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The Institutionalization of the Visegrad Group (V4)

Introduction

The Visegrad Cooperation was formed on 15th February 1991¹ officially in Visegrád, Hungary. Besides EU integration another important role of the Visegrad Four at those times was the NATO accession. Member states reached these aims by 2004 since they all became members of both EU and NATO.

In the 1990s, cooperation could be considered as a "top-down" political cooperation with pragmatic values and a goal-oriented approach, which leaves a wide margin of maneuver for participants through projects (energy policy, security, R&D, agriculture), which were fully aligned with the priority of the four states, namely the Euro-Atlantic integration. The Bratislava Summit (1999)² was a turning point in the development of cooperation and proved crucial for further collaboration through identifying the main areas for cooperation in the future (education, culture, youth, sport, science, environment, infrastructure, and cross-border cooperation).

The new Visegrad Declaration was accepted in 2004 in Kroměříž³, Czechia, and is another milestone in the history of the cooperation since it has extended the areas of cooperation and deepened the cooperation mechanism. Four areas of cooperation (cooperation within the V4 area; cooperation within the EU; cooperation with other partners; cooperation within NATO and other international organizations) were assigned and the mechanism of the cooperation was also recorded.

Based on the Guidelines on the Future Areas of Visegrad Cooperation in 2004 the Visegrad Four is expected to be developed particularly in the following areas: continuation of the strengthening of the civic dimension of the Visegrad cooperation within the International Visegrad Fund and its structures, fight against terrorism, organized crime, and illegal migration, Schengen cooperation, disaster management, exchange of views on possible cooperation in the field of labour and social policy, exchange of experiences on foreign development assistance policy, and defence and arms industries.⁴

¹ Declaration on Cooperation between the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, the Republic of Poland and the Republic of Hungary in Striving for European Integration. Visegrád, February 15th, 1991.

² Meeting of the V4 Coordinators in Bratislava on the Content of Visegrad Cooperation (preparation of the Summit) 13 May 1999.

Prime Ministers Summit in Bratislava (approval of the Contents of Visegrad Cooperation. 14 May 1999.

³ Declaration of Prime Ministers of the Czech Republic, the Republic of Hungary, the Republic of Poland and the Slovak Republic on cooperation of the Visegrad Group countries after their accession to the European Union. 12 May 2004 in Kroměříž.

⁴Szilágyi Ilona Mária: *Problems and Future Possibilities of Visegrad Cooperation*. AARMS – Academic and Applied Research in Military and Public Management Science. Budapest, 2014. No. 2. p. 298.

In 2011, the Bratislava Declaration⁵ has reinforced the intentions to foster cohesion and enhance the competitiveness of the V4. The objectives are set to promote swift development of the V4 countries' transport infrastructure and energy security, enhance the visibility of the Visegrad Group, to facilitate the process of enlarging the area of stability and democracy in the EU's neighbourhood.

Over the past decades, the number of common issues and policy areas affecting the Visegrad Group has gradually increased. By now the Visegrad Group offers the general benefits of multilateral coordination and cooperation to the participating states not only in the European Union's policy-making but also in most international and regional issues (cohesion policy and common agricultural policy, EU budget, migration, quota system, etc.) by seeking to establish a common V4 position.⁶ At the same time, the differences, sometimes conflicting approaches (e.g. in the field of security policy) and even rival interests (e. g. investment) that have prevented the establishment of a closer integration similar to that established by the Benelux countries or by the countries of the Nordic Council.

In recent years, the number of research programs and publications on the V4 has increased spectacularly. These research programs and publications have a predominantly geopolitical focus⁷ (Ladislav Cabada, Rich Fawn or Ilona Mária Szilágyi) or economic policy aspects⁸ (Anita Buzás-Németh and Szabolcs Tóth, Franjo Štiblar) but they also deal with cultural relations⁹ (Oga Gyárfášová). However, so far research has not paid much attention to the development of relations that go beyond intergovernmental, political, or policy frameworks, it has not analyzed the development of interinstitutional and social relations between the societies of the four countries, which are as important to the internal integration of the Visegrad Group as the results of high politics.

I. 'Visegradization' of important sector policies

The aims, as stated in the Visegrad Declaration in 1991, were to fully establish democracy and freedom, a market economy, and secure integration into Euro-Atlantic structures.¹⁰ Establishing an ever closer Visegrad group that wishes to demonstrate a higher cooperation profile is a strong starting point for further Visegradization of important sector policies. Depending on the policy area, every country in the region should be ready to make partnerships in the V4 format.

⁵ The Bratislava Declaration of the Prime Ministers of the Czech Republic, the Republic of Hungary, the Republic of Poland and the Slovak Republic on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Visegrad Group. Bratislava, 15 February 2011.

⁶ Fejes Zsuzsanna: A határon átnyúló együttműködések jogi és közigazgatási feltételei: Különös tekintettel a magyar határ régiókra. Szegedi Tudományegyetem, Állam- és Jogtudományi Doktori Iskola, 2010. 45-56.; Fejes Zsuzsanna: Határok nélkül?: A határon átnyúló együttműködések jogi és közigazgatási környezete Európában és Magyarországon. Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó. 2013, 42-45.

⁷ Cabada, Ladislav – Waisová, Šárka: *The Visegrad Group as an Ambitious Actor of (Central-)European Foreign and Security Policy*. Politics in Central Europe, 2018. Vol. 14. No. 2. pp. 9-20.

Fawn, Rick: *Visegrad's place in the EU since accession in 2004: "Western" perceptions*. International Issues & Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs, 2014. No. 1-2. pp. 3-24.

Szilágyi Ilona Mária: *Problems and Future Possibilities of Visegrad Cooperation*. AARMS – Academic and Applied Research in Military and Public Management Science. Budapest, 2014. No. 2. pp. 295-304.

⁸ Buzás-Németh Anita – Tóth Szabolcs: *A visegrádi országok gazdasági integrációja a válság óta*. Köz-gazdaság, 10 (4). pp. 109-130.

Franjo Štiblar: Economic Legitimacy of Visegrad Group. In: Juraj Marušiak: *Internal Cohesion of the Visegrad group*. Institute of Political Science, Slovak Academy of Sciences VEDA, Publishing House of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, Bratislava, 2013. pp. 48-86.

⁹ Gyárfášová, Olga – Mesežnikov, Grigorij: *Visegrad Four as Viewed by the Public. Past Experience and Future Challenges*. Inštitút pre verejnú otázký, Bratislava, 2021. Retrieved from: <https://www.visegradgroup.eu/download.php?docID=467>

¹⁰ Declaration on Cooperation between the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, the Republic of Poland and the Republic of Hungary in Striving for European Integration. Visegrád, February 15th, 1991.

The governments of the Visegrad Group countries, guided by the provisions of the Visegrad Joint Statement signed on 14 May 1999 in Bratislava, agreed to establish the International Visegrad Fund with its seat in Bratislava on 9 June 2000.¹¹

The International Visegrad Fund has provided funding to a diverse range of activities in all areas of life since 2000: culture and common identity; education and capacity building; regional development, tourism; environmental protection; democratic values; media; public policy cooperation; town twinning; innovation, research, and development, business sector; social development, equal opportunities. It is obvious that the projects have a broad reflection on the policy frameworks within which the cooperation process can be supported.

Table 1: Granted projects (2000-2010)

Country	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Czech Republic	6	22	35	45	72	71	80	90	94	96	95
Hungary	6	14	28	47	52	70	86	91	94	86	94
Poland	5	16	27	40	63	61	70	80	87	82	85
Slovakia	10	33	47	61	71	77	89	117	102	113	101

source: compiled by the author, based on the data of the International Visegrad Fund (<https://www.visegradfund.org>)

The number of common policy areas in V4 cooperation has been gradually increasing in recent decades. The Visegrad regional profile is reinforced by “bottom-up” structures, “people-to-people actions” and cooperation among cities and communities, which help to expand the network of contacts between the V4 countries and their societies and thus realize the vision of the Visegrad Group which is more cooperative at all levels of government. In addition to closer coordination at transnational and national levels, the subnational dimension of V4 cooperation could be strengthened in the future.

Table 2: Granted projects (2011-2020)

Country	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Czech Republic	87	90	91	80	78	71	61	63	67	57
Hungary	88	97	90	85	79	60	46	54	59	48
Poland	82	90	94	91	81	57	47	52	61	41
Slovakia	88	96	90	88	82	61	45	57	54	49

source: compiled by the author, based on the data of the International Visegrad Fund (<https://www.visegradfund.org>)

¹¹ The IVF works as a donor organization with an annual budget of €8 million contributed by every four countries equally, but other donor countries (Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, South Korea, Sweden, Switzerland, the United States) have also contributed to the Fund, provided another €10 million through various grant schemes run by the Fund since 2012.

The analysis of the socio-economic impact of the projects supported by the Visegrad Fund highlights the extent to which these projects facilitate the process of establishing a “borderless” Visegrad Group and the internal cohesion of the V4 countries.

Table 3: Objectives of the Visegrad Grants

Theme	Objectives
Culture and Common Identity	Projects presenting common audiovisual, literary, and other contemporary art products. Projects reflecting on common historical and cultural heritage as well as cultural diversity through joint research and knowledge-sharing activities. Projects establishing and fostering cooperation among municipalities, and regions.
Education and Capacity Building	Projects strengthen professional networks of educational institutions and support the mobility of students, researchers, and educators to share best practices.
Innovation, R&D, Entrepreneurship	Projects aiming to build up a new business and cluster networks for SMEs, startups, and research institutions within and outside the V4.
Democratic Values and the Media	Projects promoting active participation of citizens in democratic decision-making processes and fostering democratic debate. Projects improving media and information literacy, and increasing resilience towards disinformation. Projects aiming for better media coverage of relevant topics in the V4 region and increased access to information.
Public Policy and Institutional Partnership	Projects connecting the expert communities to find joint solutions to common policy challenges. Projects promoting active lobbying for policy change and good governance and connecting relevant stakeholders with decision-makers.
Regional Development, Environment and Tourism	Projects offering new solutions and activities to the fight against climate change and raising awareness of environmental protection within and outside the V4 region. Projects aiming at sustainable tourism development on the local and regional levels, infrastructure development, urban planning, land revitalization, and agriculture.
Social Development	Projects promoting an inclusive mindset in society and addressing the protection of minorities. •Projects improving intergenerational dialogue and the social care infrastructure.

source: compiled by the author, based on the data of the International Visegrad Fund
(<https://www.visegradfund.org>)

Currently, much of the joint action is in the more technical policy areas. Concerning public policies, the top priority should be to continue business in transport and energy. Defense and security issues (e.g. the Visegrad Battlegroup) should certainly remain on the agenda, as

the enlargement and Eastern neighborhood policies.¹² However, V4 partners excluded nationally sensitive issues from their common agendas (e.g. economic and monetary affairs).

The International Visegrad Fund enhances the civil dimension of regional cooperation. The increase in the number of applicants shows a growing interest and need to continue the incoming, intra-Visegrad and outgoing scholarships. For youth exchange within V4 countries, the most important are intra-type scholarships which promote greater mobility and willingness to get to know each other within the group.¹³

In the field of cultural cooperation, the emphasis is put mainly on education. Educational policies, e.g. pupil and student exchanges, coordinated curricula, and joint history commissions are important and are slowly starting to operate.

In the area of the 'people to people actions', the city and community cooperation is another important field. The regions and municipalities should be actively involved in V4 cooperation. Initiatives for subnational, and regional cooperation were thus welcomed as complementary to the overall aim of broader regional integration of the Visegrad cooperation.

Local and regional cooperations on the ground based on contacts between local governments should coordinate common initiatives. Subnational dimension of the V4 cooperation, incorporation of bottom-up structures and project management into regional and local initiatives in different policy areas focused on environmental protection, public transportation (the harmonization of the timetables of international trains and buses), coordination of regional infrastructural development (e.g. the main transport lines traversing the Visegrad countries) need top-down policy support of the V4 governments.

Visegrad group is still very active across a range of policy areas outside the regional cooperation in the EU. Consultations of experts (on a bi-, tri-, or quadrilateral basis) promote the exchange of information on long-term strategies. Concepts of foreign, security, and defense policy, exchange of views on the stability and security of the Central European region, and the transfer of experience on the theme of the communication strategy and methods relating to EU and NATO foster the internal cohesion of the V4 countries and facilitate the integration of the region.

Even so, the cooperation of the Visegrad Group countries should continue to focus on regional activities and initiatives aimed at strengthening the identity of the Central European region. Towards maintaining the Visegrad regional profile and strengthening the regional identity the different types of consultations among politicians, civil servants, experts, local and regional representatives, V4 chambers of commerce, and NGOs should be organized on a regular basis.¹⁴

The sectoral dimension of Visegrad cooperation, local initiatives in different fields aimed at promoting modernization in Central Europe, and the development of regions can be the most essential part of the Visegrad regional cooperation. Nevertheless assessing future political, economic, and social impacts, it is expected that divergence between national and subnational levels in V4 countries may present some degree of an obstacle to the expansion and deepening of the "visegradization" of important sectoral policies and thus to the cohesion of the Visegrad Group.¹⁵

¹² Fawn, Rick: *Visegrad's place in the EU since accession in 2004: "Western" perceptions*. International Issues & Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs, 2014. No. 1-2. p. 18.

¹³ Czyż Anna: *What is the future of the Visegrad Group as an example of regional cooperation*. Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai, Studia Europaea, 2007. No. 2. p. 138.

¹⁴ Remek Éva: V4 kül- és biztonságpolitikája. In: Rajnai, Zoltán: *Tanulmánykötet a 6. Báthori-Brassai nemzetközi konferencia előadásai*. 1-2. kötet, Óbudai Egyetem, Budapest, 2015. p. 292.

¹⁵ Soós, Edit (2015): *New modes of governance*. In: Wiszniowski; Robert and Glinka, Kamil (szerk.): *New Public Governance in the Visegrad Group (V4)*. Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Torun, 2015. p. 41.

II. Visegrad Group's structure and format – V4 Governance

The Visegrad Fund supports innovative projects that address common challenges through regional cooperation and involve the citizens of the Visegrad region. In this way, the fund has a unique role to play in creating a common Visegrad polity, which is key importance to the internal cohesion of the Visegrad Group.

Despite the increased importance of regional formations within the EU, the Visegrad group was always the forum of consultations without any institutional form (the International Visegrad Fund is the only institution of Visegrad cooperation), because of the lack of political dedication to making V4 regional formation tighter, planned, having long-term agenda.

The cooperation of the Visegrad Group is shaped and designed at regular meetings of state representatives of the four Visegrad countries. The meetings of Prime Ministers and Ministers of Foreign Affairs with National Visegrad Coordinators and national government members taking the crucial role of initiators, and rotating one-year presidency with its own presidency program.

In the existing system, the Presidency of the Visegrad Cooperation Council rotates between the four countries and lasts for a period of one year. The Presidency is represented by the prime minister who has the formal responsibility for coordinating the intergovernmental Visegrad cooperation. The country holding the Presidency draws up an annual work program in which the political priorities for cooperation during the year to come are presented. The country which holds the Presidency also holds the chair for the V4 Prime ministers' meetings throughout the year.¹⁶

Table 4: The present structure of the Visegrad intergovernmental cooperation

Meetings	Main topics
Prime Ministers' meetings with a coordinating chairmanship on a rotating basis	state of cooperation, strategic questions of Central Europe, discussion of the EU agendas
Meetings of other Government members	particular questions in charge of corresponding ministries
Meetings of State Secretaries of Foreign Affairs	preparation of prime ministers' meetings, working out draft recommendations for the tactic and strategy to be pursued in the cooperation
Ambassadors' meetings	discussion on state of Visegrad cooperation
Meetings of Visegrad Coordinators	reviewing and coordinating the cooperation, preparation of the state secretaries' and prime ministers' meetings

source: compiled by the author

The outcome of the V4 summits is usually joint declarations (or other types of documents like communiqués, statements, etc.) adopted by all prime ministers. A joint declaration adopted at the summit is prepared by experts and relevant ministries long enough in advance.

The foreign ministries have a coordinating role. A rotating one-year presidency is in place. V4 presidency reports throughout the preceding years show that attention to common issues is gradually on the rise. Nevertheless to the different intensities of the cooperation, the different V4 country representative meetings have not reached yet the same level.

¹⁶ Central European Service for Cross-border Initiatives: Legal accessibility among the V4 countries. Information and cooperation. Budapest, 2018. p. 39.

It is foreseen that the Visegrad cooperation will not develop only between the governments, but also other forms of cooperation will be encouraged, such as the meetings of the heads of state, the regular communication between parliamentary and ministerial assemblies, interparliamentary meetings, and the contacts between civil society. The time is ripe to facilitate the internal regional cooperation, or create specific consultative bodies as forums of legislative or executive organs of individual states. The internal cooperation, the frequently organized meetings of V4 ambassadors, and bottom-up cooperation of local and regional governments can strengthen the common goals and objectives of the V4 countries.

On the professional level, the most effective and most common forms of cooperation take place through specific working groups. These groups focused on a specific area consisting of various experts. Such groups can be formed in an ad-hoc manner, depending on the negotiated issues, and they can be deliberately initiated and any time and on any level. The Working Group on Cultural Heritage was proposed in 2006, the Think Visegrad is a network of think-tanks from the V4 region was established in 2012 with the aim of initiating a structured dialogue on issues of strategic regional importance. The Carpathian Convention Working Group discusses tourism-related activities with the third, especially overseas countries (e.g. USA, South Korea).

The Visegrad's high-profile meetings – especially summits – could be counterproductive by generating interest without corresponding action. The decisions are not binding on the countries. Extending the Visegradization of important sector policies would certainly require some overhaul of the current V4 'institutional' set-up.

The implementation of institutionalized cooperation will require support from the governments of the V4 countries. A dialogue will be needed to ensure that the Visegrad Group commits itself to reforms aimed at achieving deeper cohesion. The development of the institutional framework may be the best basis for creating an integration of V4 regional cooperation that is stronger than the present one, and for the future development of the untapped potential of the region.

There are several options for deeper institutionalized cooperation of the V4 states. One method is the establishment of more informal regional cooperation through the creation of a regional forum of cooperation without the actual creation of an international organization with the formalized structure of organs and powers. (Visegrad group)

Another option includes the creation of an international regional organization – either supranational or intergovernmental. This option is associated with the creation of international organizations by international treaty with defined competencies and powers.¹⁷ Such international organization usually becomes the subject of international law with the capacity to enter into legal and diplomatic relations with other states. (Nordic Council)

Expanding the integration of important sectoral policies will require some reworking of the current institutional set-up of the V4. The administrative tasks should be performed by the Visegrad Secretariat (with about 4 employees per country). The Secretariat's responsibility is to support the work of the particular organs in administrative terms and provide the non-political representation: media, researchers, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, and interested citizens. To this end, it is important to actively maintain a multilingual webpage in the official languages of the member countries and at least in English.

With regards to the institutions of the V4, despite the political order assigning significant powers to the national parliaments, the V4 offers much more room for the sovereignty of national states. The absence of the V4 Parliamentary Assembly is a huge weakness of the V4 cooperation. The Parliament reflects the will of the V4 citizens, and the absence of such in the Visegrad Group is also regarded as the reluctance of national governments to give away their

¹⁷ Nagy Dávid: *The Institutionalization of the V4*. Danube Institute, Budapest, 2021. p. 7.

sovereignty, which is a sign of the predominantly intergovernmental character of the cooperation.

III. Alternative V4 models

Intergovernmentalism is an efficient method to approach the nature and functioning of the Visegrad group. All the members' decision to join the V4 was a pragmatic, rational choice, it was determined by common history, and the predominantly political and economic benefits for V4 countries.

The intergovernmental nature of states' negotiation and institution setting implies that national governments are thus the primary decision-makers with politicians holding more responsibility for political outcomes. V4 national states established transnational bodies and grant some authority to them only so as to achieve their goals. Thus, the policy-making within the V4 is not carried out by the institutions themselves but rather coordinated by national states through negotiation by politicians, and National Visegrad Coordinators. More than that, governments can any time withdraw that authority from transnational bodies whose autonomy and self-determination are significantly constrained. This relates to the strong intergovernmental cooperation that prioritizes the sovereignty of the members, and also the small number of members. Such significant predominance of the intergovernmental component of the integration within the V4 is also beneficial from the point of view of its members because many issues concerning the common policies are agreed upon based on consensus. Therefore, it might be suggested that the V4 is advantageous for its members since it preserves their sovereignty by granting formal equality.

New perspective by pointing to the further development of the loose informal operating mechanism of the Visegrad Group within a multilevel institutional framework, which provides an opportunity to further strengthen economic, social, and political integration, and internal cohesion.

The theory of multilevel governance appears to be the most comprehensive approach to explain the future nature of the Visegrad Group in the 21 century. As opposed to intergovernmentalism, the theory denies the predominant role of a state in the integration; instead, it emphasizes the authority shift vertically and horizontally.¹⁸ The first one implies the transfer of policy-making to the transnational and subnational levels. Coming to the horizontal dimension, not only governments but also non-governmental actors participate in the decision-making process besides subnational authorities, chambers of commerce, experts, universities, research institutes, and NGOs.

Multilevel governance creates better opportunities for citizens in the decision-making process, and that is why mostly supported by people within states.¹⁹ More than that, the V4 offers broad-scale cooperation which means including cooperation with regions and localities. On the other hand, such a wide scope (economic, political, and humanitarian areas are covered) can be an advantage as well.

In sum, V4 governance is based on interconnection and interaction between different stakeholders: the creation of broad partnerships between the political, economic, cultural, and civil actors, with regional and local authorities and all public or private entities (universities, chambers of commerce, foundations, etc.). The closer cooperation with citizens must include all aspects of everyday life. All these interactions through the political, economic, cultural, and civil partnerships promote strengthening the institutional format, thereby they increase the added value of V4 governance.

¹⁸ Piattoni, Simona: *The Theory of Multi-level Governance Conceptual, Empirical, and Normative Challenges*. OUP, Oxford, 2010. p. 32.

¹⁹ European Committee of the Regions: White Paper on multilevel governance. Brussels: CdR 89/2009 fin, p. 16.

The two models (intergovernmentalism and multilevel governance) can also be considered as two stages of an evaluation starting with the loosest form and ending with the most advanced model.

IV. Conclusion

Visegrad cooperation is a 'very good vehicle' for considering different public policy possibilities, and for engaging some of them.²⁰ Although some notable achievements exist, further "visegradization" of sectoral policies is expected to accelerate the development of common policies.

Visegrad nevertheless needs to promote awareness further through decisive actors such as: Common meetings of the Speakers and the parliamentary committees on specific policies underline the necessity of the cooperation of national parliaments. The ongoing political work in the national parliaments is conducted through committees and party groups. Cooperation of parliamentary committees and ministries with the participation of experts from V4 is an existing practice which shows that necessary the stronger cooperation of the legislative and executive power. (e.g. V4 presidency can prepare seminars focusing on public policies and reforms in V4 countries.) Further strengthening the dialogue at the level of national parliaments should be the focus of interparliamentary cooperation and V4 parliamentary diplomacy.

Having considered the suitability of Visegrad's structure and format for its activities it might include permanent, ad hoc or standing working groups. Intensifying cooperation in other non-political areas (climate, environment, nuclear energy) and different innovation-related and investment programs are highly recommended.

Embassies in the Visegrad countries should maintain more public announcements and activities throughout the presidency year. V4 consular cooperation's importance is growing especially in cases of emergencies such as natural disasters, terrorist attacks, epidemics, or mass traffic accidents.

Towards maintaining the Visegrad regional profile and strengthening the regional identity the Visegrad cooperation should be developed on the lower level based on contacts between local and regional actors to coordinate common initiatives. Bottom-up 'people to people actions' the city and community cooperation are another way to establish an ever closer Visegrad group. The aim is to review new forms of cooperation, among local and regional governments, V4 chambers of commerce, NGOs, enterprises which promoting the network of connections among V4 countries and their societies.

The regions and municipalities should be actively involved in V4 cooperation. Initiatives for subnational, and regional cooperation were thus welcomed as complementary to the overall aim of broader regional integration of the V4 cooperation.

The formal development of the institutional framework is the best basis for achieving greater internal cohesion in the V4 regional cooperation. However, institutionalization and enlargement always concern researchers and diplomats, in higher political levels the leaders of the Visegrad countries always said "no" consensually to these questions. The further development of the operating mechanism of the Visegrad Group within a loose informal framework is the establishment of an institutional framework that can further strengthen the economic and political integration of cooperation over time. Best added value may be gained from mutual interests when V4 is prepared to find the best institutional format for long-term cooperation.

²⁰ Kápolnai Zoltán: Regionális Visegrád: a regionális együttműködés prioritása. In: Balaskó Angéla (szerk.): *Szakpolitikai együttműködés a V4-en belül. Visegrád magyar kormányzati szemmel*. Külügyi és Külgazdasági Intézet, Budapest, 2018. pp. 25-45.