

Volumen 5 - Número 2 - Abril/Junio 2018

# REVISTA INCLUSIONES

REVISTA DE HUMANIDADES  
Y CIENCIAS SOCIALES

ISSN 0719-4706

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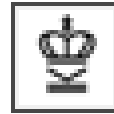
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ISSN 0719-4706 - Volumen 5 / Número 2 Abril – Junio 2018 pp. 82-93

**THE VISEGRAD GROUP – FROM EURO-IDEALISM TO PRAGMATISM**  
**EL GRUPO DE VISEGRADO – DEL EURO-IDEALISMO AL PRAGMATISMO**

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**Fecha de Recepción:** 11 de enero de 2018 – **Fecha de Aceptación:** 11 de marzo de 2018

**Resumen**

El propósito de este artículo es presentar el desarrollo de las relaciones del **Grupo Visegrad** hacia Unión Europea, su transformación del *euro-idealismo* al *pragmatismo*. Las principales tareas de nuestro objetivo son: revelar la influencia de la “*perestroika soviética*” en los procesos políticos en Polonia, Hungría y Checoslovaquia a finales de los años 80 del siglo XX; aclaración de los factores que influyen en la creación de la organización en el proceso de Integración Europea. Análisis de los documentos adoptados en sus foros, las opiniones de los principales políticos de los países del “**Grupo Visegrad**”, mostrar cómo, después de cuatro décadas el gobierno de un solo partido, los estados tienen una visión idealizada para su futuro en la UE. Después de pasar la euforia inicial de la membresía de la UE, el euro-realismo se convierte gradualmente en pragmatismo. Ellos esfuerzan por defender los intereses nacionales.

**Palabras Claves**

Grupo Visegrad – Euro-idealismo – Pragmatismo – Crisis migratoria

**Abstract**

The purpose of this article is to present the evolution in the attitude of the Visegrad Group to European Union (EU) from Euro-idealism towards pragmatism. It will be realized through the implementation of basic tasks - revealing the impact of soviet perestroika on political processes in Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia at the end of the 1980s; clarifying the factors that influenced the creation of the organization in the process of European integration of its members; analysis of the documents adopted at its forums, and the views of leading politicians from the Visegrad states. The analysis of the relations between the EU and the states of the Visegrad Group allows to conclude that the Euro-idealism that is characteristic of the period prior to Visegrad countries adoption in the EU is completely understandable after the four decades of one-party rule. Gradually, however, after passing the initial euphoria of EU membership, the Euro-idealism goes into pragmatism, the core of which is the desire to defend national interests.

**Keywords**

Visegrad Group – Euro-idealism – pragmatism – Migrant Crisis

## Introduction

The Visegrad Group is one of the stable regional organizations whose position on some of the important issues facing the European Union (EU), especially on the migration one, often raises the issue of crisis in its relations with Brussels. The answer to this question involves to accurately track the process of integration of Central European countries, taking into account various factors that influence it.

This article is based on research into the history of the Visegrad Group, which focuses on relations within the group and reveals the influence of both the economy and the personality of the leaders of the four countries on these relations<sup>1</sup>. Documents of the regional organization that reveal its position to the EU and its policy are also used<sup>2</sup>.

The purpose of this article is to present the evolution in the attitude of the Visegrad Group to EU from Euro-idealism towards pragmatism. It will be realized through the implementation of basic tasks - revealing the factors that influenced the creation of the organization in the process of European integration of its members; analysis of the documents adopted at its forums, and the views of leading politicians from the Visegrad states.

## Historical context for the founding of the Visegrad Group

After World War II Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia shared the common fate of the Soviet satellites. Their different historical heritage, however, differentiates them into

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<sup>1</sup> Любовь Шишелина, Вишеградская группа: этапы становления и развития, (Перспективы), (Lyubov Shishelina, The Visegrad Group: stages of formation and development, (Prospects)), [http://www.perspektivy.info/rus/nashe/vishegradskaja\\_gruppa\\_etapy\\_stanovlenija\\_i\\_razvitija\\_2014-08-20.htm](http://www.perspektivy.info/rus/nashe/vishegradskaja_gruppa_etapy_stanovlenija_i_razvitija_2014-08-20.htm) (23.11.2017); Алексей Дрыночкин, Экономические аспекты функционирования вишеградских стран в рамках ЕС, Вишеградская Европа, (ИЕ РАН, 2012) (Aleksey Drynochkin, Economic aspects of the functioning of the Visegrad countries within the EU, Visegrad Europe); Вишеградская Европа: откуда и куда? Два десятилетия по пути реформ в Венгрии, Польше, Словакии и Чехии. Под редакцией Л. Н. Шишелиной, (Москва: Весь мир, 2010) (Visegrad Europe: where from and where? Two decades on the path of reforms in Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, Ed. L. Shishelina (Moscow: Worldwide, 2010)); Центральная Европа в поисках новой региональной идентичности, (Москва: Институт славяноведения РАН, 2000), (Central Europe in search of a new regional identity, (Moscow: Institute of Slavic Studies RAS, 2000)); Игорь Орлик, Центрально-Восточная Европа: от СЭВ до Евросоюза, (Перспективы), (Igor Orlik, Central-Eastern Europe: from Comecon to the European Union, Comecon, (Prospects)) [http://www.perspektivy.info/rus/nashe/centralno-vostochnaja\\_jevropa\\_ot\\_sev\\_do\\_jevrosojuza\\_2010-07-12.htm](http://www.perspektivy.info/rus/nashe/centralno-vostochnaja_jevropa_ot_sev_do_jevrosojuza_2010-07-12.htm) (24.11.2017); Любовь Шишелина, Вишеградская группа в общеевропейском процессе, (Lyubov Shishelina, Visegrad Group in a European-wide process), [http://russiancouncil.ru/inner/?id\\_4=2732#top-content](http://russiancouncil.ru/inner/?id_4=2732#top-content) (3.12.2017).

<sup>2</sup> Declaration on Cooperation between the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, the Republic of Poland and the Republic of Hungary in Striving for European Integration, <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/documents/visegrad-declarations/visegrad-declaration-110412-2> (21.11.2017); Visegrad Group sends letter to EU Commission over Nord Stream pipeline, <http://www.thenews.pl/1/10/Artykul/244734,Visegrad-Group-sends-letter-to-EU-Commission-over-Nord-Stream-pipeline> (23.11.2017); Programme of the Polish Presidency of the Visegrad Group 1 July 2016 – 30 June 2017. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Poland, Warsaw 2016; Joint Statement of V4 Interior Ministers on the Establishment of the Migration Crisis Response Mechanism, <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/2016/joint-statement-of-v4> (23.11.2017).

the so-called Central European model of socialism, whose differences from the other two models - the Soviet and the Balkan ones - are mainly of civilization nature. The spiritual proximity of the Central European countries with the West - the Catholic religion, the overall scientific and cultural development, the influence of the Enlightenment and the subsequent development of positivism, formed a sense of individualism that remains alive even after the introduction of "the uniformed socialism". This determines the attempts of resistance in these states against the imposition of a foreign (Soviet) political and economic system - the Hungarian revolution in 1956, the Prague Spring in 1968 and the periodic protests in Poland, culminating in the establishment of the independent trade union "Solidarity" in 1980.

The M. Gorbachev's refusal of the "Brezhnev Doctrine" (because of the economic issue) removed the threat from intervention of the soviet army in every demonstration of independence, which is not cohered with Moscow. After the end of the financial and material subsidies for the soviet satellites, the obligatory conditional for monopole of the communist parties on the governance in these countries was eliminated. The new political course of the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union removed the foreign limitations for democratization in Eastern Bloc and allowed the tension, which was generated for decades to explode.

After the "Perestroika" in 1985 equaled the foreign policy situation for Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, the domestic factors – the communist elite, the economic state, which depended on the political factors, and the oppositional activity – became more influential for the development of political situation in these countries. They are connected one to another one, each of them influencing to a different extent on the social-political development in the Central-European countries.

In Poland, the difficult economic condition predetermined not only the tendency of the regime to discounts, but also the significant role of opposition. The politicians started to liberalize the system, trying to retain the state socialism, but the failure of their economic reforms reduced their authority. Understanding their disability to manage the situation and because of the pressure of the opposition, hardened in continuous struggles, they were forced to recognize their political enemies officially and to share the rule with them.

In Hungary, which was more stable economically, the main role for the changes was connected to the traditionally flexible state and party leaders. Developing untypical for Eastern Europe foresight, they first recognized the political pluralism and allowed the passive opposition to the power. For that reason, *Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party* controlled the real transformations longer than the other regimes in Eastern Europe and created conditions for the smoothest transition of the political system in the region.

For the illegitimate normalization regime in Czechoslovakia, which was based only on the soviet protection, the establishing of "Sinatra Doctrine"<sup>3</sup> deprived the governments in Prague of essential support. In spite of the best economic conditionals in Eastern Europe, the country was affected by the crisis of extensive development, what meant that the leaders violated the "social contract", established after 1968 – governments provided a

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<sup>3</sup> "Sinatra Doctrine" was the name that the Soviet government of Mikhail Gorbachev used jokingly to describe its policy of allowing neighboring Warsaw Pact states to determine their own internal affairs. The name alluded to the song "My Way" popularized by Frank Sinatra – the Soviet Union was allowing these states to go their own way.

high standard of living for citizens, in return for which they refused to participate in social and political life. After the reasons for loyalty to the “hardliners” disappeared and because of the catalyzing influence of the events in neighbor countries, the social powers in Czechoslovakia were released, which caused the destruction of the “old regime”.

Due to the different reaction of the ruling communist elites of the Soviet perestroika, the change of the state socialism is implemented in different ways. In Poland and Hungary, where reformers are the leaders, the system changes gradually, through reforms, which is why the British political scientist T. G. Ash introduced the term “refolution”<sup>4</sup>. The conservative regime of “the normalization” in Czechoslovakia, however, did not undertake reform efforts and was removed after the “Velvet Revolution” on November 17, 1989.

The fall of communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989 removed the artificially created boundaries on the continent and a perfectly logical fundamental foreign policy goal of the states from the region became the aspiration to join Euro-Atlantic structures.

### **Euro-idealism and the founding of the Visegrad Group**

The countries of the European Community did not remain indifferent to overcoming the division of the former Soviet satellites. In the final document of the Strasbourg session of EEC of December 1989 it is noted that the Community examines the ongoing in Eastern Europe changes as hope for the possibility of overcoming the schism in Europe. A new stage in the political cooperation with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe opened the extraordinary meeting of the European Communities in Dublin (June 1990) endorsing the document to establish “relations of association” with them.

Under the conditions of a complicated international situation - the Warsaw Pact has not been terminated yet, there is a conflict brewing in Yugoslavia, leaders of the three central European countries that are former dissidents clearly understand that they lack political experience and decide to combine their efforts to cope with the situation more successfully. The formation of the Visegrad is affected by four major factors: 1) the desire to eliminate the remnants of the communist bloc in Central Europe; 2) the desire to overcome the historical enmities among the states of Central Europe; 3) the belief that with joint efforts it will be easier to achieve the objectives set, i.e. to realize a successful social transformation and European integration; 4) the proximity of the ideas of the then ruling political elites.

On February 15, 1991 at the Royal Palace in Visegrad (Hungary) presidents of Poland and Czechoslovakia Lech Wałęsa and Václav Havel and the Hungarian Prime Minister József Antall signed the Declaration on cooperation between the three countries. Proceeding from the similar historical development in recent decades, they identified the following key objectives:

- full restitution of state independence, democracy and freedom,

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<sup>4</sup> Timothy Garton Ash. “Revolution: The Springtime of Two Nations”, The New York Review of Books, 15.06.1989, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/1989/06/15/revolution-the-springtime-of-two-nations/> (25.11.2017).

- elimination of all existing social, economic and spiritual aspects of the totalitarian system,
- construction of a parliamentary democracy, a modern State of Law, respect for human rights and freedoms,
- creation of a modern free market economy,
- full involvement in the European political and economic system, as well as the system of security and legislation<sup>5</sup>.

The identity of the objectives and the similarity of the ways to achieve them in many areas places identical tasks to the three neighboring states. Not accidentally, the first step before them is that in accordance with the interests of individual countries, they must harmonize their activities to form a cooperation and close contacts with the European institutions and hold regular consultations on their security issues<sup>6</sup>.

Completely understandable (considering the resistance against the Soviet system and the better economic condition of Czechoslovakia and Hungary) the three countries (after the split of Czechoslovakia on January 1, 1993 they are four - plus Slovakia) are preferred by the West for partners in comparison to the former Soviet satellites from South-East Europe. An important step in the cooperation between them (with regard to cooperation agreements and association with the prospect of joining the EU) is the signing of Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) on December 21, 1992, which is the peak in the activity of the Visegrad Group during the first stage of its existence.

In the process of association, however, there come to the fore domestic political problems caused by the difficulties of transition and in the relations in Visegrad Four (V4) the peak is the competition for EU funds and Western investments<sup>7</sup>. Leaders of the Visegrad Group concluded that the negotiations for accession to the EU will be led more easily in an individual way and for several years the cooperation between them has been formal.

Intensification of relations between the V4 states comes after on December 13, 1997 at a meeting of the EU Council in Luxembourg, Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic are formally invited to begin accession talks, which opens prospects for interaction among them. On October 21, 1998, on the eve of the entrance of the three countries into NATO, in Budapest an agreement for the resumption of cooperation was signed<sup>8</sup>. On May 14, 1999, two months after the accession of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic into the Alliance, at a meeting in Bratislava the four prime ministers discussed the issue of their relations with other countries and with international organizations<sup>9</sup>.

From 1998 to 2002 there were held eight meetings of the states of the Visegrad Four dedicated to the problems of joining the EU. Leaders of the four countries are worried mainly about the inequalities in the EU (especially between old and new members) and

<sup>5</sup> Declaration on Cooperation between...

<sup>6</sup> Declaration on Cooperation between...

<sup>7</sup> Любовь Шишелина, Вишеградская группа: этапы... (Lyubov Shishelina, The Visegrad Group: stages...)

<sup>8</sup> Любовь Шишелина, Вишеградская группа в общеевропейском... (Lyubov Shishelina, Visegrad Group in a European-wide...)

<sup>9</sup> Contents of Visegrad Cooperation approved by the Prime Ministers' Summit Bratislava on 14th May 1999, <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/cooperation/contents-of-visegrad-110412> (26.11.2017)

direct their efforts into trying to address it. On this occasion, the Polish Foreign Minister Andrzej Olechowski said that “we are concerned that after Poland becomes an EU member, it will not be treated in the way others are treated, and we will find ourselves in a subordinate position”<sup>10</sup>. The objections of Poland and Hungary against the opening of the agrarian EU programmes for new members 10 years after their adoption lead to the approval of a compromise.

A few days after Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and the Czech Republic had become full members of the EU on 12 May 2004 their prime ministers Marek Belka, Mikuláš Dzurinda, Péter Medgyessy and Vladimír Špidla met to identify specific programmes for their cooperation, now as EU members. They emphasized that by joining the EU and NATO (Slovakia was adopted on March 25, 2004) the main goals of the Visegrad Declaration have been met.

Although not lacking disagreements between them<sup>11</sup> the states of the Visegrad Four gradually appreciate the advantage of mutual activities especially in the years of economic crisis. An indicator of this is the fact that the main turnover is realized within the region and within the countries belonging to this region<sup>12</sup>.

### **The pragmatism of the Visegrad Group countries and their contradictions with the EU**

After the initial period of satisfaction with their accession in the EU, countries of the Visegrad Group begin to think more pragmatically without the worry of possible disagreements with Brussels. The reason for such disagreements becomes the new EU policy towards the states of the former Soviet Union, called the “Eastern Partnership”. Proposed in May 2008 by the Foreign Ministers of Poland - Radosław Sikorski, and Sweden - Carl Bildt, the program coincided with the economic crisis and received severe criticism on behalf of MEPs. According to the old Member States, the formula for cooperation does not aim at the accession of former Soviet republics to the EU, it can be seen only as a means to motivate them to approximate their positions with the EU. The Visegrad countries, however, consider this policy improper<sup>13</sup>. Gradually they receive the approval of founding countries and put the project “Eastern Partnership” under their control, helping in 2013 to sign association agreements with the countries of the former Soviet republics.

The pragmatism of the Visegrad Four, which distinguishes it from the official rate of Brussels, manifests itself in other important issues for EU as well. Although they are against the Russian policy toward Ukraine and even initiate the creation of joint for the group armed forces, the Visegrad countries do not approve sanctions against Moscow. In September 2016 the Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico stated that the imposed in 2014

<sup>10</sup> Andrzej Olechowski, “Political System and Foreign Policy. European Union – Polish Project in progress”, The Polish Foreign Affairs Digest, Vol:1, No 1(1), (2001): 74.

<sup>11</sup> There are existing problems between Slovakia and Hungary due to the Hungarian national minority, between Hungary and the Czech Republic due to the Decrees of President Beneš of 1946 for the deportation of German and Hungarian population and the confiscation of its assets, the rivalry between Poland and Hungary for leadership, etc.

<sup>12</sup> Алексей Дрыночкин, Экономические аспекты... (Aleksey Drynochkin, Economic aspects...)

<sup>13</sup> Любовь Шишлина, Вишеградская группа: этапы... (Lyubov Shishelina, The Visegrad Group: stages...)

sanctions are ineffective and “harming the EU and Russia and help the United States. I reject them, but at the same time will not break the unity of the EU on this issue”<sup>14</sup>.

The position of the leading countries in the EU and the Visegrad Group on the issue of constructing the pipeline “Nord Stream 2” is different. In mid-March 2016 the four states want the European Commission to investigate the planned pipeline “Nord Stream 2” between Russia and Germany, which has to bypass the Visegrad countries as it is contrary to the European energy strategy for breaking the dependency on a dominant gas supplier<sup>15</sup>. V4 leaders further announce the economic unjustification of the project seven months later during the summit in the Polish city of Rzeszów. According to them, “Nord Stream 2” is a political project that will deepen the energy dependence on Russia<sup>16</sup>.

The most serious problem on which Brussels and the Visegrad Four have different positions is undoubtedly the migrant issue. The Central European countries are firmly against the quota principle in the allocation of migrants and this position of theirs was categorically stated during the Czech presidency of the Group (1 July 2015 - 30 June 2016). The migrant issue is extremely important for the Polish Presidency (1 July 2016 - 30 June 2017), which is confirmed by the fact that the migrant crisis is ranked first in the first priority of the Programme of the Polish Presidency, namely “1. Strong Voice of the V4 in the European Union: coordination of the European agenda and cooperation on key challenges”<sup>17</sup>.

To realize this priority the Polish Presidency focuses its activities on the coordination of the position of V4 in EU, resulting in the need to take appropriate decisions to deal with the root causes of migration, focusing on the effective protection of the external borders of the EU (including support for third countries). The necessity for joint actions has been established in order to strengthen, support and maintain the Schengen area as one of the foundations of the European integration project<sup>18</sup>.

Regarding the reform of the Common European Asylum System, in particular the Dublin system, the V4 countries focus on the opposition to any changes that would lead to the introduction of any permanent and binding mechanism, redistribution or would substantially reduce Member States' competence in this area. Their efforts are primarily directed towards providing assistance to third countries and strengthening the cooperation with them to address the root causes of migration pressure<sup>19</sup>.

What is envisaged is the continuation of cooperation within the EU Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa. As a group of donors, the V4 countries will work out common positions before meetings of the Board and Operational Committees of the Fund. The Presidency

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.focus-news.net/news/2016/09/18/2300168/robert-fitso-sanktsiite-sreshtu-rusiya-vredyat-na-es-i-nosyat-polza-na-sasht.html> (6.12.2017).

<sup>15</sup> Visegrad Group sends letter to EU Commission.

<sup>16</sup> The Visegrad Four announced they are against „Nord Stream 2”, <http://btvnovinite.bg/article/svetut/vishegradskata-chetvorka-se-objavi-protiv-severen-potok-2.html> (4.12.2017).

<sup>17</sup> Programme of the Polish Presidency... 8-9.

<sup>18</sup> Programme of the Polish Presidency... 8-9.

<sup>19</sup> Programme of the Polish Presidency... 8-9.

continues the coordination of the initiative for joint parallel local humanitarian projects in Jordan and Syria.

The formulated in the Programme priorities were discussed at a meeting of interior ministers of the four countries held on July 11, 2016 in Warsaw. There was an agreement on the constructive position of the Visegrad countries in the area of migration and border issues including: 1) continuous efforts to ensure adequate protection of the external borders of the EU Member States; 2) increasing support to the third countries; 3) the lack of consent for any mandatory and automatic mechanisms<sup>20</sup>.

After the talks, the Polish Interior Minister Mariusz Błaszczak stated that he and his colleagues evaluated negatively the system of automatic refugee resettlement. It is ineffective and unjustified and only attracts new flows of refugees. They declared themselves in favor of support of the refugees in the countries where they already have refugee status - Libya, Jordan, Turkey<sup>21</sup>.

The Visegrad countries seek to solve the problem outside the borders of the Old Continent, in which case it is not about xenophobia, as these countries are often blamed for, but it is about a pragmatic and nationally responsible foreign policy<sup>22</sup>. The four countries emphasize upon the protection of the external borders of the Schengen area and the entire EU.

The Visegrad Group countries reaffirm their stance against the quota principle for the allocation of migrants at the summit of the EU in Bratislava (September 16, 2016). The four states emphasize upon the protection of the external borders of the Schengen area and the entire EU. The issue of security is closely linked to migration, which is a big problem for five of the Member States. That is why V4 insists on basing the migrant policy on the principle of “flexible solidarity”<sup>23</sup>.

The Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban assesses the meeting in Bratislava as unsuccessful since a change of the migration policy of Brussels has not been achieved. According to him, in the EU there continues to prevail a “self-destructive and naive immigration policy” as “on this occasion the summit had focused more on speeding up the

<sup>20</sup> Visegrad Bulletin No 1 (2016), Review of the most important events In July and August 2016. [http://www.msz.gov.pl/en/foreign\\_policy/europe/visegrad\\_group/polish\\_presidency\\_of\\_the\\_visegrad\\_group\\_2016\\_2017/visegrad\\_bulletin\\_\\_1\\_2016\\_;jsessionid=21525D3182A95EE5D1F7AB7341DC A7BB.cmsap2p](http://www.msz.gov.pl/en/foreign_policy/europe/visegrad_group/polish_presidency_of_the_visegrad_group_2016_2017/visegrad_bulletin__1_2016_;jsessionid=21525D3182A95EE5D1F7AB7341DC A7BB.cmsap2p) (7.12.2017).

<sup>21</sup> Мариуш Блашчак: Защитата и укрепването на границите на ЕС са приоритет за Вишеградската група, (Mariusz Błaszczak: Protecting and strengthening EU borders are a priority for the Visegrad group),

<http://bnr.bg/post/100714091/zashtitata-i-ukrepvaneto-na-granicite-na-es-sa-prioritet-za-vishegradskata-grupa> (7.12.2017).

<sup>22</sup> Xenophobia not being behind the migration policy of the Visegrad Group is evidenced by the fact that the Czech Republic has a relatively large number of permanent and temporary residing foreigners in the country from states outside the EU - nearly 470,000 people, as more than 47 000 of them are from Vietnam. See more: Diana Ivanova, “The policy of the Czech Republic on refugees – a manifestation of euroskepticism or national responsibility”, Europa del Este Unida No 1, (2016): 54-55, <http://www.europadelesteunida.com/europa-del-este.html> (6.12.2017).

<sup>23</sup> Вишеградската четворка постави ултиматуми на Брюксел, (The Visegrad Quartet placed ultimatums on Brussels), [https://www.actualno.com/europe/vishegradskata-chetvorka-postavi-ultimatumi-na-bruksel-news\\_563395.html](https://www.actualno.com/europe/vishegradskata-chetvorka-postavi-ultimatumi-na-bruksel-news_563395.html) (15.11.2017).



process of distributing migrants across Europe than on stopping them at the border of the Schengen Area.”<sup>24</sup>.

The referendum in Hungary can be interpreted as a reaction against this policy of Brussels. It was held on October 2, 2016 and 98% of the Hungarian voters rejected the EU plan for the state to adopt the mandatory quota of refugees<sup>25</sup>. Thus with the support of the society Orban has legitimized his policy. However, the claim of Jan Culik that by the referendum “Orbán also wanted to stoke a cultural and political counter-revolution throughout the European Union”<sup>26</sup> is far-fetched.

As a counter-suggestion to the system of mandatory quotas for resettlement of refugees, proposed by Brussels at a meeting of the interior ministers of V4, held in Warsaw on November 21, 2016, there was established a Center for managing the migration crisis (Migration Crisis Response Mechanism), whose aim is to bring about a more effective coordination between the relevant institutions responsible for migration. In this way, it can respond appropriately to relevant challenges in providing assistance to refugees in countries outside the European Union<sup>27</sup>. The position of Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and the Czech Republic is that the discussion of the migrant problem in the Group and at EU level should be based on the concept of effective solidarity. The realization of this concept is seen by the leaders of the Visegrad Four in two directions - assistance in the protection of the external borders of the EU (including the Republic of Macedonia), and support to accelerate the EU accession of Western Balkan countries, which will increase security in the region.

## Conclusion

The analysis of the relations between the EU and the states of the Visegrad Group allows to make some conclusions. First, there stands the conclusion that after the change of the system of state socialism in 1989, the European integration is becoming a major goal for Central European countries, the successful implementation of which is the basis of the creation of the Visegrad Group. The Euro-idealism that is characteristic of the period prior to their adoption in the EU is completely understandable after the four decades of one-party rule. Gradually, however, after passing the initial euphoria of EU membership, the Euro-idealism goes into pragmatism, the core of which is the desire to defend national interests. The leaders of Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and the Czech Republic clearly realize that their common policy within the European Union gives more chances to protect their national interests, which is the basis of ignoring the contradictions within the Group. This reasonable and pragmatic policy turns the Visegrad Group into one of the most successful

<sup>24</sup> Резултати от аварийно-спасителната среща на върха на ЕС в Братислава, (Results of the EU emergency summit in Bratislava), <http://bultimes.com/rezultati-ot-avarijno-spasitelnata-sreshtana-varha-na-es-v-bratislava/> (5.12.2017).

<sup>25</sup> The referendum is not valid because voters are around 45%, while according to the Hungarian Constitution there must be more than 50% of voters. See more: Andrew Macdowal, Voters back Viktor Orbán's rejection of EU migrant quotas, <http://www.politico.eu/article/hungary-referendum-eu-migration-viktor-orban/> (15.11.2017).

<sup>26</sup> Jan Culik, Hungary's invalid refugee referendum dents Viktor Orbán's anti-EU 'revolution', <https://theconversation.com/hungarys-invalid-refugee-referendum-dents-viktor-orbans-anti-eu-revolution-66424> (19.11.2017).

<sup>27</sup> Joint Statement of V4...

regional organizations after the collapse of the Eastern bloc and it is a prerequisite to increase its influence on the contemporary political processes that are characterized by the growing importance of the regional factor.

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**Para Citar este Artículo:**

Ivanova, Diana. Visegrad Group – From Euro-Idealism to pragmatist. Rev. Incl. Vol. 5. Num. 2, Abril-Junio (2018), ISSN 0719-4706, pp. 82-93.

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