



# Newsletter

## Think Visegrad in Brussels

December 2025



### In this newsletter

#### Think Visegrad in Brussels:

##### Europe 2025

- | Bulgaria in focus
- | To fund or not to fund?
- | New government in CZ
- | Europe and Belarus

#### From our members

- selected publications
- future conferences

#### Our members on social media

#### What is Think Visegrad?

### ✨ Happy New Year! ✨

Welcome to the **December 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.

For more, follow us on [Facebook!](#)

### Europe in December 2025:

**Bulgaria in focus | To fund or not to fund? | New government in CZ | Europe and Belarus**

## BG Bulgaria in Focus

📍 Sofia | 26 November – 11 December

Nationwide protests erupted in Bulgaria after a new budget proposal by the Zhelyazkov government, which eventually led to its resignation. While the **controversial budget was the main motivation** for the start of the protests, their nature changed into broader resistance against corruption. In its final days, the protests in Sofia were attended by **more than 50,000 Bulgarians** (some sources estimating up to 100,000 – 110,000 protesters), **making them the largest protests in years.**

Bulgaria has had long-term political instability, undergoing seven early elections in just four years. **Zhelyazkov government took office on 16 January 2025** and resigned on 11 December the same year, after being in power for little over 11 months. The upcoming parliamentary elections, whose exact date remains to be set, will be the 8th parliamentary elections since 2021.

Nonetheless, despite political instability, Bulgaria can pride itself on two achievements vis-à-vis the EU. Just as it started the year 2025 by entering the Schengen Area together with Romania, it opened a **new chapter in 2026 by moving into the Eurozone.**

## BY Europe and Belarus

📍 Minsk | 9 – 13 December

Belarus, arguably the closest ally of Russia on the continent, continues to be a destabilising factor for EU and NATO members alike.

On 9 December, **Lithuania declared a nationwide emergency** after it noted that Belarusian smuggling balloons threatened its civil security. The smuggling balloons have been active for two months before the emergency declaration, and are considered by Lithuania as a hybrid attack. In 2025, **Lithuania recorded 613 incursions**, which affected 320 flights. Similarly, Poland's border continues to be destabilised by targeted migration from Belarus.

There are some arguments that the EU and European countries' policy towards Belarus has been counterproductive, as **it only makes Belarus more dependent on Russia**, with the EU losing all leverage. Nevertheless, Lithuania and Poland, countries which neighbour Belarus and are frequently destabilised because of the country's actions, understandably do not want to engage with Lukashenko's regime.

The US continues to engage with **Belarus, leading to the Belarusian release of 123 prisoners.** The prisoners were mostly nationals of Belarus, political prisoners, and opposition activists, but also included citizens of countries such as Ukraine, the UK, the USA, Australia, Latvia, Japan, and Poland. The vast majority of the released prisoners were deported to Ukraine, and the rest to Lithuania. In exchange, Belarus enjoyed the lifting of the American embargo on potash fertilisers imposed in 2021.

## CZ New Government in the Czech Republic

📍 Prague | 15 December

The **new Czech government** was appointed by the Czech president, Petr Pavel, in mid-December. The declaration of the new government was highly anticipated after a several-week-long stand-off between the president and the leader of the winning party.

The elections, which took place in October 2025, were **won by Andrej Babiš's party ANO** – a party which is joined by SPD and Motorists in coalition. While Babiš returns to his position of prime minister after 4 years in the opposition, both SPD and Motorists are newbies in government structures. The three-party coalition holds a majority of 108 seats (out of 200).

According to predictions and statements of the new representatives, it is expected that the **Czech government will focus mostly on domestic policy**, with a passive external action.

## UA EU EU Member States Agree on €90 Billion Loan for Ukraine After Tense Negotiations

📍 Brussels | 18–19 December

In December, all governments of the member states of the **EU stood before a decision whether to use frozen Russian assets to help Ukraine** in its defence against Russia. The highly anticipated negotiations in the EU Council took place in the second half of the month in Brussels, with high anticipation and knowledge that their outcome would set the tone for the future of the whole continent and especially the future of Ukraine.

The results of these negotiations were neither great, nor terrible. Ultimately, the member states agreed on **providing Ukraine with a €90 billion interest-free loan financed through joint EU borrowing on financial markets**. This loan will need to be repaid by Ukraine only after receiving reparations from Russia, and if not, the frozen Russian assets will be used. The loan should cover two-thirds of the crucial external financial assistance to Ukraine for 2026–2027, with the expectation that other allies of Ukraine will cover the rest.

This agreement was hard to reach for multiple reasons. First, **Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary only agreed to the loan under the condition of being exempt from providing financial guarantees**. Furthermore, Belgium was against the use of the frozen Russian assets, which are held mostly in Belgium, as it feared possible retaliation, arguing it would be seen as confiscation.

In this **December 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 2026!**

## From Our Members: Selected Publications



**Katarína Schachtschneider**

**Between Control and Contradiction: The V4 in the Age of the EU Migration Pact and Labour Shortages**

**Tamás Csiki Varga**

**From REARMing to SAFETY: Defence Capability Development Trends of the V4**



**OSW**

CENTRE FOR EASTERN STUDIES  
OSRODEK STUDIÓW WSCHODNICH

**Zuzanna Krzyżanowska**

**One step forward, one step back – a year of the Turkish-Kurdish peace process**

**Jan Nowinowski**

**North Macedonia: European Integration at a Crossroads**



**GLOBSEC**  
IDEAS SHAPING THE WORLD

**Donald Bowser**

**Russian Organised Crime and Links to Hybrid War in Europe**

INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL  
RELATIONS PRAGUE

**Frederica Cristani**

**Human Rights as a Tool for Justifying State Policies: The HRJust Project Presented Key Findings**



**PISM**

POLSKI INSTYTUT SPRAW MIĘDZYNARODOWYCH  
THE POLISH INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

**Przemysław Biskup**

**Post-Brexit Paradoxes of Britain's Legal Immigration Policy**

**Piotr Dzierżanowski**

**Marcin Przychodniak**

**Scenarios for the EU's Reduction of Economic Dependence on China**



**Magyar Külügyi Intézet**  
Hungarian Institute of International Affairs

**Sándor Seremet**

**Angelina Zsófia Nagy**

**The "Belarusian Balcony" – an Opportunity for American Transactionalism, a Shackle on European Political Thinking**

**Ruslan Bortnik**

**The Potential Extension of New Start: Global (In)Stability Ahead?**

## Future Events



# PISM

## 🚩 New Northern Frontiers: High North and Baltic Sea Security in a Transatlantic Context

📅 29 January 2026

🕒 14:30–16:15 (doors open at 14:15)

📍 Embassy of Sweden in Washington, D.C.

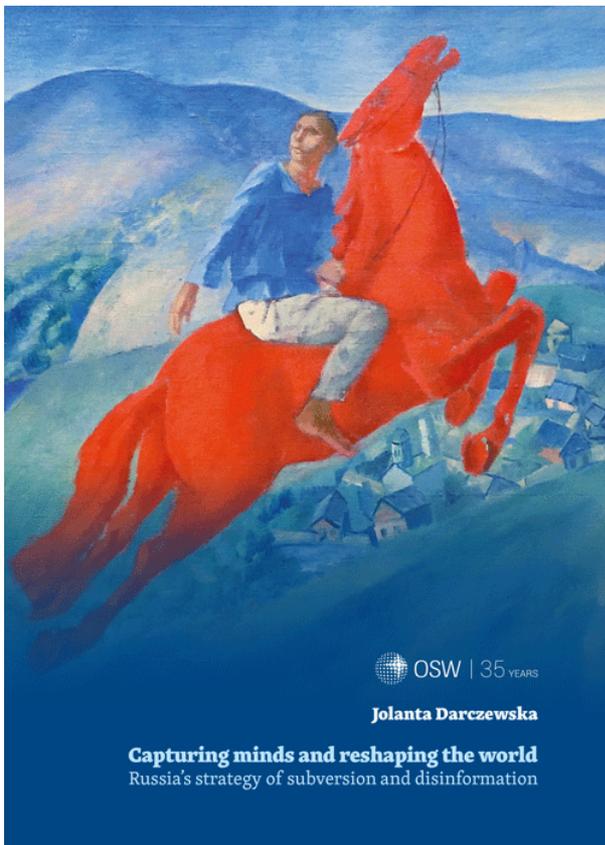
🌐 Language: English

How are the High North and the Baltic Sea reshaping transatlantic security? 🌍

Join leading experts to discuss the growing strategic importance of these regions **amid Russia's war in Ukraine**, increased militarisation in the North, and emerging hybrid and cyber threats.

The discussion will explore **what these shifts mean for NATO security** and transatlantic cooperation 🌐.

## Reading Tips



### 📖 Capturing Minds and Reshaping the World: Russia's Strategy of Subversion and Disinformation

by Jolanta Darczewska

The report focuses on **Russia's wartime narrative** and its historical and cultural context. It highlights methods used away from the battlefield, such as **psychological pressure and propaganda**. It follows the development of the war narrative. The author introduces the role of siloviki, military elites whose strategic culture emphasised **preserving imperial influence**.

Published in **December**.

## EU Careers and Traineeships: Stay Informed

### **Interested in a career in the EU?**

If you are **considering working or doing a traineeship in EU institutions**, there is a reliable source worth following.

*The **Tvoříme Evropu** newsletter provides clear and up-to-date information on:*

- **EU career opportunities** and EPSO competitions,
- **traineeships and internship programmes**,
- job openings in EU institutions and agencies,
- practical guidance on how to prepare and where to start.

The content is **available in Czech** and is based on official EU sources, making it a useful tool for anyone who wants to stay informed and not miss important deadlines.

 If an EU career is on your radar, the **Tvoříme Evropu newsletter is a smart first step**: <https://tvorimeevropu.cz/newsletter>



## 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.





Co-funded by  
the European Union

EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy  
Avenue de Broqueville 40, 1200 Woluwe-Saint-Lambert  
Bruxelles

You can find more information about GDPR under [this link](#).

In case you do not wish to subscribe to this newsletter anymore, [click here](#).

©2025 Institute for European policy EUROPEUM.

All rights reserved.

**Think Visegrad in Brussels Newsletter | December 2025**