

Priorities 2015/2016

- >> strengthening **cohesion and stability** of the Central Europe through targeted cooperation among citizens, non-governmental organisations, entrepreneurs and other stakeholders of the **V4** countries,
- >> **cooperating within the EU to create a functioning Energy Union**,
- >> discussing the future of **Cohesion Policy**,
- >> **energy safety** and safeguarded energy supplies,
- >> creating an independent **internal market** with natural gas and safeguarding stable gas pipelines,
- >> **supporting reforms** in the countries of the Eastern Partnership and Western Balkans,
- >> promoting free **media**,
- >> **enhancing efficiency of security forces** owing to the current war conflict nearby,
- >> active implementation of the solidarity principle,
- >> **support and promotion of the digital administration** for increased competitiveness,
- >> combatting **tax frauds** and evasions.



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Calendar of events

Type of event	Theme	Deadline	Venue
High-level meeting	Signing of the protocol on cooperation in tourism, including a marketing plan	February 16–17, 2016	Prague
Conference	Destination branding – in cooperation with the UNWTO and the University of Economics (VŠE)	17 February 2016	Prague
Workshop	Closing of 2007–2013 programmes	26 February 2016	Prague
Ministerial meeting	Housing for elderly people – challenge for the 21st century	March 16–17, 2016	Prague
Forum	V4 Forum on Future of Housing Estates (during the European Habitat)	17 March 2016	Prague
Side event	Cohesion policy as an urban-development instrument (during the European Habitat)	March 16–18, 2016	Prague
Conference	Smart Cities: the pathway to sustainable development of cities	April 7–8, 2016	Ostrava
Conference	The first year of implementation of the new programming period	April 2016	Prague
Meeting of the Steering Group	Common regional planning strategy	April 2016	tbc
Conference	Territorial dimension and integrated instruments for regional planning	May 2016	Prague
DG meeting	Preparation of common conclusions	May 2016	tbc
Workshop	Electronic processing of public contracts and licences	June 2016	tbc
Meeting of ministers	Approval of common conclusions	June 2016	Prague

V4 – Common trust Cohesion policy



Introduction

What is the Visegrad Group aka V4 mean?

V4 is a group of four cooperating countries of the Central Europe – the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia. This untraditional union has been established so that its members could reach the advanced level of West-European democracies as soon as possible. Its unofficial name is **Visegrad Four (V4)**.

When was the VS established?

The Declaration of Close Cooperation among initially three countries of the Central Europe dates back to **15 February 1991**. The Declaration was signed by the Hungarian President **József Antalla**, the Czechoslovak President **Václav Havel** and the Polish President **Lech Walesa**. As a result of the following historical events, the Soviet Union broke up and the Visegrad Group focused on assistance to countries in transition from totality to democracy. After the split of the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic, two separate states were established in 1993 and the Visegrad Group has expanded. Consequently, **The Visegrad Four (V4)** has been created.

What is its aim?

The purpose, powers and compass of **the V4** expanded after admission to the NATO and among the EU Member States. The aim of the group is to strengthen mutual trust and solidarity among individual countries at the European, as well as the international level. The presiding country always makes efforts so that the Group deals with principal themes and its meetings have a practical impact.

What is the agenda of V4 member meetings?

V4 meetings deal with a very wide range of topics at various levels, starting from coordination in EU administrations and aligning attitudes to key issues, energy sector and education to security issues and coordination of armed forces. When we consider the fact that **V4** countries have the same number of votes in the EU Council as France and Germany combined, the Group may have a significant impact on further direction of the EU.

Czech Republic

Official name: Czech Republic
Abbreviation: CZ
Capital city: Prague
Area: 78,866 km²
Population (2014): 10.5 mil.

Ministry of Regional Development of the Czech Republic

- >> it is part of the Czech Republic's system of central bodies of the state administration in the fields defined by the relevant legal documents,
- >> fulfils the function of the National Coordination Authority (NCA) that defines a single framework for management and implementation of support granted from Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund in the Czech Republic,
- >> carries out activities related to the EU Cohesion Policy in CZ,
- >> was established on 1 November 1996.

The Ministry is a central administrative body in the matters of:

- >> regional policy,
- >> housing policy,
- >> housing stock development,
- >> rental of residential and non-residential premises,
- >> territorial planning,
- >> building rules,
- >> public auction and real estate activity,
- >> investment policy,
- >> tourism,
- >> appropriation,
- >> and funeral services.

Partner countries

Official name: Poland
Abbreviated name: Poland
Capital city: Warsaw
Area: 312,679 km²
Population (2014): 38.4 mil.



Official name: Slovak Republic
Abbreviated name: Slovakia
Capital city: Bratislava
Area: 49,036 km²
Population (2014): 5.4 mil.

Official name: Hungarian Republic
Abbreviated name: Hungary
Capital city: Budapest
Area: 93,036 km²
Population (2014): 9.9 mil.

V4 presiding country

On 1 July 2015 the Czech Republic started its annual **presidency of the Visegrad Group**. Representatives of the Member States meet at various levels, while the most significant cooperation takes place among ministries and departments. Prime Ministers meet once a year at a conference.

Documents arising from the meetings are mostly opinions or declarations and as such they are not legally binding. The cornerstone of **V4** countries is their common idea of cooperation of neighbouring countries and this platform is useful for developing relations among them. The **V4's** connection with Austria and Slovenia is ensured by the Regional Partnership and the countries cooperate with Germany thanks to the V4+ programme.

Cohesion Policy

It is the most important policy of the European Union. The funds earmarked for the Cohesion Policy in the 2014–2020 programming period amount to **EUR 351.85 billion**. It aims to reduce disparities among the levels of development in various regions, reduce underdevelopment of disadvantaged regions and strengthen economic, social and territorial cohesion for the purpose of harmonious development of the European Union.

For the 2014–2020 period, the key instrument of the cohesion policy consists in the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) through which applicants may draw funds from the EU budget. ESIF include the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF), the Cohesion Fund (CF), the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF). The funds earmarked for the Czech Republic amount to almost **EUR 24 billion**.

