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April 2025

NEWSLETTER

Think Visegrad in Brussels

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Welcome to the **April edition** of the newsletter of Think Visegrad in Brussels. This issue traditionally presents activities and publications of the **Think Visegrad** in Brussels projects, the individual members of the **Think Visegrad** platform and informs about the upcoming events.

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Europe 2025 : AI Ambitions, Power Shifts & Justice Demands

EU Launches AI Continent Plan, 9.04

Europe is going big on AI with the world's first AI legal framework. This strategic move to position EU as a world-leader in AI comes with a €200B InvestAI push, new AI Factories, and a Data Union Strategy.

Key Takeaways:

- A Risk-Based Approach
- Transparency Obligations
- Innovation & Regulation
- Governance & Enforcement

The message is clear: *Lead in AI, the European way.*

Germany Finalises Coalition: What's Next?, 9.04

CDU-SPD Deal Sealed

A coalition agreement between CDU and SPD is in place as of April 9—despite a rocky path towards the Chancellery Merz's imprint on Germany's, and Europe's, direction is undeniable.

"Germany is Back": Geopolitical Reset

Merz, calling himself a "transatlanticist," set a bold tone in post-election debates: Declared European independence from the U.S. as an "absolute priority." Signals a revived Franco-German axis and stable leadership at the EU's core.

Coalition Agenda: What It Means for Europe

- Tougher stance on migration
- Push for intergovernmental Europe: CDU now controls Germany's EU-facing ministries (Chancellery, Economy, Foreign Office) for the first time in nearly 60 years
- Coordination with EU Commission Chief Ursula von der Leyen anticipated
- Notably absent: any environmental policy

Domestic Drift Right?

The new coalition could rattle Brussels by testing EU values:

- Civil Society Clampdown:

Merz submitted 500+ questions targeting the funding and neutrality of NGOs like Greenpeace and Correctiv—widely criticized as an attack on civic freedoms.

- Freedom of Information Act under threat:

Proposed restrictions on the 2006 transparency law raise concerns over civil rights protections.

Front Line Mentality: Poland's Foreign Policy Draws the Line, 23.04

In a fiery annual address to Parliament, **Polish Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski** cast Poland as Europe's frontline defender against Russian aggression, while also giving a nod to domestic politics ahead of next month's presidential election.

- Warsaw sees itself on the front line of Europe's defense, vowing: "Moscow will never again rule in Warsaw."
- Resonates with Czech memories of 1968, fueling deep regional solidarity with Ukraine
- Sikorski subtly endorses Rafal Trzaskowski, the pro-EU presidential candidate from PM Donald Tusk's Civic Coalition, invoking Trzaskowski's campaign slogan: "All of Poland forward."
- Emphasis on Poland's crucial logistical role: 80% of aid to Ukraine flows through Jasionka Airport
- A clear message: Eastern Europe won't back down in standing up for Ukrainian sovereignty

EU-UK Reset? A United Front & Fresh Dialogue, 28.04

28 April **Declaration of Shared Values** marks a diplomatic reset as the UK and EU present a united front ahead of the 19 May summit—the first formal sit-down since Brexit.

- A "geopolitical preamble" setting the tone for deeper cooperation
- Strong EU-UK alignment on Ukraine, in direct contrast to recent U.S. positions
- Joint pledge to multilateralism and "free and open trade"—a clear rebuke of Trump-era tariffs
- Framed as a bulwark against transatlantic turbulence.
- With the summit looming, leaders aim to break deadlock on thorny issues like youth mobility and revive momentum

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT – MEPs Debate:

Russia's war crimes in Ukraine: standing with Ukraine and upholding justice, 1.04

HR Kallas: *"There can be no lasting peace without justice. Accountability is the cornerstone of any real resolution."*

Key Takeaways:

War Crimes in Focus: From Bucha to Mariupol, MEPs highlighted overwhelming evidence of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by Russian forces – “not collateral damage, but systematic brutality.”

Justice Mechanisms: Strong support for a dedicated tribunal to try Russia's aggression, Bolstering the International Criminal Court (ICC), Cooperation with Ukrainian and international prosecutors

Solidarity with Ukraine: Parliament praised Ukraine's resilience and legal efforts. Aid isn't just military – justice is a pillar of support

No to Impunity: Calls to freeze and repurpose Russian state assets for Ukraine's reconstruction gained traction. “Frozen funds must flow to rebuild.”

Warning to Enablers: MEPs denounced nations and companies aiding Russia's war machine. Sanctions must hit harder and smarter

Not Just Words: Parliament stressed this isn't just about statements – it's about real, enforceable justice. Peace must never mean letting war criminals walk free

In this **April edition**, and throughout the year, we will bring you analyses, insights, and expertise from top experts within the **Think Visegrad platform**, offering a Central European perspective on what lies ahead for the EU—from security and defence to economic shifts and digital transformation.

Stay with us and stay ahead of the key developments **shaping Europe in 2025!**

From our members: selected publications



OSW

CENTRE FOR EASTERN STUDIES
OSRODEK STUDIÓW WSCHODNICH



INSTITUT PRO EVROPSKOU POLITIKU
INSTITUTE FOR EUROPEAN POLICY

PISM

POLSKI INSTYTUT SPRAW MIĘDZYNARODOWYCH
THE POLISH INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

**Serbia's new government:
no concessions to protesters**

Marta Szpala

**Georgia: Georgian Dream
consolidates its anti-
Western and authoritarian
rule**

Wojciech Górecki

›INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL
RELATIONS PRAGUE

**Central European Populism: Is
there a convergence around
climate change, gender- and
immigration-related policies?**

**Katarzyna Kochlöffel &
Others**

**Policy Brief | The EU's Tech
Dilemma Under Trump: How
to Set Higher Ambitions
That Europe Can Actually
Achieve - 10
Recommendations for a
Targeted European Tech
Strategy.**

Silke Maes

**Building a More Competitive
EU: Objectives and
Challenges**

**Melchior Szczepanik &
Jolanta Szymańska**

**İmamoğlu Arrested: Türkiye
Shifting to Autocracy**

**Aleksandra Maria
Spancerska**



Magyar Külügyi Intézet
Hungarian Institute of International Affairs

**Recalibrating Global
Solidarity: The G20 in the
Era of US Retrenchment**

**Ramachandra Byrappa &
Others**

Our Members: Future Events

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SAVE THE DATE

Lecture by Dr Mark Galeotti – Russia and Europe after the Ukraine War

An early end to the war in Ukraine is unlikely – but it will end. The real question: what kind of Russia will emerge, and what threat will it pose to Europe? Can the EU shape the outcome, or is it just along for the ride? Join Professor Mark Galeotti as he explores the scenarios, security dilemmas, and tough choices shaping Europe's future.

15 May 2025 | Prague, Czech Republic

SAVE THE DATE

PISM Strategic Ark 2025

Join leading experts, diplomats, and policymakers for two days of cutting-edge debate on global security, geopolitics, and the shifting world order. With dynamic panels, keynote speeches, and interactive sessions, Strategic Ark is where big ideas meet real impact.

22-23 May 2025 | Warsaw, Poland

EUROPEUM: Event Highlights & Key Takeways

'Germany in a multi-dimensional change: implications for Central Europe'

On **April 29th**, the **Brussels Office of EUROPEUM** representing the Think Visegrad Platform hosted a **closed-door expert roundtable** discussion



Germany's Political Earthquake: Why Central Europe Should Care

Germany's new government under Chancellor Merz marks a seismic shift — with big implications for Central Europe. At our recent roundtable, experts unpacked what's ahead:

The End of the "Grand" Coalitions?

- ◆ Germany's new two-party coalition under Chancellor Merz is barely holding a majority — and the far-right AfD is now the largest opposition force. A third of Germans voted for anti-system parties.
- ◆ Traditional parties therefore must deliver tangible results or risk irrelevance

Big Bets on Defence

- ◆ Merz rewriting the fiscal rulebook, pledging €1 trillion+ to rearm and modernize Germany

The Franco-German-Polish Engine?

- ◆ Planned visits to Paris and Warsaw hint at a Weimar Triangle revival.
- ◆ The message: Central Europe is not a junior partner.

Geopolitical Wake-Up Call

- ◆ Strategic autonomy is the buzzword — but the U.S. remains an essential partner *for now*
- ◆ Whether it's in defence, energy, or enlargement, Germany's decisions will ripple across Central Europe.

Our members on social media

[Centre for Euro-Atlantic Integration and Democracy](#)



[EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy](#)



[Center for Eastern Studies \(OSW\)](#)



[GLOBSEC Policy Institute](#)



[Hungarian Institute of International Affairs \(HIIA\)](#)



[Institute of International Relations Prague \(IIR\)](#)



[Slovak Foreign Policy Association \(SFPA\)](#)



[The Polish Institute of International Affairs \(PISM\)](#)



What is the ‘Think Visegrad in Brussels’ project?

In the first half of 2016, the Think Visegrad platform members agreed on the idea proposed by the EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy, to create a common representation office in Brussels. The main motivation for it is the need to encourage debate on issues of common interest to the EU and the V4 and explain the positions of the V4 to a wide audience. We would like to project an image of constructive partners, to explain the dynamics of the debates within our regions and to highlight our active contributions to EU policy-making. With this view and with the aim to boost discussions specifically on the Czech Republic and the EU, EUROPEUM has opened its Brussels office in January 2016.

The project run in the second half of 2016 and consisted of many interesting and successful events. The second part of the project was approved in June 2017 and continued until the end of the year. Project has been continuously running since 2018.





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