

V4+Ukraine security cooperation: limits of possible (Ukrainian perspective)

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Abstract

Since the start of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, the security environment has changed dramatically in the CCE region. Both Ukraine and Visegrad countries faced the necessity to revisit security policies and security models.

New National Security Strategy of Ukraine referred to the V4 as a subregional forum which might be utilized by Ukrainian authorities to enhance the national security level in the foreign policy domain. At the same time, there are three approaches to deal with the V4 and its members. First, Poland is considered to be a strategic partner with deep cooperation on security issues. The second strategic level is connected to the wider context of Intermarium, created with the participation of the V4 and Baltic states. And their approach is focused on the V4 itself drawing on energy security, the EaP policy development and potential membership of Ukraine in the Visegrad Group.

Ukraine benefited most from the V4 support in years of 2014-2016. The CEE countries were among the first to declare respect to the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine, its European aspirations.

Both bilaterally and as a group of four, the V4 countries have delivered tangible support to Ukraine. Although being split on the issue of EU's sanctions against Russia, so far they remain united in helping Ukraine to fight the Kremlin-led hybrid war.

The V4+Ukraine high-level format was on the rise in 2014-2015 but in the cooperation scaled down in 2016-2017 in political terms. Among the reasons, there are internal divisions between V4 members on a number of issues, as well as the worsening of some political bilateral tracks with Ukraine.

To activate the V4+Ukraine format, especially in security and defense domain, some homework has to be done by Ukraine. In terms of political and expert level communication with V4, more initiative and interest are needed to restore trust and foster defense and security cooperation.

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Think Visegrad – V4 Think Tank Platform is a network for structured dialog on issues of strategic regional importance. The network analyses key issues for the Visegrad Group, and provides recommendations to the governments of V4 countries, the annual presidencies of the group, and the International Visegrad Fund.

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1. Visegrad Group in the Foreign Policy and Security Strategies of Ukraine

In order to understand the role and place of the Visegrad Group in the foreign policy and security guidelines of Ukraine, it is necessary to refer to Ukrainian strategic documents in these spheres. Unfortunately, nowadays Foreign Policy Strategy of Ukraine as a unified document does not exist, which highly complicates the construction of the foreign policy coordinates system. There are also no regional strategies that would formulate official Kyiv's vision of the priorities in relations with Central European states, for instance.

The existing strategic documents include the National Security Strategy of Ukraine and the Military Doctrine of Ukraine. In 2015, as a result of Russia's aggression against Ukraine these strategic frameworks for defining military and security policies have undergone significant changes. The approaches to the construction of the national security and defense system have been considerably revised.

The reference to V4 can be found in the updated National Security Strategy of Ukraine, which was adopted in May, 2015. Thus, this document indicates that when formulating and implementing the national security policy in the foreign policy sphere, Ukraine can use the Visegrad Group's format to ensure the protection of the territorial integrity and state sovereignty, as well as to implement economic and energy projects and initiatives. In ensuring economic security context, the document provides for the approximation of the social standards of Ukraine to the level of Central and Eastern European countries – the EU members, in order to achieve the economic criteria necessary for Ukraine to become an EU member¹.

Yet another strategically important security cooperation sphere is energy. The Strategy for Sustainable Development "Ukraine-2020" and the Energy Strategy-2035 indicate the need to integrate Ukraine's energy systems into the European Network of Transmission System Operators for Gas (ENTSOG), which includes our immediate neighbors from the V4 countries².

¹ Указ Президента України від 26 травня 2015 року № 287/2015 «Про рішення Ради національної безпеки і оборони України від 6 травня 2015 року «Про Стратегію національної безпеки України», <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/287/2015>

² УКРАЇНСЬКА ПРИЗМА: ЗОВНІШНЯ ПОЛІТИКА 2015, <http://prismua.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/UA-PRINT.pdf>

The guidelines for building relations between Ukraine and the V4 countries, as well as the formats of official Kyiv's cooperation with the Group, can in a way be outlined from the annual address on the internal and external state of the country from the President of Ukraine to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (the Parliament). This speech, provided for by the Constitution of Ukraine, in these indicates the significant directions of development of internal and external policies.

The Visegrad Group itself as a regional initiative is not mentioned directly in the address of the President of Ukraine, which is quite understandable considering the volume of the speech and a wide range of issues covered by the Head of the state. However, almost all addresses since 2014 mention directly or indirectly individual countries of the Group. Almost all of the speeches contain references to Poland and Slovakia successful experience in conducting rapid and effective reforms, which are now being implemented in Ukraine. In the year 2015, Petro Poroshenko referred to the EU countries, which helped provide Ukraine's energy security via reverse supplies of natural gas³. Among these partners were Poland, Slovakia, and Hungary. The assistance of experts from Poland and Slovakia in conducting economic reforms was pointed out by the President of Ukraine in the Address to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine "On the Internal and External Situation in Ukraine in 2017"⁴.

The additional extended information on the vision of the relations with the V4 may be provided by analytical reports by the National Institute for Strategic Studies (NISS) as an annex to the above-mentioned addresses. Of course despite of a comprehensive approach, these reports do not reflect the real status of constructing the state foreign policy vector. They rather point to the dynamics of expert perception of the relations state, that in turn creates the basis for foreign policy formulation. However, it is particularly these reports that may shed light on shifting Ukraine's approaches to the strategy and tactics of cooperation with the Visegrad Group.

For example, it is interesting to follow the change in perception of relations with the Visegrad Group countries and the use of the initiative itself. In 2013, it was all about strengthening economic cooperation and cross-border contacts. Among priority areas with untapped potential experts pointed out:

³ Щорічне Послання Президента України до Верховної Ради України «Про внутрішнє та зовнішнє становище України в 2015 році», 4 червня 2015 року, <http://www.president.gov.ua/news/shorichne-poslannya-prezidenta-ukrayini-do-verhovnoyi-radi-u-35412>

⁴ Послання Президента України до Верховної Ради України «Про внутрішнє та зовнішнє становище України в 2017 році», 7 вересня 2017 року, <http://www.president.gov.ua/news/poslannya-prezidenta-ukrayini-do-verhovnoyi-radi-ukrayini-pr-43086>

energy cooperation in the context of energy resources transit and modernization of the Ukrainian gas transportation system; development of international transport corridors; joint activities in the field of environmental safety and environmental protection; cross-border cooperation⁵. Such "economization" of relations was also explained by the fact that the V4 countries in 2013 conditioned the support of European integration of Ukraine with termination of the selective justice practice by the regime of Viktor Yanukovich⁶.

The Revolution of Dignity and Russian aggression have shifted the emphasis radically. In 2014, on the background of the search for new formats of Ukraine's cooperation in foreign and security spheres, in the Analytical report NISS experts marked the need for continuing active cooperation with already established regional associations, such as the Visegrad Group.

Regarding the cooperation with the V4 and its individual countries the analytical reports for 2015-2017 contain three distinct levels that complement each other and create some conditional hierarchy of approaches:

- 1) Strategic partnership with Poland, deepening of bilateral relations in the security and defense fields;
- 2) Formation of the Baltic-Black Sea security system (Intermarium) in the wider regional context based on cooperation of Central European countries (the countries of the Visegrad Group and the Baltic States) with Ukrainian participation;
- 3) Actual deepening of cooperation with the Visegrad states, which, according to experts, "is gradually being transformed from a socio-cultural instrument of subregional cooperation into an alliance of military and political forces with an international Visegrad battle tactical group and an initiative in the energy security sector."

However, already at this stage, the Ukrainian side has noted some contradictory approach of the V4 countries: on the one hand, there's the restrained position of individual states regarding the introduction of EU sanctions against Russia, and on the other hand, there's the full support of Ukraine's European integration intentions and readiness to assist in the process of reforming based on the Visegrad

⁵ Про внутрішнє та зовнішнє становище України в 2013 році : Щорічне П ослання Президента України до Верховної Ради України. - К. : НІСД, 2013. - 576 с. http://www.niss.gov.ua/content/articles/files/Poslannia_2013-c7954.pdf

⁶ Вишеградська група: Україна має виконати умови для асоціації з ЄС, 18.05.2013, <https://www.unian.ua/politics/789040-vishegradska-grupa-ukrajina-mae-vikonati-umovi-dlya-asotsiatsiji-z-es.html>

countries experience. This position has prompted experts to suggest continuing further regional partnership with Slovakia and Hungary within the framework of the Visegrad Group initiative, thus probably motivating the impossibility of transition to more strategic bilateral relations as, for example, between Ukraine and Poland.

Among the further Ukrainian priorities in the cooperation the following were mentioned: the promotion of the V4+ initiatives within the framework of the Eastern Partnership policy; potential accession of Ukraine to the Visegrad Group; energy cooperation on diversification of energy supplies sources. In general, further deepening of relations with the V4 states remained the priority of Ukraine's regional policy.

It should be especially emphasized that the issue of Ukraine joining the V4 as a full-fledged member, which was yet again announced by the President of Ukraine at the end of 2014 and was mentioned in the NISS analytical reports in 2014-2015, was on the agenda of consultations of foreign policy departments. However, the change of political elites in Poland in 2015, which were the engine for the idea itself, as well as the cool attitude towards the idea of a number of V4 capitals, did not allow to reach the final stage of multilateral negotiations on the accession of Ukraine to the Visegrad Group, with its further transformation into the "Visegrad Five".

In 2017, in Ukraine's strategic plans the idea transformed into associate membership. At present, the indicated status is not conceptually formed by the Ukrainian side, which does not make it clear which spheres precisely are meant to be strengthened through such an integration process.

2. Development of Security Cooperation in the V4 + Ukraine Format

2.1 Beginning of Cooperation in the Security and Defense Field

The cooperation between the Visegrad Group and Ukraine, which can be considered more or less systematic, began in 2004-2005 when the Group assumed obligations to help neighboring countries in accordance with the V4 Kroměříž Declaration. In essence, this document established the foreign policy ambitions of the Group members to contribute to the process of the European Union enlargement. V4 separately stressed the desire to formulate and implement EU foreign policy towards the Eastern and Southeastern European countries. V4 agreed to strengthen cooperation with its closest partners in the region of Central Europe, as well as to engage in specific areas of common interest in the wider region

with third countries, their associations and international organizations⁷. Exactly on this stage the format V4 +Ukraine was launched.

The first political meeting in this format was held in Poland in 2005, when the Head of the Ukrainian government, Yulia Tymoshenko, and her colleagues from the Group discussed the issues of Ukrainian European integration and energy cooperation⁸. And already in early January of 2006, Defense Minister A. Gritsenko took part in a meeting of V4 defense ministries heads, where he spoke on Ukrainian need for expert support on the way to the Euro-Atlantic integration⁹. Since 2007, the meetings of Chiefs of General Staff in the format of V4+Ukraine have become traditional. The joint military exercises of the Visegrad countries and Ukraine were conducted periodically.

Already in 2007, the idea of creating an EU combat tactical group from the Visegrad countries, where Ukraine was also supposed to be invited, was discussed. In 2013, during a regular Chiefs of General Staff meeting in Poland, the Ukrainian side was informed that they were invited to join the Visegrad Battlegroup (V4 EU BG).

Among other security cooperation spheres, the parties showed interest in border cooperation, airspace control, officers training at the headquarters of V4 countries, joint military exercises, language and professional exercises¹⁰.

2.2. Transformation of V4 Security and Defense Policy

Ukraine indirectly became one of the preconditions for the Visegrad Group security policy. In the energy sector as a result of V4 significant material losses from the Russian-Ukrainian gas conflict in 2009, the Group countries made a joint position to strengthen solidarity within the EU and ensure

⁷Declaration of Prime Ministers of the Czech Republic, the Republic of Hungary, the Republic of Poland and the Slovak Republic on cooperation of the Visegrad Group countries after their accession to the European Union (12 May 2004), <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/documents/visegrad-declarations/visegrad-declaration-110412-1>

⁸ “Україна, безумовно, буде членом ЄС”. Розмова з Юлією Тимошенко та Марекком Белькою, прем'єр-міністрами України та Польщі, <http://www.ji-magazine.lviv.ua/kordon/ostpolitik/2005/lg13-06.htm>

⁹Вишеградська четвірка підтримує Україну на шляху до НАТО, 14.08.2007, <https://ua-reporter.com/uk/content/vishegradska-chetvirka-pidtrimuie-ukrayinu-na-shlyahu-do-nato>

¹⁰УКРАЇНУ ЗАПРОСЯТЬ ДО БОЙОВОЇ ГРУПИ “ВИШЕГРАДСЬКОЇ ЧЕТВІРКИ”, 17.04.2013, https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-world/1483821-ukrayinu_zaprosyat_do_boyovoi_grupi_vishegradskoi_chetvirki_1819103.html

diversification. In 2010, the Energy Declaration, adopted at the Budapest V4 Summit, outlined the areas of energy cooperation in the Central European region in the V4+ format.

In 2011-2013, at the V4 level, some military and security initiatives were launched. For example, in 2013, at the level of V4 Heads of Government, the following proposals for military cooperation were approved:

- Creation of a joint EU Visegrad Battlegroup, which was supposed to take the combat duty in the first half of 2016;
- Preparing a Long-Term Vision for a defense cooperation strategy;
- Strengthening cooperation in the field of armed forces trainings and exercises in the V4 format;
- Research of the possibility of developing a common approach to in-depth cooperation in defense planning at the V4 level¹¹.

Further work continued in March of 2014, when defense ministers adopted decisions that further strengthened cooperation:

1) three directions of the Long-Term Vision are formulated:

- capacity building, procurement and cooperation;
- creation of multinational units;
- joint training and exercises¹².

2) the MoU on the V4 EU BG creation was signed;

3) a framework document for deepening cooperation in defense planning was prepared.

The Budapest Declaration of June 2014 made the next step in strengthening the V4 defense capabilities, including the NATO eastern flank strengthening. The Declaration also indicates that it is Russia's aggression against Ukraine that makes it necessary to review the current Group members' defense policy¹³.

¹¹Budapest Joint Statement of the Visegrád Group Heads of Government on Strengthening the V4 Security and Defence Cooperation, October 2013., <http://www.msz.gov.pl/resource/b68e234a-47c7-4672-925b-dc1921ba2f70:JCR>

¹²Long-term Vision of the Visegrad Countries on Deepening Their Defence Cooperation, 2014, http://www.visegradgroup.eu/documents/official-statements#_2014

¹³Budapest Declaration of the Visegrad Group Heads of Government on the New Opening in V4 Defence Cooperation, June 24, 2014, <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/2014/budapest-declaration-of>

In April of 2015, in line with the Long-term Vision, the Action Plan on V4 Defense cooperation was adopted, which includes nine areas for enhanced military cooperation and the establishment of accordant institutional frameworks¹⁴.

2.3. Strengthening Cooperation in 2014-2016

In general, the intensity of cooperation in security and defense field between the Visegrad Group and Ukraine intensified along with the growth of integration processes in the defense sphere within the framework of initiative itself.

However, the real support and cooperation between the V4 and Ukraine in the security sector starts only after 2014, when Ukraine became a victim of Russia's aggression. The political position of the V4 countries on supporting territorial integrity and sovereignty, the non-recognition of the Crimean annexation by Russia, along with the support for the implementation of the Association Agreement between the EU and Ukraine in 2014-2015, were significant. These countries were among the first to make statements in support of Ukraine, as well using the existing V4+ format they were able to involve in the discussing on the situation in Ukraine and encouraging to join the pro-Ukrainian statements such states as Austria, Great Britain, Switzerland, the countries of the Western Balkans, as well as Germany and France.

It can be noted that since July, 2014 until June, 2015 during the presidency of Slovakia in the Visegrad Four, the matters of strengthening the V4+Ukraine format, on the one hand, and security and defense issues, on the other hand, have been in the focus of the Group. Bratislava payed particular attention to maintaining a high level political dialogue with Ukraine in order to stimulate the democratic and structural reforms. Furthermore among the main priorities of the Slovak presidency in the V4 were the issues of energy security, common V4 foreign and security policies, defense cooperation, transport, etc.

¹⁴Joint Communiqué of the Visegrad Group Ministers of Defence, 2015, <http://www.visegrad-group.eu/calendar/2015/joint-communicue-of-the>

During the V4+Germany+Ukraine Summit in Bratislava, President of Ukraine P.etro Poroshenko managed to reconcile the format of the permanent interaction between V4 and Ukrainian Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Defense Ministers¹⁵.

Due to the support of the Group states, in particular Slovakia and Hungary, in 2014-2015 the official Kyiv was able to withstand Russia's pressure in the energy sector. In November, 2015, Ukraine succeeded in abandoning the purchase of natural gas from Russia.

In June, 2016, the participation of the Ukrainian Armed Forces in the EU V4 EU BG was formalized. In Brussels, signed a note on the accession of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine to the Technical Agreement between the MoDs of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia regarding their cooperation within the framework of the V4 EU BG to ensure its readiness for the EU in the first half of 2016. Ukrainian participation in the alternation of the combat tactical group involved: the transport aircraft IL-76MD with the crew and a group of staff officers¹⁶.

In June, 2017, the Ukrainian delegation headed by the Chief of General Staff participated in the meeting of Chiefs of Staff in the format of the V4+the Baltic States+Ukraine for the first time¹⁷.

However, it should be noted that the cooperation pace in the V4+Ukraine significantly slowed down between 2016 and 2017, especially at the political level. On the one hand, this can be explained by focusing of the Visegrad Group efforts on EU internal issues and seeking compromise solutions in relation to Russia. But on the other hand, the situation may be explained by the reduction of the political dialogue between Ukraine and the individual Group members. Coincidentally the V4 presidency in 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 was held by Poland and Hungary, respectively, which currently put forward a number of claims to Ukraine in the bilateral relations. The situation is aggravated by the fact that Budapest has announced blocking of European and Euro-Atlantic aspirations of Ukraine on all international platforms, including in the EU and NATO.

¹⁵Президенти України і країн "Вишеградської четвірки" домовилися про новий формат співпраці, 16 листопада 2014, <https://ukr.segodnya.ua/politics/prezidenty-ukrainy-i-stran-vyshegradskoy-chetverki-v-bratislave-dogovorilis-o-novom-formate-sotrudnichestva-569698.html>

¹⁶Стан співробітництва між Україною та Європейським Союзом в оборонній сфері, <http://www.mil.gov.ua/content/other/Україна-ЄС.pdf>

¹⁷Україна і Вишеградська четвірка: новий формат поглиблення співпраці, 24 червня 2017, <http://www.mil.gov.ua/news/2017/06/24/ukraina-i-vishegradska-chetvirka-novij-format-pogliblennya-spivpraczi/>

Moreover, a certain cooling down in relations with the V4 countries could be the result of Kyiv's incomplete understanding of cooperation mechanisms, interests and opportunities of partners in the Group.

Informally, experts and diplomats state that the official Kyiv is focused on the cooperation with the great powers (USA, Canada, Germany, Great Britain, France), while neglecting the small countries that also provide political and material assistance to Ukraine.

3. Conclusions

Non-governmental experts from the V4 countries who studied the security cooperation between the V4 and Ukraine indicate, that despite the differences in the positions on foreign policy priorities among the countries of the Visegrad Group and their attitudes towards Ukraine, especially in the context of Russian aggression, the experience of the last three years clearly shows solidarity in the issue of assistance to Ukraine. Thus the support of the Ukrainian security and defense sector can further be a common platform for the V4 activity. However, Kiev has to as well somewhat reconsider its approaches to cooperaten with the Visegrad Four. The Ukrainian side needs to develop a Strategy on cooperation with the countries of the Group at the regional and bilateral levels. Currently such a division is not always defined in political declarations and documents. This does not allow the optimal use of potential V4 tools and sometimes prevents from pragmatic building of relations with individual member states.

First of all, in building relations with the Visegrad Four, Ukraine should abandon the idea of gaining full or associate membership in this organization. Several main obstacles to the implementation of such an initiative can be specified. First, Ukrainian authorities have no clear understanding of the content of such membership, especially the associate. No other country benefits from such an associated status, despite the wide geographical range of V4 international cooperation.

The current state of the bilateral relations between Ukraine and Hungary, indicates the impossibility in the near future to hope for a complete restoration of the V4+Ukraine format to at least to the level of 2014-2015. At the same time, participation in multilateral formats V4+Ukraine+third countries can have positive results and level off the hostility of some of the Group's states to the official Kyiv's policy.

Understanding the consensus format of the V4 work, Ukraine may display restrained optimism about the upcoming Slovak presidency in the Group, which will begin in mid-2018. First, according to expert surveys, the official Bratislava is the most optimistic about V4 perception as an influential player in the EU. Secondly, it is exactly the Slovak side that promotes the issues of reforming the security and defense sector, energy security and energy efficiency in its relations with Ukraine. And these sectors specifically are currently of the greatest interest to Kyiv.

4. Recommendations

1. The Ukrainian leadership should appoint a Commissioner for V4 Affairs at the level of deputy minister or head of the profile department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to conduct consultations with representatives of the Slovak Foreign Affairs Ministry on the development of priorities and specific formats of cooperation in the field of security during the presidency of Slovakia in the second half of 2018.
2. Kyiv should invite to the Slovak side to return to the initiative of holding four sectoral round tables annually, thematically secured by the V4 countries. It was this initiative, launched during the last Slovak presidency in 2014-2015, which contributed to the strengthening of cooperation in the V4+Ukraine format, including in the security sphere.
3. Practical implementation of the agreements reached at the meeting of the Presidents of the V4+Germany+Ukraine in Bratislava in November, 2014 on the meetings of the Ministers of Defense of the Visegrad Four and Ukraine. Ukrainian initiative on the format of heads of national security and defense councils meetings deserves particular attention.
4. The V4+Ukraine+the Baltic States format can be particularly useful in terms of military-political cooperation, considering the already existing forms of cooperation in this region, as well as strategic aspirations of Ukraine.
5. Potentially promising may be the format V4+Germany+Ukraine, taking into account that Germany is considered to be the main partner for the countries of this region.
6. In addition to the general V4+EaP format of cooperation for six partner countries from the Eastern Europe and Southern Caucasus, the launch of new formats V4+3 (Georgia,

Moldova and Ukraine) or V4+2 (Georgia and Ukraine) could potentially be useful, depending on the directions of cooperation. Such meetings and consultations can thematically focus on security and defense issues, joint exercises.

7. Nowadays, with regard to Hungarian-Ukrainian relations and Hungary's declarations on the blocking of the political level of Ukraine's contacts with NATO and the EU, as well as on other international global and regional platforms, a similar approach will also be applied to V4 political decisions. Such a trend is already being observed. Although Budapest points out its readiness to continue cooperation at expert and technical level. In this context, until the Ukrainian-Hungarian relations are normalized, the Ukrainian side should focus on establishing the expert channels of communication and cooperation in the V4+Ukraine format. In addition to the traditional annual heads of the general staff meetings that will continue, we can also propose initiating the Ukrainian participation in the V4 meetings at the level of: heads of the departments of defense planning and international cooperation of the Ministries of Defense, advisers on security issues of heads of government, etc.
8. There is the practice of individual Visegrad Group countries to publish open analyzes and reports of special services and intelligence agencies on existing elements of the Russian hybrid war on the territory of the respectful countries. This practice can be extended to other V4 countries, but it can also be especially useful for Ukraine, given a volume of information gathered on the forms and methods of Russian subversion on the territory of Ukraine. It is advisable to hold a working meeting of special services representatives in the V4+the Baltic States+Romania+Ukraine (or Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia) format. Such meeting could establish the periodic reports taking into account the level of information, that can be made public without compromising each country's national interests. Realization of this initiative in practice could significantly weaken the Kremlin's position in the region and increase the resilience to hybrid threats.
9. For Ukraine, joining the European Union's and NATO institutional network as an observer or a full-fledged participant, if this option is foreseen for a third country, is likely to be a prospect. For example, it may be about joining NATO or EU Centers of Excellence. For example, Japan joined Cooperative Cyber Defense Center of Excellence (NATO CCD COE) in the status of Contributing Participant possible for the third countries. By this time Only Austria, Finland and Norway enjoyed such status in the organization. Taking into account the fact that the Vysegrad Group is among the 17 full-fledged members of the

Center and Slovakia is also one of the founding members, it is worth mentioning the possibility of V4 activities for promotion of Ukrainian participation in it.

10. The International Visegrad Fund as one of the few joint institutions of the Visegrad Group is a powerful tool in the development of socio-cultural links between the V4 countries themselves, as well as for the dissemination of the B4+ format. In the context of strengthening the information stability and security of the V4 and Ukraine, special attention should be paid to strengthening the cooperation between media in the B4+Ukraine format and their access to reliable and complete information. Organization of visits of Hungarian, Polish, Slovak and Czech journalists to Ukraine can help strengthen the Ukrainian information presence in the region. Given the fact that the lion's share of Russian narratives in the Visegrad countries is based on a distorted view of the situation in Ukraine, periodic visits by media from these countries to Ukraine and eastern regions of Ukraine can have a positive impact on the dissemination of truthful information in Central European countries.
11. Expert cooperation in the security field also requires enhancement. In this context, it would be useful to include Ukrainian think tanks dealing with international security issues to the Think Visegrad think-tank consortium. Such cooperation could consist of annual expert meetings of think tanks in the V4+ Ukraine format with the aim of discussing and working out the options of regional cooperation policy. In addition, it would be advisable to initiate the preparation of analytical documents with the participation of Ukrainian partners at the request of the V4 countries within the Think Visegrad consortium. Such a practice would bring closer the positions of the group and Ukraine, including the issue of forming a common security policy.
12. Separate attention should also be paid to the development of security training courses based on the experience of the V4 countries for Ukrainian universities. These training could help to unify the approaches to identifying security threats, their research and the search for common solutions on the international level.