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text

March 2025

NEWSLETTER

Think Visegrad in Brussels

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Welcome to the **March 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 2025 : Defence, Competitiveness and Energy Security

"What we invest in defence is how we value our defence"

Kallas, HR for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy – 19.03.25

Von der Leyen Commission – First 100 Days, Evaluated

'Hard power is the name of the game'

The second von der Leyen Commission is determinedly completing its checklist ahead of the 100-day mark.

Key Milestones:

- **Economic Competitiveness:** Competitiveness Compass released January 2025 as a roadmap to enhance economic security.
- **Global Partnerships:** Achieved breakthrough in Mercosur Trade Agreement, strengthening international alliances.
- **Youth Engagement:** 23 commissioners conducted Youth Policy Dialogue, emphasising the importance of involving younger generations in policymaking.
- **Defence and Security:** New 'Security College' unveiled, European commissioners will receive frequent security briefings and intelligence reports

White Paper for European Defence Readiness 2030, 19.03.25

"The only way we can ensure peace is to have the readiness to deter those who would do us harm"

White Paper presented by von der Leyen outlining how Europe can finance a major defence ramp up, a symptom of the paradigm shift in European defence and security.

Key Takeaways:

Spending, collaboration, innovation & deterrence

- **Massive Defence Spending Increase:** €150bn funding proposal through SAFE instrument, projection of €800bn defence spending within four years.
- **Boosting EU Defence Industry:** Through joint procurement and technology investment
- **Strengthening Ukraine Defence:** A key part of European Security
- **Enhancing Military Mobility and Infrastructure:** For rapid crisis response
- **Deepening EU-NATO Cooperation:** Maintaining a strong transatlantic bond even as Europe takes responsibility for its own defence.

NEWS FROM THE V4:

Polish President Andrzej Duda met with NATO Secretary General **Mark Rutte** in Brussels 6.03 to discuss security, support for Ukraine, and the need for increased Allied defence spending. Poland's **significant contributions** were praised. Meanwhile, on 12.03, **Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk** met with Turkish leaders in Ankara, urging Turkey to play a key role in **facilitating peace talks** between Russia and Ukraine.

On 6.03 **Slovak and Czech Presidents**, Peter Pellegrini and Petr Pavel met in the hope of addressing tensions in bilateral relations and foreign policy divergences. Meanwhile, the Czech Republic is lobbying the EU to **fund Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL)** after U.S. financial support was cut.

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT – Key Debates

"White Paper on the Future of European Defence," 11.03.25

"The direction of travel is clear: a Europe with more responsibility for its defence" – Adam Szlápka, President-in-Office of the Council

- Calls for a major boost in military spending, including the €800 billion ReArmEU plan.
- EU leaders emphasised the need for continued financial and military aid to Ukraine.
- Plans to expand Europe's military-industrial base and reduce reliance on non-EU suppliers.
- Divided opinions on whether Europe should strengthen ties with NATO or push for full defence independence.
- Concerns over funding, bureaucratic hurdles, and the balance between defence and social spending.

"Accelerating the phase-out of Russian gas and other Russian energy commodities in the EU," 12.03.25

"Energy is at the heart of geopolitics" – Dan Jørgensen, Member of the Commission

- Russian oil imports have dropped from 25% to 3%, and gas reliance has fallen from 45% in 2021 to 19% in 2024.
- Some MEPs criticised delays in fully phasing out Russian gas by 2027, demanding immediate action.
- While some stressed the need for full independence through renewables and nuclear energy, others warned against rising energy costs and industrial decline.
- Concerns were raised about Russian energy being resold via third countries, undermining sanctions.
- The debate reinforced the EU's REPowerEU plan, emphasising renewables, alternative suppliers, and energy efficiency.

In this **March 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

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PISM

PÓLSKI INSTYTUT SPRAW MIĘDZYNARODOWYCH
THE POLISH INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Romania: new presidential election without Georgescu

Kamil Caľus

The EU's gas market in 2025: Russian gas, new US policy, and strategic uncertainties

Agata Łoskot-Strachota

Transformation of Ukrainian transport system and its perspectives for the EU integration

Sandra Baniak

A Paper Tiger or a Game-Changing Project: European Defence Industrial Strategy and views from Central Europe

Timotej Kováčik

Slovakia Remains Dependent on Russian Energy

Łukasz Ogrodnik & Tymon Pastucha

Ukraine Political Scene Facing Uncertainty

Maria Piechowska

›INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS PRAGUE



Magyar Külügyi Intézet
Hungarian Institute of International Affairs

Common Fears, Common Opportunities? Czechia and Norway in the changing international context.

Mark Galeotti & Others

Five Reasons for Direct Negotiations Between the EU and Russia

Ramachandra Byrappa

Our Members: Future Events

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SAVE THE DATE

Lecture with Dr Dulyapak Preecharush called **Sino-American-Russian Geopolitical Rivalry in Southeast Asia**

The Southeast Asian region has witnessed a dynamic geopolitical competition among the world's "great powers" - the US, China, and Russia. These three states played a vital role in regional rivalry in the Cold War era. Today, they are all seeking to extend their influence in this region. In this lecture, the audience will learn about the great power rivalry in Southeast Asia.

8 April 2025 | Prague, Czech Republic

SAVE THE DATE

23rd Annual Review Conference on the Foreign and European Policy of the Slovak Republic

SFPA will host host MPs, MEPs, and experts from Slovak think tanks to discuss Slovakia's foreign policy consensus, EU reform, and key security challenges, including NATO's regional role.

15 April 2025 | Bratislava, Slovakia

EUROPEUM: Event Highlights & Key Takeways



On **March 17th**, the Brussels Office of EUROPEUM co-organised with IRSEM Europe a public event entitled **'European Defence at a Crossroads: Can the EU Build a Stronger Defence Industry?'**



Key Takeways:

- ◆ **Stronger Together** – Greater European defence autonomy is essential, but collaboration must outweigh competition.
- ◆ **Closing the Gaps** – Urgent investment in joint procurement, innovation, and scaling up Europe's fragmented defence industry.
- ◆ **Reality Check** – Over-reliance on U.S. security is risky; Europe must build resilience amid shifting transatlantic dynamics.
- ◆ **Strategic Priorities First** – Budget increases are important, but defining clear defence goals must come first.
- ◆ **Beyond Hardware** – Defence isn't just about weapons—cybersecurity, social media resilience, and strategic communication matter too.

Our members on social media

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



[EUROPEUM Insitute for European Policy](#)



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



[GLOBSEC Policy Institute](#)



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[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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