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May 2025

## NEWSLETTER

# Think Visegrad in Brussels

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Welcome to the **May 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 : Reset, Realign, Rebuild



## Germany's Confidence Crisis

### Merz's First Day Marks Political Sensitivities

*Friedrich Merz appointed as Germany's new Chancellor*

What was intended to be a moment of political stability in Germany took an unexpected turn:

- **Merz Falls Short in Initial Parliamentary Vote:**

In a departure from **established post-war parliamentary practice**, Friedrich Merz did not secure the necessary majority in the first round of the Bundestag vote for Chancellor.

- **Successful Outcome in Second Parliamentary Vote:**

While Merz was confirmed in a **second-round ballot** later the same day, the initial result highlighted underlying tensions within the governing coalition and raised early questions about the strength of his parliamentary support.

- **Broader consequences:**

The episode highlights early questions regarding the cohesion of the new coalition and has prompted reflection on Germany's capacity to reassert its leadership within the European framework—a role some observers viewed as **less prominent** during Olaf Scholz's tenure.

### A Firmer Migration Approach from Germany's New Government

*Germany's new administration is moving swiftly to introduce a more restrictive migration policy.*

- **Increased border presence within Schengen:**

Thousands of officers have been deployed to **reinforce border controls**, including within the Schengen Zone. The government frames this as a necessary response to current pressures, though legal experts have raised questions about its compatibility with EU law.

- **Tightened asylum procedures:**

The measures include rejecting certain asylum applications directly at the border, drawing attention to both the legal basis and potential humanitarian consequences.

- **Legal justification under Article 72 TFEU:**

The German government invokes Article 72 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, which permits exceptions on grounds of public security. The legal interpretation, however, remains the subject of debate.

## Post-18 May Outlook: What the Results Mean for Brussels

*Elections across Romania, Portugal, and Poland shake up the European political landscape.*

### Romania – A Shock Turn Toward the Center

- **Backdrop:**

Originally scheduled for December 2024, Romania's presidential race was brought forward amid allegations of **Russian interference**, after far-right independent Calin Georgescu unexpectedly led the first round.

- **Election Recap:**

- *1st Round (May 4):* Pro-EU centrist **Nicușor Dan**, Mayor of Bucharest, trailed in second place.
- *2nd Round (May 18):* **Dan** stunned the nation with a **surprise victory** over far-right challenger George Simion.

- **What's Next?:**

**Nicușor Dan** pledges to keep Romania **aligned with the EU and NATO**.

Portuguese PM António Costa welcomed the result as "**a strong signal**" of Romania's European commitment.

## Portugal – Electoral Momentum for the Right

- **Portugal's Legislative Elections Yield a Plural but Fragmented Outcome**

The **centre-right AD coalition** (PSD/CDS) emerged as the leading force in the election, securing **86 seats** in parliament with **32.10%** of the vote. The **Socialist Party** (PS, centre-left) and the **far-right Chega** both obtained 58 seats, with **23.38%** and **22.56%** of the vote respectively, based on the final count in the national constituencies.

- **Why It Matters:**

The rise of the far-right Chega party marks the first time a **third party** has gained significant momentum, showing rapid growth over the past two election cycles.

## Poland – A Narrow Win for PiS Allies

Since 2023, Donald Tusk's pro-democracy Civic Coalition has faced resistance from a presidency still aligned with PiS.

- **Presidential Election:**

- 1st Round: Pro-EU candidate Rafał Trzaskowski led.
- 2nd Round (June 1): PiS-backed Karol Nawrocki pulled out a razor-thin win.

- **Implications:**

Nawrocki is expected to continue President Duda's veto strategy, limiting the Civic Coalition's **reform agenda**.

## **From Brexit to Reset?**

*For the first time since Brexit, EU leaders sat down with UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer at Lancaster House to bury old wounds and chart a new future. With global challenges mounting, both sides appeared willing to move past 2016 and face today's new geopolitical realities—together.*

### Key Takeaways:

- **Defence & Security Cooperation**

The summit's central focus was on opening the door for **UK companies** to participate in **major EU defence contracts** and joint procurement initiatives. The discussions also led to formalised cooperation in areas such as **hybrid threats, cybersecurity**, and the **protection of critical infrastructure**.

- **SPS Alignment – Market Reconnection**

The UK is moving closer to a **Swiss-style deal** with the EU, after a new agreement was announced at the UK-EU Summit in London. It grants unprecedented market access for a non-

announced at the UK-EU summit in London. It grants unprecedented market access for a non-EFTA country, reduces regulatory barriers in key sectors, and includes a **12-year fisheries deal**. The arrangement opens a new chapter in cooperation without crossing UK red lines on the single market or free movement.

- **Youth Mobility Deal Stalls**

There were high expectations for progress on a bilateral youth mobility agreement, but discussions remain at the **rhetorical stage**, with no concrete breakthrough achieved so far.

## EU Adopts New Strategy for the Black Sea

*"The Black Sea is at our doorstep" – Marta Koss, Commissioner for Enlargement*

In a firm **geopolitical move**, the EU has unveiled a new strategy to transform the Black Sea, a region which has become a security hotspot since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, into a zone of stability, opportunity, and resilience. The strategy identifies **five countries** as key players in the region and calls for closer cooperation with them: *Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova, Ukraine, and Türkiye*.

### The Strategy Rests on Three Pillars:

- **Security & Resilience**
  - Establishing a Black Sea Maritime Security Hub
  - Enhancing maritime safety
  - Supporting regional demining cooperation
- **Sustainable Growth**
  - A dedicated Connectivity Agenda to boost transport, energy, and digital corridors
  - Strengthening Europe's link to Central Asia via the South Caucasus
- **Climate & Preparedness**
  - Addressing war-related environmental damage
  - Expanding the blue economy
  - Improving climate adaptation for coastal communities

This initiative complements the **Global Gateway**, **ProtectEU**, and the **Eastern Partnership**, reinforcing the EU's broader geopolitical strategy to enhance regional resilience.

In this **May 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



**PISM** | POLSKI INSTYTUT SPRAW MIĘDZYNARODOWYCH  
THE POLISH INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Ideological consolidation of the alliance: the Russia-China summit

**Witold Rodkiewicz**

Sham dialogue: the Istanbul talks between Ukraine and Russia

**Marek Menkiszak & Tadeusz Iwański**

Policy Brief | The EU's Tactical Approach and 'Conditional Engagement' with China in the Context of a Challenging Transatlantic Relationship

**Marcin Przychodniak**

Position Paper | Civil society and industry demand measures to boost the use of recycled steel in the automotive sector

**Filip Křenek**

Poland and France Sign Treaty on Enhanced Cooperation and Friendship

**Amanda Dziubińska & Artur Kacprzyk**

U.S. and Ukraine Agree Revised Minerals Deal

**Paweł Markiewicz & Tymon Pastucha**



**GLOBSEC**  
IDEAS SHAPING THE WORLD

Private Technology for Resilience: Geopolitical Changes and Government-Tech Partnerships

**Alena Kudzko & Alexandr Burilkov**

Global Offensive: Mapping the Sources Behind the Pravda Network

**Jakub Kubš**



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

Not Just an Observer, but a Key Player – Hungary's Role in Security Cooperation within the Organization of Turkic States

**Dávid Biró, Sándor Seremet & László Vasa**

Battle of Presidents: Volodymyr Zelensky vs. Petro Poroshenko

**Ruslan Bortnik**

## Our Members: Future Events

>INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL  
RELATIONS PRAGUE

[Learn more](#)

## SAVE THE DATE

### INTERFER Project Training Workshop

Join IIR for a two-day workshop on open-source intelligence (OSINT). Led by renowned researchers Ruslan Trad and Eto Buziashvili, the workshop will focus on **Russia-related security threats, disinformation, and digital influence** operations.

Participants will gain hands-on experience with OSINT tools and techniques, including:

- Identifying and analysing disinformation campaigns
- Investigating manipulative content on platforms like Facebook, TikTok, and Telegram
- Tracking covert influence efforts in shifting geopolitical contexts

**18 – 19 June 2025 | Prague, Czech Republic**

## EUROPEUM: Future Events



### SAVE THE DATE

#### The Future of Transatlantic Relations: Between Unity and Uncertainty

Expert discussion

This public event aims to bring together **Brussels-based stakeholders, European policymakers,** and **experts** from across the EU, including the **V4 region**, to reflect on the future of the transatlantic relationship and how Europe can **collectively shape its strategic trajectory.**

Join us for this timely discussion as leading experts and policymakers explore these pressing issues and assess Europe's readiness to build a stronger, more integrated, and strategically autonomous defence framework.

**10-11:30am, 19 June 2025 | Brussels**

#### Registration

#### Speakers:

- **Rebecca Christie**, Senior Fellow, **Bruegel**
- **Danielle Piatkiewicz**, Deputy Chief Operating Officer, **Alliance of Democracies Foundation**, Research Fellow, **EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy**
- **Botond Feledy**, Senior Research Fellow, **Centre for Euro-Atlantic Integration and Development**
- **Łukasz Ogrodnik**, Visegrad Group and Austria Analyst, **Polish Institute of International Affairs**
- **Matúš Halás**, Senior Researcher, **Institute of International Relations Prague**

#### Moderation:

- **Martin Vokálek**, Executive Director, **EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy**

### 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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