

Review of the most important events In July and August 2016

Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the V4, 9 July, Warsaw

The first meeting of the V4 Foreign Ministers under the Polish Presidency took place at the margins of the NATO Summit. Four chief diplomats discussed current agenda, including implementation of decisions taken at the Summit in Warsaw as well as situation in Europe after UK referendum.

Meeting of the ministers of interior of the V4, 11 July, Warsaw

On 11 July 2016 Warsaw hosted a meeting of the Interior Ministers of the V4, the purpose of which was the inauguration of the Polish Presidency of the V4. The meeting was attended by: Mr. Mariusz Błaszczak, Minister of Interior and Administration of the Republic of Poland, Mr. Rober Kaliňák, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior of the Slovak Republic, Mr. Sándor Pintér, Hungarian Minister of Interior and Mr. Jiří Nováček, Deputy Minister of Interior of the Czech Republic.

The main purpose of the meeting was to present the priorities of the Polish Presidency of the V4 in the area of internal affairs. The aim of the discussion of Interior Ministers was also to identify common priorities implemented by the Visegrad Group countries and to develop a constructive position of the V4 states on migration and border issues also in the context of parallel presidencies held by other V4 countries (i.e. the presidency of the Czech Republic in the Salzburg Forum and the Slovak presidency in the Council of the European Union).

Ministers of Interior of the V4 states discussed the situation in the region in relation to the migration crisis. They agreed the constructive position of the Visegrad countries in the area of migration and border issues including: a) continuous efforts to ensure adequate protection of the external borders of the EU Member States, b) increasing support to the third countries c) the lack of consent for any mandatory and automatic mechanisms.

Interior Ministers of the V4 states agreed to carry out regular consultations on the current issues of the European agenda discussed during the meetings of the JHA Council. The Visegrad Group countries also confirmed their readiness to cooperate in the expanded format and thereby strengthen the potential of our region.

Meeting of the ministers for economic affairs and cohesion policy, 14 July, Warsaw

The meeting of the ministers, responsible for the economic affairs and cohesion policy from the Visegrad Group and Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Slovenia was held in Warsaw on 14 July, 2016. The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economic Development, Mr. Mateusz Morawiecki outlined at the meeting the strategic priorities, pursued by the Polish Presidency which encompass inter alia the cooperation with the countries of the region in the field of innovation and start-ups, cohesion policy and development of the Single European Market.

The meeting of the ministers allowed to identify the convergence of positions, taken by the V4 countries and Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Slovenia with regard to the policy of supporting innovativeness and competitiveness of national economies. The support was also expressed for the priorities of the Polish Presidency, relating to the creation of a stable and friendly regulatory environment for small and medium-sized enterprises and start-ups.

The representatives of V4+4 also reiterated their opposition to the protectionist measures, taken by some EU member states and the European Commission (incl. the German minimal wage law and the revision of the directive on posting workers), which distort the free competition-based character of the Single European Market.

The ministers agreed with the assessment of the most pressing challenges for the EU cohesion policy, which was presented by the Polish side. They also pointed out to the need for adopting a joint position on a planned reform of this policy.

Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the V4, 17 July, Brussels

On 17 July 2016 a coordination meeting of foreign ministers of the V4 was held in Brussels before the meeting of Foreign Affairs Council (FAC). Discussion among the ministers concerned the upcoming meeting of prime ministers of the V4 countries in Warsaw (21 July), as well as current situation in the EU after Brexit. Other topics concerned the recent terrorist attack in France and events in Turkey.

Meeting of the Prime Ministers of V4 countries, 21 July, Warsaw

Among the topics of the meeting of the Polish Prime Minister Beata Szydło, the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, the Czech Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka and the Prime Minister of Slovakia Robert Fico were: the situation after Brexit, the future of the European Union, as well as the security. In its joint statement after the meeting, the prime ministers of Visegrad Group (V4) stressed: “The outcome of the referendum in the UK creates a new situation for the EU. We can’t simply continue to look the other way and hope that the crisis will pass by itself. We have to bring the European idea closer to citizens and bridge the existing gap between European institutions and the expectations of the people.”

They added: “We need a deeper reflection on the contemporary challenges facing the Union. The outcome of the referendum in the United Kingdom has clearly shown us that we cannot avoid reflection on specific concerns or even the doubt that our citizens have towards the European Union”.

The prime ministers also noted that “one of the worst conclusions that Member States could draw from Brexit would be the division of the European Union into small groups. This might encourage fragmentation of a Union whose strength is primarily in its size and its cohesion”.

In addition, they stressed that the UK’s exit must take place in an orderly manner and encouraged Britain to “stay as close as possible to the single market in accordance with the applicable principles of reciprocity.”

Meeting of the of the Head of Governments of V4 countries and Germany, 26 August, Warsaw

The talks concerned preparations for the informal summit of the heads of EU-27 state governments in Bratislava on 16 September, which will deal with the functioning of the European Union after the British exit. “We need to draw conclusions from the British referendum; introduce the changes the Europeans expect so that there is no temptation in other states to leave our group,” said the head of the Polish government. “We must look the truth in the eye: the EU is changing; after the UK leaves, there will be changes we will have to face. Our goal, our most important task is for the EU to remain a strong entity that guarantees security of its citizens,” said Prime Minister Szydło. She added that we needed to consider what reforms of the EU were necessary for it to function better, to develop better, “We need to restore in our citizens a sense that the EU really serves them and that they are its hosts. Such a process of adapting the EU to the new realities will be supported by Poland,” she explained.

The talks focused also on the planned reforms in the EU, internal and external security of the Union, effective terrorism prevention, and the migration crisis. The topics of the meeting also included regulations regarding the Posting of Workers Directive and proposals for changes to the asylum system. Discussions also concerned intensification of military operations on the part of the Russian Federation in Ukraine.

Meeting of the V4 Prime Ministers with Prime Minister of Ukraine, 6 September, Krynica

The meeting took place at the margins of the Economic Forum in Krynica. Main topics of the discussion focused on cooperation and joint V4-Ukraine initiatives, strengthening of the infrastructure in the Carpathian region as well as security situation. The prime ministers of V4 and Ukraine underlined the importance of a long-term cooperation, which supports the development of our

countries and overall stabilisation in the Central and Eastern Europe. After the meeting the V4 prime ministers has issued a [communiqué](#).

Meeting of the heads of parliaments, 7 September, Krynica

The heads of V4 parliaments met during the “Carpathian Europe” conference held in Krynica. They have discussed mutual cooperation between parliaments and potential challenges. The conference “Carpathian Europe” was devoted to strengthening the cooperation of parliaments in the region as well as among all relevant stakeholders working towards further development of Central and Eastern Europe. A V4 cooperation was among major topic of discussion.

Upcoming meetings of the V4 Polish Presidency (September-October 2016)		
High Level Political Meetings		
Date	Description	Venue
6 September	V4 Prime Ministers meeting/ V4+ Ukraine, in the margins of the 2016 Krynica-Zdrój Economic Forum	Krynica-Zdrój
7 September	V4 meeting of the Presidents of Parliaments During the Polish Presidency in the Visegrad Group, on 7-8 September 2016 another conference of the cycle Europe of the Carpathians will be organised. These conferences are held each year as part of the Economic Forum. This year the Marshal of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland, Mr Marek Kuchciński, has decided to invite Speakers of V4 Parliaments to take part in one of the panels of the conference, entitled: The Visegrad Group – contemporary challenges, new forms of cooperation. Furthermore, assuming, that the Visegrad Group should "inspire cooperation among countries from the region of Central and Eastern Europe", three more panels are also planned during the Conference: a panel with the participation of representatives of Central European Countries, entitled The Carpathians and its neighbours: from common values to shared interests, a panel entitled Intellectual facets of Central-Eastern Europe, in which intellectuals from Central and Eastern Europe are going to take part and a panel devoted to the experience of the last 25 years of the countries of the region, entitled Succeses and shortcomings of democracy: 25 years of experience in Central-Eastern Europe, in which former important politicians from Central-Eastern Europe will take part. Furthermore, the Parliaments of V4 Countries are working on establishing the Parliamentary Assembly of Visegrad Countries (V4 PA). The project, whose author is the Marshal of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland, Mr Marek Kuchciński, aims to give renewed impetus to the parliamentary contacts in the Visegrad Group. We hope to establish the Parliamentary Assembly in the coming months.	Krynica-Zdrój
6-7 October	V4 meeting of the State Secretaries for European Affairs and Sherpas	Warsaw

High Level Sectoral Meetings		
Date	Description	Venue
6-8 September	Meeting of the V4 Ministers of Energy. Topics: security of gas supply, solidarity principle in the context of draft Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning measures to safeguard security of gas supply and repealing Council Regulation 994/2010; New electricity market design.	Krynica-Zdrój
28 September	Dinner of the V4 ministers responsible for competitiveness - meeting is aimed at strengthening a common position in the field of industry, internal market and competitiveness before the Competitiveness Council meeting on 29 September.	Brussels
3-4 October	V4+ meeting of the Ministers of the Environment. Ministers from V4 countries, Bulgaria and Romania have been invited as well as from Belarus and Ukraine- as observers. Main topics to be discussed by the ministers are: climate change and biodiversity.	Tuczno n. Poznan
25-26 October	V4 + 3 (Bulgaria, Romania, Slovenia) meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture	Warsaw, Poland
Other Meetings		
Date	Description	Venue
8-9 September	Expert meeting "Evaluation in theory and practice of V4+4 countries", held in V4+4 format. The meeting will focus on presenting the results of the evaluation study titled "Ex post evaluation and forecast of the benefits to the EU-15 countries resulting from the implementation of the Cohesion Policy in the Visegrad Group countries". The importance of the outcomes, produced by this study for the upcoming debate on the cohesion policy 2020+ will be discussed among representatives of V4+4 countries and EC.	Zakopane
12 September	Meeting of V4 Directors General responsible for the Internal Market / Industry (High Level Group) - meeting is aimed at preparing ministerial meeting scheduled on 28 September before the Competitiveness Council on 29 September.	Brussels
13 September	Expert meeting of the representatives of the Visegrad countries and Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and Slovenia. The discussion will cover issues related to fair and affordable prices of medicines, in particular procedure for and scope of joint negotiations, risk-sharing schemes and terms of contract with Manufacturing Authorization Holder (MAH).	Warsaw
22-23 September (tbc)	Expert meeting on Cohesion Policy 2014-2020 implementation, held in V4+4 format- the meeting will be devoted to examining the recently introduced, new mechanisms in the process of cohesion policy implementation, inter alia ex ante conditionality, including delivery of research and innovation, smart specialization strategies, performance reserve and performance framework. The meeting will also give the opportunity to share experiences and examine lessons learnt from the implementation of the Cohesion Policy in 2014-2020, especially in terms of its management systems, effectiveness of administration system, designation procedure, eligibility of expenditures, major	Śląskie Voivodship (tbc)

	projects as well as ways of simplifying the system. Conclusions from expert discussions will be taken into account in the EU debate on the future of the Cohesion Policy.	
14 October (tbc)	Expert meeting on Cohesion Policy in the context of the Multiannual Financial Framework review and its role in post 2020 period, held in V4+4 format. The meeting will be devoted to discussing the role of the Cohesion Policy among other EU policies both in the present and in the next programming period.	Warsaw
21 October	Conference on barriers in the EU internal market. This conference will be attended by the Deputy Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki and representatives of the Visegrad Group countries, Bulgaria, Croatia, Slovenia and Romania (V4 + 4), including representatives of government and entrepreneurs. Talks will concentrate on the protectionist measures undertaken by some of Member States in the EU internal market and the resulting barriers, which seem to curtail the smooth conduct of business activities by entrepreneurs.	Warsaw
27-28 October (tbc)	Expert meeting on Urban Agenda for the EU, held in V4+4 format. The meeting will focus on carrying on actions aimed at securing an implementation of Pact of Amsterdam which established the Urban Agenda for the EU. The meeting will give the opportunity to V4+4 countries, the representatives of their regions, cities and European Commission to discuss the implementation of the EU Urban Agenda, especially in the context of existing and new partnerships.	Warsaw
October	Working consultation on the updates of River Basin Management Plans and Flood Risk Management Plans. The event will be hosted by the National Water Management Authority in cooperation Ministry of Environment. The meeting will be held on expert level and will provide a forum for experience exchange between the V4 countries (e.g. in environmental education and information campaigns for planning in water management).	Warsaw