



# THE LONG TERM VISION OF THE VISEGRAD COUNTRIES ON THEIR DEFENCE COOPERATION (Prague, 24 June 2020)

## **Introduction**

Since the adoption of the Long Term Vision of the Visegrad Countries on Deepening Their Defence Cooperation in March 2014, the V4 countries have substantially expanded their defence cooperation and coordination and implemented joint projects and activities in many areas as stipulated in the document. We have succeeded in forming the V4 EU Battlegroups (EU BGs) at regular intervals, while the establishment of the V4 Joint Logistics Support Group Headquarters (JLSG HQ), a multinational NATO Capability Target, is well in progress. The armed forces of the V4 countries hold frequent joint exercises, we have significantly improved our ability to share lessons learned, our men and women in uniform serve shoulder-to-shoulder in missions and operations, and we strive to support each other's candidates for relevant international positions. In other words, the V4 defence cooperation is firmly established today and facilitated by the membership of our countries in both NATO and the European Union.

We, the Ministers of Defence of the Visegrad countries, have agreed today on a revised version of the Long Term Vision to provide our defence cooperation with a fresh impetus and to highlight the main joint activities to be implemented in the coming years.

## **Security environment: new challenges and opportunities**

We are facing challenges stemming from an ever more complex and unpredictable security environment. At the same time, we recognize that our shared strategic interests continue to provide solid common ground for further expanding the V4 defence cooperation. Better policy coordination towards strategic issues on the agenda of NATO and the EU and strengthened V4 cooperation within both the Alliance and the Union stand out as the underlying priority. We should keep actively looking for further opportunities for practical regional cooperation that would contribute to NATO and EU efforts.

One way is to make use of new NATO and EU initiatives which offer numerous cooperation opportunities. In this context, we emphasize the need to avoid unnecessary duplications while taking into account a broader strategic rationale.



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Our main long-term objective is clear – to strengthen our nations’ security, to enhance the footprint of the V4 within NATO and the EU and at the same time to strengthen the cohesion of the Alliance and the Union.

Over the past decade, Euro-Atlantic security environment has undergone significant changes. Traditional challenges have intensified and new ones have emerged. They include Russia’s aggressive actions, the rise of China, the persistent threat of terrorism, violent extremism and radicalization, the increase in irregular migration with serious security implications, and local and regional conflicts in the MENA and Sahel regions.

Moreover, both state and non-state actors increasingly use unconventional and hybrid methods to exploit our vulnerabilities, create ambiguity and chaos, exacerbate divisions in our societies, undermine our democratic processes, disrupt our decision-making, and hamper or delay our response. This includes, among others, cyber-attacks, disinformation campaigns, and increased intelligence activities. Such efforts can also undermine the cohesion of NATO and the EU. Last but not least, our defence and security will increasingly be impacted by disruptive technologies (including artificial intelligence, quantum computing, hypersonic weapons, and autonomous systems) employed by our adversaries, as well as by the decrease of the technological superiority of the West in certain areas.

We must be ready to respond to these threats and challenges in line with the 360-Degree Approach and be able to contribute to relevant NATO and EU initiatives and instruments addressing them. They include, in particular, NATO’s Enhanced Forward Presence, the NATO Response Force, the NATO Readiness Initiative and NATO’s Baltic Air Policing, along with the EU BGs, EU’s Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), and the European Defence Fund (EDF). We note that the acceleration of technological innovation and digitalization will have an extraordinary impact on the development and application of the capabilities required to succeed in future conflicts.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown how vulnerable our societies are and how quickly and markedly such a global health crisis can impact our security. In this context, we underline the key role of our armed forces in tackling the crisis by providing assistance to civil authorities. V4 will cooperate to draw lessons learned for the armed forces and their involvement in fighting the pandemic as well as to strengthen both NATO’s and the EU’s capabilities to support the Allies and the Member States.

All these phenomena highlight the imperative of strengthening the resilience and preparedness of our countries; therefore, we commit ourselves to cooperating closely on developing innovative responses to current and future security threats and challenges.



## Priority areas of V4 defence cooperation

In view of the above, we agree to focus mainly but not exclusively on the following four areas of cooperation: 1) establishing multinational formations and contributing to multinational forces and initiatives; 2) harmonizing defence planning and capability development; 3) improving joint education, training and exercises to enhance interoperability; 4) cooperating with partners.

- 1) We will bolster cooperation in the operational domain and force planning,<sup>1</sup> Command and Control capabilities and operations where we either act together or may do so in the future. We acknowledge that contribution to international initiatives, operations and missions under the aegis of NATO, the EU and the UN directly improves military interoperability and builds up the V4 political credit. Promoting EU BGs, which are open to partners, and actively supporting the increase of their usability will be part of the V4 policy.

We will use opportunities for joint actions in the area of enablement of SACEUR's Area of Responsibility, thus implementing a proper level of military mobility or securing energy supplies. We will support relevant transnational infrastructure projects<sup>2</sup> that increase the level of regional interconnection in important areas relevant for security and defence.

We will also explore possibilities of running cross border activities by making use of existing bilateral agreements (e. g. common air policing).

- 2) Capability development and procurement remain critical areas of cooperation. Cooperation in this area should be focused on the implementation of NATO Capability Targets (including common V4 target to develop and provide JLSG HQ at the required level of readiness) and development of forces for multinational formations. Due to the nature of the defence planning process, the cooperative efforts should target the medium and long term planning horizons in order to provide time and flexibility to achieve the largest possible degree of convergence of V4 countries' defence plans.

Activities to support defence planning harmonization and capability development shall take place through inter alia multinational initiatives such as the Framework Nations Concept (FNC) and PESCO. We will promote opportunities to establish multinational projects, including in the framework of PESCO, which might be eligible for EDF funding to maximize benefits both for our Armed Forces and defence industries.

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<sup>1</sup>The existing areas of cooperation include V4 EU Battlegroups, V4 Joint Logistics Support Group HQ, NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence, NATO Readiness Initiative, and NATO Response Force. The V4 countries also contribute to Headquarters of Multinational Corps Northeast, Multinational Division Centre, Multinational Division North East, and NATO Force Integration Units.

<sup>2</sup>e. g. Via Carpathia or the extension of the Central European Pipeline System in Central Europe and Europe's Eastern flank.



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Joint procurement will stay high on the V4 agenda. We will seek ways to overcome the existing hurdles of technical, political, economic, legal and organizational nature in this particular area of cooperation. Sharing good practices from national acquisition processes at the working level will support these efforts. NATO and the EU provide excellent opportunities for joint participation in armament projects, be it in the whole V4, in trilateral or in bilateral format. Additionally, the involvement of partners from outside of the V4 can increase the prospect of such projects being successfully implemented.

Joint research and development of dual-use technologies conducted under the umbrella of the EDF represent opportunities we will explore.

Accelerated innovation, digitalization and disruptive technologies emphasize the need for continuous adaptation across the whole spectrum of military functions that will enable the transformation of military capabilities and structures. As part of this transformation, a V4 coordination and information exchange on future capabilities foresight and conceptual and technological innovation could contribute to the efforts to respond to and keep pace with the challenges and opportunities mentioned above.

- 3) Implementation of the V4 Training and Exercise Strategy and joint military exercises are means of reinforcing the interoperability and operational readiness of our forces. The joint V4 exercise programme will respond to the main threats and challenges identified above that we share as members of NATO and the EU with an emphasis on regional specificities.

We will devote more attention to joint education programmes and language training. E-learning and online platforms for sharing best practices will be employed where useful and appropriate. We will also continue to cooperate in the field of simulation and training technologies.

- 4) We will continue to build flexible partnerships with countries outside of the V4, including in NATO and the EU neighbourhood, when and where appropriate. The aim of developing ties with partners via meetings in “V4 Plus” formats is to foster mutually beneficial cooperation.

### **Adjusting the methods of V4 defence cooperation**

Based on the lessons learned since 2014, we will build our cooperation upon the established working formats and we agree on the following adjustments.

In order to reach better harmonization of capability development planning and procurement processes, regular interaction of National Armaments Directors, Capability Directors and military experts will be established. Meetings of Research Directors will be considered as



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a way to improve V4 cooperation in the early stages of relevant projects in order to address technological development adequately.<sup>3</sup>

National Armaments Directors and Capability Directors will regularly exchange information regarding national armaments and capability programs, in order to identify the most promising areas of cooperation in capability development, including proposals for promising joint projects, when and where appropriate. To facilitate defence planning harmonization, the “V4 Integrated Capability Development Matrix” will be regularly updated by the V4 Planning Group.

The “Action Plan of the Visegrad Group Defence Cooperation” will serve to measure the progress in implementing priorities set during subsequent V4 Presidencies. Progress will be assessed by Defence Policy Directors and reviewed by the Senior Body, which will issue follow-on tasking, if needed. Information on the progress achieved will be regularly presented to V4 Ministers of Defence.

Last but not least, the goals and achievements of V4 defence cooperation will be communicated to our general public in a more systematic and efficient way.

By agreeing on these objectives and steps, we reaffirm our common interest in further developing the V4 defence cooperation and our shared determination to continue working together with the aim to preserve security in Central Europe and contribute to the stability and security of the entire Euro-Atlantic area.

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<sup>3</sup> Such projects are conducted mainly within the Research-European Defence Fund (R-EDF), European Defence Agency Capability Technology Groups (EDA CapTechs), and the NATO Science and Technology Organization (NATO STO).