12 STOs) was to Georgia in 2016, the third to Russia in 2018 Russia (9 STOs). In the cases of Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Mongolia Hungarian STOs were the highest among the V4, which could be the result of the Eastern Opening policy of the Hungarian Government. The commitment towards the Western Balkan can also be seen through the one LTO deployed to Serbia and in the fact that Hungary was the only V4 country to deploy STOs to the 2<sup>nd</sup> round of municipal elections in the FYROM in 2017. However these trends are only shown by slight differences in numbers and are not significant enough to show a clear strategic approach to any of the countries observed.

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47 Russia, Azerbaijan, Montenegro and Turkey

48 Hungary.

49 Not counting the 2015 LEOM to Uzbekistan and the 2018 EOM to Azerbaijan where no information was available.

50 2015: Tajikistan; 2016: Serbia, USA; 2017: Bulgaria



# The Visegrad Group Facing New Challenges

Out of the V4 countries Poland has the most strategic approach with a very clear policy shown from the statistics. Poland clearly puts an emphasis on election observation in the countries of the European Union's Eastern Partnership programme<sup>51</sup>, another clear priority being the participation in missions to Russia. In fact the Polish policy is so clear in that they rarely participate in missions outside this geographical area. Within the Eastern Partnership countries their STO deployment is by far the largest: 2015: Belarus 15 STOs, Ukraine 39 STOs; 2016: Belarus 30 STOs, Georgia 21 STOs, Moldova 25 STOs; 2017: Armenia 30 STOs, Georgia<sup>52</sup> 2 STOs. The trend also applies to long-term observers, while the Czech Republic is consistent in almost always deploying LTOs and Hungary and Slovakia almost never doing it, Poland seems to apply a strategic approach to this as well. It has deployed LTOs in 2015 to Belarus (3), Ukraine (7), in 2016 to Belarus (4), Georgia (4), in 2017 to Armenia (2) and in 2018 to Russia (3). Overall Poland, which is also the largest V4 country by population has deployed the most STOs in the V4, however what makes this more interesting is that Poland has a selective approach concentrating its resources on the geographic areas of the greatest importance in its foreign policy. This approach also enables Poland to participate in these missions with a deployment that is similar to that of significantly bigger or wealthier participating states such as Germany, Canada, the UK or the USA.

Slovakia, the smallest state of the Visegrád Group, participates in the fewest missions with the fewest observers. In the given period they have not deployed any long-term observers. In the distribution of their short-term observers no significant pattern can be found. As in all the other three Visegrád states, the highest number of STOs were deployed to the EOM of the 2015 local elections in Ukraine.

In the context of parliamentary observation the only example of strategic planning can be noted perhaps in terms of Armenia in 2017, in which case the parallel observation mission of the OSCE/ODIHR was supported financially by the Polish Aid and in this case out of 7 MEP observers 2 were from Poland.<sup>53</sup> However it must be noted that the other OSCE/ODIHR mission supported by Poland that year was to Kyrgyzstan, in which case no V4 MEP participated<sup>54</sup>. In fact besides the Armenian mission the participation does not seem to follow any

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51 Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine

52 The number is significantly lower due to the fact that this is a local election.

53 Election Observation Delegation to the Legislative Elections in Armenia(2 April 2017)[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/election\\_observation/missions/2014-2019/armenia-2017-04-02.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/election_observation/missions/2014-2019/armenia-2017-04-02.pdf)

54 Election Observation Delegation to the Parliamentary Elections in Kyrgyzstan(13-16 October 2017)[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/election\\_observation/missions/2014-2019/kyrgyzstan-2017-10-13.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/election_observation/missions/2014-2019/kyrgyzstan-2017-10-13.pdf)



patterns or foreign policy logic. Two other missions can be mentioned in terms of strategic foreign policy importance with regards to the participation from the V4, the 2014 mission to Ukraine<sup>55</sup> and the 2017 mission to Albania. In the Ukraine mission the V4 was represented by 2 Czech, 2 Polish and 1 Hungarian MEP out of 14 observers clearly showing a political interest in Ukraine. The other such active participation was in the 2017 Albanian observation with a Polish, a Hungarian and a Slovak MEP, the latter chairing the mission. Both in the case of Ukraine and Albania a greater political interest in an Eastern Partnership country (with a crisis of great foreign policy significance) and a Western Balkans country potentially contributed to the participation of V4 MEPs.

Regarding the OSCE PA detailed data can be reached regarding the missions of 2014, 2015 and 2017.<sup>56</sup> In 2014 there were 9 observation missions, altogether 398 parliamentary assembly members participated, 44 from V4 countries: 20 Czechs, 2 Hungarians, 22 Polish, 0 Slovaks. In 2015 there were 6 missions with 221 parliamentarians, 37 from the V4: 19 Czechs, 4 Hungarians, 14 Polish, 0 Slovaks. In 2017 there were 5 missions with 161 parliamentarians, 38 from the V4: 15 Czechs, 19 Polish, 1 Hungarian and 3 Slovaks. Percentage-wise a growing trend can be seen in the number of observers. Many factors may influence the participation of parliamentarians within an observation: one such special factor for the OSCE PA might be elections within the politicians' own state, thus for example in case of the largest mission in 2014 to Ukraine no Hungarian parliamentarian participated, which is most likely linked to the fact that the Hungarian parliament was forming at that time as well.<sup>57</sup> It is a positive change that in 2017 Slovakian observers were also present in the OSCE PA activities. It can generally be noted that the participation in election observation activities is very much connected to the interest of the parliamentarians, with some being more active and participating regularly.

With regard to the European Parliament the study shares statistics on election observation missions that were carried out between 2014-2017<sup>58</sup>. Altogether in this time period there were 24 observation missions<sup>59</sup> with 158 observers out of which 25 were from the V4 countries giving 15.8 % of observers. Out of the four

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55 Election Observation Delegation to the Parliamentary Elections in Ukraine (26 October 2014) [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/election\\_observation/missions/2014-2019/ukraine\\_2014\\_10\\_26.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/election_observation/missions/2014-2019/ukraine_2014_10_26.pdf)

56 OSCE PA: 2017 Election Observation Overview, [www.oscepa.org/election-observation/election-statements](http://www.oscepa.org/election-observation/election-statements)

57 Hungarian parliamentary elections took place on 6 April 2014, while the Ukrainian early presidential elections took place on 25 May 2014 with more than 100 OSCE PA observers, among them 6 Czech and 2 Polish, but no Hungarian or Slovak. It must be noted that in 2014 no Slovak OSCE PA member participated in any election observation mission.

58 [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/election\\_observation/missions20142019\\_en.htm](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/election_observation/missions20142019_en.htm)

59 No statistics were available for the 2015 mission to Sri Lanka.

countries 11 observers were from Poland, 5-5 from Hungary and Slovakia and 4 from the Czech Republic. The Polish Ryszard Czarnecki chaired the 2015 mission to Kyrgyzstan<sup>60</sup>, the Slovak Eduard Kukan chaired the 2016 mission to Ghana<sup>61</sup> and the 2017 mission to Albania<sup>62</sup>.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

In the past three decades since the fall of communism election assistance activities have developed significantly. These activities have become standard procedures for such organisations as the OSCE and as a foreign policy instrument for the European Union. Development has happened in terms of the acceptance of these tools and more notably regarding the methodology and the sophistication of the reporting. This development can also be seen with regards to the reports that have been written about the elections in the countries of the Visegrád Group.

The V4 countries electoral systems have also developed in the past three decades on many occasions, taking into account the recommendations of the ODIHR election observation missions. The reports of the missions also allow us to have snapshots of the political arenas of each country and follow their development through the decades. One such important development is becoming members of the European Union and becoming effectively donor countries with development cooperation policies. It can be noted that all four countries have in some ways included their experiences of transition within their development cooperation strategies, but only Poland pays special attention to elections in this regard. The participation of the V4 in election observation activities through their parliamentarians has also been growing within the OSCE PA and have participated in election observation activities of the European Parliament consistently.

In general, it can be concluded that election observation activities are an integral part of the cooperation between V4 states and international organizations. There are however significant differences between the Visegrád states in using election observation as a strategic tool. We can conclude from reviewing the number of short-term and long-term observers in OSCE/ODIHR limited election ob-

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60 Election Observation Delegation to the Parliamentary Elections in Kyrgyzstan (4 October 2015) [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/election\\_observation/missions/2014-2019/kyrgyzstan\\_04\\_10\\_2015.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/election_observation/missions/2014-2019/kyrgyzstan_04_10_2015.pdf)

61 Election Observation Delegation to the Presidential and Parliamentary Elections in Ghana (5-9 December 2016) [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/election\\_observation/missions/2014-2019/ghana-2016-12-5.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/election_observation/missions/2014-2019/ghana-2016-12-5.pdf)

62 Election Observation Delegation to the Parliamentary Elections in Albania (25 June 2017) [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/election\\_observation/missions/2014-2019/albania\\_2017-06-25.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/election_observation/missions/2014-2019/albania_2017-06-25.pdf)



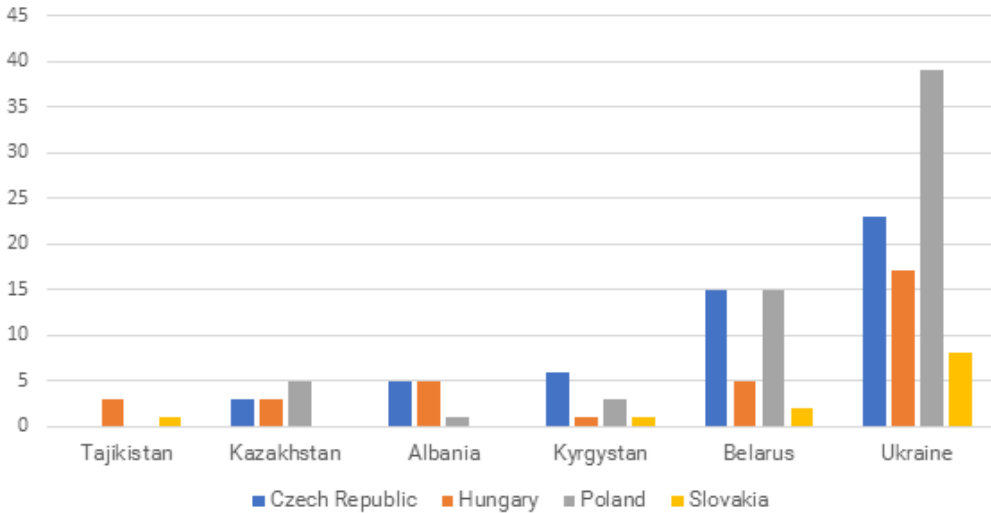
servation missions and election observation missions that the commitment towards participation and the utilization of observation as a foreign policy tool vary as well. The size of the missions show that the Czech Republic is the most consistent in its support especially regarding long-term observers. The statistics also show a strategically planned participation by Poland with regard to the EU Eastern Partnership countries, that may also be supported by other foreign policy tools such as Polish Aid development cooperation programme as seen in the case of the 2017 election observation mission to Armenia.

The way for development could be seen in giving more significance to the findings of activities in national legislation as well as the more strategic use of these instruments within the general foreign policy initiatives. With regard to the latter it could be worth exploring cooperation between the V4 states with regards to the geographic areas within their focus, thus creating a burden sharing system.

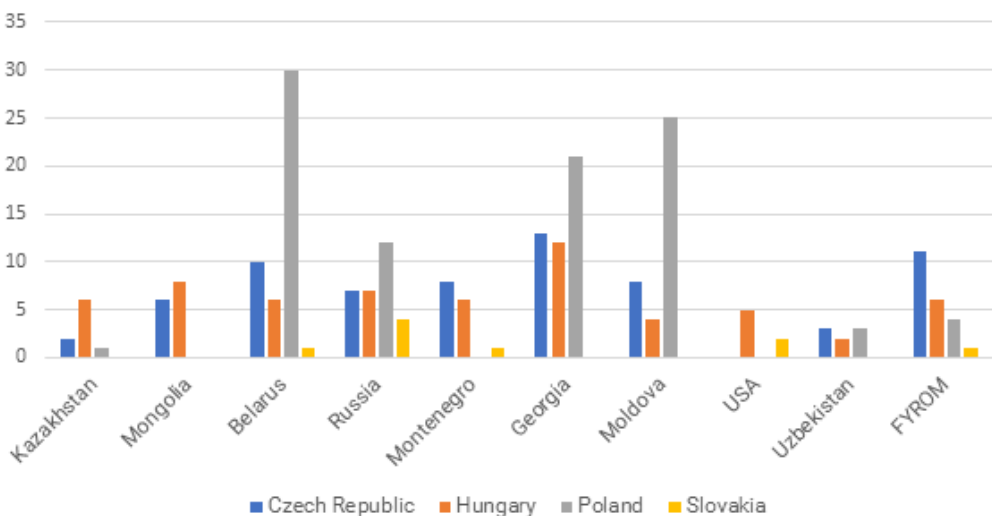
## APPENDIX I

Charts showing the number of short-term election observers participating in the Election Observation Missions (EOMs) of the OSCE/ODIHR based on the final reports of EOMs between 2015-2018. Source: <https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/>

2015: Number of short-term observers in OSCE/ODIHR EOMs

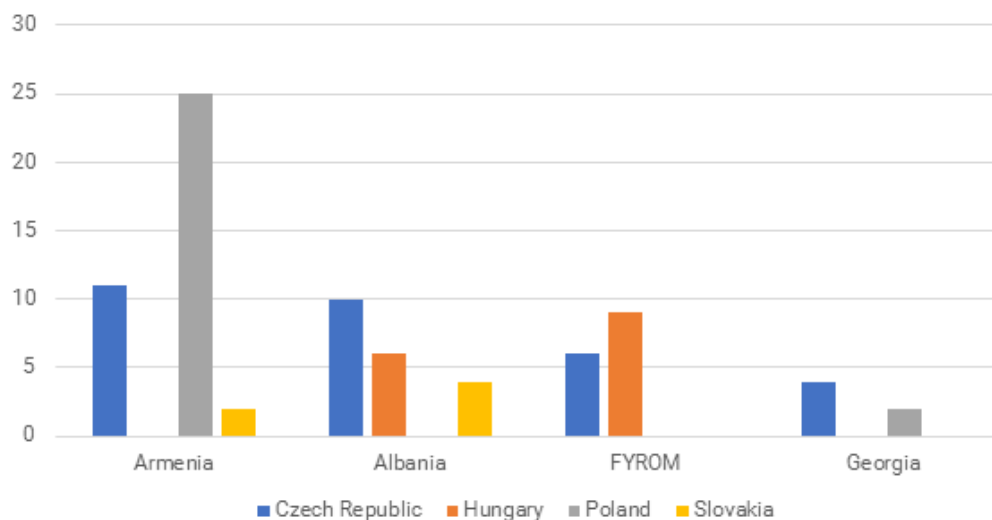


2016: Number of short-term observers in OSCE/ODIHR EOMs

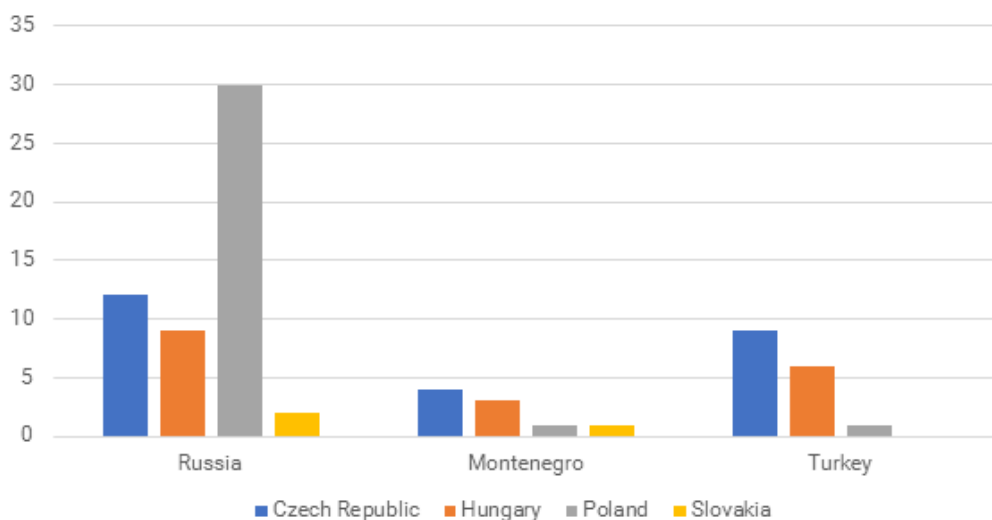




2017: Number of short-term observers in OSCE/ODIHR EOMs



2018: Number of short-term observers in OSCE/ODIHR EOMs



# MAGYARORSZÁG GAZDASÁGI NÖVEKEDÉSE A VISEGRÁDI CSOPORT FEJLŐDÉSÉNEK KONTEXTUSÁBAN

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Jelen tanulmány fókuszában a V4 csoport 1989-től napjainkig tartó fejlődési útja, növekedési tendenciái állnak. A 2017–2018-as ötödik hazai elnökség kapcsán készített összegző kutatásunk elsősorban Magyarország gazdasági növekedésre irányul. A rendelkezésre álló adatok alapján úgy tűnik, hogy a csoport harmadik legnagyobb gazdasága 2014-et követően kilábal a válságból, illetve ismételten konvergenciát mutatott az EU legfejlettebb országai felé. Am hazánk növekedésének hosszabb távú, évtizedekre nyúló vizsgálatának elkészítése során felmerül a kérdés, hogy vajon feltételezhetünk-e egyáltalán hosszú távú konvergenciát az eddigi trendek fényében, valamint helyes-e tartós felzárkózásra számítani a jövőben. Az sem hagyható figyelmen kívül, hogy a legutóbbi, 2008-as gazdasági és pénzügyi válság igen szignifikáns, illetve tartós visszaesést okozott hazánk növekedésében a többi visegrádi országhoz viszonyítva, ami gazdaságunk magas fokú sérülékenységére enged következtetni. Utóbbi megállapítást a régióba beáramló nagymértékű FDI-tól való függésre is alapozhatjuk, melynek „injekciószerű” hatásai közel sem biztosíthatják egy gazdaság tartós növekedési tendenciájának a fenntartását.

*In the present study, the issue under scrutiny is the overall economic development of the V4 countries from 1989 until nowadays. As on the occasion of current presidency of the Group, our research focuses on the economic growth of Hungary. On the basis of the recently published data it seems that the third largest country of the Four has overcome the crisis-driven economic turmoil and a slight convergence might be also detected towards the most developed centre states of the EU. Yet, if analysis is carried out in a longer term, different conclusions may be drawn concerning its catching-up tendency. At the same time, it cannot be ignored that the recent economic and financial crisis of 2008 has contributed to a significant as well as substantial economic downturn compared to other members of the V4 group. Latter statement might be based on the fact that Hungary is greatly dependent on FDI inflows, however, these “injections” cannot truly stimulate long-term growth tendencies within a given economy.*



Kétségtelen, hogy a rendszerváltást követően Kelet-Közép-Európa gazdaságai szignifikáns fejlődési utat jártak be, melynek során bőven akadtak gyors felzárkózási, illetve komolyabb visszaesési periódusok is. A Szovjetunió felbomlása óriási kihívás elé állította a régiót: olyan környezetbe került, ahol rövid időn belül alkalmazkodnia kellett a jóval fejlettebb, nyugati országok indukálta versenyhez, illetve az Európai Unióhoz való csatlakozás peremfeltételeinek teljesítéséhez. A kezdeti kiszolgáltatottságról, rugalmatlanságról, óriási gazdasági-társadalmi alulfejlettségről hirtelen meginduló növekedési-felzárkózási pályára való, relatíve rövid időszak alatt történő átállás nem kevés feszültség forrásának bizonyult. 2008 előtt a KKE-i országcsoport a világ legdinamikusabban növekvő térségei között szerepelt: 2000-től 2008-ig az éves reál GDP növekedési ráta 4,6% volt, az egy főre eső bruttó hazai termék növekedése pedig 4,8%-ot ért el. Utóbbi paraméter négyszer gyorsabban bővült, mint Nyugat-Európában.<sup>1</sup> Hozzá kell tenni azonban, hogy a közvetlen külföldi tőkebeáramlás hajtotta növekedés hosszú távon nem feltétlenül szolgálja a valódi felzárkózást abban az esetben, ha az adott ország vagy országcsoport nem fejleszt ki olyan stratégiát, amely növekedési stabilitásához járulna hozzá. A 2007-08-as válság alapvetően rávilágított arra, hogy jelen országok továbbra is igen sérülékeny gazdasággal rendelkeznek, ráadásul földrajzi értelemben is az Európai Unió periferiáján helyezkednek el, s éppen emiatt alakulhatott ki az elmúlt években tapasztalt elhúzódó recesszió.

Az 1991-ben a Csehszlovák Köztársaság, a Lengyel Köztársaság és a Magyar Köztársaság államfője a Visegrádi Nyilatkozat keretében egy olyan együttműködést hozott létre, melyben az európai integráció közös megvalósítását tűzték ki célul. 1993-ban pedig már négytagú lett a csoport Csehszlovákia felbomlása miatt. A kooperáció első és legfontosabb eredményeként a négy tagországban mind a politikai rendszerváltást követő demokratizálódásnak, mind pedig a piacgazdasági átmenet megvalósításának egy jóval hatékonyabb formája vált lehetővé. 2004-ben pedig sikeresen lezajlott az Európai Unióhoz való csatlakozás is, amely az egyik legfőbb célkitűzéseként jelent meg már a kezdetekkor is.<sup>2</sup>

Habár az elmúlt évtizedek felzárkózási folyamata valóban példaértékűnek tekinthető Európában, a négy ország fejlődési szcenáriói számos aspektusban elválaszthatók egymástól: utóbbi példaként említhetjük azt a tényt, hogy csupán Szlovákiának állt módjában bevezetni az eurót 2009-ben. Ami az országok földrajzi elhelyezkedését illeti, a periferikus adottság egyben komoly előnynek is tekinthető, hiszen a Kelet és

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1 Eric Labaye et al.: „A New Dawn: Reigniting Growth in Central and Eastern Europe”. McKinsey Global Institute, 2013. 3. o. [https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/McKinsey/Global%20Themes/Europe/A%20new%20dawn%20Reigniting%20growth%20in%20Central%20and%20Eastern%20Europe/MGI\\_CEE\\_A\\_new\\_dawn\\_Full\\_report\\_Dec\\_2013.ashx](https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/McKinsey/Global%20Themes/Europe/A%20new%20dawn%20Reigniting%20growth%20in%20Central%20and%20Eastern%20Europe/MGI_CEE_A_new_dawn_Full_report_Dec_2013.ashx), 2018. április 8.

2 „A visegrádi csoport története”. International Visegrad Fund, <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/tortenelem>, 2018. április 8.



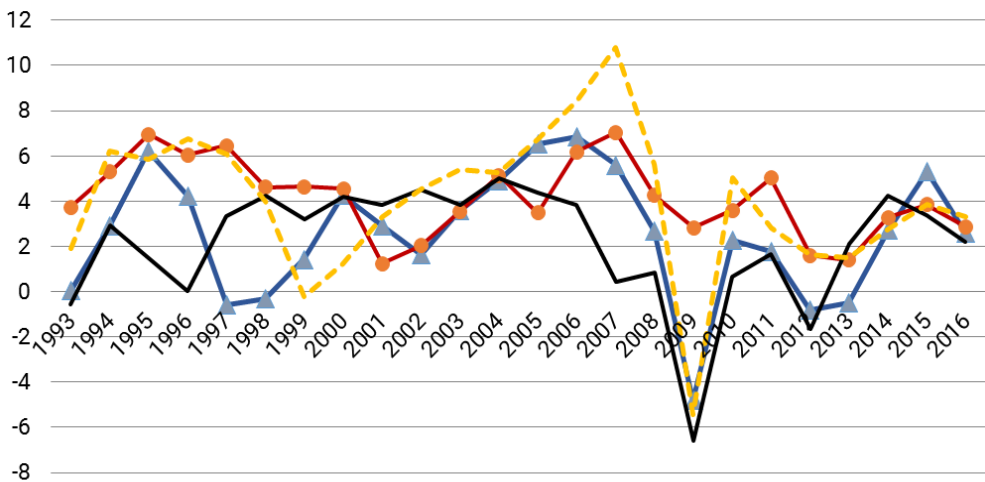
# The Visegrad Group Facing New Challenges

Nyugat közötti fekvés kereskedelmi szempontból számos lehetőséget jelent az országcsoportnak. Ezen felül az Unión kívül eső országokból érkező olcsó munkaerő szintén a gazdasági növekedés fenntartásának egy releváns tényezőjeként fogható fel. Másfelől azonban, a kívülről – alapesetben a fejlettebb centrumországok felől – érkező sokkok és egyéb begyűrűző externáliák igen rövid időn belül érzékeltetik negatív hatásukat a térségben. A KKE-i, illetve szűkebb körben a V4 csoport legfőbb előnyei közül az alábbiakat emelhetjük ki: magasan képzett és olcsó munkaerő, alapvetően – válságmentes periódusok során – stabil makrogazdasági környezet, kedvező befektetési környezet, illetve az e bekezdésben már kiemelt stratégiai jellegű elhelyezkedés.<sup>3</sup>

Vajon milyen tényezők járulhattak hozzá legnagyobb mértékben a világgazdaságba, illetve szűkebb perspektívában az Európai Unióba történő integrációhoz? Vajon számíthatunk-e a következő évtizedekben további szignifikáns konvergenciára, felzárkózási előrelépésre, vagy pedig hosszú távon a vizsgált országcsoport, illetve régió kapcsán utóbbi feltételezések csak részben teljesíthetőek?

1. ábra:

A V4-ek éves reál GDP növekedési rátája (1993-2016)  
Forrás: a WDI (2017) adatai alapján saját készítésű ábra



Az 1. ábra a V4-es országcsoport éves reál bruttó hazai termékének növekedési rátáját illusztrálja. A Világbank World Development Indicators rendelkezésre álló adatai a négy ország esetében 1993-tól teszik lehetővé a vizsgálatot egészen 2016-ig.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Eric Labaye *et al.*: i. m. 3–4. o.

<sup>4</sup> A The World Bank: „World Development Indicators”, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/reports.aspx?source=world-development-indicators>, 2018. április 6.



Ahogy a vonaldiagram is szemlélteti, a rendszerváltás első néhány évében az 1994–95-ös transzformációs válság következtében jelentősebb gazdasági visszaesés tanúi lehettünk, de a térségbe egyre nagyobb volumenben beáramló FDI az 1990-es évtized második felében óriási löketet adott a GDP bővülésének. A következő mérföldkővet az Európai Unióhoz való csatlakozás jelentette, amely tovább fokozta a növekedés sebességét a térségben. A V4-ek közül az elemzett időszakban Szlovákia érte el 2007-ben, közvetlenül a krízis beáramlása előtt a legmagasabb értéket, 10,8%-ot. A gazdasági és pénzügyi válság első nagyobb hatása 2009-ben mutatkozott meg, s ugyanebben az esztendőben a négy gazdaság közül hazánk produkálta a legalacsonyabb értéket (–6,6%), amely egyben a teljes periódus minimumát is képezte. Meg kell jegyeznünk, hogy Magyarország számos évben, összesen 12 alkalommal rendelkezett a V4 csoport legalacsonyabb reál GDP-növekedési rátájával: egyrészt a transzformációs válság, másrészt pedig a 2007–08-as krízis és recesszió idején, melynek számos gazdaság- és monetáris politikai kiváltó oka is volt. Ugyanezen tényezőkből eredően a 2012-es, ún. W-alakú válság második ágában is hazánk volt a sereghajtó.

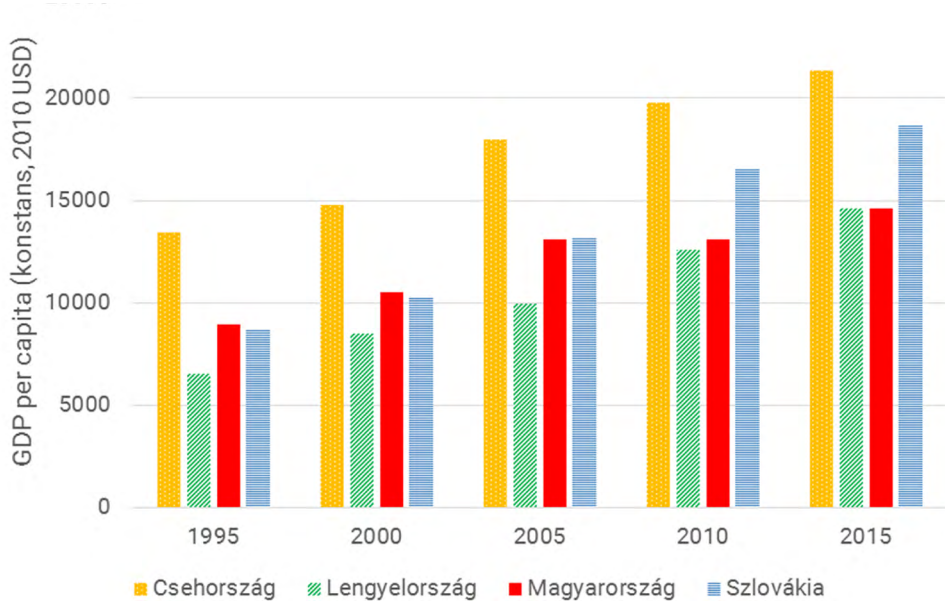
A régióban 2013-at követően már egyértelműen megindult a kilábalási tendencia: 2013 és 2016 között Csehország esetében figyelhettük meg a maximális értéket (5,31%), miközben 2013-ban ugyanitt –0,48%-os reál GDP növekedési ráta következett be. Elemzésünk során mindenképp ki kell emelni Lengyelország teljesítményét, amely kiválóan mutatkozott mind a V4, mind pedig a kelet-közép-európai térség országai közül. 1993-tól napjainkig gyakorlatilag nem is beszélhettünk negatív értékekről, s ez igen komoly eredménynek számít a legutóbbi válság övezte időszakra vetítve. A legkisebb érték (1,25%) 2001-ben, míg a legmagasabb 2007-ben (7,03%) következett be. 2010-ben és 2011-ben is az előző évhez képest emelkedést láthattunk, azonban 2012-re 3,41 százalékpontos csökkenés került terítékre, habár így is pozitív értéket őrizhetett meg a gazdaság.

A McKinsey Global Institute 2013-as elemzésében azt a javaslatot fogalmazta meg a kelet-közép-európai térség további felzárkózását illetően, hogy a fogyasztás helyett beruházás alapú növekedést kell megvalósítani, valamint bővíteni a régió növekedést finanszírozó lehetőségeit, többek között az exporttevékenység további fokozása és a hazai elmaradottabb szektorok termelékenységének gyarapítása révén. Utóbbi növekedési terv legfőbb alkotóelemei az infrastrukturális, oktatási és innovációba fektetett beruházások, illetve az intézményi reformok lehetnek.<sup>5</sup>

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5 Eric Labaye et al.: i. m. 1. o.

2. ábra:  
Öt éves intervallumonként ábrázolt egy főre eső GDP (1995–2015)  
Forrás: a WDI (2017) adatai alapján saját készítésű ábra



A gazdasági növekedés, felzárkózás egy további fokmérőjeként érdemes megvizsgálni a négy ország egy főre eső GDP-jének alakulását. A 2. ábra öt éves szakaszonként jeleníti meg a transzformációs válságot követő időszaktól 2015-ig tartó fejlődési utat. A GDP per capita tekintetében a teljes periódus alatt Csehország teljesített a legjobban. Magyarország és Szlovákia 2005-ig közel azonos szintet hoztak, majd 2010-től váltak el élesebben egymástól a szlovák gazdaság felívelésével, ahol 2009-ben vezették be az eurót. Lengyelország pedig igen stabil és fokozatos növekedést valósított meg annak ellenére, hogy a négy tagállam közül 1995-ben itt tapasztalhattuk a legalacsonyabb egy főre jutó GDP-értéket. Az arányokat elemezve kiderül, hogy a csehekénél az első vizsgált évhez képest 2015-re több mint másfélszeres növekedés állt be, a lengyeleknél ez a ráta 2,24-szeres, így a csoport legnagyobb mértékű bővülését könyvelhették el, hazánkban 1,63-szoros emelkedés volt tetten érhető, a szlovákoknál pedig 2,15-szörös volt az 1995-ről 2015-re bekövetkező GDP per capita növekedést.

A V4-ek közül következő lépésként hazánk és az EU reál GDP-növekedési rátáját vizsgáljuk az 1992-től 2016-ig tartó periódusban. Az említett időszakban gyakorlatilag három szignifikáns növekedésbeli visszaesés állt elő: első körben

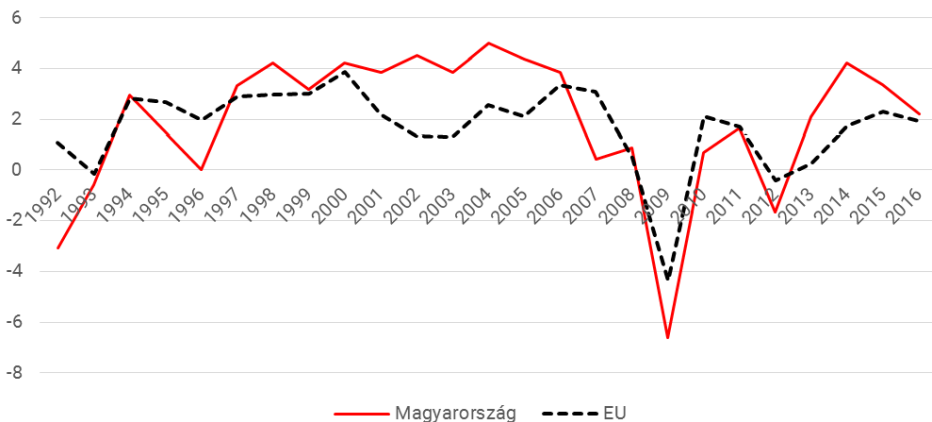


a transzformációs krízis okozott jelentős GDP csökkenést a magyar gazdaságban. Ezt követően a 2007–08-as válság 2009-es mélypontja – mint ahogy már említettük is, a V4 csoportban elért legalacsonyabb ráta – a 2012-ben megfigyelhető második leszálló szakasszal folytatódott, amely a W alakú recesszió eredményeként lépett fel Magyarországon. E jelenség a többi kelet-közép-európai gazdaságban is tetten érhető volt: a válságot követő átmeneti GDP-bővülés után lassulási tendencia kezdődött, ezúttal viszont már kisebb mértékű csökkenést vont maga után. Hogy néhány konkrét rátát is felsorakoztassunk, 2009-ben hazánkban  $-6,6\%$  volt a bruttó hazai termék, miközben az európai uniós átlag  $-4,36\%$ -ot tett ki. A következő visszaesési fázisban, 2012-ben pedig a két érték  $-1,64$  és  $0,43\%$  volt.<sup>6</sup>

3. ábra:

Magyarország és az Európai Unió éves reál GDP növekedési rátája (1992-2016)

Forrás: a WDI (2017) adatai alapján saját készítésű ábra



## AZ FDI GAZDASÁGI NÖVEKEDÉSRE GYAKOROLT HATÁSA

Tanulmányunk keretében feltételezzük, hogy egy adott gazdaság vagy ország-csoport hosszú távú konvergenciája abban az esetben valósulhat meg, ha egy nagyobb növekedési időszak után nem alakul ki olyan periódus, melynek sajátossága a relatíve magas folyó fizetési mérleg hiány fennállása. Utóbbi feltételezés azért is indokolt, mert a tartósabb folyó fizetési mérleg deficit eredményeként

6 A The World Bank World Development Indicators (2018) adatbázisa alapján.

jelentős külső adósságtömeg gyülemlik fel. Ugyanekkor a befolyó külföldi működőtőke-befektetések egyre kevesebb eszközt hagynak a hazai vállalkozások, valamint háztartások esetében. A külföldi tulajdoni ráta bővülése bizonyos idő eltelte után egyre inkább szűkíti a bruttó hazai termék, valamint a bruttó nemzeti jövedelem közötti rést. A jelentősebb FDI inflow (ezen kívül pedig alacsonyabb hányadban portfólió beruházás és adósságfinanszírozás) révén működő szignifikáns növekedési periódusok kapcsán gyakran halhattunk a valutaválságok kialakulásának párhuzamáról. Ehhez kötődően három epizód is felmerül: az 1994 és 1995 közötti mexikói peso-válság, az 1997-ben bekövetkező kelet-ázsiai krízis, illetve az 1998-2002-es argentin válság. Az említett jelenségekkel kapcsolatban megfigyelhető, hogy az érintett országok az adott időszakban közepes jövedelmű gazdaságok voltak, illetve a krízisek egy gyorsuló növekedési szakaszt követően bontakoztak ki.

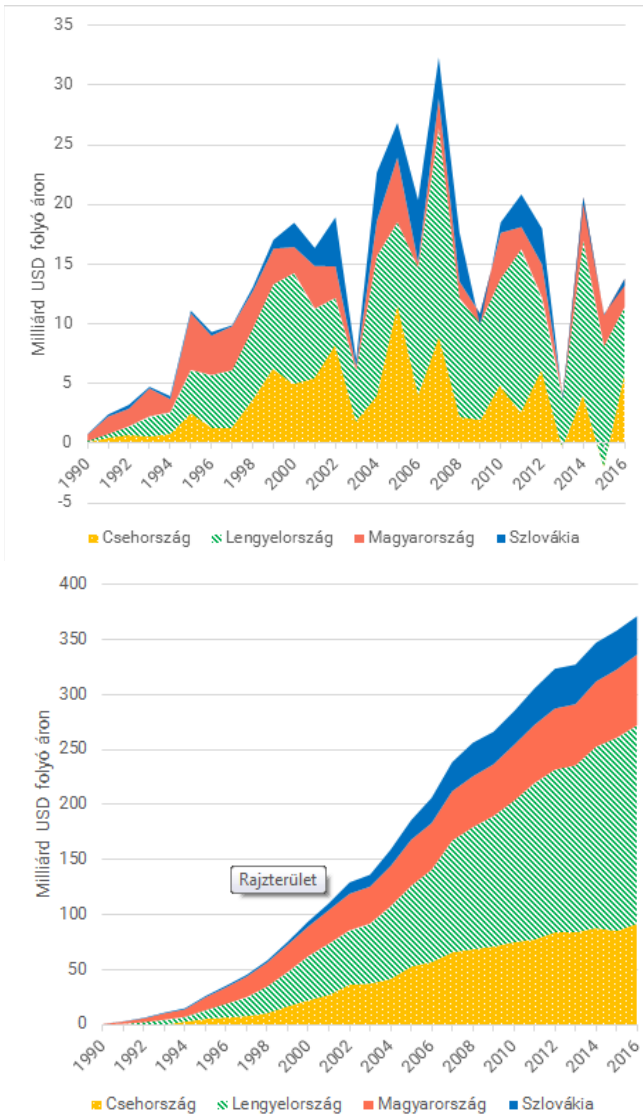
A 4. ábra-együttes bal oldali diagramja az éves FDI beáramlás és kiáramlás különbözetét jeleníti meg folyó áron kalkulált milliárd dollárban a WDI és az UNCTADstat adataira támaszkodva.<sup>7</sup> A kapott alakzatok területe elsősorban az adott nemzetállamok népességétől is függ. A legmagasabb FDI állomány Lengyelországban figyelhető meg, hiszen ez a tagállam adja a teljes V4 csoport súlyának több mint 60%-át 38 milliós népességével. A lengyeleket a csehek követik a német piaccal való szoros összefonódásnak köszönhetően. A harmadik helyen hazánk szerepel, majd pedig Szlovákia, a Visegrádi Négyek legkisebb gazdasága volumen tekintetében. Az is egyértelműen megállapítható, hogy az 1990 és 2016 közötti időszakban összesen három szakasz különböztethető meg: az első fázis a rendszerváltás óta 2003-ig tartott, amely az EU-s csatlakozást megelőző év átmeneti állapotát jeleníti meg, hiszen ekkor számos befektető előrettekintő jelleggel a 2004-es csatlakozási időpontot várta meg. A következő jelentős periódus a 2004-es csatlakozástól egészen a 2008-as gazdasági és pénzügyi válság térségünkbe való beszivárgásáig tartott, amely igen magas FDI állomány kialakulását tette lehetővé. A harmadik szakasz pedig a W alakú válság 2012-es második fázisa után állt elő, amikor ugyanis már kisebb volumenű FDI-áramlások szemtanúi lehettünk a V4 tagállamaiban. Utóbbi folyamat napjainkban is tart. A jobb oldali diagram már kumulatíván illusztrálja az évről évre felhalmozódó FDI-t a régióon belül. A rendszerváltás után egyre nagyobb mértékben befolyó külföldi közvetlen tőke nagyjából 10–15 éven keresztül maradt relatíve igen magas intenzitáson, azonban a folyamat – habár jóval kisebb meredekség fenntartása mellett – napjainkban is erőteljesen érvényesül.

<sup>7</sup> United Nations Conference on Trade and Development: „UNCTADstat”, <http://unctadstat.unctad.org/wds/TableViewer/tableView.aspx>, 2018. április 6. és a The World Bank World Development Indicators (2018) adatbázisa alapján.



4. ábra:

Éves és kumulatív nettó FDI milliárd dollárban folyó áron kifejezve (1990-2016)  
Forrás: a WDI (2017) és az UNCTADstat (2017) adatai alapján saját készítésű ábra

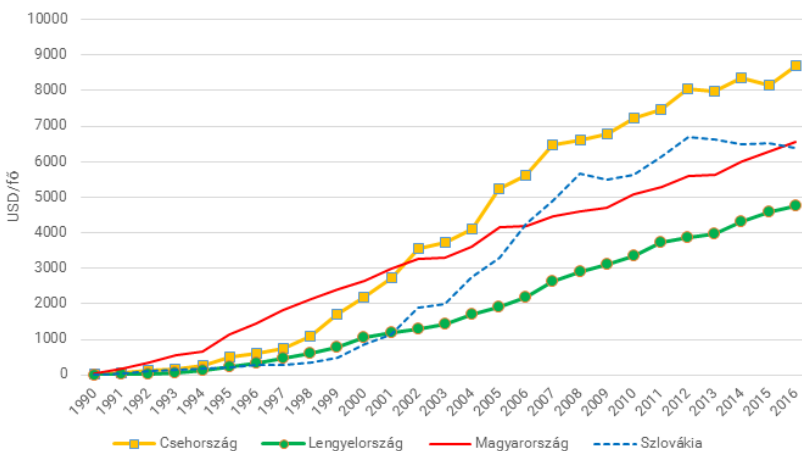


Ezt követően érdemes megvizsgálni a V4-tagországok egy főre eső kumulatív nettó FDI-állományának alakulását. A fenti két ábrával ellentétben, ahol a magas népességnek köszönhetően Lengyelország került az első helyre, utóbbi gazdaság a 5. ábrán egy főre jutóan a legalacsonyabb FDI-értékkel bír, mivel nagyobb belső

piaccal és relatíve kisebb nyitottsággal rendelkezik a V4 többi országához képest. 2016-ban 4751 dollár volt a fejenkénti nettó FDI-állomány. A magyar és a szlovák érték az elmúlt esztendőben nagyjából azonos szintű volt (6551 és 6404 USD/per fő), míg a legnagyobb állomány a cseheknél állt elő (8703 USD/fő) 2016-ban. Csehország egyébként 2002 óta tartja az első helyezést a vizsgált paramétert illetően, amikor hazánk elé sikerült jutnia 3726 dolláros egy főre eső nettó FDI-állományával, ráadásul itt a GDP per capita is jóval nagyobb, mint a többi országban.

5. ábra:

Egy főre eső kumulatív nettó FDI állomány dollárban folyóáron (1990-2016)  
Forrás: a WDI (2017) és az UNCTADstat (2017) adatai alapján saját készítésű ábra



## A BRUTTÓ HAZAI TERMÉK NÖVEKEDÉSE ÉS A FOLYÓ FIZETÉSI MÉRLEG KÖZÖTTI KAPCSOLAT VIZSGÁLATA

Ahhoz, hogy a korábban már megfogalmazott feltételezésünk alaposabb vizsgálat tárgyát képezhesse, a 6. ábrát vezetjük be elemzésünk eredményeként, amely az éves reál GDP növekedési ráták és a folyó fizetési mérleg közötti összefüggést mutatja be. Ahhoz, hogy viszonylag pontos eredményekre jussunk, a V4-es tagállamok körét bővítjük néhány további kelet-közép-európai országgal: Bulgária, Csehország, Horvátország, Magyarország, Románia, Szlovákia és Szlovénia. A pontdiagram elkészítése során adatpáronként ábrázoltuk a vizsgált gazdaságokat, illetve éveket az

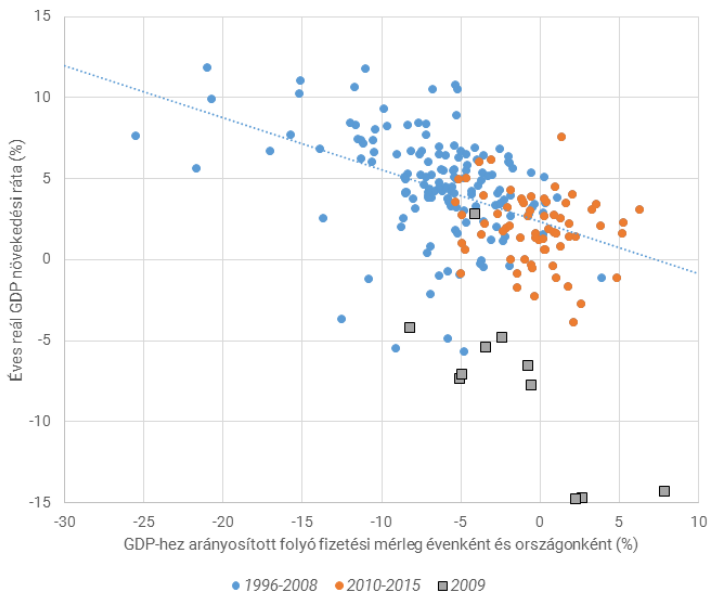


1996 és 2016 közötti periódusra. A kék szín a válság előtti, a piros pedig a krízist követő adatokat jeleníti meg. Megállapítható, hogy az éves GDP-növekedés, illetve a folyó fizetési mérleg GDP-hez viszonyított aránya között szignifikáns összefüggés áll fenn, ezen kívül pedig strukturális töréspontok nem alakultak ki.

6. ábra:

Az éves reál GDP-növekedési ráták és a folyó fizetési mérleg közötti összefüggés nyolc választott kelet-közép-európai országban (1996–2015)

Forrás: a WDI (2017) és az Eurostat (2017) adatai alapján saját készítésű ábra



Ami a konkrét számokat illeti, a WDI és az Eurostat<sup>8</sup> adatait felhasználva kiszámítható, hogy a folyó fizetési mérleg egyenlegének koefficiense  $-0,319$ -es értéket vesz fel, ami tehát azt jelenti, hogy ha a folyó fizetési mérleg egyenlege 1 százalékpontot esik, a GDP-ráta  $0,319$  százalékpontot nő. Ezen felül a kereskedelmi nyitottság, illetve a Fraser Institute által publikált Economic Freedom Index<sup>9</sup> is felmerült mint potenciális tényező, a számítások alapján azonban egyértelművé vált, hogy e két esetben a kapcsolat szorossága már nem mondható szignifikánsnak. A folyó fizetési

8 European Commission: „Eurostat”, <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>, 2018. április 6. és a The World Bank World Development Indicators (2018) adatbázisa alapján.

9 The Fraser Institute: „Economic Freedom”, <https://www.fraserinstitute.org/studies/economic-freedom>, 2018. április 9.



mérleg egyenlege, valamint az FDI inflow tekintetében Rapacki és Próchniak is hasonló párhuzamot állapítottak meg, valamint a strukturális reformok fejlődésére irányították kutatásukat a kelet-közép-európai régióban a reál konvergenciával összefüggésben.<sup>10</sup> Ha a V4-országokat gazdasági teljesítményük alapján rangsorolni kívánjuk, a 2015-ös adatok alapján a vásárlóerő-paritáson vett egy főre eső bruttó hazai termék szerint Csehország képezte a csoport legfejlettebb gazdaságát, melyet Szlovákia, Lengyelország és végül Magyarország követett.

A V4-tagok gazdasági teljesítményének, valamint fejlettségének komparatív elemzését folytatva néhány további megállapítást is tehetünk. A fentebb már felsorolt és néhány egyéb paraméter GDP-növekedésre gyakorolt hatásáról Simionescu Mihaela és szerzőtársai 2017-es tanulmányában az alábbi összefüggéseket állapították meg. Egyrészt a K+F-re fordított kiadások pozitívan korreláltak a növekedéssel Csehország és Magyarország esetében, de Lengyelországban és Szlovákiában éppen ellentétes irányú hatásokat generált. Másrészt, az FDI összességében pozitív hatást gyakorolt Szlovákia kivételével mindhárom gazdaságban a növekedésre. Harmadrészt pedig az oktatásba fektetett állami kiadások csupán Csehországban mutattak pozitív összefüggést a növekedéssel, a többi három országban viszont negatív korreláció állt elő az elemzések során.<sup>11</sup>

Vajon kijelenthető-e, hogy közép-, illetve hosszú távon a humántőkére irányuló beruházások a növekedés, felzárkózás motorjaként szolgálnak különösképpen az olyan tranzit gazdaságoknál, mint a Visegrádi Csoport? A magasan képzett humántőke bázis minden bizonnyal lehetővé teszi a megfelelő kutatási-fejlesztési tevékenység megalapozását, amely a versenyképesség fenntartásának záloga. Ami pedig kifejezetten hosszú távon szolgálja a stabil gazdasági növekedést, az kétségtelenül az oktatásra fordított kiadások, beruházások fokozatos bővítése.<sup>12</sup>

## A V4-GAZDASÁGOK KÖZEPES JÖVEDELMI CSAPDA EPIZÓDJAI

A következő fejezetben egy rövid elemzés formájában megvizsgáljuk a régió gazdasági növekedésében bekövetkező jelentősebb lassulási szakaszokat. A felzárkozási út elmúlt néhány évtizedben tapasztalt alakulásában – néhány ország esetében – érdekes tendenciákat tárhatunk fel. Vajon milyen okból jönnek létre a jelentősebb,

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10 Rapacki, R. – Próchniak, M.: „The EU Enlargement and Economic Growth in the CEE New Member Countries”. Economic Papers 367. (2009). [http://ec.europa.eu/economy\\_finance/publications/pages/publication14295\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/publications/pages/publication14295_en.pdf), 2018. április 2.

11 Simionescu Mihaela et al.: „Determinants of Economic Growth in V4 Countries and Romania”. Journal of Competitiveness, Vol. 9, Issue 1. (2017). 110. o.

12 Uo. 111. o.



tartósabb lassulási fázisok, illetve mindez hogyan tükröződik a felzárkózás folyamán? A növekedéstudomány és fejlődés-gazdaságtan diszciplínái lehetőséget nyújtanak arra, hogy közelebbről is megvizsgálhassuk az egyes országok, országcsoportok növekedési lassulásait, amelyek a legutóbbi gazdasági válság óta ismét egyre nagyobb jelentőséggel bírnak. Geoffrey Garrett egy 2004-es kutatásában a közepes jövedelmű országok növekedési problémáit elemezte és azt hangsúlyozta, hogy a globalizáció támogatói nem tudnak logikus magyarázattal szolgálni azon lassulási periódusokra, amelyek jelenleg számos közepes jövedelmű gazdaságban zajlanak.<sup>13</sup> A napjainkban egyre gyakrabban gazdasági, illetve gazdaságpolitikai elemzések tárgyát képező, úgynevezett közepes jövedelmi csapda jelensége egyrészt módszertanként szolgál a jelentős lassulási epizódok felderítésére az egyes országok növekedési útjában, másrészt pedig állandó vitafelületet is nyújt a megoldási javaslatok kidolgozása végett a további lehetséges felzárkózási scenáriókat illetően.

Mint ismert, a Világbank évente nyilvánosságra hozza a világgazdaságunk országait csoportosító jövedelmi kategóriákat. A jelenleg legfrissebb, 2017-es évre vonatkozó klasszifikáció szerint a 28 uniós tagországból már csak Bulgária és Románia tartoznak a felsőközép jövedelmi csoportba, a többi tagország pedig már a felső kategóriába sorolható a rendszer indikátorai szerint<sup>14</sup>. Ám kutatásunkban egy saját klasszifikációs módszert vezetünk be a különböző jövedelmi csoportok definiálására az alábbiak szerint. Ahhoz, hogy a négy jövedelmi csoport intervallumait pontosan meghatározzuk, az adott ország egy főre eső GDP-jét el kell osztanunk a világ egy főre eső GDP-jével. Ha ez a ráta 50% alatti értéket ad, úgy alacsony jövedelmű gazdaságként tartjuk számon a vizsgált országot. 50% és 100% között alsó-közép, 100% és 200% között felső-közép, 200% fölött pedig magas jövedelmű gazdaságokról beszélünk. A már említett közepes jövedelmi csapda jelensége jellemzően tehát egy magasabb növekedési szakasz következtében áll elő tartós lassulást eredményezve. Ahhoz, hogy egy-egy ilyen epizódot azonosítani tudjunk, meg kell vizsgálni, hogy a lassulást megelőző tíz évben fennállt-e a már említett gyors gazdasági növekedés. Ezen felül számításaink alapján a jövedelmi csapdában lévő ország felzárkózási pályát jár be tízéves átlagban 3%-os egy főre eső GDP mellett. Továbbá fontos hangsúlyozni, hogy növekedési lassulás alatt stagnálást, nem pedig hirtelen recessziót kell érteni. A legalább tíz éven át tartó lassulási fázis során az egy főre jutó GDP-növekedés nullához közeli vagy legfeljebb 1% évente.

Az 1. táblázatban<sup>15</sup> az általunk, előzőekben már felsorolt nyolc KKE-i ország kapcsán összesen három jövedelmi csapda epizód alakult ki az elmúlt évtizedek során. Ami a legérdekesebb, hogy a két érintett ország V4-es gazdaság is egyben,

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13 Geoffrey Garrett: „Globalization’s Missing Middle”. *Foreign Affairs*, 83(6): 84. (2004). 85. o.

14 The World Bank World Development Indicators (2018) adatbázisa alapján.

15 A táblázat a WDI mellett az ún. The Maddison-Project Database adatai alapján készült. GGDC: „The Maddison-Project”, <http://www.ggdc.net/maddison/maddison-project/data.htm>, 2018. április 2.

# The Visegrad Group Facing New Challenges

ahol tehát három csapdahelyzet állt elő. Lengyelországban 1953-tól 1975-ig egy szignifikáns növekedési időszak állt fenn átlagosan 3,72%-os éves növekedési rátával, majd pedig 1976-tól egy 14 éven át tartó stagnálás következett (0,11%/év). 1992-től ismételten megindult a növekedés, amely napjainkban is tart. Magyarországon azonban két közepes jövedelmi csapda-szituáció is létrejött. Az első esetet egy 1957-től 1978-ig tartó növekedési fázis előzte meg (3,57%-os átlagnövekedéssel), majd pedig 1979-től 1989-ig szignifikáns lassulási tendencia bontakozott ki átlagosan 0,92%-os növekedési rátával. 1994-től 2005-ig pedig a soron következő növekedési szakaszba léphetett hazánk. A második jövedelmi csapda előtt 1994-től egészen 2005-ig az előzőekhez hasonlóan jelentős növekedés volt folyamatban, amelyet a transzformációs válságból való kilábalás, illetve a régióba beáramló FDI indukálta. 2006-tól azonban – részben endogén hatásokra (a folyó fizetési mérleg deficit csökkentésére irányuló intézkedések), illetve néhány évvel később a gazdasági válság miatt – komoly visszaesés indult meg, amely nagyjából 2014–2015-ig tartott<sup>16</sup>.

1. táblázat:

Növekedési és lassulási periódusok a visegrádi országokban  
 Forrás: a World Development Indicators (2017) és a GGDC (2013)  
 alapján saját számítás

Országok	Növekedési időszak			Lassulási időszak						Utólagos növekedési ráta		
	kezdete	vége	% / év	kezdete	vége	hossza (év)	% / év	jövedelmi szint	csoport	1. év	vége	% / év
Lengyelország	1953	1975	3,72	1976	1989	14	-0,11	141%	felső-közép	1992	<i>napjainkig</i>	4,19
Magyarország	1957	1978	3,57	1979	1989	11	0,92	185%	felső-közép	1994	2005	3,61

A tartós növekedési lassulásokkal kapcsolatos gondolatmenetet folytatva további elemzésünket a 2007–08-as válság, illetve recesszió azon hatásaira irányítjuk, amelyeket a Visegrádi Csoport két, fentebb bemutatott csapda kapcsán érintett tagjára gyakorolt, hiszen igen egyértelmű, hogy a krízis nagyon

<sup>16</sup> A The World Bank World Development Indicators (2018) adatbázisa alapján.



különböző módon érintette a lengyel és a magyar gazdaságot. Az egyik első megállapítunk az, hogy ugyan 2008 előtt a régióban a külső finanszírozás vitális szerepet játszott a bruttó hazai termék bővülésében, a hazai fogyasztás rendszeresen meghaladta a GNI-t mindkét ország esetében. Ennek folyományaként a fizetési mérleg hosszú távon jelentős hiányt mutatott, s ennek ellensúlyozását a szufficités tökemérleggel kísérelték meg. 2008-at követően azonban a pénzügyi válság nagymértékben beszűkítette a térségünk által nyújtott finanszírozási lehetőségeket, különösképpen hazánkban, ahol a külföldi befektetők túlzottan kockázatosnak ítélték meg jövőbeli beruházásaikat a jellemzően devizában történt magas állami és magánszektorbeli eladósodás, illetve a kedvezőtlen makrogazdasági teljesítmény miatt is. Magyarországon 2008 októberében a központi bank 3 százalékponttal emelte a jegybanki alapkamatot egyetlen nap leforgása alatt. Ezen felül pedig a kormány tárgyalásokba kezdett az IMF-fel hitelfelvétel ügyében, mivel a piaci alapú finanszírozás már tarthatatlanná vált a gazdaság számára. 2008 és 2009 között hazánkban a folyó fizetési mérleg egyenlege 7 százalékponttal emelkedett, melynek hatására a külső finanszírozás gyakorlatilag megszűnt, a háztartások fogyasztása és a beruházások jelentősen csökkentek, a GDP 7 százalékponttal esett egy év alatt, s ezáltal igen komoly recesszió lépett fel a következő időszakban.

Ami Lengyelországot illeti, ennek gazdaságában szintén deficit állt fenn 2008-at megelőzően, azonban jóval de mértékben, mint hazánkban (nagyjából 2–5% között). A válság első szakaszában az állami és magánszektorban fennálló eladósodás szintén kisebb volumenű volt, így a külső finanszírozás fenntarthatónak bizonyult 2008–09-ben, illetve a válság beáramlását követő további néhány évben. A lengyel válságkezelés leglényegesebb eleme viszont nem más, mint a radikális korrekciók hiánya. Az Unióban fennálló recessziós időszakban a lengyel gazdaságpolitikai intézkedéseket nyolc év alatt hajtották végre. E fokozatosságnak hála a gazdasági szereplők alkalmazkodni tudtak a kedvezőtlenebb körülményekhez, illetve a kiigazító intézkedésekhez is. Ennek eredményképpen nem állt elő recesszió 2008-ban, 2010 után pedig viszonylag magas növekedés is megindult az országban.<sup>17</sup>

## KONKLÚZIÓ

Vitathatatlan az a tény, hogy a kelet-közép-európai térség országai a piacgazdasági átmenetet követő, transzformációs válságtól és komoly társadalmi feszültségektől terhes időszaka után képesek voltak egy viszonylag gyors gazdasági növekedési úton elindulni és ezáltal jelentős felzárkózást elérni. E sikeres növekedési időszak

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17 A The World Bank World Development Indicators (2018) adatbázisa alapján.

alapvetően a térségbe óriási volumenben beáramló FDI-állomány segítségével valószínűleg meg, ami különösképpen az Európai Unióhoz való csatlakozást követően vált még inkább vonzó lehetőséggé a külföldi befektetők számára. Azonban amint a legutóbbi gazdasági és pénzügyi válság is felszínre hozta, a legnagyobb mértékben FDI beáramlás által hajtott növekedés hosszú távon nem bizonyult fenntarthatónak. A krízis során tapasztalhattuk, hogy az Unió periferiáján lévő országok mennyire érzékenyen reagáltak a külső sokkokra, illetve hogy valójában milyen törekény az elmúlt évtizedekben megvalósított fejlődésük. Utóbbi megállapításhoz kapcsolódóan mindenképp meg kell említeni a KKE-i nemzetállamok fejlődésére is vonatkoztatható, úgynevezett függő piacgazdaságok modelljét, amely évtizedek alatt meglehetősen kedvezőtlen, kockázatos hátteret alakít ki a pénzügyi, humán és társadalmi tőke számára. A külső finanszírozástól való ilyen mértékű dependencia valójában tehát történelmi teherré vált a vizsgált országok hosszú távú felzárkózásában, amely napjainkban már nemcsak a fejlett, központi országoktól, hanem többek között a multi- és transznacionális vállalatoktól való óriási mértékű függés formájában is tapasztalható.<sup>18</sup> Az olcsó munkaerő, összeszerelő tevékenység és a kiszervezett üzleti szolgáltatóközpontok (SSC-k) előtérbe juttatása még inkább felerősítheti azt a kedvezőtlen hatást, amely többek között hazánk gazdasági fejlődését is szignifikánsan visszavetette az elmúlt időszak folyamán.

E tanulmányban megállapításra került, hogy a bruttó hazai termék növekedése igen szoros kapcsolatban áll egyrészt a folyó fizetési mérleg egyensúlyának, másrészt pedig a beáramló külföldi közvetlen működőtőke-beruházásoknak az alakulásával. Ezen felül kimutattuk azt is, hogy egyedül Lengyelország és Magyarország produkált közepes jövedelmi csapda-epizódokat a vizsgált régióban. Míg előbbi országban a növekedési fázis napjainkban is teljesül, illetve igen sikeres válságkezelési stratégiák valósultak meg az elmúlt néhány év folyamán, melyek lehetőséget adtak a külső finanszírozóknak, illetve egyéb piaci szereplőknek a fokozatos alkalmazkodásra, addig hazánkban a sokterápiás jellegű gazdaságpolitikai intézkedések hatására 2008-ról 2009-re 7 százalékponttal emelkedett a folyó fizetési mérleg egyenlege, illetve egy elhúzódó recessziós periódus alakult ki. A válság során tehát újra bebizonyosodott, hogy a régió fogyasztás alapú növekedése tovább fokozta a külső sokkoknak való kitettséget és a tartósan elhúzódó stagnálás kialakulását. 2005 és 2008 között a klasszikus értelemben vett KKE-i régió GDP-jének 80%-át tette ki a fogyasztás.<sup>19</sup> A beruházások hiánya mellett azt is hozzá kell tenni, hogy a világgazdaság ezen térségére is jellemző a túlzott fogyasztási hajlandóság az

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18 Zoltán Gál – Andrea Schmidt: „Geeconomics in Central and Eastern Europe. Implications of FDI.” In: *Advances in Geeconomics* (szerk. Munoz J. M.). London; New York: Europa Economic Perspectives. (2017). 76–93. o.

19 Eric Labaye *et al.*: i. m. 5. o.



alacsony rendelkezésre álló jövedelmek ellenére, illetve ennek következményeként az alacsony megtakarítási hajlandóság. Mivel nagyobb a felhasználás, mint a belső termelés, a külkereskedelmi mérleg hiánya a folyó fizetési mérleg deficitjét eredményezi.

Mindezek fényében számíthatunk-e valódi felzárkózásra a Visegrádi Négyek további gazdasági fejlődése során? Ami Magyarországot illeti, néhány számítás elvégzése után kiderül, hogy az 1920 és 2016 közötti időszakban a hosszú távú éves növekedési ráta 1,77%-os. Utóbbi ráta egyfajta köztes állapotra utal a konvergencia és a divergencia között. A V4-ek esetében közös sajátosság tehát a periféria jellegű földrajzi elhelyezkedés, a relatíve kisebb belső piac (Lengyelország kivételével), a magas fogyasztás és kedvező üzleti környezet fennállásakor beözönlő külföldi tőke, illetve az igen nagy mértékű sérülékenység, externáliáknak való kitettség. A rendelkezésre álló adatok és a történelmi tapasztalat alapján arra a következtetésre juthatunk, hogy a térség konvergálásának megvalósítása a fejlett magországok teljesítményéhez csak igen szigorú fenntartások mellett válhat lehetségessé. Az exporttevékenység bővítése mellett óriási szükség lenne arra, hogy a képzett munkaerő valóban magas hozzáadott értékű termékek előállítására szakosodjon a jövőben. Ehhez viszont további beruházásokat kell végrehajtani mind a humántőke-állomány további fejlesztése és hazai piacokon való megtartása, mind pedig a technológiai korszerűsítés érdekében. A V4- és KKE-i országok másik potenciálja pedig akár a mezőgazdasági tevékenység felfuttatása is lehetne. Utóbbi tényezőt a MacKinsey Global Institute is kiemelten kezelte 2013-as elemzésében.<sup>20</sup> A humán és fizikai erőforrások, a növénytermesztési és állattenyésztési hagyományok, a kedvező elhelyezkedés és nyugati, illetve Unión kívül eső kelet-európai (orosz és ukrán) piacoktól való kellő távolság ideális feltételeket nyújthatna régióknak, amely közép- és hosszú távon tovább bővíthetné az országok GDP-jét, illetve a válságot követő jelentős megtorpanás után ismét a felzárkózás útjára segítené a térséget.

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NEMZETI KIVÁLÓSÁG PROGRAMJÁNAK TÁMOGATÁSÁVAL KÉSZÜLT”

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20 Eric Labaye et al.: i. m. 7. o.

# The Visegrad Group Facing New Challenges

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