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**COOPERATION OF THE VISEGRAD  
GROUP AND THE THREE SEAS  
INITIATIVE IN THE FRENCH  
POLITICAL DISCOURSE**

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The year 2021 marks the thirtieth anniversary of cooperation within the Visegrad Group (V4) and five years since the first summit of the Three Seas Initiative (3SI). The activities of both groups have primarily an international dimension, so an interesting question is: How are the Visegrad Group and the Three Seas Initiative perceived by our foreign partners, including France? The aim of this paper is to answer the following questions:

**(Q1) IS THE ACTIVITY OF THE VISEGRAD GROUP AND THE THREE SEAS INITIATIVE PRESENT IN THE POLITICAL DISCOURSE IN FRANCE?**

If so,

**(Q2) WHAT IS THE ASSESSMENT OF THIS ACTIVITY?**

A preliminary analysis of the websites and social media of French relevant political groups<sup>1</sup> (Front National, Les Républicains, La République en Marche, Union des Démocrates et Indépendants, Partie Socialiste, Partie Communiste Française), the most important French political institutions (Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires Étrangères, Premier Ministre, Président de la République Française)<sup>2</sup>, as well as selected expert centers in France (Institut de L'International and Strategic Relations (IRIS), the Fondation pour l'Innovation Politique (FON – DAPOL), Terra Nova, Fondation Jean-Jaures)<sup>3</sup> indicates that the issues related to the functioning of the Visegrad Group or the Three Seas Initiative are not often discussed there.

Most of the publications devoted to the Visegrad Group refer to the reasons for its establishment, while at the same time emphasizing that from the very beginning the Group's interest was primarily cooperation aimed at facilitating and accelerating the integration of the Visegrad Group countries with the European Union and NATO. The publications consider it a success that the four former satellites of the Soviet Union: Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia / the Czech Republic and Slovakia very quickly reestablished ties with the Western Europe and the United States, which led to the integration of these countries with NATO in 1999 (Slovakia in 2004), and then with the EU during the biggest enlargement in May 2004<sup>4</sup>.

It's a known opinion that after the initial goal had been achieved, cooperation between the four members of the Visegrad Group began to wane, making the bloc's utility less obvious. However, the meetin-

gs of the Member States were held continuously and regularly, which still allowed the V4 countries to present a common position on issues related to certain European policies. We are also finding opinions that when it comes to the "internal" aspect of the Visegrad cooperation, the results are positive, albeit not spectacular. Indeed, the V4 is a regional integration project that has contributed to the improvement of relations between the four countries concerned and has not been interrupted despite more or less intense tensions that have arisen over the past thirty years<sup>5</sup>.

Difficult situations for the partners from the Visegrad Group include, among others, tensions between the Czech Republic and Slovakia related to the collapse of Czechoslovakia and between Slovakia and Hungary around the Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros dam or conflicts around the Hungarian minority in Slovakia, which provoked criticism from Viktor Orbán against the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The tendency of the Czech president Václav Klaus to pursue the policy of a "lonely rider", clearly reluctant to tighten cooperation "in the spirit of Visegrad" is also recalled<sup>6</sup>.

At the same time, the aid and support that Slovakia received in 1993–1995 in its successful attempt to make up for the delay in the process of integration with NATO are positively assessed. Other achievements of the Group's member states are also recalled: the implementation of the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA), joint actions against the USSR in the field of dismantling the Warsaw Pact, and in particular accomplishing the withdrawal of the Soviet army from the territory of the former members of that treaty. The actions of the V4 mem-

<sup>1</sup> Relevance in the electoral function. <https://www.rfi.fr/en/tag/front-national/> ; <https://republicains.fr> ; <https://en-marche.fr> ; <https://www.parti-udi.fr> ; <https://www.parti-socialiste.fr> ; <https://www.pcf.fr>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/> ; <https://www.gouvernement.fr/en/prime-minister> ; <https://www.elysee.fr/la-presidence/les-presidents-de-la-republique>

<sup>3</sup> The mentioned think tanks are one of the most recognizable French expert centers, and their activity is recorded in the prestigious Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program (TTCSP) ranking; <https://www.iris-france.org> ; <https://www.fondapol.org> ; <https://tnova.fr> ; <https://www.jean-jaures.org> <https://institutdelors.eu>

<sup>4</sup> J. Iwaniuk, *Le Groupe de Visegrad ou l'émancipation de l'Europe centrale*, „Le Monde”, 6 avril 2016, [https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2016/04/20/le-groupe-de-visegrad-ou-l-emancipation-de-l-europe-centrale\\_4905439\\_3232.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2016/04/20/le-groupe-de-visegrad-ou-l-emancipation-de-l-europe-centrale_4905439_3232.html)

<sup>5</sup> J. Iwaniuk, *Polonais et Hongrois contre Tchèques et Slovaques : le groupe de Visegrad en crise*, „Le Monde”, 25 février 2021, [https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2021/02/25/polonais-et-hongrois-contre-tcheques-et-slovaques-le-groupe-de-visegrad-en-crise\\_6071131\\_3232.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2021/02/25/polonais-et-hongrois-contre-tcheques-et-slovaques-le-groupe-de-visegrad-en-crise_6071131_3232.html)

<sup>6</sup> S. Kauffman, *Zuzana Caputova : La question migratoire est le problème de toute l'UE*, "Le Figaro", 27 juillet 2019, [https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2019/07/27/zuzana-caputova-la-question-migratoire-est-le-probleme-de-toute-l-ue\\_5494116\\_3210.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2019/07/27/zuzana-caputova-la-question-migratoire-est-le-probleme-de-toute-l-ue_5494116_3210.html)

ber states in the final phase of accession negotiations with the EU are assessed very positively, even referred to as "coordinated cooperation". It is also noticed that cooperation within the V4 has resulted in a number of initiatives in various fields: a contribution to the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) by establishing an EU battle group (Visegrad Battle Group) in 2012 or the creation of the Visegrad Patent Institute in 2016. The establishment of the International Visegrad Fund (IVF) in 2000 was also assessed very well, stressing that the allocation of the annual budget of EUR 8 million for scholarships and research grants and the promotion of cross-border cooperation between four member states is a great initiative. The V4 countries were especially praised for the fact that IVF finances projects related to culture, education, youth mobility, and cooperation in the field of tourism. The Platform of European Remembrance and Conscience is considered an emblematic program, co-financed by the Visegrad Fund, and highly appreciated ideas are the launch of the English-language website [visegradinfo.eu](http://visegradinfo.eu), devoted to news from the V4 countries, or the creation of the so-called *Central European Art Database*, an online portal about visual arts from the V4 countries, which catalogs works of art (paintings, sculptures, performances, art installations) created after 1945<sup>7</sup>.

Critical comments appear, however, when the Visegrad Group states position themselves as a kind of counterweight to "Brussels". This mainly refers to the activities initiated by France and Germany. However, if the V4 really wanted to become a major player on the European or even global scene, it should have a unified stance on the most important matters, and this is not always the case. Some French commentators believe that it is even difficult to find important political areas in which the Visegrad countries have the same or at least similar views and have converging interests. And so it is calculated that in economic matters, not the same sectors are a priority for all V4 members. For example, the automotive industry,

both in terms of share of GDP and total employment, is clearly more important for the Czech Republic and Slovakia than for Hungary and Poland, for which agriculture is a key economic sector. An additional and at the same time significant economic difference is the attitude to the common European currency. After all, only Slovakia has adopted the euro, the Czechs show an attitude of "expectation and pragmatism tinged with skepticism" in this matter, while the Polish and Hungarian governments are not interested in adopting the common European currency, adding that it is mainly for ideological reasons. Among the important discrepancies within the Visegrad Group, that are noticed in France, is the attitude of the V4 member states towards Russia. This problem is even mentioned as the only cause of dissonance in the currently good Polish-Hungarian relations. There is also an opinion that among all the V4 countries, only Poland defends the idea of a European perspective for Ukraine. Similarly, in the case of the anti-German discourse, it is argued that it is mainly used by the Polish government<sup>8</sup>. Additionally, an element that does not fully bind the countries of the Visegrad Group is their attitude to faith and religion, because while they play a fundamental role in social and political life in Poland and Slovakia, they are much less prevalent in Hungary and the Czech Republic<sup>9</sup>. According to another opinion these differences mostly result from the political history, geopolitical situation and socio-economic processes that have taken place in these countries throughout history. Additionally, they are reinforced by other fundamental constraints of the Visegrad Group, in particular the lack of balance between Poland and three other countries in terms of demographics. Poland is inhabited by about 60% of the population of this group, which may only fuel fears of Polish leadership, and even domination, unacceptable to other V4 countries. The imbalance resulting from the fact that Poland belongs to the so-called "large" member states, and since 1991, within the Weimar Triangle, has been cooperating with France and Germany. This issue was especially ra-

<sup>7</sup> D. Debomy, *Un peu, beaucoup ... modérément: les opinions publiques et l'UE dans les pays de Visegrád*, Policy paper de l'Institut Jacques Delors, 2018, <https://institutdelors.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/OpinionspubliquespaysdeVisegrad-Debomy-avril2018-1.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> M. De Langlois, *Le groupe de Visegrad, à la recherche d'une identité régionale*, "Tribune" No. 1264, <https://www.defnat.com/e-RDN/vue-tribune.php?ctribune=1366>

<sup>9</sup> T. Buron, *Le groupe de Visegrad, une autre Europe*, <http://www.revueconflits.com/visegrad-une-autre-europe-thierry-buron/>

ised during the presidency of Nicolas Sarkozy, who spoke of a "group of large, and therefore important states" in the EU, in which Poland would have its place and therefore would remain a privileged country in relation to other members of the V4<sup>10</sup>. The situation is also recalled when in 2004, during the institutional debate at the intergovernmental conference, Poland allied with Spain and did not seek allies among the other V4 member states. Similarly, in the case of one of its most significant initiatives in the EU, the Eastern Partnership, Poland turned to Sweden, not to partners from the V4. These separate activities on the EU forum are perceived as factors because of which, the Visegrad Group may be considered weak. Judging from the activities of the V4 Group, one may notice that it is primarily in opposition to the EU because of the need to push through its interests. The most spectacular examples were the famous "no" to the migration crisis solution or the obstruction of the appointment of Frans Timmermans to the position of the head of the European Commission<sup>11</sup>.

An important and currently discussed topic is the issue that qualifies as an attempt to "ideologize" the Visegrad process by the Hungarian and Polish governments. This may be noticed in Poland and Hungary proposing certain projects that are perceived as a kind of "cultural counter-revolution" and concern issues of worldview or professed values. It is similar in the case of promoting "illiberal democracy" as a political concept or, finally, a vision of "Europe of Homelands" in opposition to the existing European project, the manifestation of which is the present European Union<sup>12</sup>. Although these proposals may find supporters among some political forces in the Czech Republic or Slovakia, these countries are reluctant to involve themselves in the deepening ideological confrontation between

"Brussels" and Warsaw and Budapest. The recent situation with the conditionality mechanism is given as an example. And even if Hungary and Poland expect some kind of indulgence, and even sympathy or understanding in this matter from their partners from the V4 group (or even other countries of Central and Eastern Europe, especially Croatia or Slovenia), they do not receive real support.

The topic of the so-called conflict in the face of the migration crisis, mainly the problem with the V4 countries' acceptance of refugee limits under the so-called process of relocation of refugees within the EU. This conflict, as noted by French commentators, has been oriented around the ideological discourse led by the V4 leaders, which boils down to: rejecting "multiculturalism", popularizing the concept of European identity built mainly on Christian values, and at the same time reminding about the threats related to the security of EU citizens. Such a narrative undoubtedly gave the V4 member states the status of "depository of a different concept of the European Union"<sup>13</sup>. These proposals of the Visegrad Group were explained primarily by the fact that the V4 member states are different from almost all Western European countries. They showcase a strong ethnic and cultural homogeneity, without a colonial past, with citizens in exile rather than immigrants. Therefore, they are waiting for solutions to be developed that will defend national sovereignty and not strengthen the asylum and migration policy. The misunderstanding and opposition to non-European immigration also resulted from the fact that attempts were made to give it an ideological dimension, although in reality it remained a political problem<sup>14</sup>. There is also a certain inconsistency in the position of the Visegrad Group countries towards the migration crisis, recalling that in the 1990s the Czech Republic accepted several thousand

<sup>10</sup> H. Mahony, *Sarkozy warns Visegrad countries not to make a habit of pre-summit meetings*, "euobserver.com", 4 November 2009, euobserver.com/news/28928

<sup>11</sup> A. Faure, *Qu'est-ce que le groupe de Visegrád ?*, 22 juillet 2020, <https://www.touteurope.eu/vie-politique-des-etats-membres/qu-est-ce-que-le-groupe-de-visegrad/>

<sup>12</sup> *Kaczynski et Orban veulent une "contre-révolution culturelle" dans l'UE*, [https://www.rtf.be/info/medias/detail\\_kaczynski-et-orban-vivent-une-contre-revolution-culturelle-dans-l-ue?id=9398053](https://www.rtf.be/info/medias/detail_kaczynski-et-orban-vivent-une-contre-revolution-culturelle-dans-l-ue?id=9398053)

<sup>13</sup> T. Buron, op. cit.

<sup>14</sup> P. Bélich Nabli, *L'Europe et la « crise migratoire », une question de valeurs*, 29 juin 2018, <https://www.iris-france.org/115450-leurope-et-la-crise-migratoire-une-question-de-valeurs/>

refugees from the former Yugoslavia, a large part of whom were Muslims. Their adoption took place without the slightest controversy and difficulties. In 2015, Andrej Babiš rejected the idea of a compulsory quota system, but at the same time suggested in the media that the Czech Republic could accept refugees, arguing it with the lack of unskilled labor force in the country<sup>15</sup>. It is also important to say that the V4 group was not able to present an alternative proposal to solve the migration crisis.

A similar observation about the lack of a common position of the V4 Group appears in relation to other issues, for example the amendment to the 2018 directive on posted workers, which was supported by the Czech Republic and Slovakia, while Hungary and Poland voted against it. Nevertheless, it has to be emphasized that the V4 group and, more broadly, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe are characterized by a certain common sensitivity related to similar historical experiences, which implies a feeling that Western European countries apply "double standards" towards Central European citizens or even treat them as "Europeans of the second category" questioning their full adherence to Western civilization. Yet Central Europe tends to see itself - to quote Milan Kundera – as the "kidnapped West". Unfortunately, the studied materials emphasize the fact that this mutual misunderstanding was to some extent reinforced by accession to the EU, because too often this process was presented by decision-makers from Western Europe as an "enlargement" of the EU, and not as a "unification" of Europe<sup>16</sup>.

Another topic that appears in the French discourse on the Visegrad Group is the question of its future. Among other things, the problem of potential radicalization, that unifies the V4 countries and that may pose a threat to the stability of the European Union, is noticed. An example is leaving the EPP group in the European Parliament by politicians from

the Fidesz party and their likely membership in the ECR group, which already includes Polish MPs from PiS and in which there is also a significant group of Slovak and Czech MPs. Such decisions may additionally distract the countries of the Visegrad Group from the European "mainstream". In addition, there are many other internal factors that could favor radicalization and, at the same time, increase populism in the V4 countries. On one hand, issues related to the internal situation of the V4 countries are mentioned, such as: economic problems, corruption, poor management of the health crisis caused by the pandemic, weakness of civil society, citizens' dissatisfaction with systemic transformations or the growing crisis of political parties. On the other hand, there is also a lack of interest in the problems of Central European countries and a lack of understanding of these problems on the part of the European Union, and this may also contribute to the strengthening of anti-European attitudes<sup>17</sup>.

In conclusion, it should be pointed out that attention in the French discourse is drawn to poor cooperation caused by a divergence of interests between the Visegrad Group and other EU countries; it is also worth noting that sometimes the apparent unity of the V4 Group is largely motivated by the fact that these countries do not have other partners in the EU, who would be interested in their support and cooperation. Therefore, they turn to neighboring countries with similar historical experiences. In addition, there is a strong asymmetry in the Visegrad Group itself: the Czech Republic and Slovakia communicate much better with each other than with the remaining V4 countries, and Poland and Hungary interact with each other much more effectively than with the other two members of the Group. This is explained, among other things, by the fact that the Polish-Hungarian relationship has been strengthened especially since 2015, due to ideological kinship and the sense of the existence

<sup>15</sup> *Czech companies struggling with labor shortage*, 9 October 2019, <https://english.radio.cz/Bohem-companies-struggling-labour-shortage-8121115>

<sup>16</sup> T.Chopin, S. Maillard, J. Rupnik, L. Macek, *L'Europe d'après. Pour un nouveau récit de l'élargissement*, „L'Esprit”, Mai 2020, <https://esprit.presse.fr/actualites/sebastien-maillard-et-thierry-chopin-et-lukas-macek-et-jacques-rupnik/l-europe-d-apres-pour-un-nouveau-recit-de-l-elandissement-42754>

<sup>17</sup> D. Debomy, op. cit.



of common obstacles within the EU. The difficulty of the Visegrad Group in finding strong and stable alliances among other member states is well illustrated by the attitude of Austria, a country which in many respects seems to be a "natural" partner of the V4 among the so-called "First fifteen". While the Austrian government can sometimes express a close position or understanding to the proposals of the Visegrad Group, in particular on the issue of migration, it keeps its distance, placing itself between the Franco-German proposals and those from the V4<sup>18</sup>.

Statements of French politicians more and more often express the awareness of the lack of agreement between the Visegrad Group and other EU countries. This problem is considered to be a result of the frictions that emerged during the 2015 migration crisis. For this reason Angela Merkel met with the V4 leaders in Warsaw in August 2016 and Bratislava in February 2019, while Emmanuel Macron and his foreign minister increased the number of visits to Central and Eastern Europe. Emmanuel Macron's Speeches in Cracow<sup>19</sup> or Jean-Yves Le Drian's in Prague<sup>20</sup> focused on, as reads the French press, creating more balanced, more respectful and more transparent relations between France and the Visegrad countries. However, it is of course necessary to translate these declarations into visible actions that could result in wider and better cooperation between the V4 and France and Germany<sup>21</sup>. At the same time, comments appear that the Visegrad Group is facing another important challenge – adapting to the changes caused by Brexit. Great Britain turned out to be a "natural" partner and ally in several key issues: strong support for the transatlantic alliance, defense of the interests of non-euro area countries, preference for an intergovernmental approach, and a counterbalance to Franco-German influence. Therefore, the attitude of Central European

countries towards Great Britain, in the context of its exit from the European Union, was not unequivocal. On one hand, they supported Brexit because of their political and ideological sympathies, and on the other hand, it was clearly against their interests. Moreover, the V4 countries, and Poland in particular, were concerned about the rejection of the right to freedom of movement within the EU and the discourse stigmatizing Central European immigration, which then appeared in the British public debate. During the negotiations between the European Union and Great Britain, the group of V4 countries did not essentially break European unity. However, in connection with the withdrawal of Great Britain from the EU, there will be questions in France about new scenarios for the Visegrad Group. One of them is: will the V4 countries unite more to be more important in the EU? Or maybe the absence of the British supporter will make them look for new alliances that could loosen the relations between the V4 partners? This course of events may apply, for example, to Slovakia, which, as a member of the euro area, has always aspired to be a state of the so-called EU "hard core", which does not apply to the rest of the V4. An interesting reflection on the Visegrad Group is the opinion that after 2015, on one hand, there were well-deserved, negative assessments of European decision-makers and journalists about the activity of the V4 countries, mainly due to their "populist ideas", and on the other - that the criticism of the Visegrad Group countries was exaggerated because the situation of each of the V4 member countries was different and in fact did not differ much from the post-crisis situation, characteristic for the entire EU<sup>22</sup>.

In some French analyses on the V4, we can read that from the very beginning the Visegrad Group was an important initiative that played an important

<sup>18</sup> Report prepared by IIFOP for la Fondation Jean-Jaurès and l'Observatoire Conspiracy Watch, quoted in Le Monde of 7 January 2018, [http://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2018/01/07/les-theories-du-complot-bien-implantees-au-sein-de-la-population-francaise\\_5238612\\_3224.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2018/01/07/les-theories-du-complot-bien-implantees-au-sein-de-la-population-francaise_5238612_3224.html)

<sup>19</sup> *Discours du Président Emmanuel Macron devant les étudiants de l'Université Jagellonne de Cracovie*, 5 février 2020, [www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2020/02/05/discours-du-president-emmanuel-macron-devant-les-etudiants-de-luniversite-jagellonne-de-cracovie](http://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2020/02/05/discours-du-president-emmanuel-macron-devant-les-etudiants-de-luniversite-jagellonne-de-cracovie)

<sup>20</sup> [la.ambafrance.org/Discours-de-M-Jean-Yves-Le-Drian-ministre-de-l-Europe-et-des-affaires](http://la.ambafrance.org/Discours-de-M-Jean-Yves-Le-Drian-ministre-de-l-Europe-et-des-affaires)

<sup>21</sup> Speech by Emmanuel Macron in Pnyx, Athens, 7 September 2017 – <http://www.elysee.fr/declarations/article/discours-du-president-de-la-republique-emmanuel-macron-a-la-pnyx-athenes-le-jeudi-7-septembre-2017>

<sup>22</sup> T. Buron, op. cit.

role in Central Europe and it is inappropriate to treat it as the "enfant terrible" of the European Union since 2015. The analysis even suggests that both the European Union institutions and the EU member states approach the V4 and "manage the Visegrad" as if it was one of the many opportunities for contact and cooperation with the countries that make it up. At the same time, they understood that the activity within the Visegrad Group is one of many tools for the countries forming it to pursue their interests in the European Union or in relations with other countries in the world<sup>23</sup>. The paper also emphasizes the fact that the Visegrad countries are also involved in other initiatives and groups within the EU: Poland in the Weimar Triangle, Slovakia in the euro area, and the Czech Republic and Slovakia together with Austria, after signing the Slavkov Declaration, announced the creation of a new format of cooperation in Central Europe. In the conclusion of one of the comments, we can even read that the Visegrad Group is a project that should neither be underestimated nor overestimated, and that it is primarily important for maintaining stable relations and peaceful cooperation in the region, which is traditionally very sensitive. At the same time, it is also an essential partner for the rest of the EU. The V4 can also play a role in inspiring and helping other regions in Europe, such as the Western Balkans, and continue to support the Eastern Partnership agenda<sup>24</sup>.

It is interesting to observe that the Visegrad Group is not only an intergovernmental cooperation, but also a collection of initiatives and cooperation format for the development of the civil society, local democracy and education, because, as one can see, the Central European University was also an expression of the "spirit of Visegrad". Important civic projects include: the platform "VISEGRÁD + for Renewable Energy" established in 2019 or taking a public position by the authorities of Bratislava, Budapest, Pra-

gue and Warsaw on issues related to immigration, ecology, transparency of public affairs or the fight against populism<sup>25</sup>.

While the introduction to the report stated that the issue of cooperation of the Visegrad Group does not often appear in the French political discourse, in the case of the Three Seas Initiative, it should be noted that this is a topic even less frequently discussed by politicians, experts or the French media. We will find references to this international economic and political initiative on the occasion of its successive summits. Most often they read that it is an informal alliance of twelve Central and Eastern European countries, established on the initiative of Poland, which has the ambition to exert regional influence, both in the economic and geopolitical dimension. And the projects that are being implemented mainly relate to transport, energy and digitization policy<sup>26</sup>. Attention is also drawn to the interest in the Initiative on the part of the United States, which sees it primarily as a way of counteracting Russian and Chinese influence in the region. Questions are also asked whether the Three Seas Initiative has a chance to survive and actually play a significant role, especially in the context of emerging information that Bulgaria and Croatia are considering the purpose of participation in this Initiative. Although two other countries want to join the bloc: Ukraine and Moldova, their accession to the Three Seas Initiative will only be possible if they become EU members<sup>27</sup>. It is difficult to predict what the future of the alliance of the twelve EU states located near the Baltic, Black and Adriatic seas will be like. And there are no clear answers to the questions: Will this bloc have enough driving power to change the regional geopolitical landscape, and above all, will it be able to compete with Russia and China, which will probably defend their positions in the face of potential future actions of the Three Seas Initiative?

<sup>23</sup> M. De Langlois, op. cit.

<sup>24</sup> A. Faure, op. cit.

<sup>25</sup> *La Central European University quitte Budapest pour Vienne*, 17 septembre 2019, <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/politique-etrangere-de-la-france/diplomatie-scientifique-et-universitaire/veille-scientifique-et-technologique/autriche/article/la-central-european-university-quitte-budapest-pour-vienne>

<sup>26</sup> R. de Francqueville, *L'Initiative des trois mers: un remodelage de l'Europe centrale?*, 11 octobre 2021, <https://www.revueconflits.com/initiative-3-mers/>

<sup>27</sup> B. Cadène, *Les pays des "Trois Mers" esquissent un nouveau pôle d'attraction de l'Union européenne*, 25 octobre 2020,

<https://www.franceculture.fr/geopolitique/les-pays-des-trois-mers-esquissent-un-nouveau-pole-dattraction-de-lunion-europeenne>



Summarizing and answering the questions posed at the beginning of the report, it should be stated: Referring to the question (Q1) whether the activity of the Visegrad Group and the Three Seas Initiative is present in the political discourse in France, the issues related to the Three Seas Initiative are occasionally discussed in France. Also the activity of the Visegrad Group is not a particularly frequently raised topic, although the autumn of 2015 is an important turning point, followed by the number of publications and comments on the V4. When answering the question (Q2) about the assessment of the activity of both projects, it should be said that in the case of the Three Seas Initiative, due to the low interest in this alliance, we only find questions about the future of this Initiative, rather than assessing its activity. Meanwhile, the opinion on the Visegrad Group is ambiguous, and noticeably, the Group, which has been unknown to the international public for a long time, is gaining publicity. And although the Visegrad countries are still far from achieving their next goals, it is true that this format remains a useful platform to defend the interests of Central Europe vis-à-vis other EU states. At the same time,

the French political discourse recognizes that it would be beneficial for the entire European Union if the Visegrad Group became one of the most important leaders of European integration.

Finally, it is worth noting that in addition to the political, social and economic challenges faced by both the Visegrad Group countries and the Three Seas Initiative countries, it is important to strengthen their activity that will enable them to be more recognized internationally, not only among decision-makers, but also among the international community. It seems that in the current situation, the political elites of the V4 and 3SI member states should take care to promote their activities through, for example, greater presence in the media, both traditional press and social media, or even participation in debates organized by various expert centers interested in international issues.

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5. <https://www.parti-socialiste.fr> ;
6. <https://www.pcf.fr> ;

### II. Websites of the most important political institutions in France:

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