

2015

# TRENDS OF VISEGRAD FOREIGN POLICY

---

Vít Dostál



Asociace  
pro mezinárodní  
otázky  
Association  
for International  
Affairs



Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
of the Czech Republic



**INSTITUTE OF  
PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

The publication was prepared within the international research project of the Association for International Affairs (AMO), Trends of Visegrad Foreign Policy. The project was supported by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic and the Open Society Foundations. It has been carried out in cooperation with the Center for EU Enlargement Studies - CENS (Hungary), the Central European Policy Institute - CEPI (Slovakia) and the Institute of Public Affairs - IPA (Poland).

**TRENDYV4.AMO.CZ**

2015

# TRENDS OF VISEGRAD FOREIGN POLICY

Vít Dostál

 OPEN SOCIETY  
FOUNDATIONS

 Konrad  
Adenauer  
Stiftung



Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
of the Czech Republic



Asociace  
pro mezinárodní  
otázky  
Association  
for International  
Affairs

## TRENDS OF VISEGRAD FOREIGN POLICY

*Author* – VÍT DOSTÁL

*Translation* – DIDACTICUS, S.R.O.

*Designed by* – JAN VÁCLAV

*Printed by* – VYDAVATELSTVÍ KUFR, S.R.O.

All rights reserved. You may not copy, reproduce, republish or circulate in any way the content from this publication except for your own personal and non-commercial use. Any other use requires the prior written permission of the publisher.

Views expressed in the book are not necessarily the official attitude of the Association for International Affairs (AMO).

ASSOCIATION FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS (AMO)

Žitná 27/608

CZ 110 00 Praha 1

Tel.: +420 224 813 460

info@amo.cz

www.amo.cz

© AMO 2015

ISBN 978–80–87092–38–5 (print version)

ISBN 978–80–87092–39–2 (pdf version)

## Contents

06	MAIN FINDINGS
07	INTRODUCTION
08	SUCCESSSES AND FAILURES
09	FUTURE IMPORTANT TOPICS
10	ALLIES AND PARTNERS
11	THE VISEGRAD GROUP
13	EU POLICIES
14	TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS
15	CONCLUSION
16	NOTE ON METHODOLOGY
17	GRAPHS
68	ABOUT PUBLISHER

## Main Findings

- The objective of the “Trends of Visegrad Foreign Policy” project was to identify the views of those that make, influence and implement this policy. It also sought to compare the views held by foreign-policy communities in Visegrad countries. Via questionnaire, the project approached 1,711 civil servants, researchers/experts, journalists, business representatives and politicians from Visegrad Group countries – the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia – and received a response from 429 people (a response rate of 25.1%).
- In the coming years, Visegrad foreign policy makers will be training the spotlight on energy security, instability in the EU neighborhood and illegal migration.
- According to respondents, the Visegrad Group should primarily focus on energy, Eastern policy, migration, energy security, and security in general. Respondents are also of the opinion that the V4 should collaborate more frequently and extend its reach into other areas. Yet they are dismissive of its deeper institutionalization or the accession of additional countries.
- Intra-Visegrad relations are excellent. Poland is deemed to be the third most important partner and the third most significant player. On the whole, mutual relations between Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia are considered very sound. Relations with Hungary, on the other hand, are much more problematic.
- All four countries feel their Visegrad Group membership is important and that it acts as a conduit for the promotion of their national interests. Foreign policy makers are also convinced that the V4 plays a constructive role in the EU, although they would not go so far as to say that it is an influential body here. The Visegrad Group is generally rated somewhat successful, especially in the realms of culture, education, coordination in the EU, policy on the Western Balkans and the energy sector. In contrast, respondents believe that cooperation on defense and Eastern policy is languishing.
- Germany is judged to be the most important and the best partner in Central Europe.
- The United States is pinpointed as the V4’s second most important partner. Hungary differs in the assessment of the quality of this relationship, viewing its rapport with Washington in a much poorer light than the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia; it believes that the erosion of these relations has been the most resounding failure of its foreign policy since 2004. Respondents have no doubt that transatlantic relations will continue to strengthen in the security and economic arenas. They are also confident that the North Atlantic Alliance will grow in stature.
- Hungarian respondents named Russia as a significant and sterling partner, although this opinion is not shared by the other V4 countries’ foreign-policy communities. Polish, Slovak and Czech respondents do, however, concede that Russia is a player of paramount importance on the international stage.
- European Union membership is rated as categorically beneficial, and the importance of the EU will be augmented in the coming years. In the mid-term, institutional developments within the EU will be borne along the trend of larger countries become stronger, differentiated integration and a shift in power to joint institutions. Respondents identified energy, immigration and the single market as the most important European policies in the next five years.
- Events associated with EU membership – holding the rotating presidency, participation in Union initiatives and ongoing integration within the EU, driven by Schengen membership and, in Slovakia’s case, its euro area status – are considered the greatest foreign policy successes of V4 countries since 2004. Czech and Hungarian foreign policy failures are also linked to European policy. Poles and Slovaks see their Eastern policy in a negative light, while Hungarians take a dim view of relations with the US.

## Introduction

Foreign policy is created by people. It is the product of bureaucratic or political processes influenced by individuals and their opinions and priorities. These are instrumental in understanding how foreign-policy communities behave and in explaining and predicting foreign policy. Twenty-five years of democratic development in the Visegrad Group (V4) region – encompassing the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia – have given rise to a foreign-policy elite, whose views are explored in the “Trends of Visegrad Foreign Policy” project. This project set out not only to chronicle the views held by foreign policy makers, but also to compare these against the broader Central European perspective, in an attempt to determine whether a common Visegrad foreign-policy identity can be identified. And if such an identity is impossible across the board, in which areas it can be found.

The project was proposed at a time when Visegrad cooperation was facing its greatest internal crisis of trust. In the course of 2014, the V4 failed to deliver a strong united front on resurgent Russia and on the Ukraine conflict. All references to the European prospects of Eastern Partnership countries vanished

from joint declarations. Fundamental differences in approaches were illustrated by the public argument between the Polish and Hungarian Prime Ministers on the V4 PM panel at the GLOBSEC Conference in Bratislava in May. Nevertheless, the V4 is still here, serving as a formidable voice for Central Europe. As the survey was coming to a close, public discourse was dominated by the migration crisis, during which the V4 once again closed ranks. Although the decision on mandatory quotas enforced by the qualified majority voting saw a break in this cohesion (as Poland broke the ranks of the V4 block and stroked a separate deal), the Visegrad group made itself very much heard during the EU negotiations on migration. The conviction that Visegrad cooperation means more than any differences of opinion on Russia and Ukraine, and that it extends beyond an alliance in tackling migration, stands at the core of this research.

The unique data acquired from all Visegrad countries with the help of the questionnaire has paved the way for us to probe and compare the views held by foreign-policy communities. The questions centered on a full gamut of topics, enabling us to piece together many parts of the puzzle. It is not the

purpose of this publication to catalogue every single finding, but rather to analyze results touching on six areas: successes and failures, important issues, allies and partners, Visegrad cooperation, transatlantic relations, and European policies. The questionnaire also featured questions embracing current affairs, such as the situation in Ukraine and the fight against ISIS, international organizations and development policy. Thought-provoking though this information may be, it does not form part of this study.

The entire project was implemented by the Association for International Affairs (AMO) in cooperation with the Central European Policy Institute (CEPI) in Bratislava, the Centre for EU Enlargement Studies (CENS) at the Central European University in Budapest, and the Institute of Public Affairs (IPA) in Warsaw. The research was supported by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic and the Open Society Foundations.

The aggregate results are available in interactive form on the project’s website at [trendyv4.amo.cz](http://trendyv4.amo.cz), where the full dataset of responses can also be found. Visitors to the site can also try answering the questionnaire used by respondents.

## Successes and Failures

► For graphs see the page 64—67

The region's fully-fledged integration into Euro-Atlantic structures in 2004, when Visegrad countries acceded to the European Union, with Slovakia also joining NATO, spearheaded a major qualitative change in the foreign policy of all four of the countries in question. Now that the main objective had been accomplished, new tasks were sought. In order to determine how national diplomacy fared in this process, we asked respondents to indicate their country's main foreign-policy success and failure since EU accession in 2004.

Answers from all countries were dominated by events relating to their activities within the EU. The Czech Republic's main success was perceived to be its presidency of the EU Council in the first half of 2009 (this was cited by 26.8% of respondents), followed by the initiation of the Eastern Partnership (12.2%). Hungarian respondents answered along similar lines, highlighting the Hungarian presidency in the first half of 2011 (30%). They also considered Croatia's entry into the EU as the fruitful outcome of their national diplomacy (14.3%). The Eastern Partnership is deemed to be the biggest success of Polish foreign policy (25%). Polish respondents frequently pointed out the fact that

their country had grown to have a stronger role in the international environment, which was viewed in a positive light (17.5%). Slovakia's integration within the EU continued to even after accession, and this is judged to be the greatest achievement of its national diplomacy. Particularly noteworthy here is the country's accession to the euro area (28.4%) and, more broadly, further integration, which encompassed the adoption of the single currency as well as the entry into the Schengen area (23.5%). Other highlights were relations with the Western Balkans (13.6%) and, generally, improvements in Slovakia's credibility (12.3%).

The catalogue of failures was littered with individual events, longer-term trends and general characteristics of foreign policy. Czech respondents exemplified how ambivalently the EU Council presidency is rated in expert circles: it is believed to be not only its greatest success, but also its most profound failure (16.1% of respondents). Setbacks of Czech foreign policy also included its inscrutability (7.5%), lack of priorities (6.5%) and its poor assertion in the EU (6.5%). Polish respondents were scathing of the Eastern policy (35%) and relations with Russia (15%) and Lithuania

(10%). In Slovakia, too, Eastern policy was thought to be problematic, whether taken as a whole (9.7%) or specifically in relation to Ukraine (also 9.7%). In Hungary, relations with the United States (20.3%), misguided policy within the EU (13%) and the country's poor image in the Union (10.1%) were deemed to be failings. The extradition of Ramil Safarov to Azerbaijan in 2012 was also singled out for special attention (10.1%). In 2004, Safarov was in Budapest on a language course sponsored by the NATO Partnership for Peace Program when he murdered his Armenian classmate. He was subsequently sentenced to life imprisonment. Following his extradition, Safarov was promptly pardoned, decorated and celebrated as a national hero in Azerbaijan.

There are no clear conjunctions in failures in Visegrad foreign policy. The Czech Republic and Hungary place more weight on matters associated with European policy, whereas Polish and Slovak respondents are more critical of their countries' Eastern policy. Even so, the national samples showed no prevailing positive or negative topics.



## Future Important Topics

► For graphs see the page 28—29

Foreign-policy communities focus on topics they consider significant for their country. In this light, one of the questions centered on identifying future substantive topics by rating their importance on a scale. We asked which issues, in the assessment of the respondents, would be relevant to their country's foreign policy in the coming years. Energy security eclipsed other responses, with 99.4% of respondents saying this would be important or somewhat important. This was followed by instability in the EU's neighborhood (96.9%), illegal immigration (93.2%), cybersecurity (86%), international terrorism (85%) and armed conflicts (80.3%). At the other end of the scale, issues identified as least important were pandemic infectious diseases (37.5%), the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (45.1%), international development cooperation (60.7%) and climate change (65.6%). Foreign policy makers, then, channeled most of their attention into security-related areas.

There were no major differences between individual V4 countries. In other words, Poland,

the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia all expect to be grappling with similar foreign-policy issues. Variations of any note were only seen in three cases. Upholding international law and norms is expected to be significant for Slovakia (87%), but secondary for Hungary (54%). Similarly, Hungarian respondents predicted that the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction would be a secondary issue for their country, with only 28% citing it as important or somewhat important, as opposed to other countries, where the majority labelled this issue as important. The promotion of human rights and democracy is also expected to be less important for Hungary (just 51.5%). In contrast, Czech foreign policy makers anticipate that this will be one of the more fundamental topics, with 79.8% of respondents rating it as important or somewhat important.

## Allies and Partners

► For graphs see the page 22—27

Three questions were geared towards the importance and quality of bilateral relations. The first asked respondents to name their country's five most important partners, the second called on them to identify the importance of relations with preselected countries, and the last required them to assess the quality of relations on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 for very good and 5 for very bad).

Germany is considered to be the most important partner by all four Visegrad countries and was ranked among the five most important partners by 99.1% of respondents. Relations with Berlin were identified as important by 98.1% of respondents and as somewhat important by the remaining 1.9%. Germany also topped the qualitative assessment with an average mark of 1.6. It was the highest scorer among Polish respondents (1.6), and came second among Czech and Slovak respondents, albeit with better average marks (1.3 and 1.4, respectively). Hungarian respondents put Germany on the second place as well with an average mark of 2.1.

The region's second most important partner is the United States, selected as an important partner by 83.6% of respondents, with a full 98.6% of them claiming that relations with the US were important or somewhat important. This is analyzed in more detail below in the section on transatlantic relations.

Relations with Russia turned up remarkable results, placing as low as sixth in the chart of most important partners. A comparison of the results emerging from individual Visegrad countries shows

that Hungary bucks the trend. Russia was mentioned by as many as 73.3% of Hungarian respondents, ranking it third behind the US and Germany. This figure is much higher than in Slovakia (38.2%), Poland (29.4%) and the Czech Republic (19.7%). The same gap can be seen in the quality of relations with Russia. Polish foreign policy elites rate relations as dire (an average mark of 4.5), which is echoed by Czech (3.6) and Slovak respondents (2.7). Conversely, Hungarian-Russian relations were given a mark of 2.2. Despite the fact that Visegrad Group countries cannot reach a consensus on Russia as a partner or on the quality of relations with Moscow, they all agree that Russia is an important player (according to 95.3% of respondents).

Ukraine found itself in much the same position. Only Poland considered it a partner of any note, where 43.1% of respondents said it was important in an open question. Yet it was acknowledged as an important international player by all V4 countries (an average of 92.9% of respondents). Other countries enjoying a better position among Polish respondents were France (mentioned by 78.4%), the UK (56.9%) and Sweden (25.5%). Hungarian respondents, for their part, stressed the role played by China (35.6%) and Romania (31.7%), while Austria was mentioned by the Hungarians, Czechs and Slovaks (34.7%, 34% and 22% respectively), but was overlooked entirely by the Poles. The relatively poor perception of Polish-Lithuanian relations (an average mark of 3.7) and Hungarian-Romanian relations (3.2) is also intriguing.

## The Visegrad Group

The analysis of bilateral relations needs to be supplemented by an analysis of the interconnection of the Central European region. Poland is deemed to be the third most important partner (mentioned by 72.5% of respondents) and evaluated as the third most important country (for an average of 98.5% of respondents) in the eyes of the other Visegrad countries. Yet Poland does not return the favor. The most striking difference here can be found in Czech-Polish relations, where Poland was selected as an important partner by 87.8% of Czech respondents, but the Czech Republic was mentioned by a mere 17.6% of Polish foreign policy elite. A similar situation occurred in Slovak-Hungarian relations, with Slovaks more attentive to their southern neighbor. In contrast, Czech-Slovak relations are symmetrical and deemed to be important by both sides; they are also perceived to be of the best quality within the framework of intra-Visegrad relations, receiving an average mark of 1.1 by Czech and Slovak respondents alike. On average, relations with Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia are perceived by other partners to be very positive, with an average mark of 2 in all three cases. Conversely, in terms of quality, relations of other countries with Hungary got an average mark of 2.5. The worst mutually rated relations within the Visegrad Group can be found between Poland and Hungary, not between Slovakia and Hungary.

All four countries think that their Visegrad Group membership is important and beneficial in the pursuit of their country's national interests. On average, 91% and 87% of respondents, respectively,

agree or somewhat agree with these statements. Foreign policy makers are also convinced that the V4 plays a constructive role in the EU (71.6%), although Poles are discernibly less sanguine (only 48%). On the other hand, they do not share the view that the V4 is an influential player in the EU (just 44.9% agree with this). While a clear majority of representatives of the smallest V4 country - Slovakia (70.2%) - espouse this opinion, only 20% of respondents in Poland identify with this view.

Respondents also rated the V4's activities in various areas. It is generally considered to be somewhat successful. Activities in culture and education are viewed in the best light, seen by 65.7% of respondents as successful or somewhat successful. Coordination within the EU (59.8%), policy on the Western Balkans (57.1%) and energy policy (51.7%) also reported positive figures. In contrast, only 43.6% of respondents feel that cooperation on defense policy is successful, and just 37.8% believe that Eastern policy is successful. However, these results are heavily influenced by the negative view emanating from Poland. Whereas only 34.7% of Poles viewed all of the monitored areas of Visegrad cooperation as successful or somewhat successful, Slovaks can be found at the other end of the scale, reporting an average of 67.5%.

The aptly named "divergence of national interests" is the main difficulty in achieving better quality cooperation within the Visegrad Group. As many as 62.5% of respondents mentioned this issue as one of three main difficulties in an open question. Other barriers to better quality cooperation tend to

be internal issues - Polish dominance (according to 14.2% of respondents), a lack of common goals (9.9%), competition (9.7%), a lack of coordination (9.4%), internal politics (8.8%), and Hungarian attitude (8.2%). The lack of a consensus on Russia (13.1%) is a major obstacle in external relations.

In another open question, we asked on what areas Visegrad cooperation should focus. Most respondents (40.1%) selected energy policy as one of three areas. This was followed by Eastern policy and migration (each of these areas was singled out by 22.1%), energy security (19.8%) and security in general (19.3%). In all, energy related issues were mentioned by almost 60.9% respondents, though we differentiated between those who spoke about energy policy in general, and those who emphasized the security dimension. A point of interest here is that Eastern policy and security policy fared quite well, despite the fact that these are topics that have not been rated particularly positively in the Visegrad Group's activities to date.

Respondents would recommend that the Visegrad Group strive more often for a joint approach (94.8% of respondents agree or somewhat agree), and V4 countries should be the first partners for coalition building (according to 76.7%). The Visegrad Group should also extend its reach into other areas. Yet here, too, there are noteworthy differences. Only 46% of Polish respondents believe that other V4 countries should be the first partners Poland should turn to when building a coalition. Hungarians (93.7% of respondents) and Poles (81.6%) are particularly keen on the idea

► For graphs see the page 40—49

of enlarging the V4's scope of operations, while the Czech Republic (69.3%) and Slovakia (65.5%) are more reticent. Support for parliamentary cooperation is universally underwhelming, backed, on average, by just 56.4% of respondents. V4 countries reject further institutionalization of this format, with only 43.5% of respondents agreeing with this proposition, or its enlargement (28.6%). Once again, however, a comparison of the results from each country shows that they are highly disproportionate. A small majority of Hungarian (53.6%) and Polish respondents (51%) were in favor of V4 institutionalization, and the Poles also favor V4 enlargement (48%) more than the others.

Visegrad Group membership is widely viewed as beneficial and important, although, in the respondents' opinion, the group's success in its individual policies is not particularly remarkable. Despite this, or perhaps because of this, they believe the Visegrad Group should continue to develop and amplify cooperation in those areas in which it is already active. On the other hand, any further institutionalization or enlargement of the V4 should be shelved. The Poles seem to be the most skeptical about Visegrad cooperation, while the Czechs, Hungarians and Slovaks are more tight-knit in their views.

## EU Policies

► For graphs see the page 34—39

European Union membership is deemed by respondents throughout the Visegrad Group to be categorically beneficial (99.1%), and 77.9% of respondents say that the importance of the EU will grow in the coming five years.

In the next decade, respondents believe that the EU's institutional development will be borne along by trends that will see larger countries become stronger (according to 75.8% of respondents), differentiated (multispeed) integration, and power shifted to joint institutions. According to the V4's foreign-policy communities, a conceivable scenario is that empowered institutions will be heavily influenced by larger countries and will focus much more on the issues faced by the euro area, which will continue to move away from the rest of the EU. The prospects of such development are not good for the cohesion of the EU or for the V4. Even so, the individual countries differ in their views on this. Only 44% of Polish respondents believe in the strengthening of joint institutions, while 88.6% of Hungarians expect this scenario to materialize. Similarly, only 39% of Hungarian respondents think that there will be further differentiation in integration,

whereas the other countries more or less agree this to be true. Differences can also be found in the question of the strengthening role played by larger countries. The mosaic of opinions on the future of European integration is therefore highly fragmented from the perspective of the Visegrad capitals.

Nevertheless, there is no reason to believe that such differences could affect the Visegrad Group's cooperation on a European level. The issue of reinforcing the euro area is thought to be important or somewhat important for the EU in the next five years by 84.2% of respondents, whereas only 69% of respondents take the same view of institutional reform. In the opinion of respondents, the most important topics are energy (98.6%), immigration (95.8%), the single market (94.3%) and the EU's competitiveness in the world (90.9%). Respondents from individual Visegrad countries were in relative consensus in terms of how they view the importance of each issue.

According to foreign policy elites in Visegrad Group countries, the least important policy of all surveyed policies is enlargement, with only 21.9% of respondents convinced of its prospective importance

for the European Union. We focused on EU enlargement in more detail. Only a handful (9.4%) believe that Turkey will join the EU in the next 10 years. Most respondents (59.1%) also agreed with the statement that the EU would succeed in admitting at least one country from the Western Balkans within the next decade. Only the Polish remain pessimistic on this issue, with the statement gaining the support of only 43.1% of respondents. Respondents were less sanguine (45.6%) when it came to the question of whether accession negotiations would be opened with one of the three associated countries of the Eastern Partnership (Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia). However, stark differences in the opinions of V4 countries on Eastern policy came to the fore here. While most Polish (62%) and Slovak (61%) respondents were confident that talks would open, the Czechs were a little pessimistic (42.7%) and in Hungary hardly anyone saw this as more than a pipe dream. This result underscored the different opinions maintained on the Eastern policy by Visegrad Group countries.

## Transatlantic Relations

► For graphs see the page 50—53

On average, the United States is viewed by Visegrad countries as their second most important partner (after Germany), with as many as 83.6% of respondents mentioning this country as one of their five most important partners in the corresponding open question. Relations with the US are deemed to be important by 98.6% of respondents. Hungary stands out from the others in its evaluation of the quality of these relations, offering an average mark of just 2.9, with Poland and the Czech Republic rating relations with Washington as 1.9 and Slovakia achieving 1.6. However, according to the results, Hungarian foreign policy makers are critical of this situation, as 20.3% of them denoted relations with the US as the country's greatest foreign-policy failing since 2004.

The vast majority of respondents across the Visegrad Group believe that transatlantic relations will intensify in economic and security areas in the coming five years. Greater intensity in relations between the two sides of the Atlantic is projected in the economic sphere by 85.4% of respondents and in security by 78%.

Respondents were also asked to name three issues that would dominate transatlantic relations in the

next five years. Economic and trade cooperation was mentioned as one of these three issues by as many as 72.2% of respondents. This was followed by security issues: security and defense policy in general (37.2%), relations with Russia (25.6%), and the fight against terrorism (24%).

North Atlantic Alliance membership was seen in a very positive light, with 97% of respondents considering it to be beneficial in the promotion of national interests. Furthermore, 81.4% of respondents believe that NATO's importance is set to grow.

Aside from the poor assessment of current relations between Budapest and Washington, Central Europe takes more or less the same view of relations with the US. It was in this area that the results of the survey were found to be most cohesive. It is surprising, then, that relations with the US did not feature among the issues that according to the respondents should be jointly addressed by the Visegrad Group.

## Conclusion

The research presented here indicates that the foreign-policy communities of Visegrad Group countries have close view of the world. The most divergent views emanate from Budapest, which strays quite significantly from the data obtained in the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia on in relation to certain issues.

One such area was Eastern policy. While Hungarian respondents cite Russia as an important partner and are not expecting accession talks with any of the Eastern Partnership countries to be opened in the mid-term, the other Visegrad Group countries acknowledge Russia as an important player, but not as a close partner, and are more optimistic about the integration of Eastern Europe into the EU. Although Eastern policy is not among the positively assessed areas of Visegrad cooperation, V4 respondents believe it is in their interest to stick with this area.

Generally, activities within the V4 are considered by all members to be important and beneficial, and cooperation should continue to focus on the areas currently being targeted. Intra-Visegrad relations are

sound, although the quality of relations that the Czech Republic, Slovakia and - especially - Poland have with Hungary are not rated as positively. The Poles are also, generally speaking, the most skeptical about Visegrad cooperation.

The most cohesive results within the Visegrad Group can be found in the analysis of transatlantic relations, both in the evaluation of the current state of play and in the comparison of prospects for further development. Views on the importance of the EU's individual policies are also aligned. Energy security - a topic of enduring relevance to Central Europe and Visegrad cooperation - leads the way, followed by immigration and the EU's single market.

Thus, the V4 will probably remain a cohesive block on the EU level, as the issues in which the Group should cooperate, and which are ought to be relevant for it, overlap a lot. On the other hand, one can hardly expect any convergence of views in the V4's eastern and Western Balkans policy. By the same token, the Visegrad foreign policy elites differ in their expectations of the future institutional development of the EU.

Almost 25 years after the formation of the Visegrad Group, the foreign-policy identities of these Central European countries are very similar. Bearing in mind the trials lying in wait for the region in the coming months and years, this is a positive finding. Despite repeated prophecies of terminal decline, the existence of Visegrad cooperation continues to have purpose.

## Note on Methodology

► For graphs see the page 18—21

The questionnaire survey approached 1,711 representatives of foreign-policy communities, of whom 537 were from Poland, 440 from the Czech Republic, 418 from Hungary and 316 from Slovakia. The questionnaire was addressed to civil servants (45.6% of those contacted), politicians (23.8%), researchers (16.6%), journalists (10.1%) and selected business representatives (3.9%). Questionnaires were returned by 429 people, equal to an overall response rate of 25.1%. Slovaks were the most diligent (a response rate of 39.2%), followed by Czechs (33.9%) and Hungarians (24.6%). Barely 9.9% of the Poles who were approached provided a response. Even so, given the high number contacted in absolute terms, the results from Poland can also be considered valid.

Compared to the structure of those approached, the views of civil servants comprise 48.3% of respondents, researchers 24.7%, journalists 11.4%, politicians 8.4% and business representatives 0.9%. Further 6.3% were unable to align themselves with any of the preselected categories.

We conceptualized the foreign-policy community as those politicians and civil servants charting the course of foreign policy, along with other key stakeholders (primarily experts and journalists) contributing to the debate on its form. Specifically, this community was made up of:

- members of lower and upper parliamentary

- chambers sitting on relevant committees;
- the chairpersons of the lower and upper parliamentary chambers;
- government ministers;
- members of the European Parliament;
- senior state administration employees specializing in foreign and European policy, including ambassadors;
- the experts of political parties;
- researchers/experts;
- representatives of think-tanks and NGOs;
- journalists specializing in foreign policy;
- and representatives of trade unions and employers' organizations.

The questionnaire survey was conducted between July 20 and September 6, 2015 via the online application SurveyMonkey. The responses were anonymized.

There were 24 questions, which can be broken down into the following topics:

- bilateral relations;
- important international topics;
- international organizations;
- European integration;
- the Visegrad Group;
- transatlantic relations;
- current issues;
- and foreign-policy successes and failures.

The nature of the questions was mixed. In some cases, respondents were asked to identify how much they agreed with, or how much significance they attached to statements prepared in advance. Here, one of the answers was “don't know”. Some questions were open and required the respondents to give their own answers. Others were multiple choice. With one question, respondents assessed quality by means of a numerical scale. Respondents were free to skip any questions they wanted.

The responses to open questions were then categorized to provide a higher degree of abstraction. The frequency of open questions showed how many respondents (as a percentage) provided the particular answer.

Joint Visegrad results were obtained for open questions by the sum of answers. For other questions, the arithmetic averages of the values for each option were calculated. The aim of this approach was to minimize the distortion caused by the smaller proportion of responses from Poland. The final questions, centering on foreign-policy successes and setbacks, were not compared because the responses had no common basis.



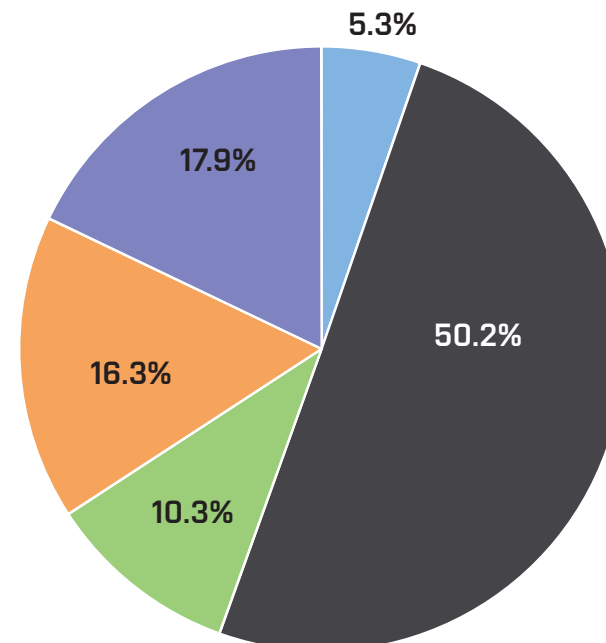
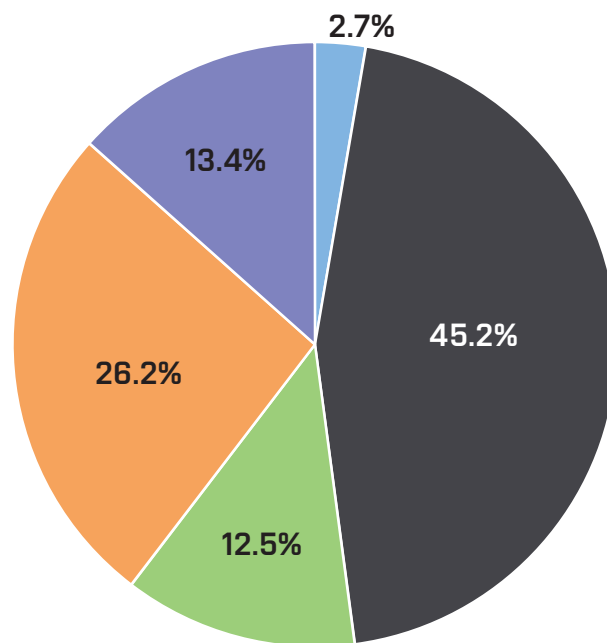
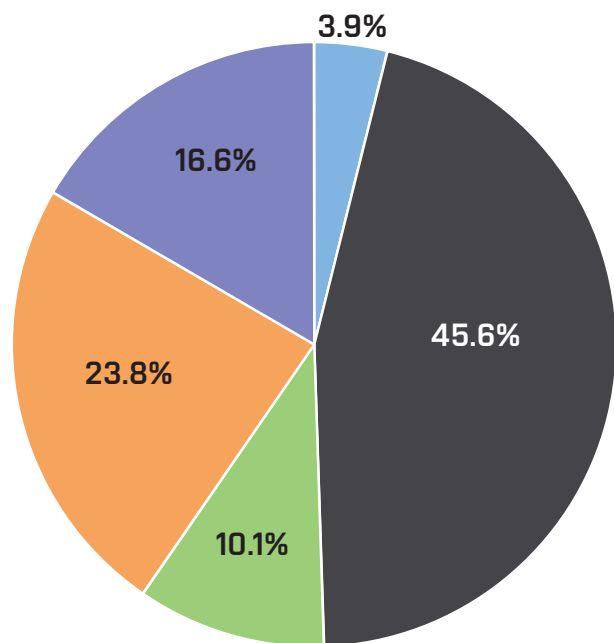
**GRAPHS**

# Which of the following best describes your current occupation? — Approached

VISEGRAD GROUP

CZECH REPUBLIC

HUNGARY

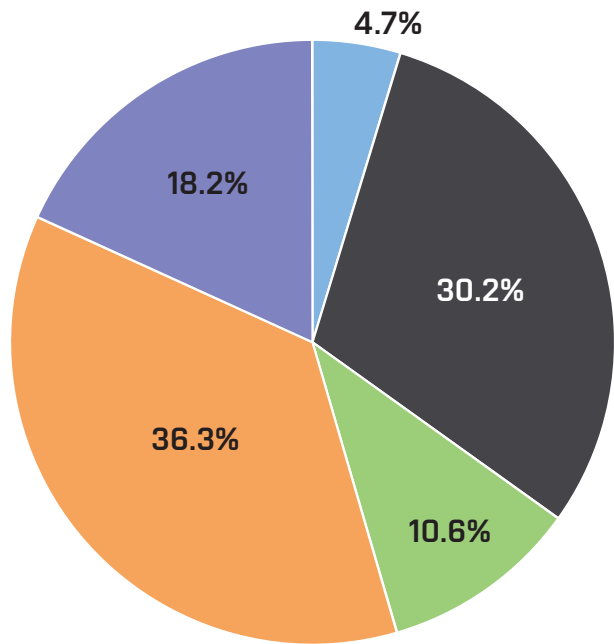


RESEARCHER / EXPERT  
POLITICIAN

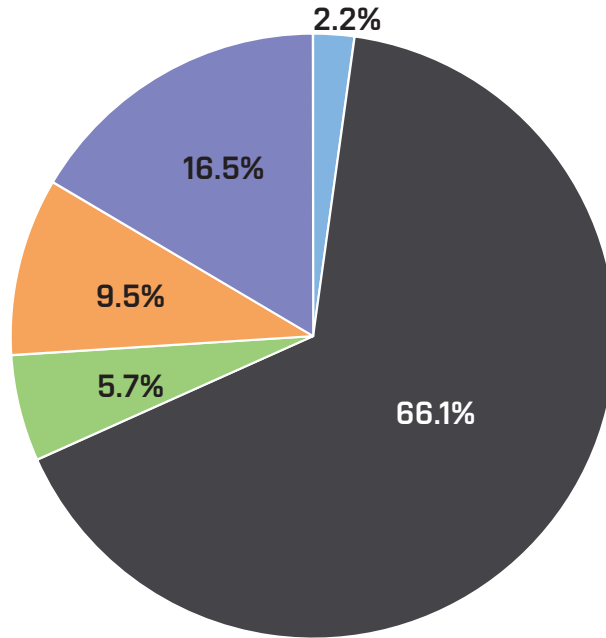
JOURNALIST  
CIVIL SERVANT

BUSINESSMAN / BUSINESSWOMAN

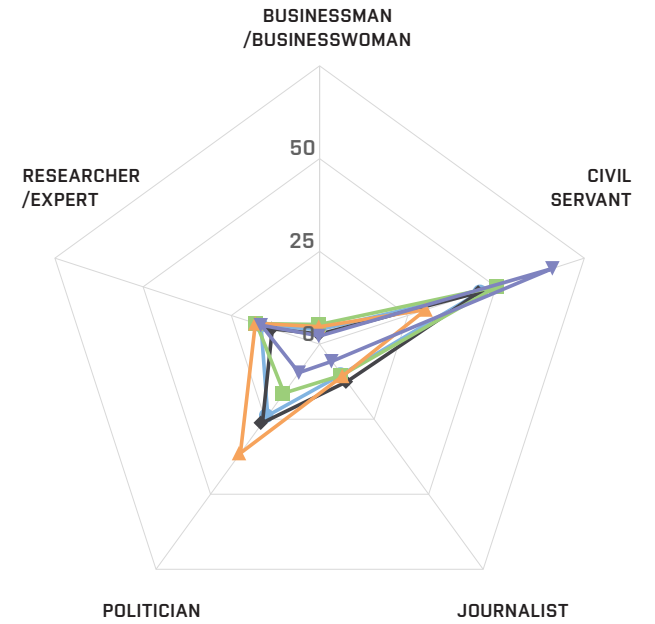
POLAND



SLOVAKIA



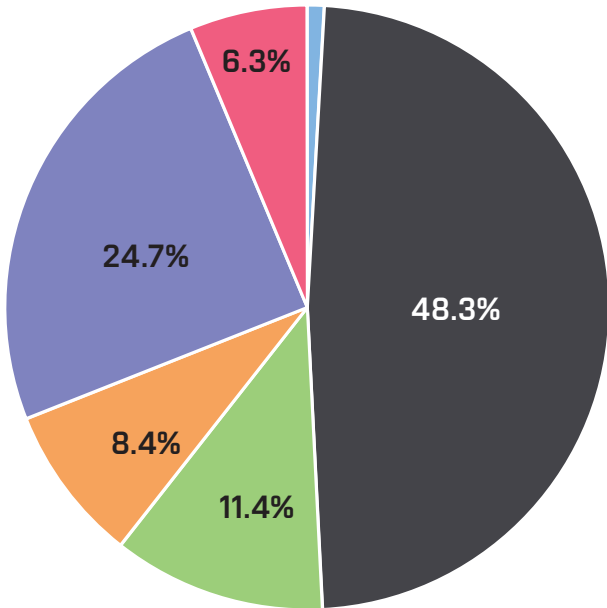
COMPARED RESULTS



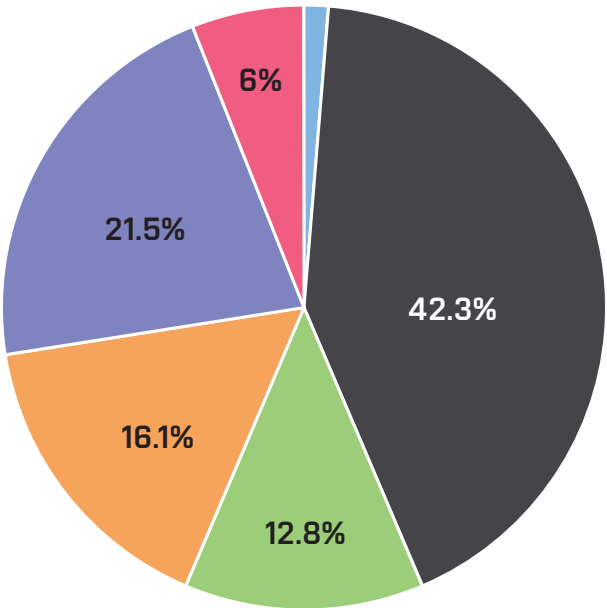
- VISEGRAD GROUP
- CZECH REPUBLIC
- HUNGARY
- POLAND
- SLOVAKIA

# Which of the following best describes your current occupation? — Respondents

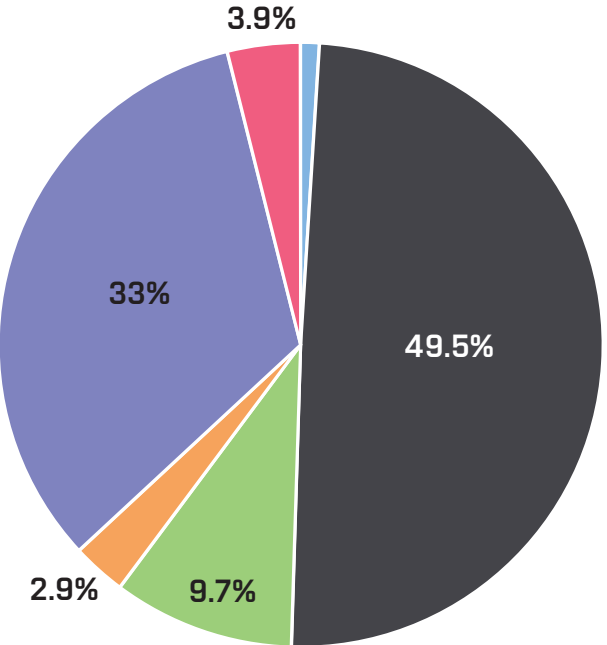
VISEGRAD GROUP



CZECH REPUBLIC



HUNGARY

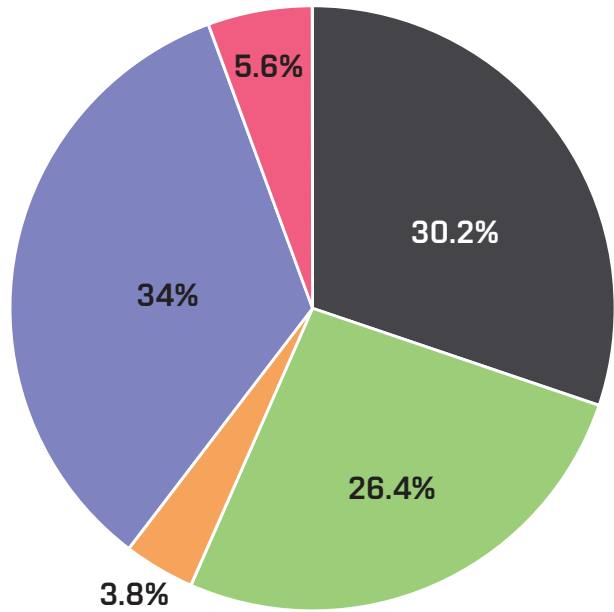


CIVIL SERVANT  
RESEARCHER / EXPERT

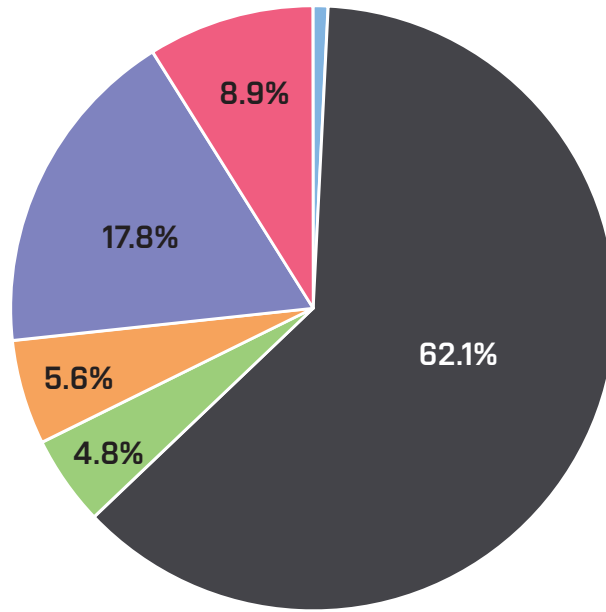
JOURNALIST  
POLITICIAN

OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)  
BUSINESSMAN / BUSINESSWOMAN

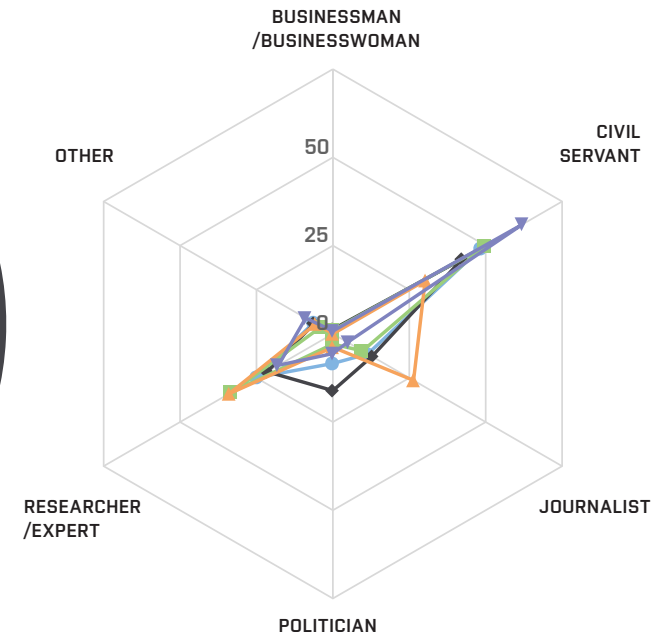
POLAND



SLOVAKIA

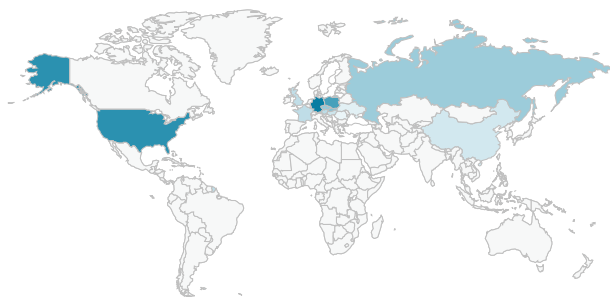


COMPARED RESULTS



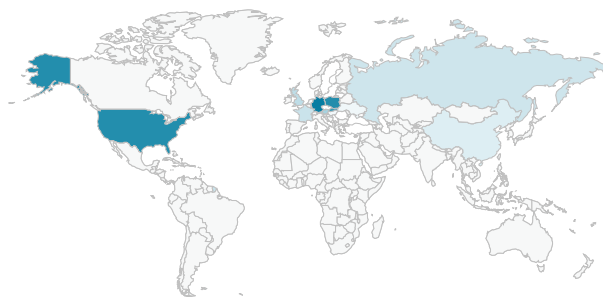
# Which countries are the 5 most important partners for your country's foreign policy?

## VISEGRAD GROUP



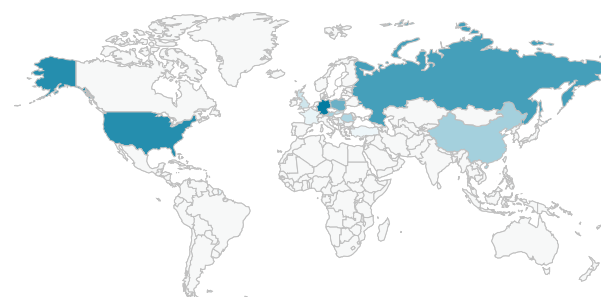
COUNTRY	FREQUENCY
GERMANY	99.1
USA	83.6
POLAND	72.5
SLOVAKIA	46.2
CZECH REPUBLIC	41.5
RUSSIA	39.1
AUSTRIA	26.5
FRANCE	25.6
UNITED KINGDOM	24.9
HUNGARY	19.9
CHINA	17.1
UKRAINE	11.4
ROMANIA	8.1

## CZECH REPUBLIC

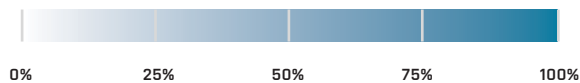


COUNTRY	FREQUENCY
GERMANY	99.3
POLAND	87.8
USA	87.1
SLOVAKIA	76.9
AUSTRIA	34.0
UNITED KINGDOM	25.9
FRANCE	21.1
RUSSIA	19.7
CHINA	12.9
ISRAEL	11.6
UKRAINE	6.1
HUNGARY	5.4

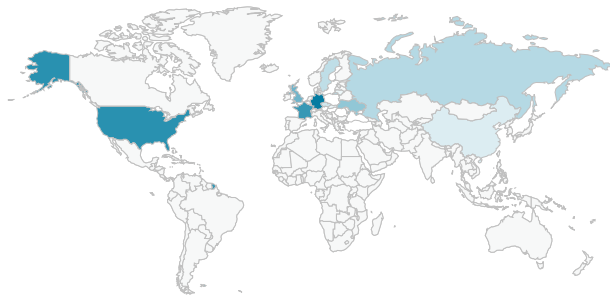
## HUNGARY



COUNTRY	FREQUENCY
GERMANY	100.0
USA	86.1
RUSSIA	73.3
POLAND	59.4
CHINA	35.6
AUSTRIA	34.7
ROMANIA	31.7
SLOVAKIA	20.8
UNITED KINGDOM	19.8
FRANCE	8.9
SERBIA	7.9
TURKEY	6.9

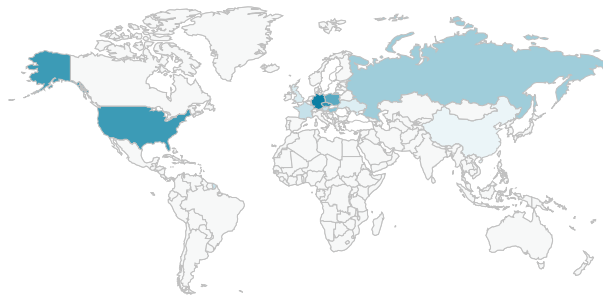


**POLAND**



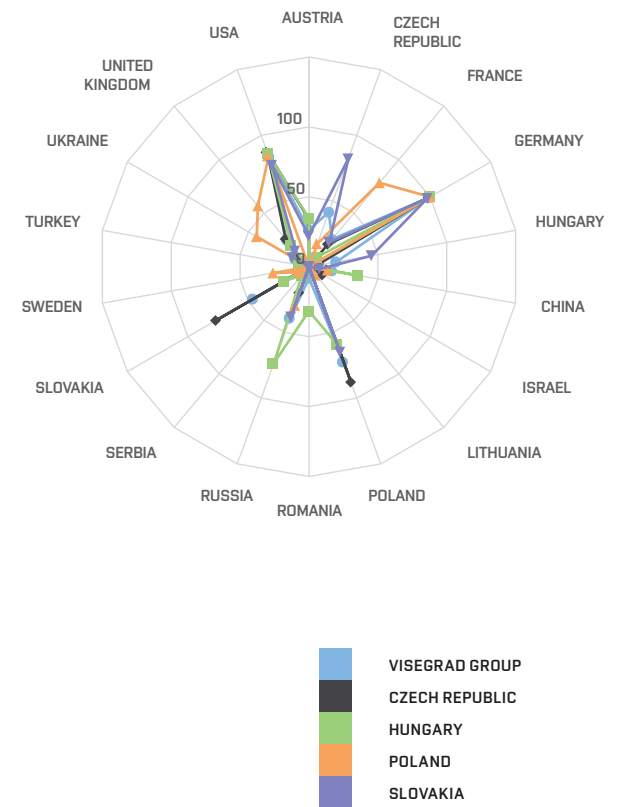
COUNTRY	FREQUENCY
GERMANY	100.0
USA	84.3
FRANCE	78.4
UNITED KINGDOM	56.9
UKRAINE	43.1
RUSSIA	29.4
SWEDEN	25.5
CZECH REPUBLIC	17.6
CHINA	13.7
LITHUANIA	7.8
SLOVAKIA	7.8

**SLOVAKIA**

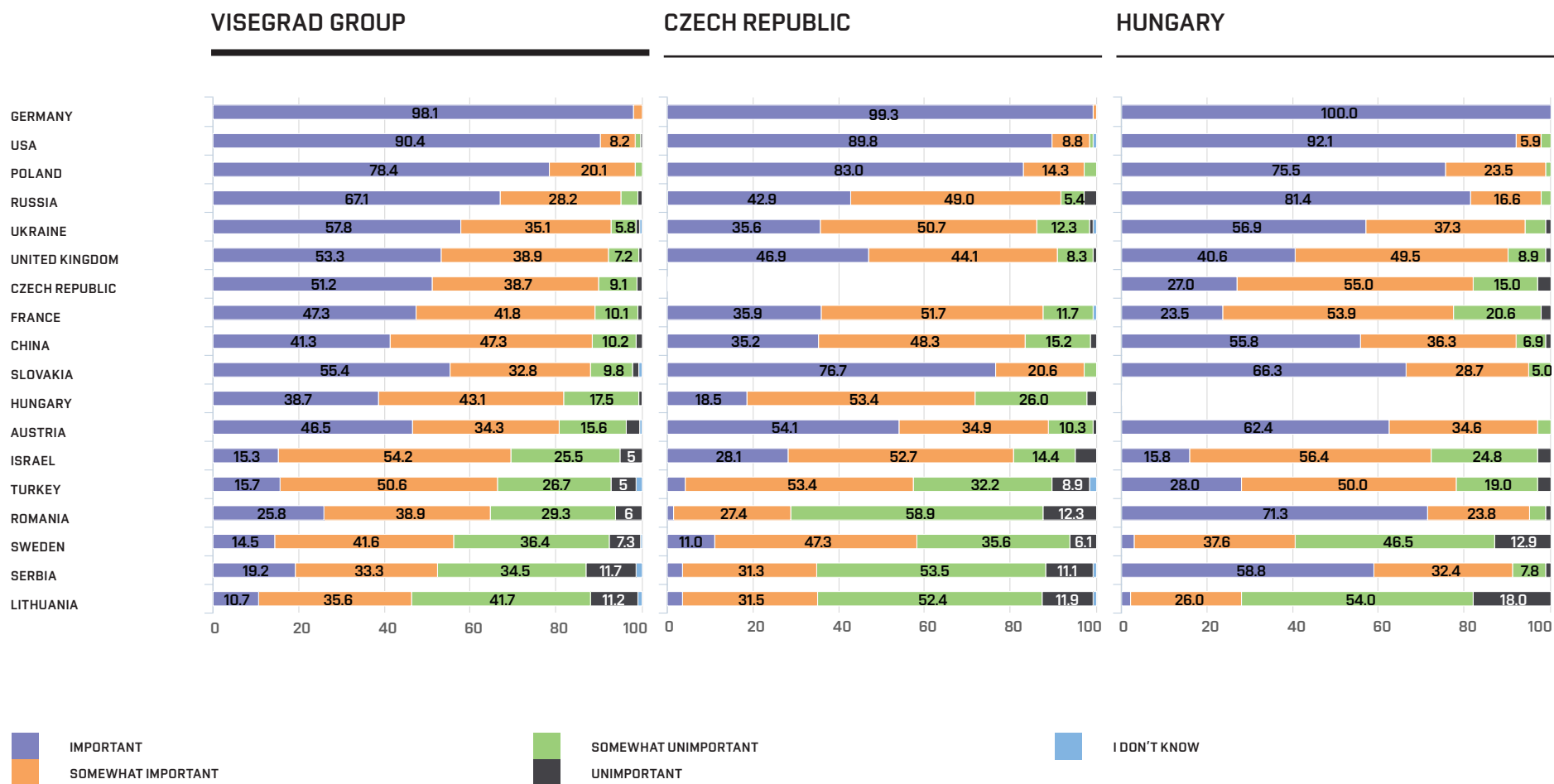


COUNTRY	FREQUENCY
GERMANY	97.6
CZECH REPUBLIC	82.1
USA	77.2
POLAND	65.0
HUNGARY	45.5
RUSSIA	38.2
FRANCE	22.8
AUSTRIA	22.0
UNITED KINGDOM	14.6
UKRAINE	13.0
CHINA	8.1

**COMPARED RESULTS**



# Evaluate the importance of the following countries for your country.

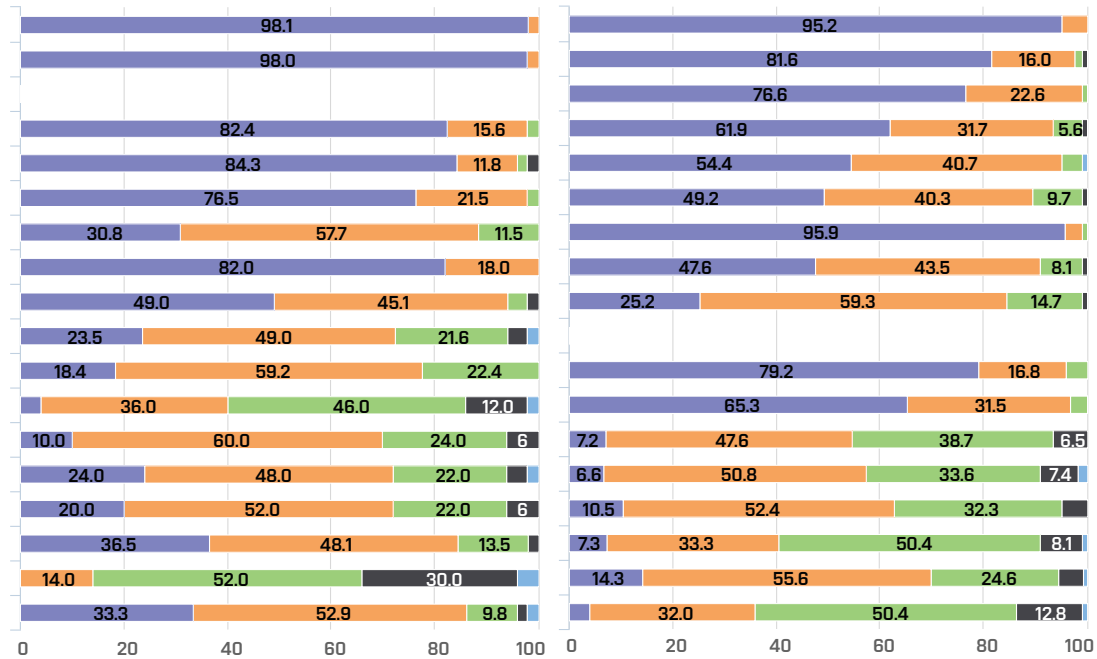




POLAND

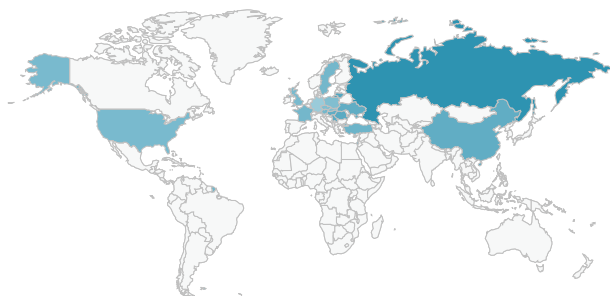
SLOVAKIA

- GERMANY
- USA
- POLAND
- RUSSIA
- UKRAINE
- UNITED KINGDOM
- CZECH REPUBLIC
- FRANCE
- CHINA
- SLOVAKIA
- HUNGARY
- AUSTRIA
- ISRAEL
- TURKEY
- ROMANIA
- SWEDEN
- SERBIA
- LITHUANIA



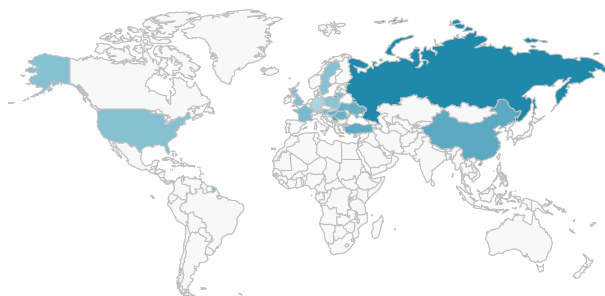
Evaluate the quality of your country's relations with the following countries on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 for very good and 5 for very bad).

### VISEGRAD GROUP



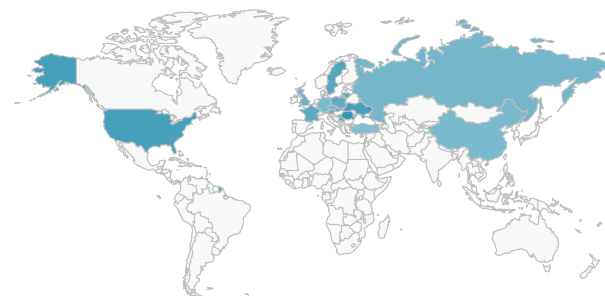
COUNTRY	AVERAGE
GERMANY	1.6
CZECH REPUBLIC	2.0
POLAND	2.0
SLOVAKIA	2.0
USA	2.1
UNITED KINGDOM	2.1
AUSTRIA	2.2
FRANCE	2.2
ISRAEL	2.2
SWEDEN	2.2
TURKEY	2.3
CHINA	2.5
UKRAINE	2.5
HUNGARY	2.5
ROMANIA	2.6
SERBIA	2.6
LITHUANIA	2.7
RUSSIA	3.3

### CZECH REPUBLIC

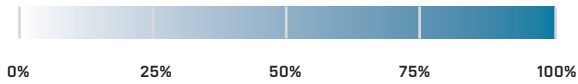


COUNTRY	AVERAGE
SLOVAKIA	1.1
GERMANY	1.3
ISRAEL	1.6
POLAND	1.8
USA	1.9
SWEDEN	1.9
UNITED KINGDOM	2.0
LITHUANIA	2.1
AUSTRIA	2.1
FRANCE	2.1
ROMANIA	2.4
UKRAINE	2.4
HUNGARY	2.4
SERBIA	2.6
TURKEY	2.6
CHINA	2.6
RUSSIA	3.6

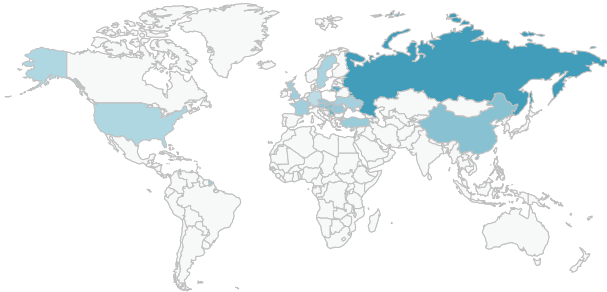
### HUNGARY



COUNTRY	AVERAGE
TURKEY	2.0
GERMANY	2.1
CHINA	2.1
RUSSIA	2.2
CZECH REPUBLIC	2.2
UNITED KINGDOM	2.3
AUSTRIA	2.4
POLAND	2.5
SERBIA	2.5
SLOVAKIA	2.5
ISRAEL	2.5
FRANCE	2.6
LITHUANIA	2.7
SWEDEN	2.7
USA	2.9
UKRAINE	2.9
ROMANIA	3.2

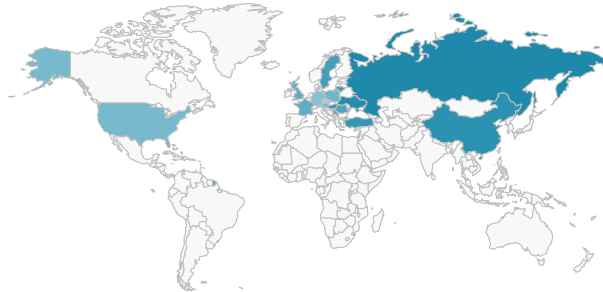


**POLAND**



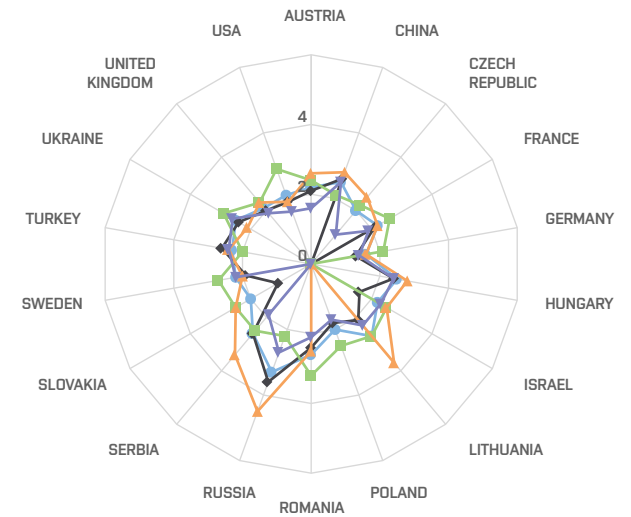
COUNTRY	AVERAGE
GERMANY	1.6
USA	1.9
SWEDEN	2.0
UKRAINE	2.1
FRANCE	2.2
UNITED KINGDOM	2.3
TURKEY	2.4
ISRAEL	2.5
ROMANIA	2.5
CZECH REPUBLIC	2.5
SLOVAKIA	2.5
AUSTRIA	2.6
CHINA	2.8
HUNGARY	2.8
SERBIA	3.4
LITHUANIA	3.7
RUSSIA	4.5

**SLOVAKIA**

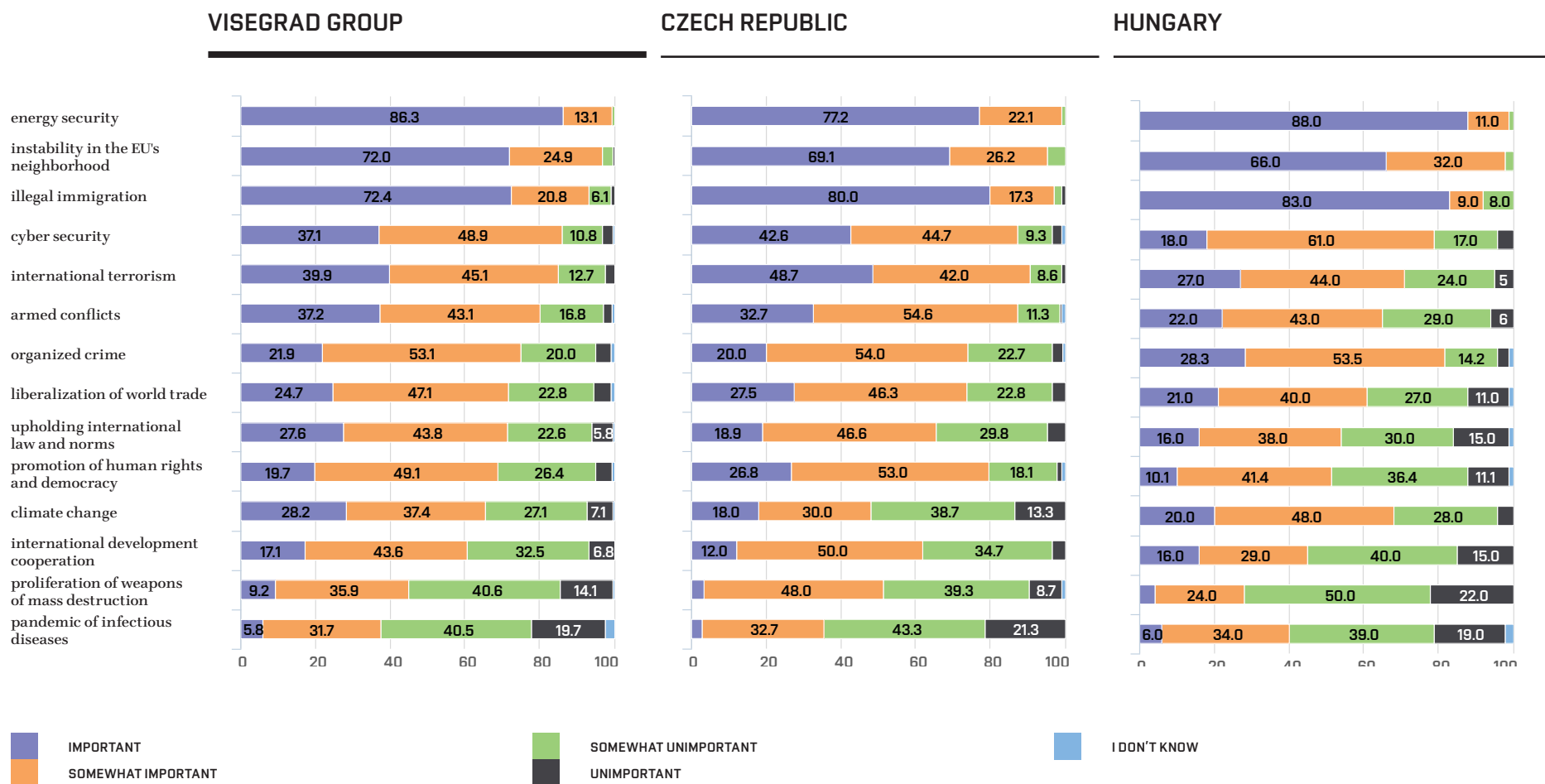


COUNTRY	AVERAGE
CZECH REPUBLIC	1.1
GERMANY	1.4
USA	1.6
AUSTRIA	1.6
POLAND	1.7
UNITED KINGDOM	1.9
FRANCE	1.9
SERBIA	1.9
ROMANIA	2.1
SWEDEN	2.2
ISRAEL	2.3
LITHUANIA	2.3
TURKEY	2.4
HUNGARY	2.4
CHINA	2.5
UKRAINE	2.6
RUSSIA	2.7

**COMPARED RESULTS**

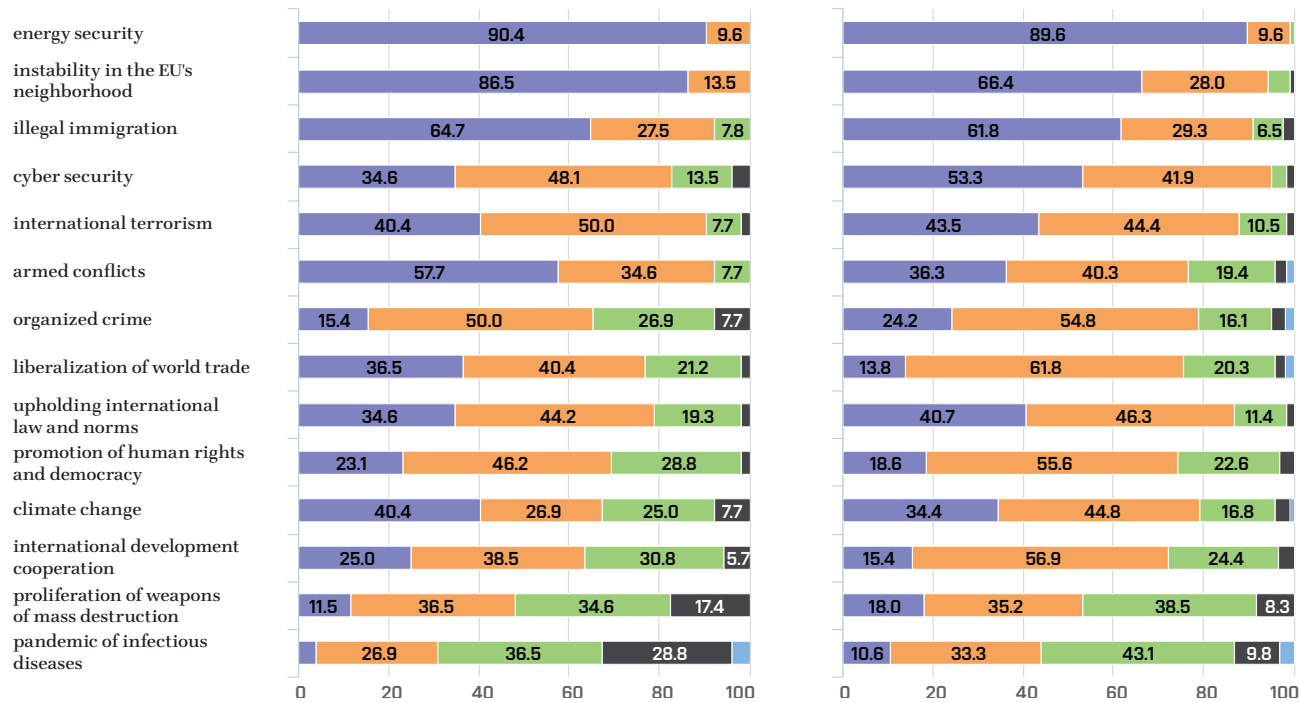


# How important will the following issues be for your country's foreign policy in the next 5 years?



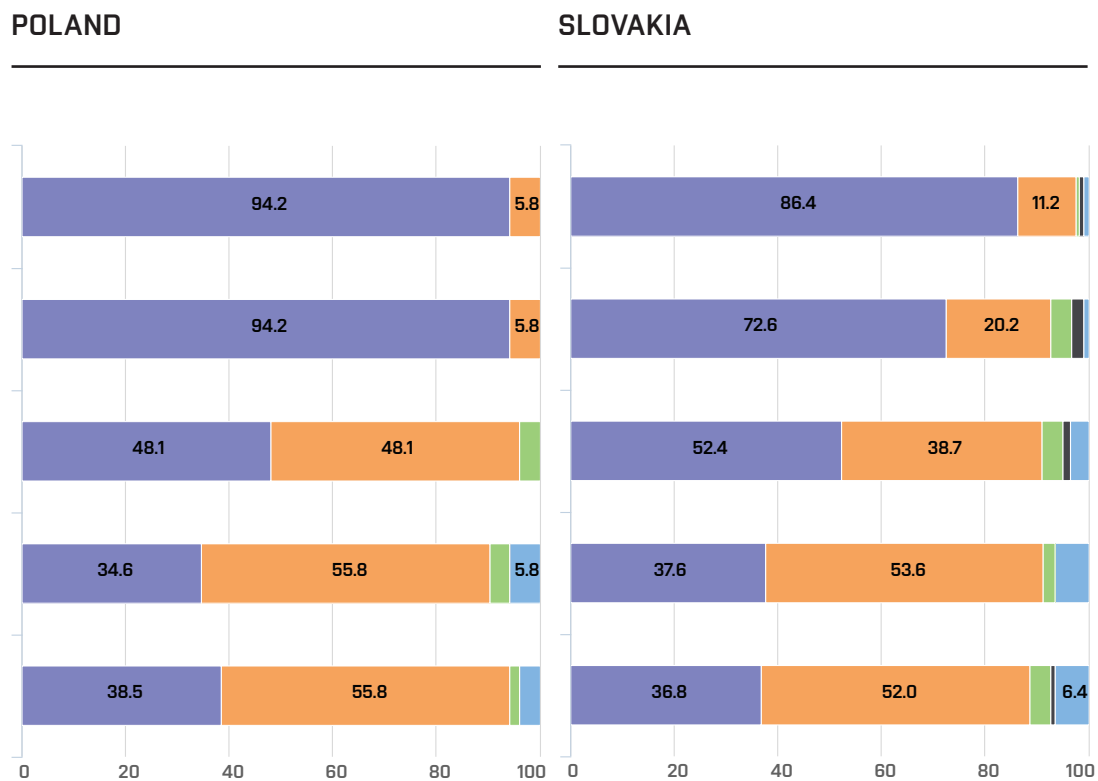
**POLAND**

**SLOVAKIA**

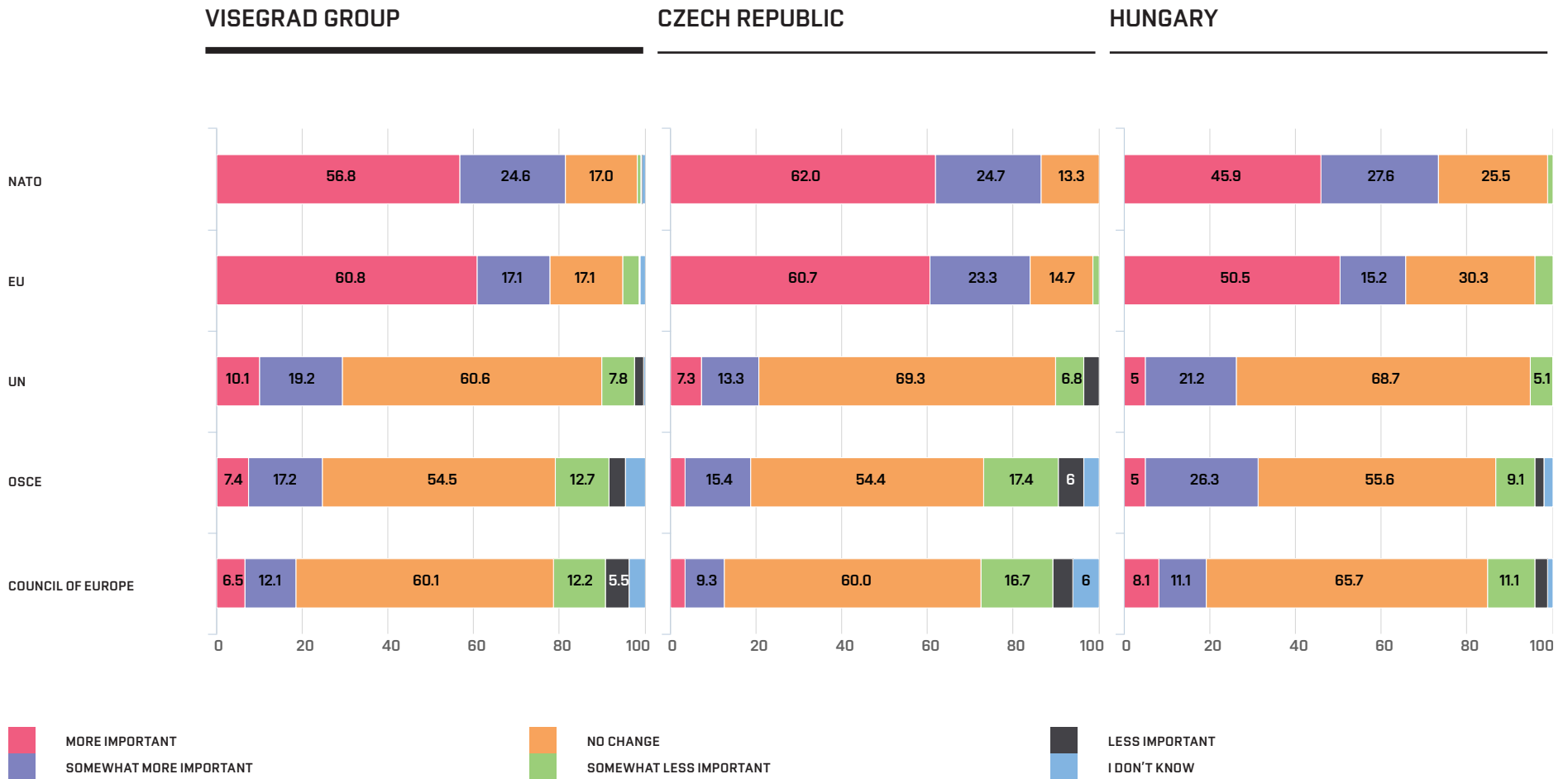


# Is the membership of your country in the following international organizations beneficial for pursuing its national interests?





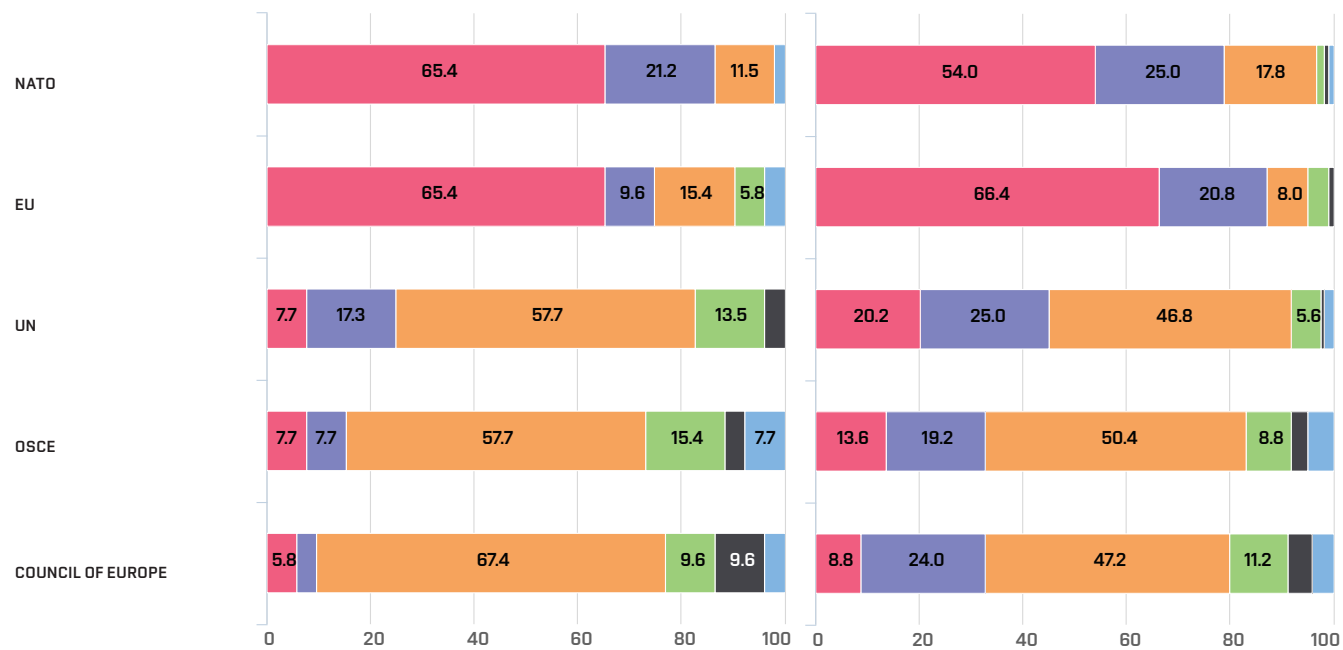
# Compared to now, how important will the following international organizations be for your country in the next five years?



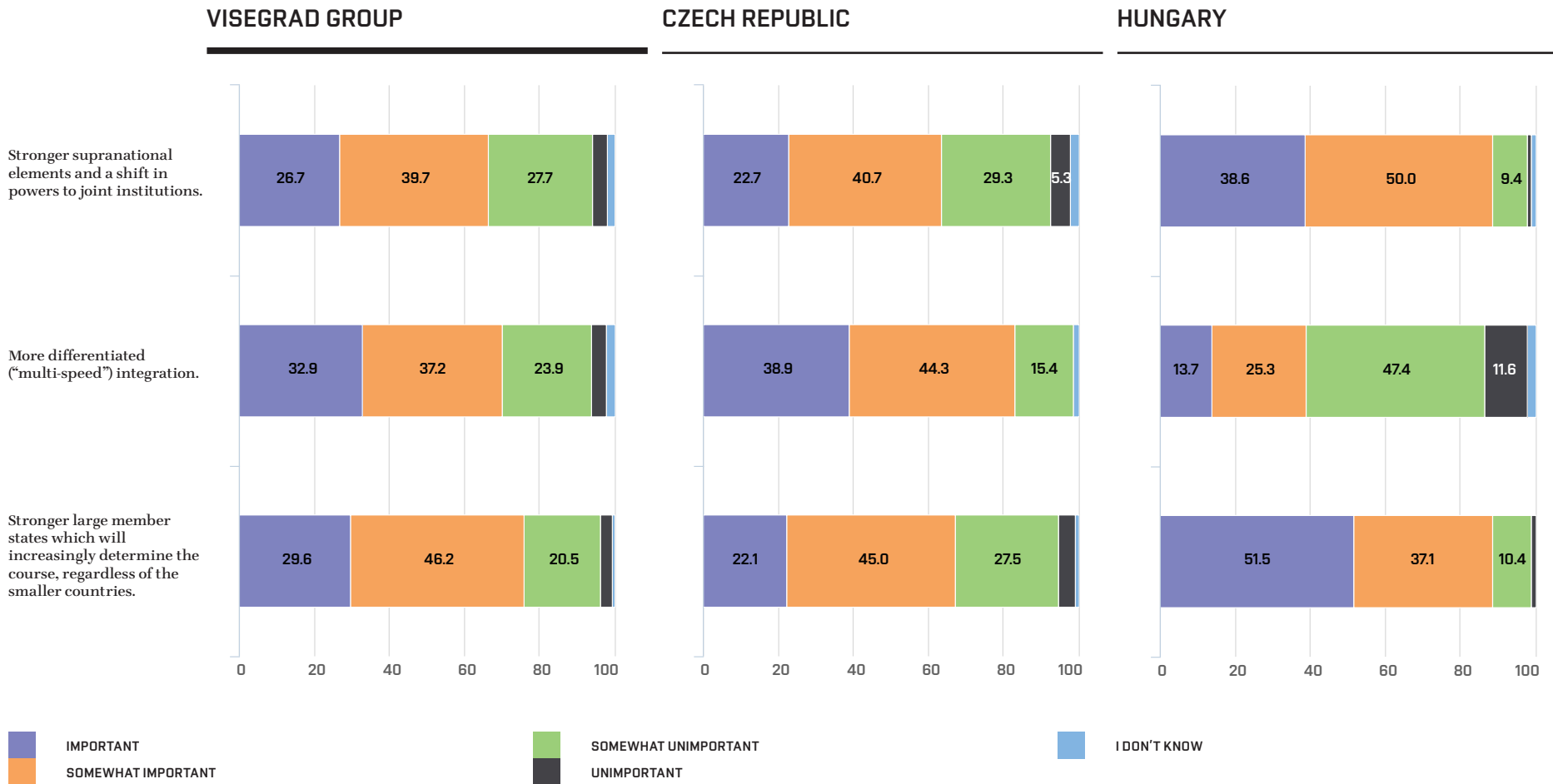


**POLAND**

**SLOVAKIA**

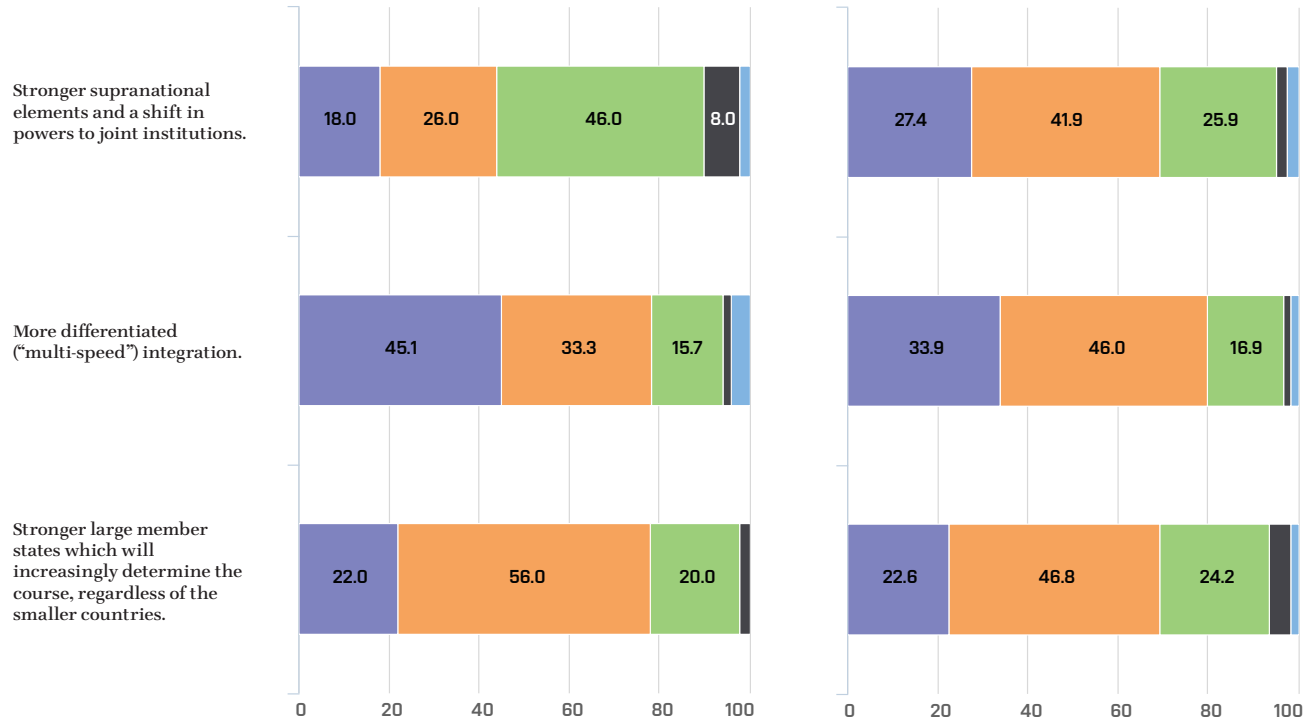


# What do you think will characterize the development of the EU in the next 10 years?

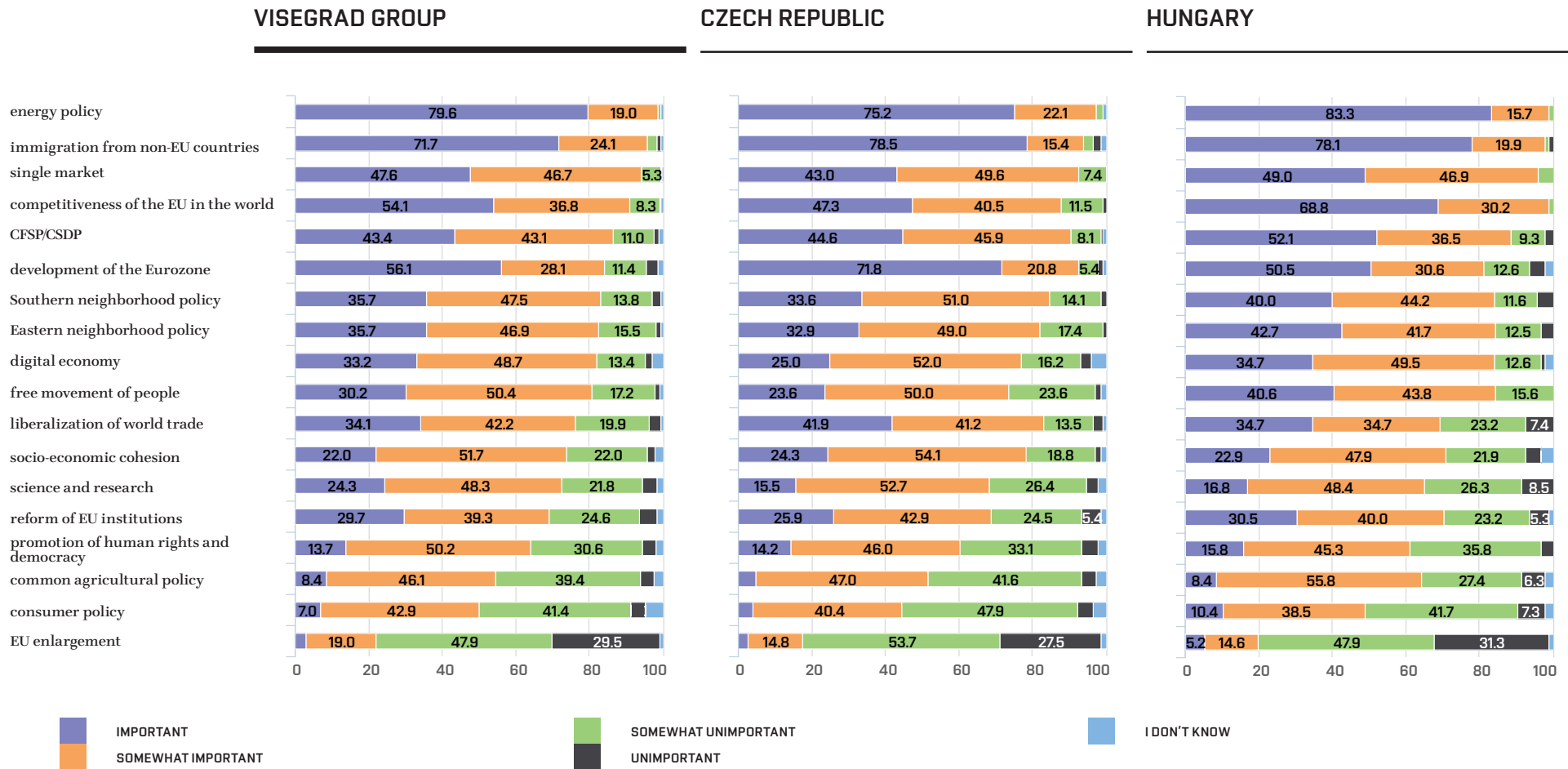


**POLAND**

**SLOVAKIA**



# How important will the following issues be for the EU in the next 5 years?

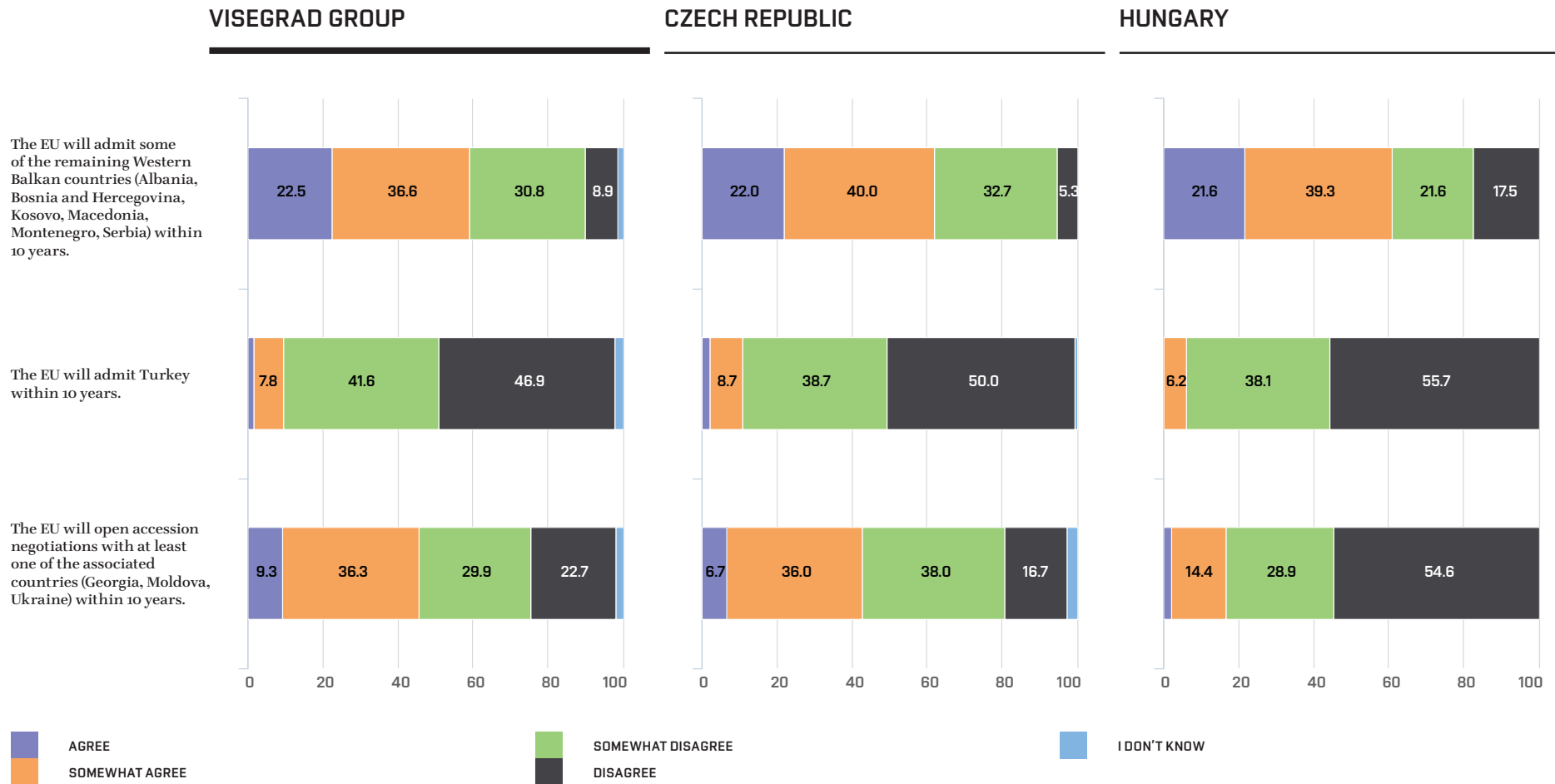


**POLAND**

**SLOVAKIA**

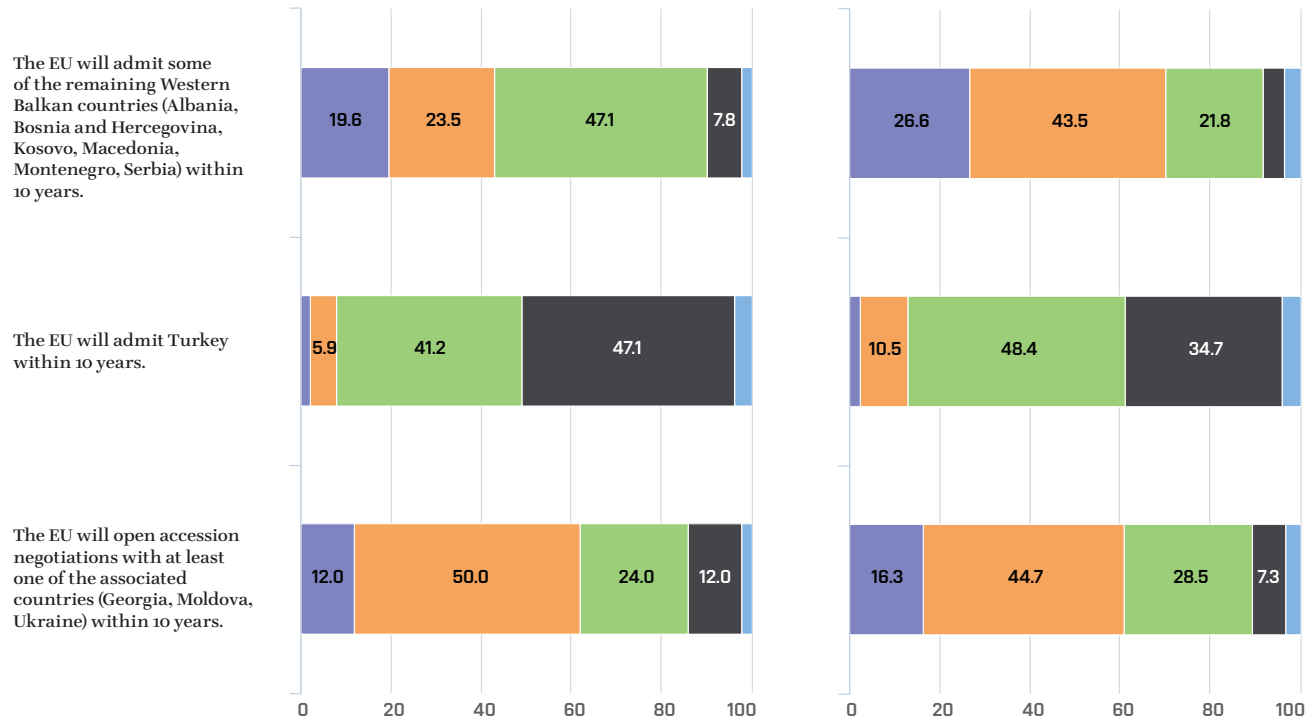


# How do you think the EU enlargement process will develop in the future?

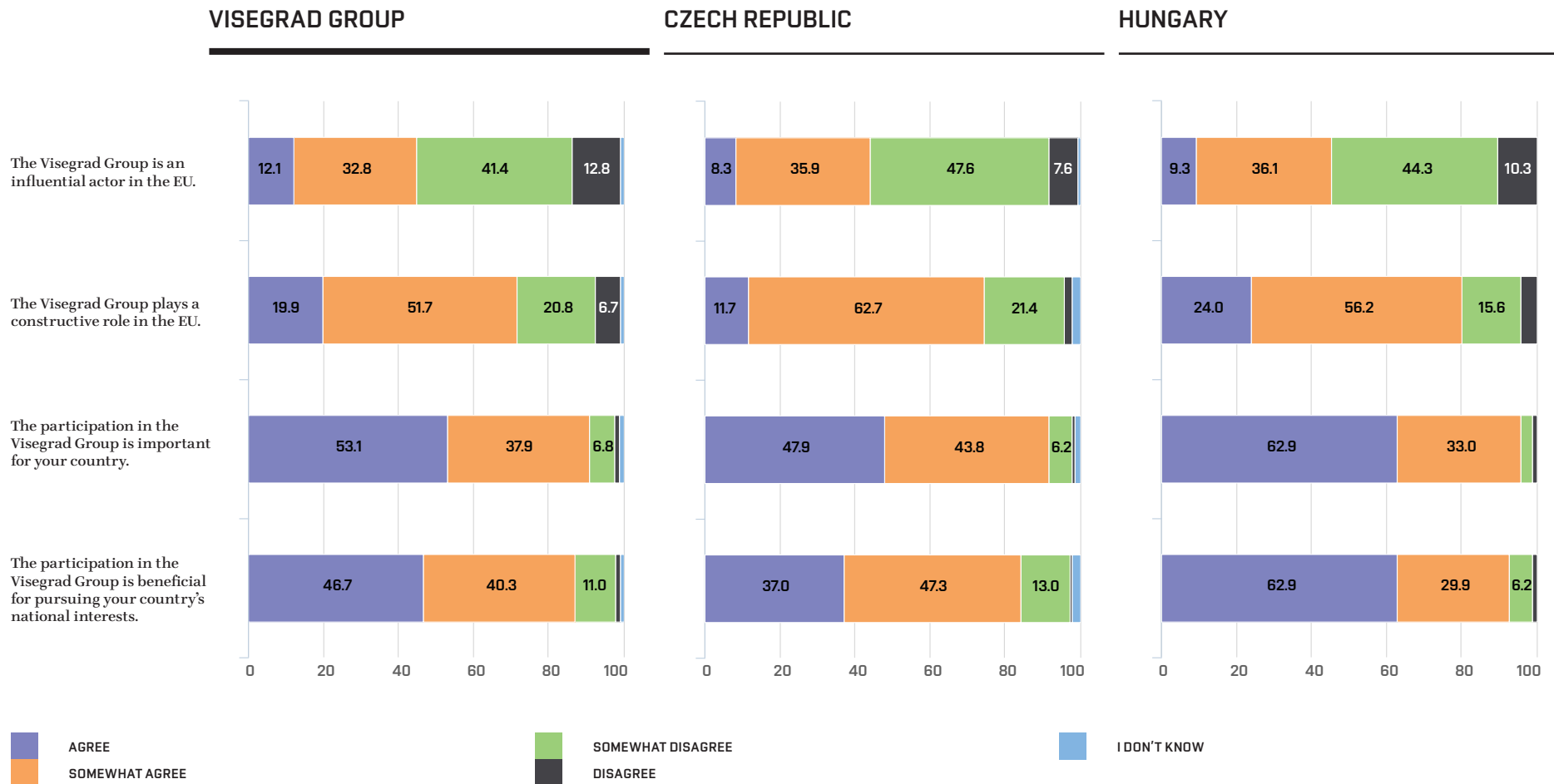


**POLAND**

**SLOVAKIA**



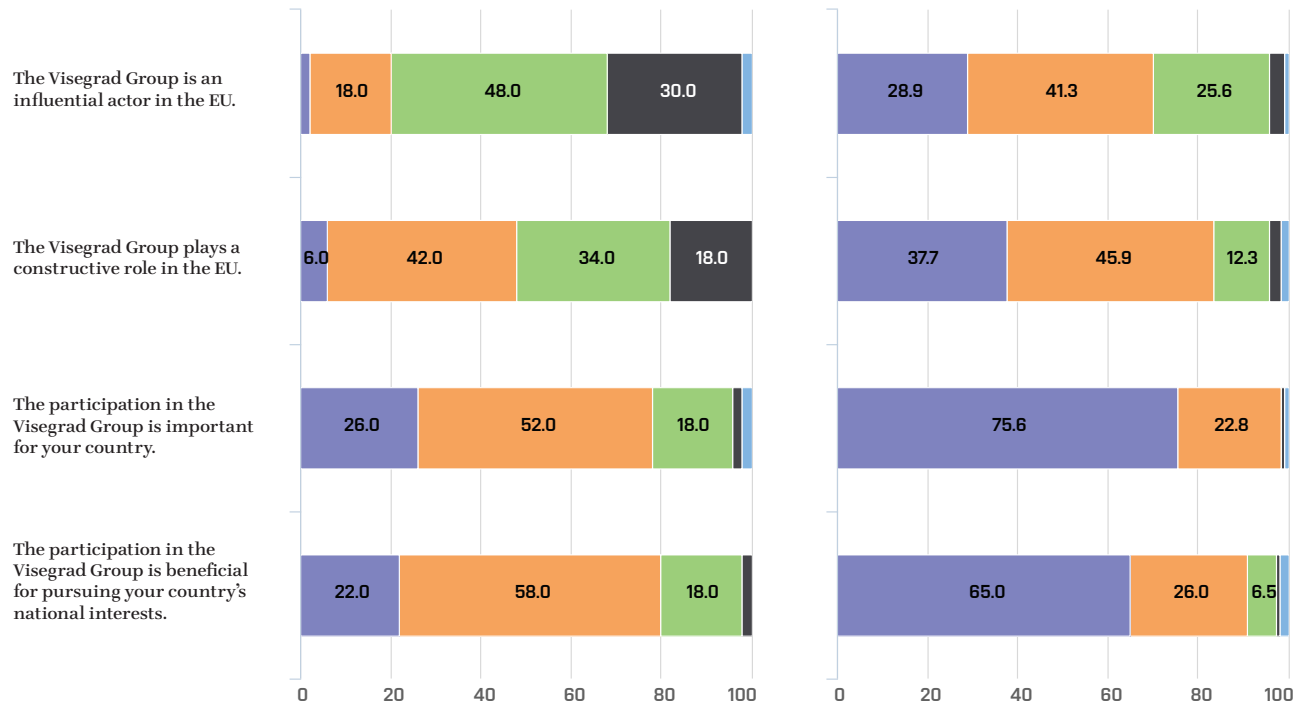
# To what extent do you agree with the following statements about the role of the Visegrad Group in the European Union?



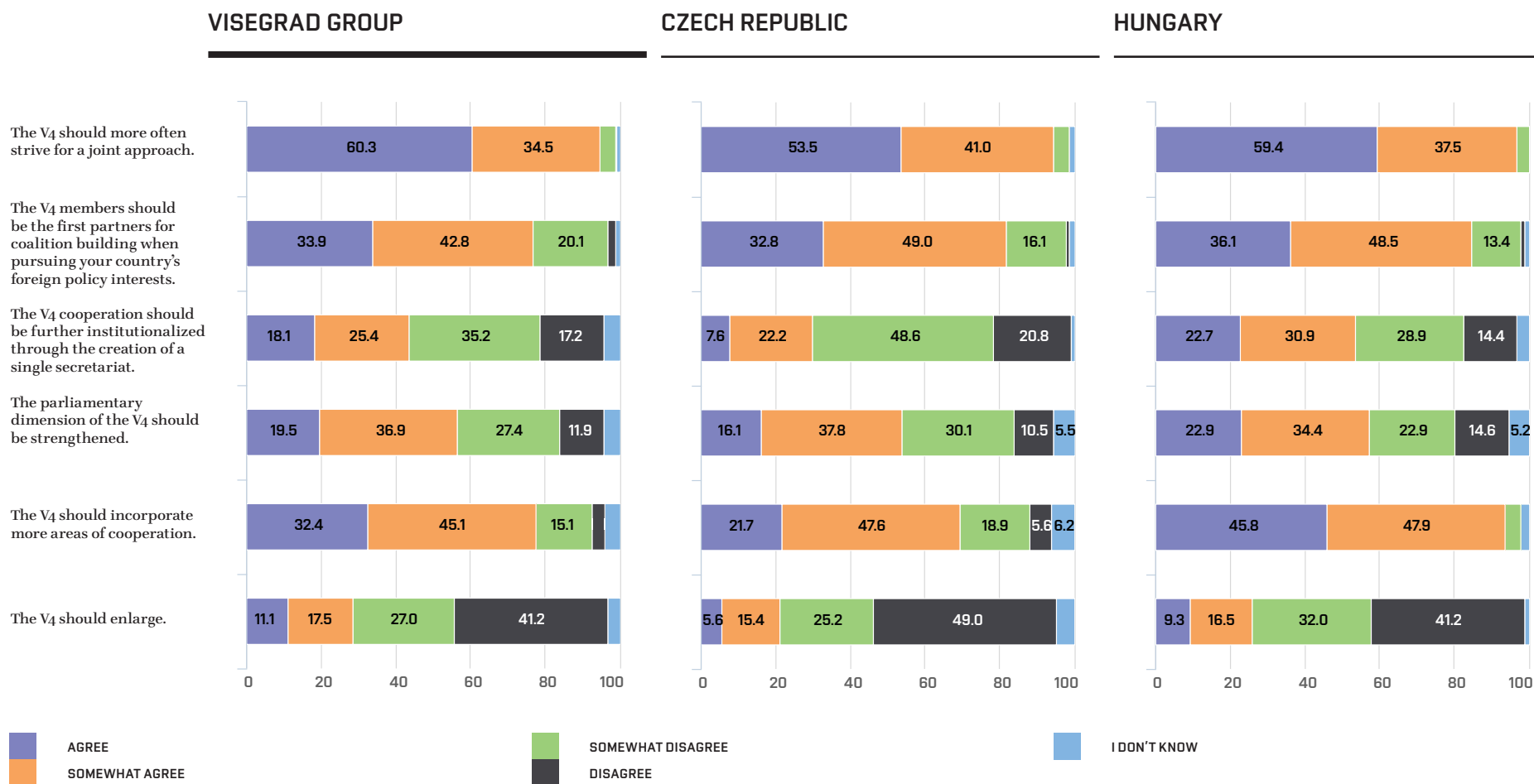


**POLAND**

**SLOVAKIA**

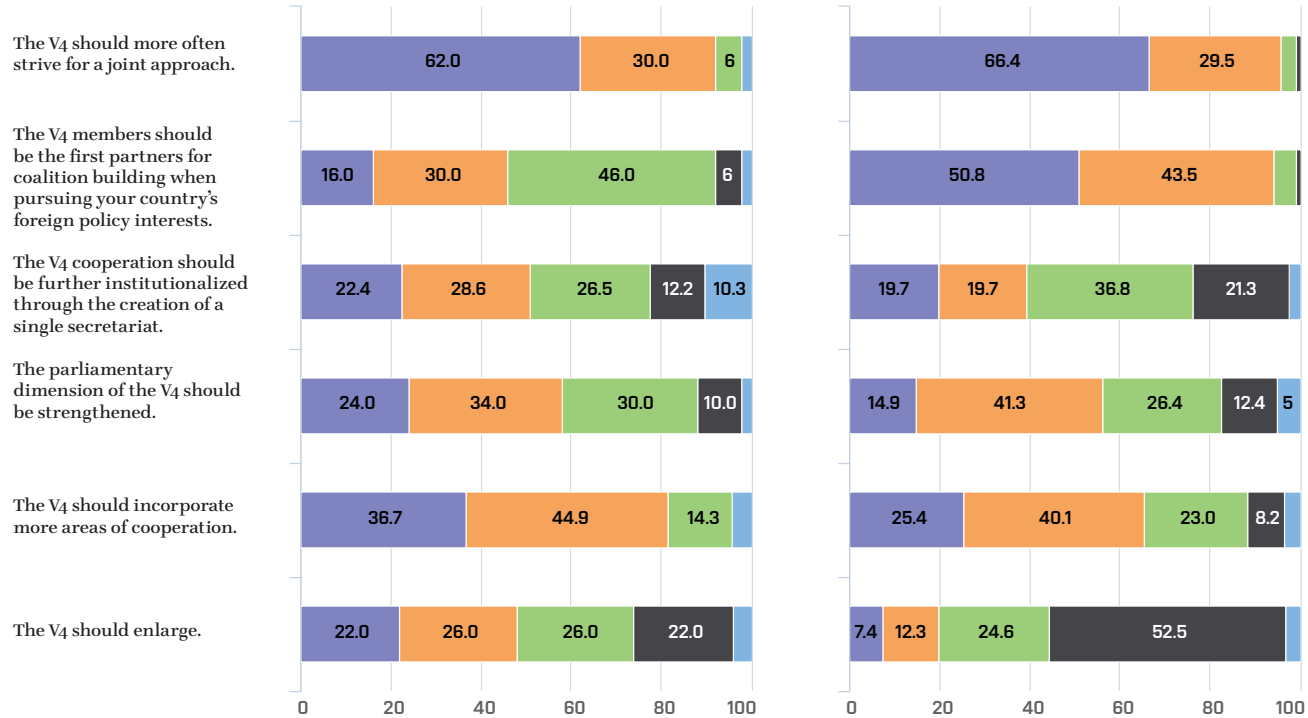


# To what extent do you agree with the following propositions about the future development of the Visegrad Group?



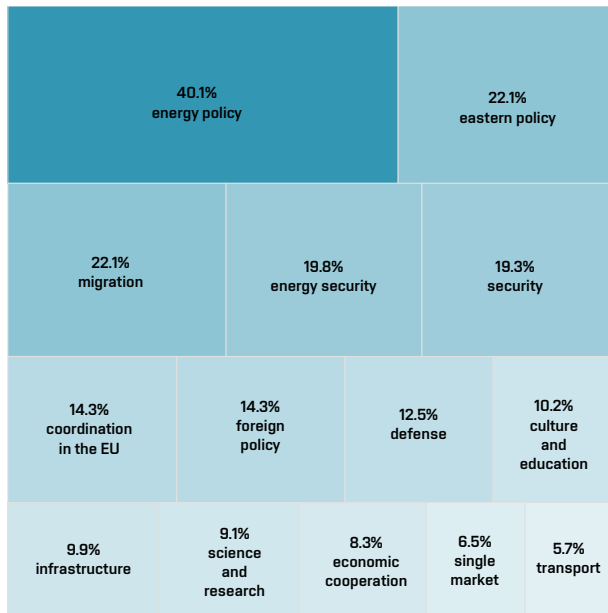
POLAND

SLOVAKIA

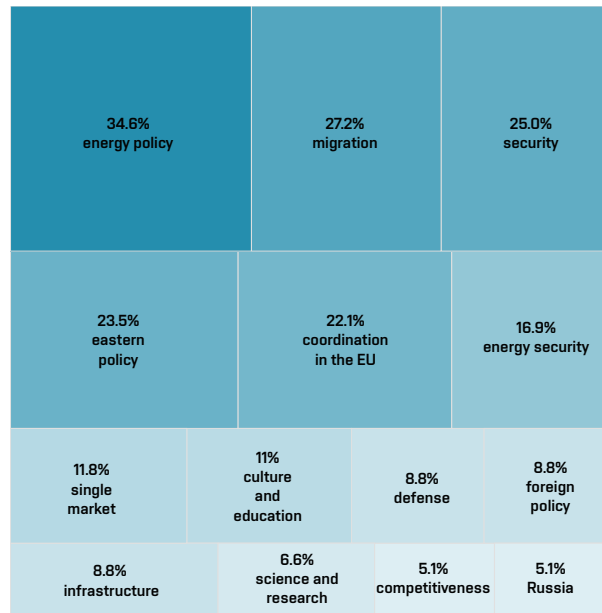


# What, in your opinion, are the 3 most important policy areas that the Visegrad Group should focus on?

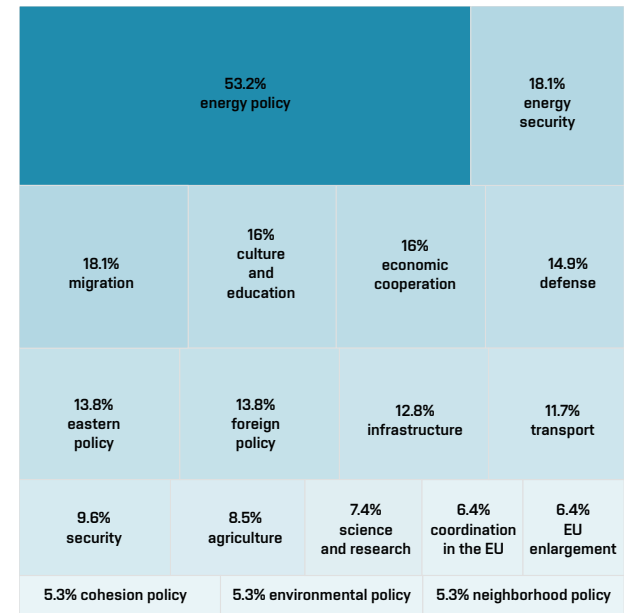
## WISEGRAD GROUP



## CZECH REPUBLIC



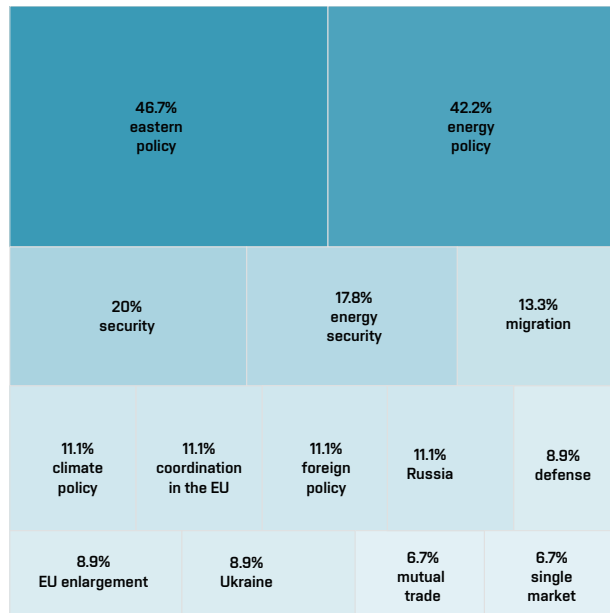
## HUNGARY



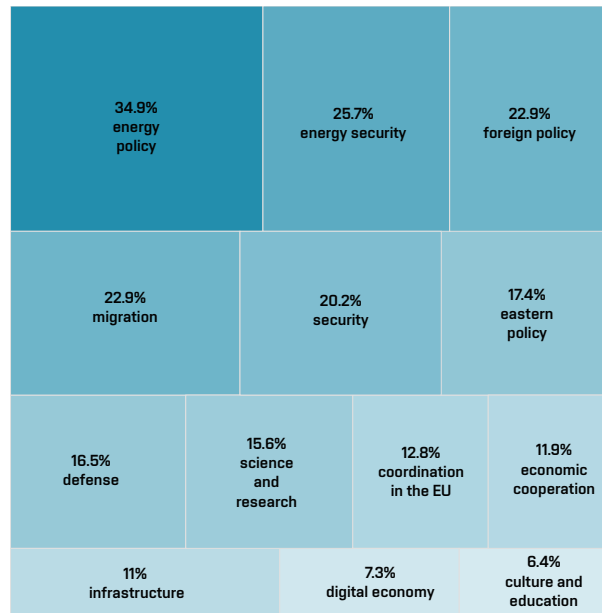
FREQUENCY OF OCCURENCE



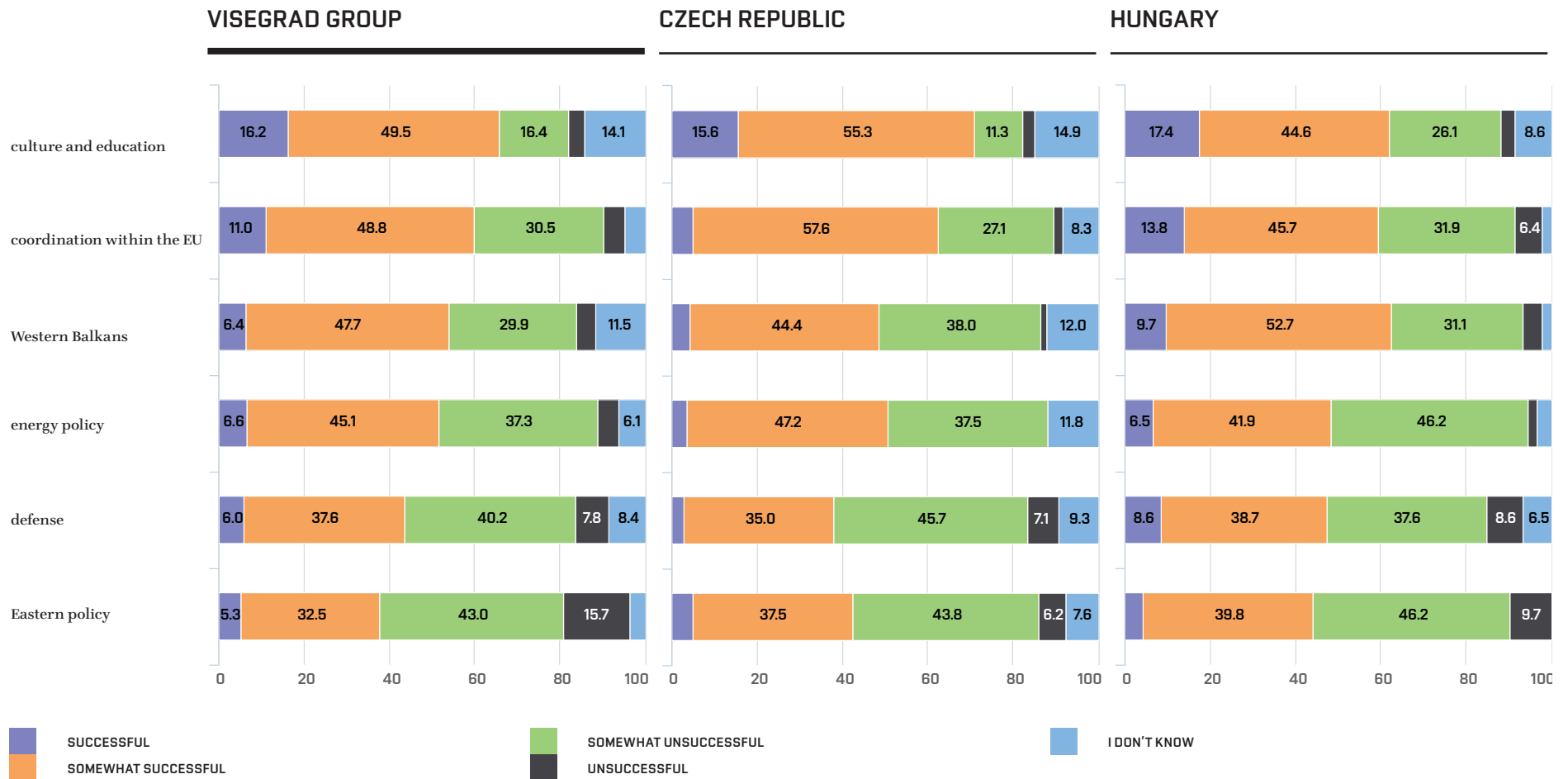
**POLAND**

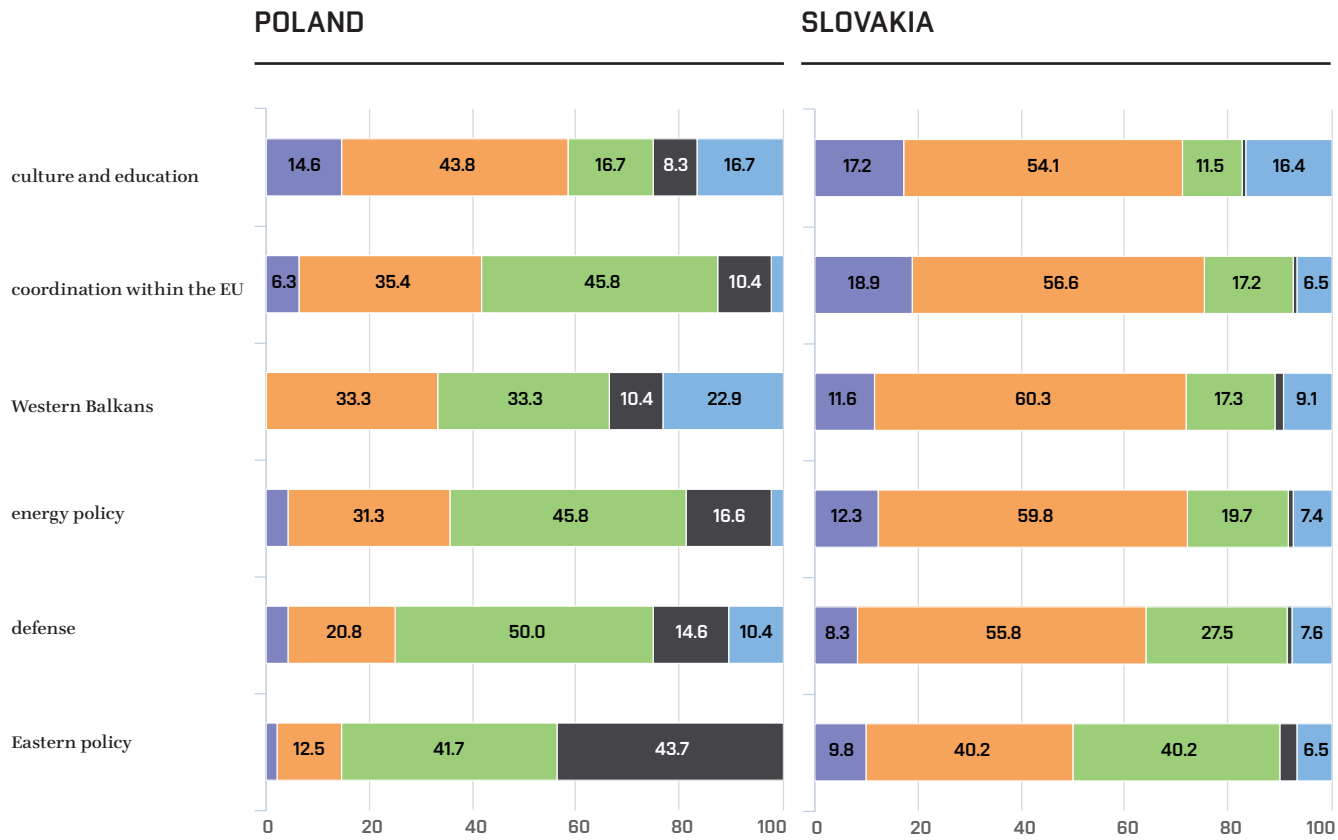


**SLOVAKIA**



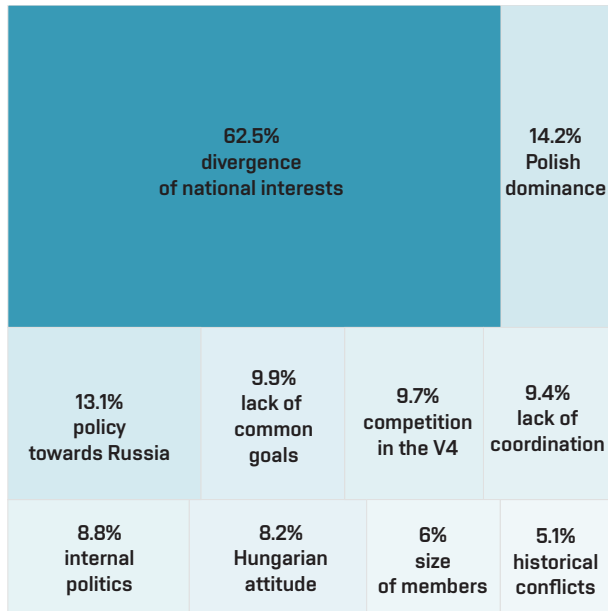
# Evaluate the performance of the Visegrad Group in the following areas.



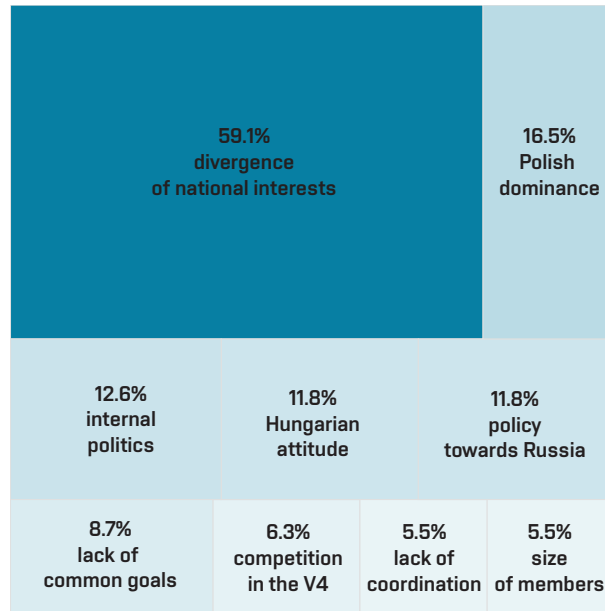


# What do you consider to be the 3 main difficulties in achieving successful cooperation within the Visegrad Group?

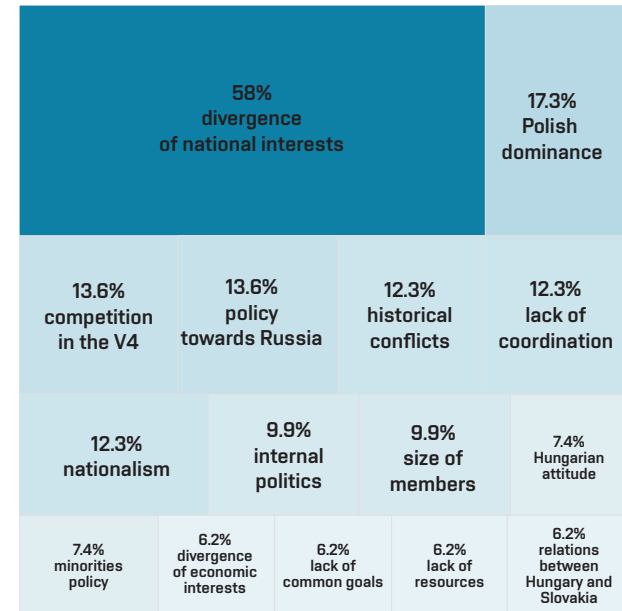
## VISEGRAD GROUP



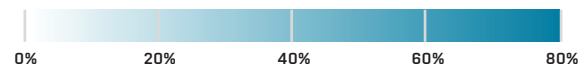
## CZECH REPUBLIC



## HUNGARY

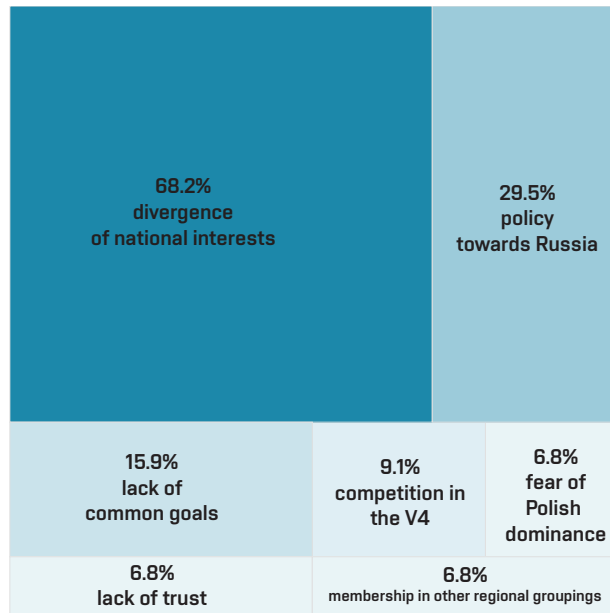


FREQUENCY OF OCCURENCE

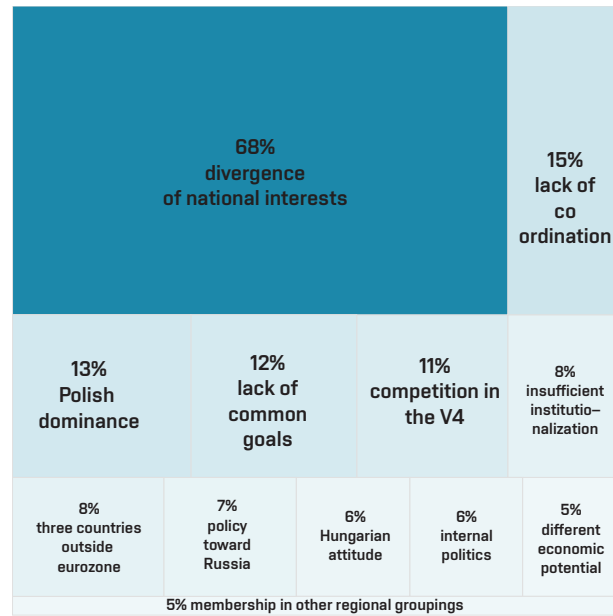




POLAND

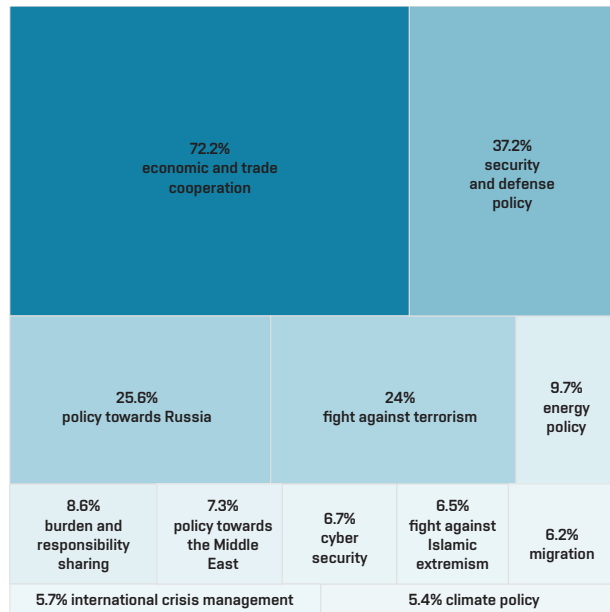


SLOVAKIA

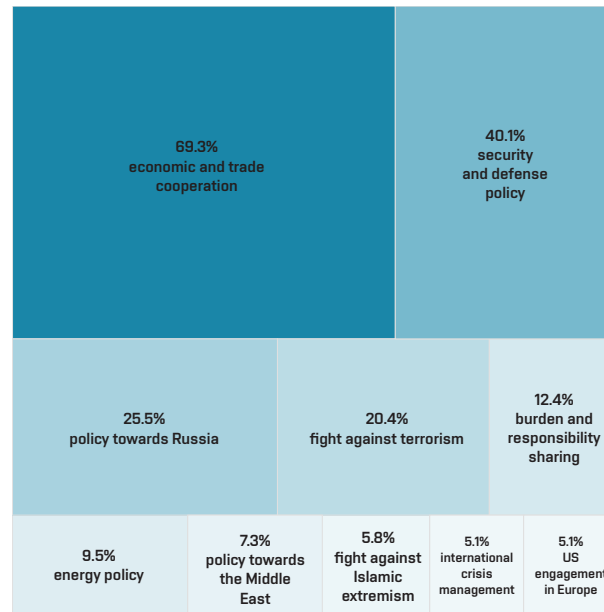


# What, in your opinion, are the 3 issues which will be the most important for the transatlantic relationship in the next 5 years?

## WISEGRAD GROUP



## CZECH REPUBLIC



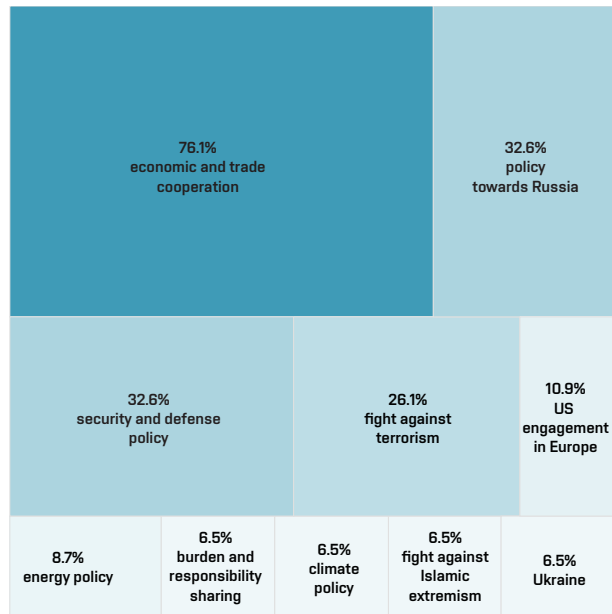
## HUNGARY



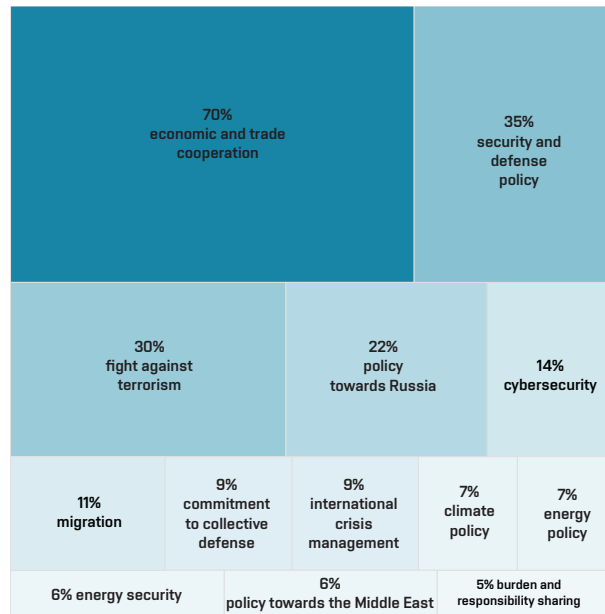
FREQUENCY OF OCCURENCE



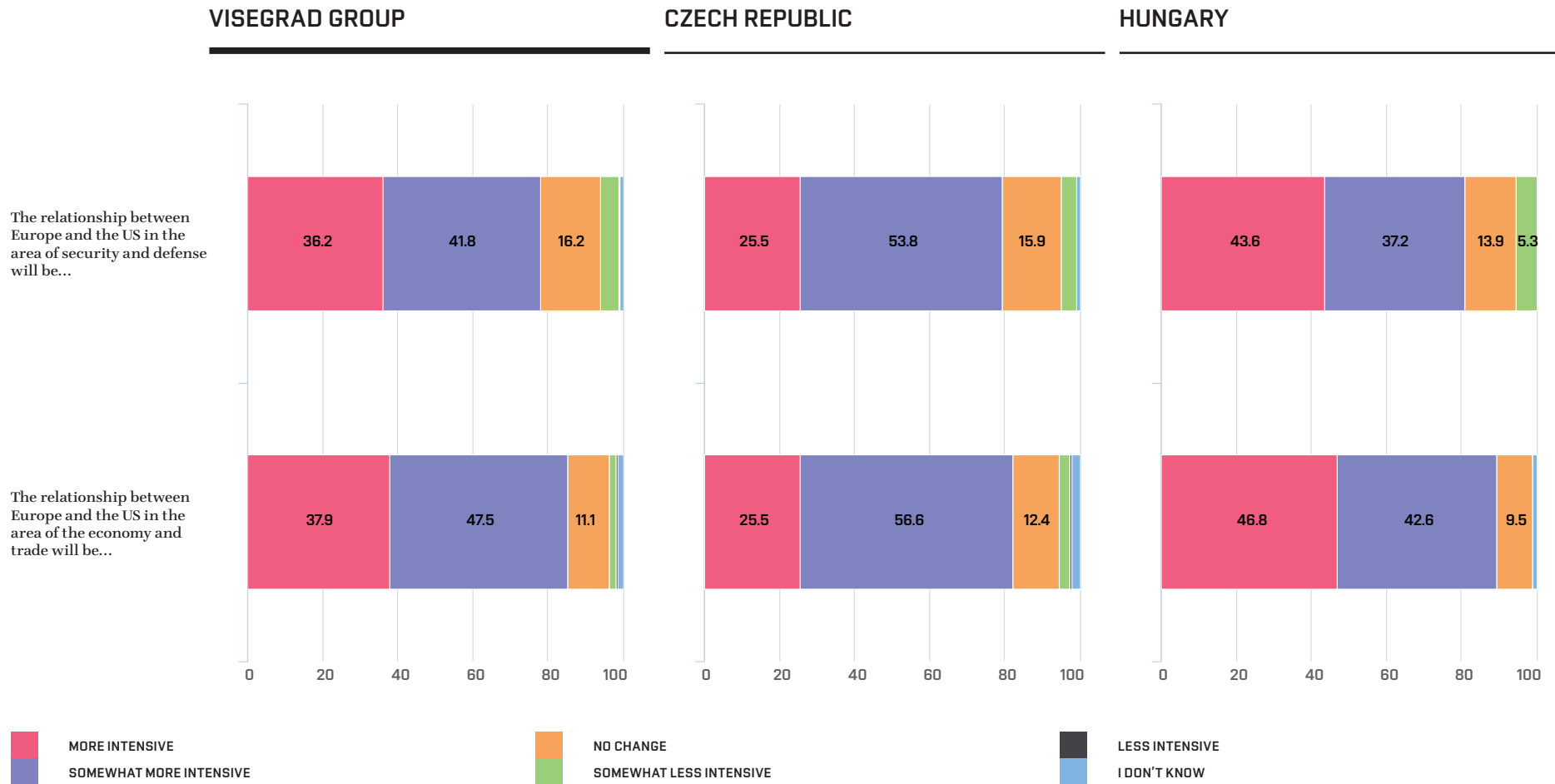
**POLAND**



**SLOVAKIA**

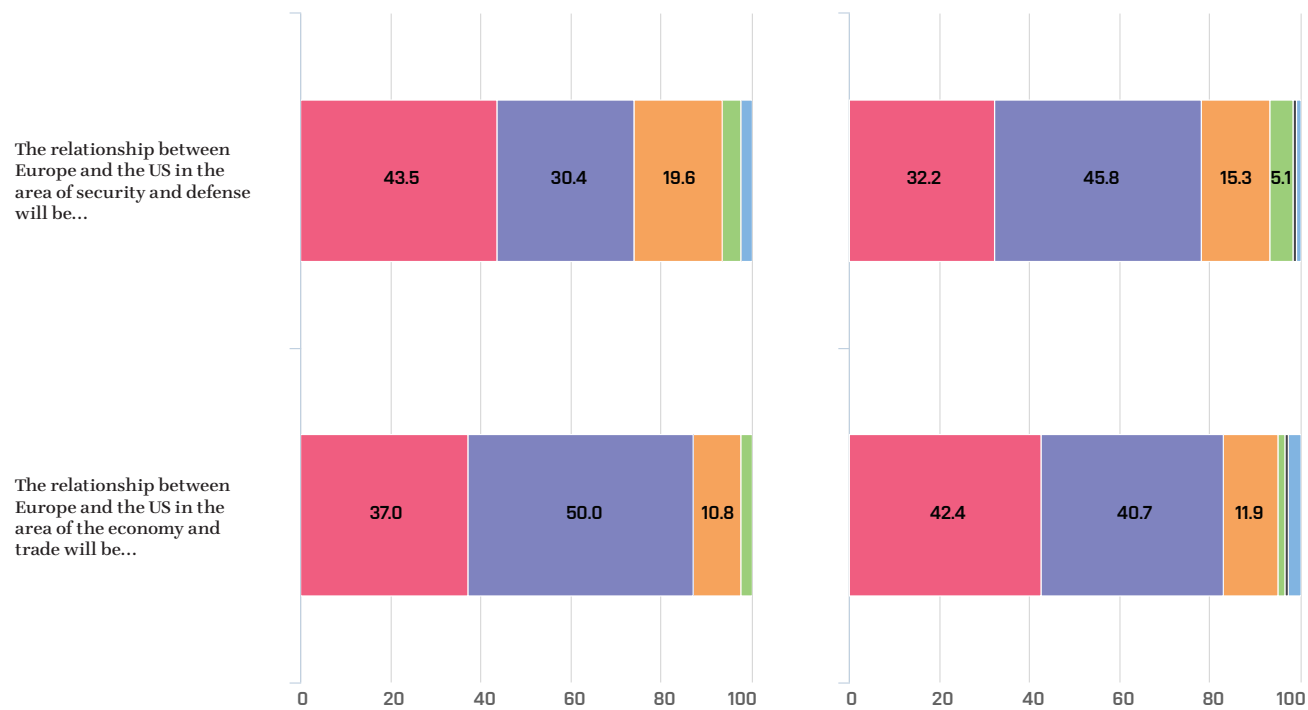


# How intensive will transatlantic relations be in the following areas in the next 5 years?

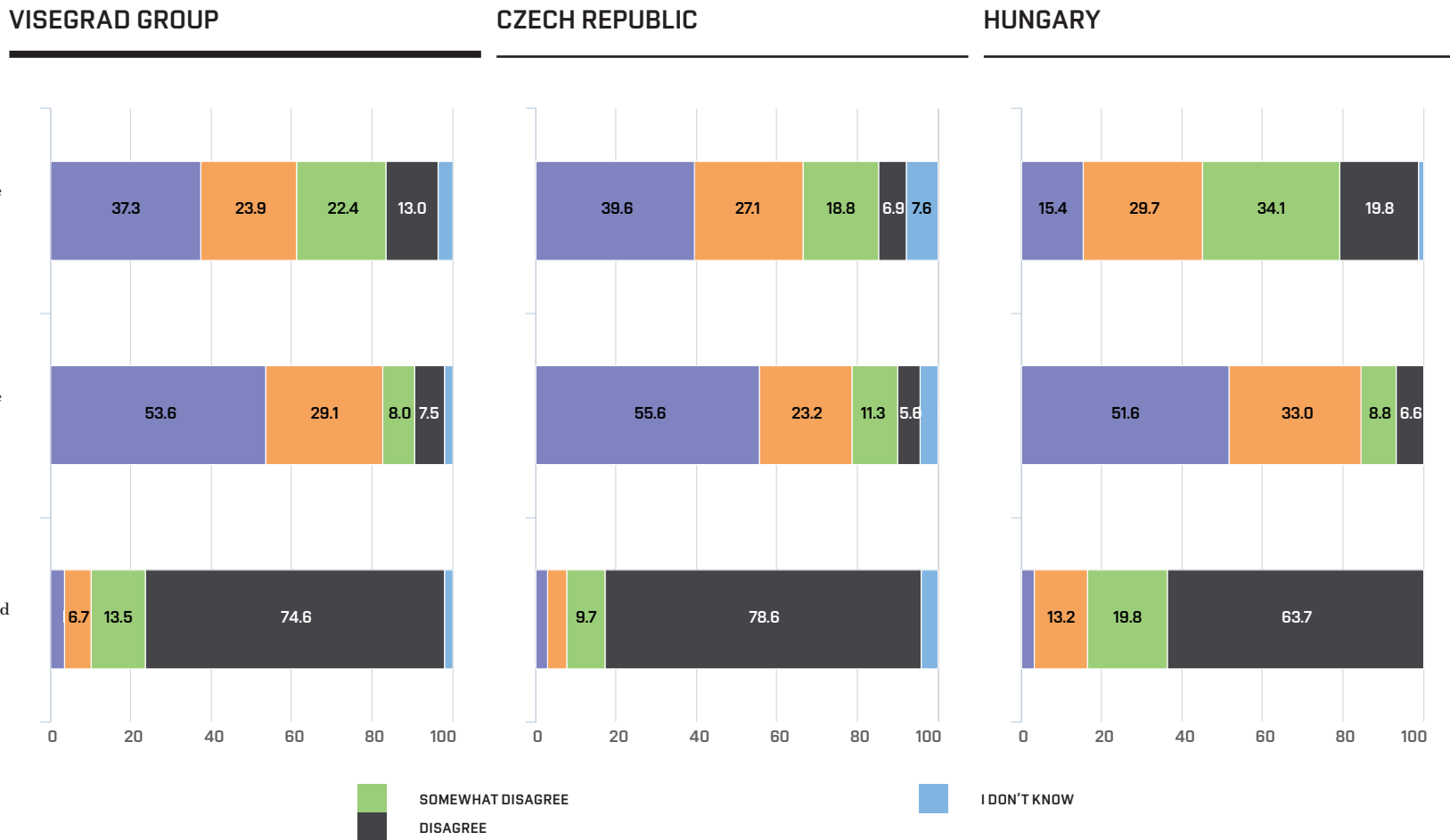


**POLAND**

**SLOVAKIA**

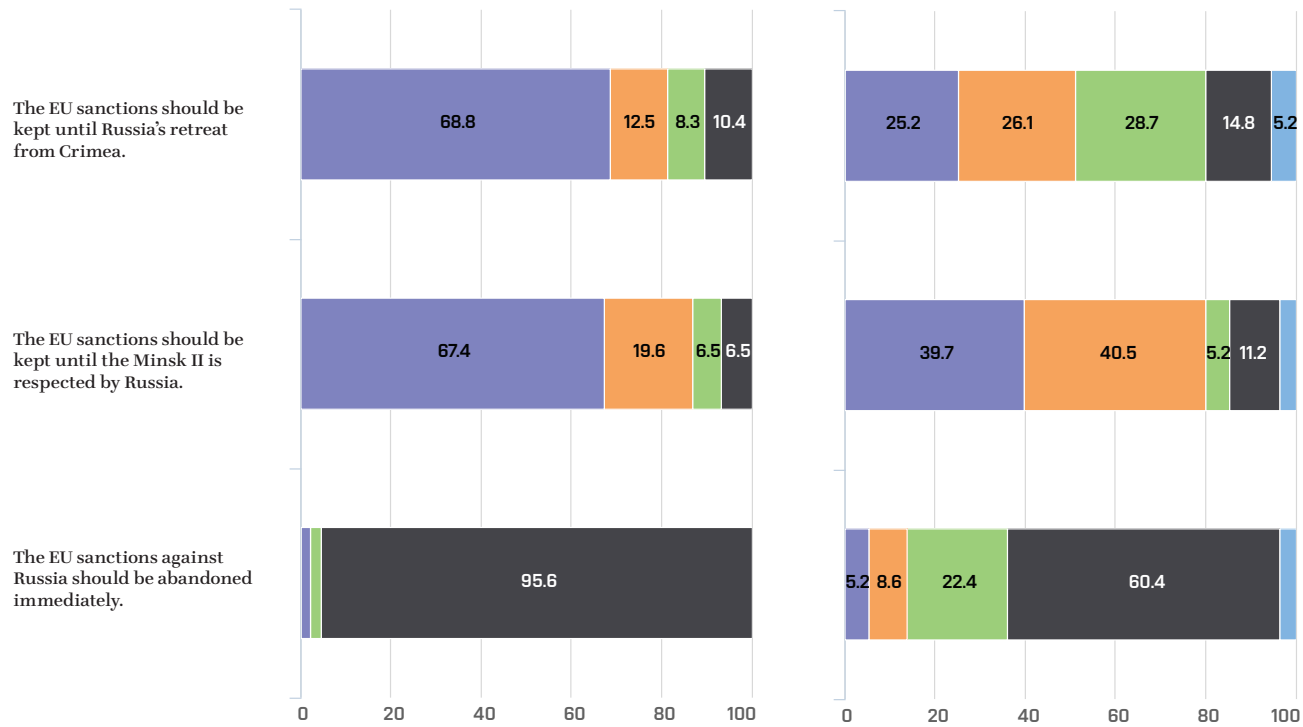


# To what extent do you agree with the following statements about the EU sanctions against Russia?



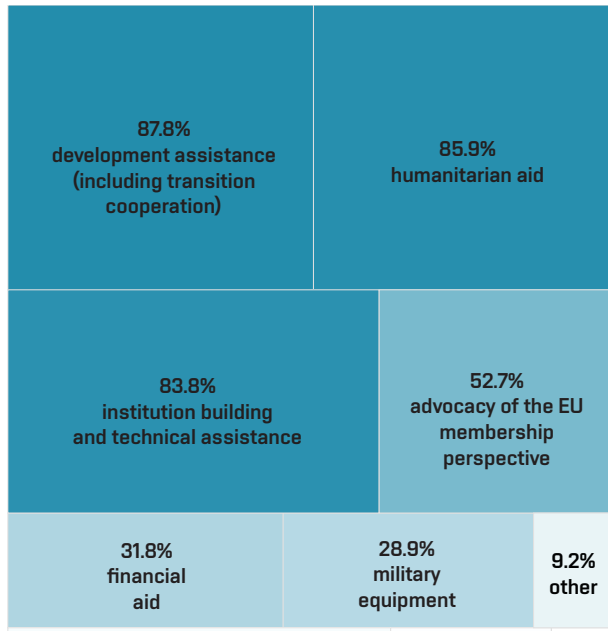
POLAND

SLOVAKIA

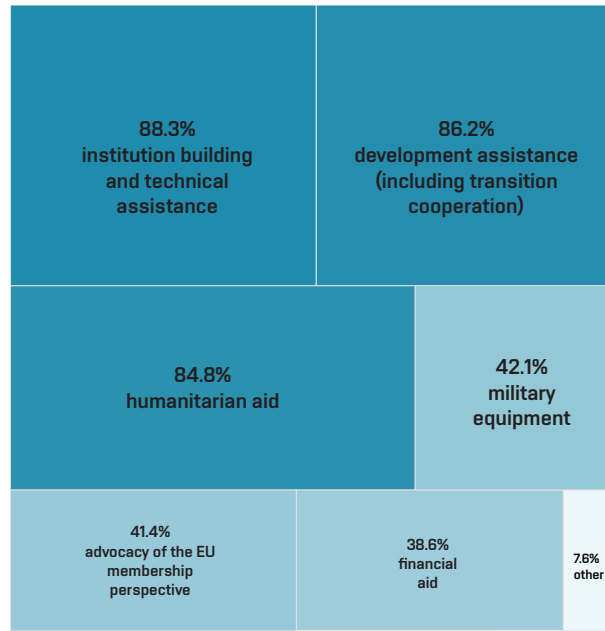


# What kind of support should your country provide to Ukraine?

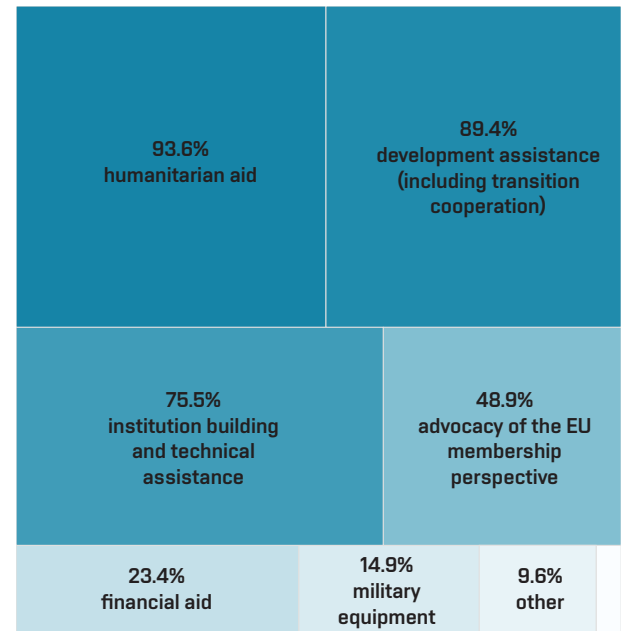
## WISEGRAD GROUP



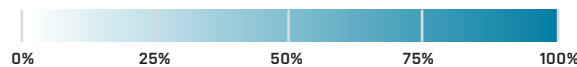
## CZECH REPUBLIC



## HUNGARY

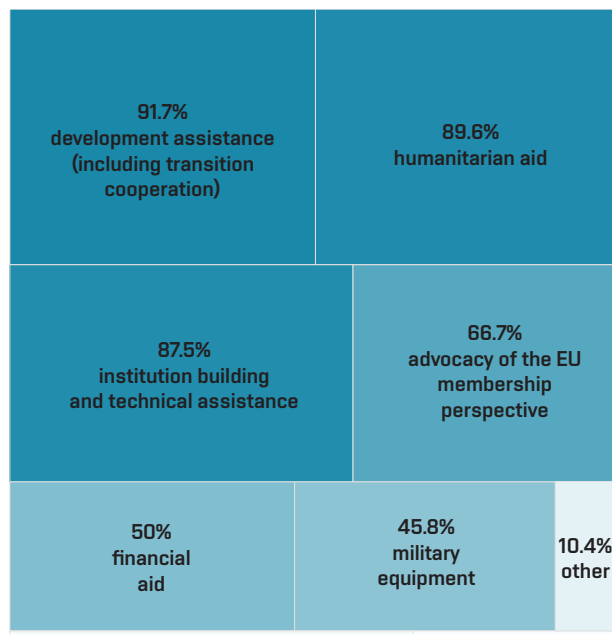


FREQUENCY OF OCCURENCE

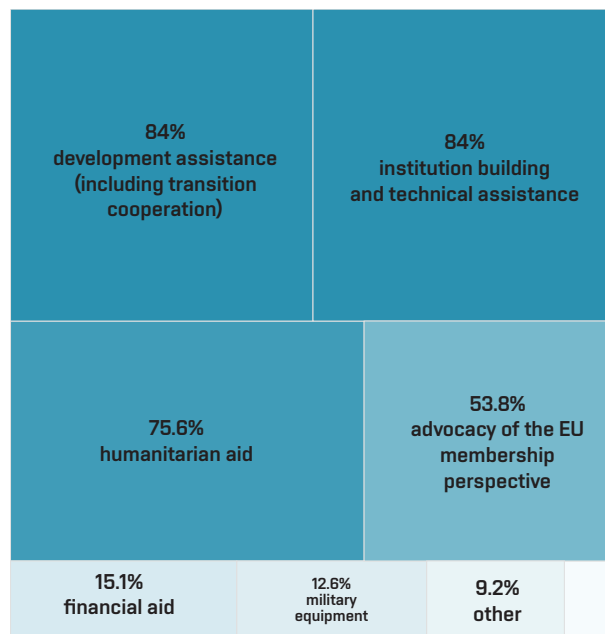




**POLAND**

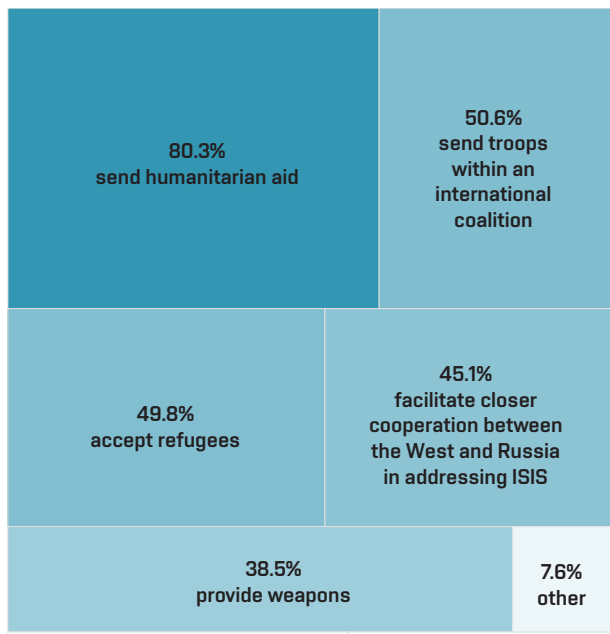


**SLOVAKIA**

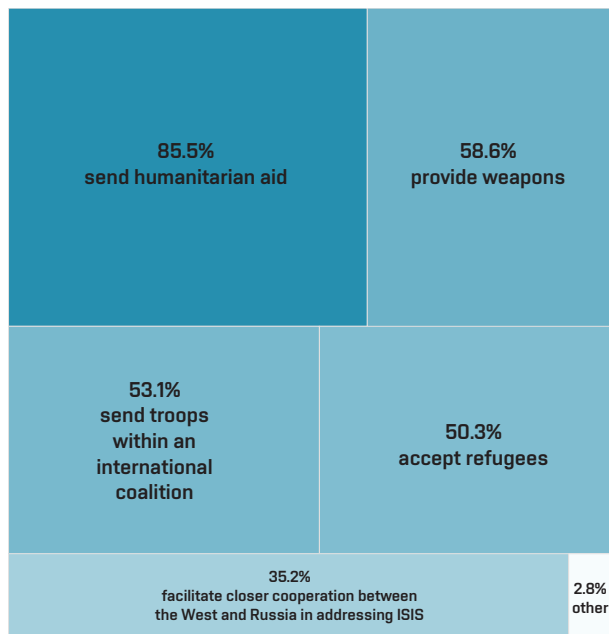


# What activities should your country undertake in the fight against ISIS?

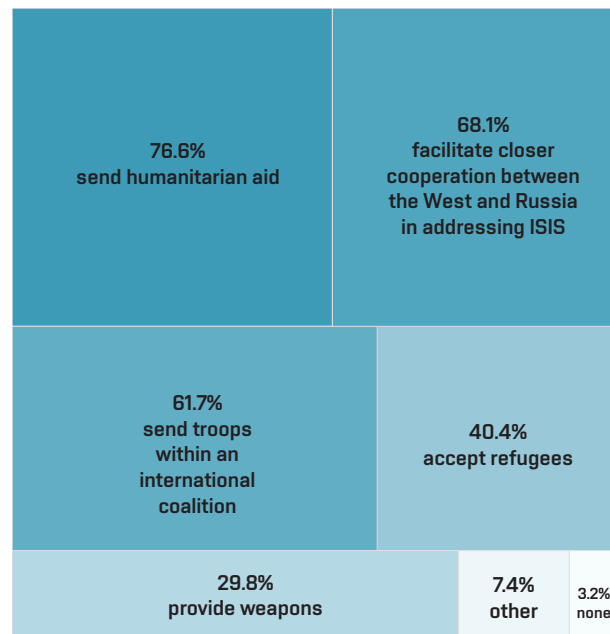
## VISEGRAD GROUP



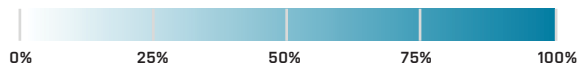
## CZECH REPUBLIC



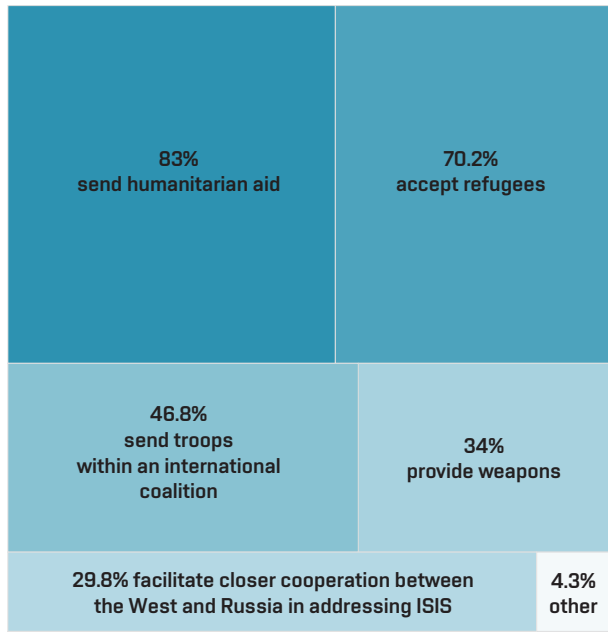
## HUNGARY



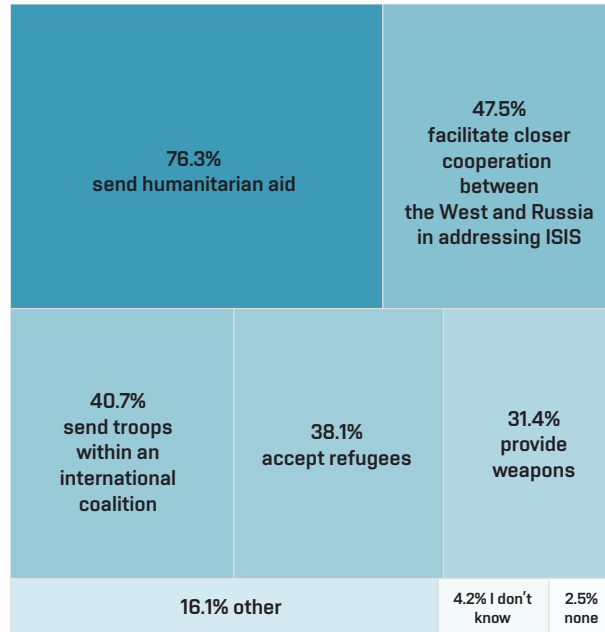
FREQUENCY OF OCCURENCE



POLAND

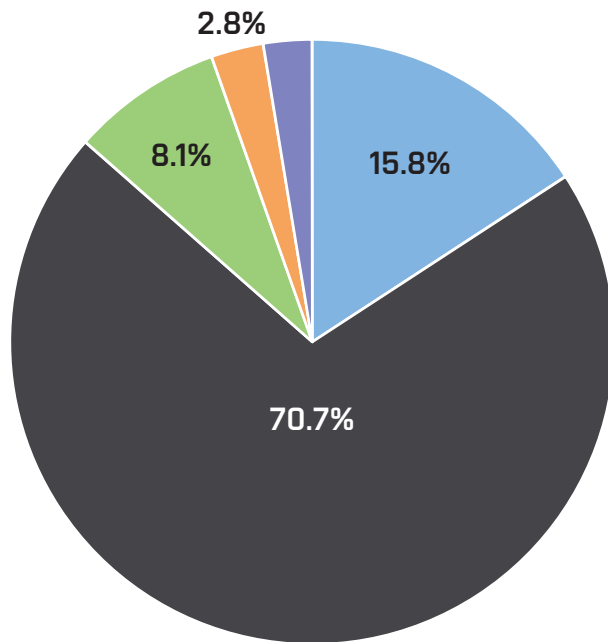


SLOVAKIA

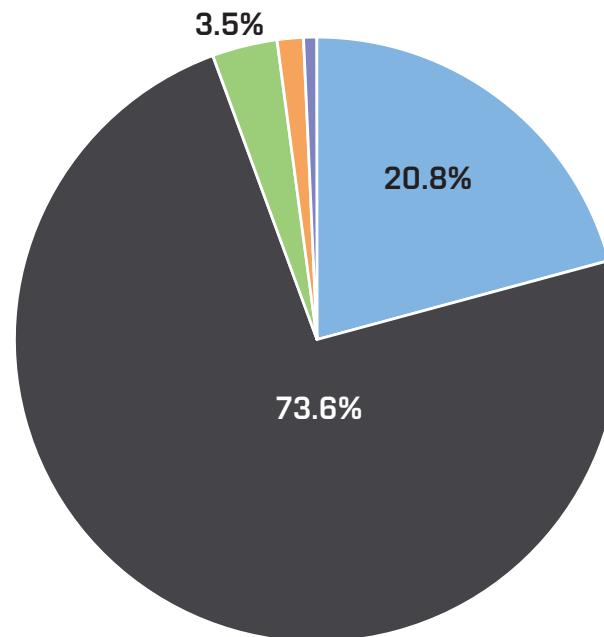


The EU (the European Commission and Member States) has promised to increase the level of its aid to developing countries. Given the current economic situation, which of the following statements best describes your opinion concerning your own country's aid?

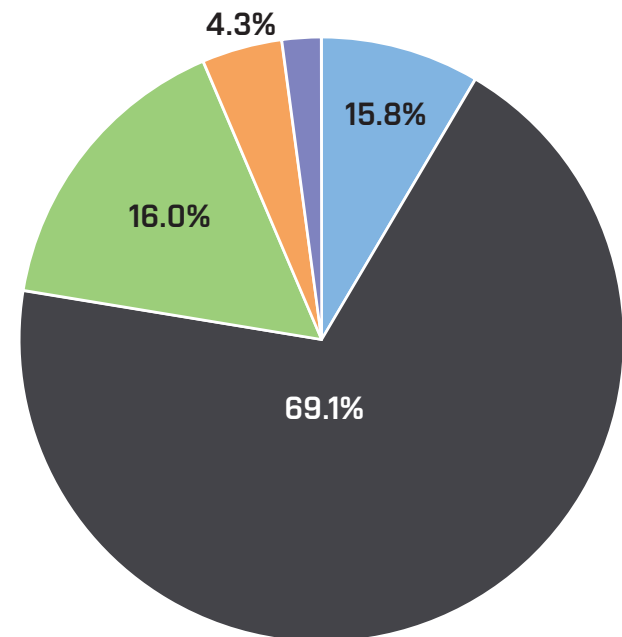
## VISEGRAD GROUP







## CZECH REPUBLIC




## HUNGARY

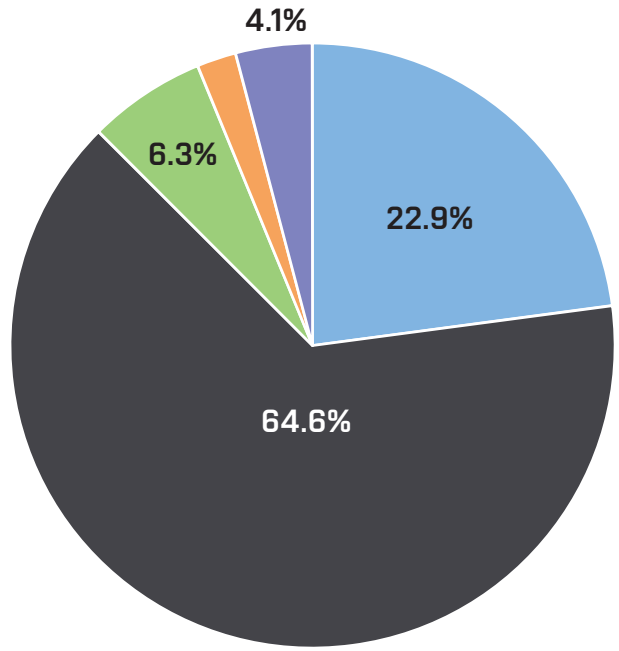


 Your country should keep its promise to increase aid to developing countries.  
 Your country should increase aid to developing countries beyond what is already promised.

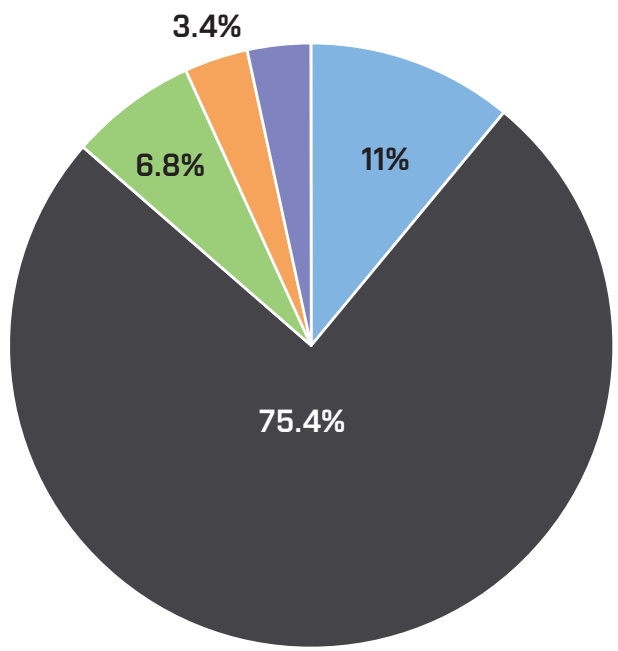
 Your country should not increase aid to developing countries even though it has been promised.  
 Your country should reduce aid to developing countries as we can no longer afford it.

 I don't know.

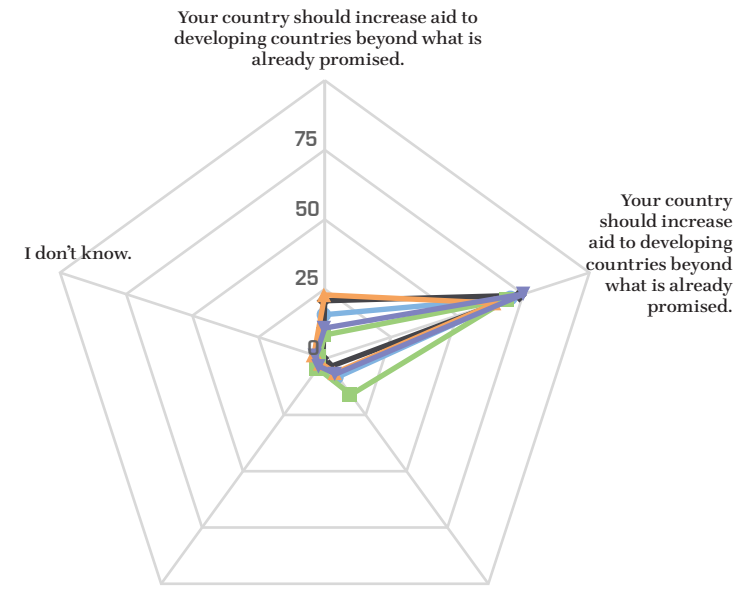
POLAND



SLOVAKIA



COMPARED RESULTS



Your country should increase aid to developing countries beyond what is already promised.

Your country should increase aid to developing countries beyond what is already promised.

I don't know.

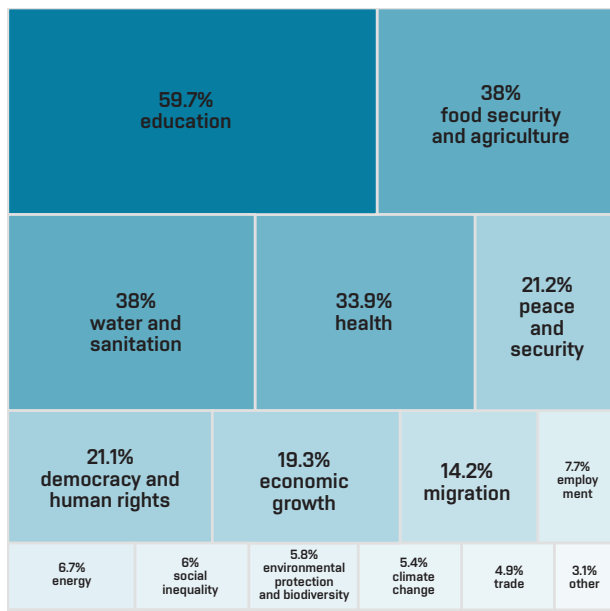
Your country should reduce aid to developing countries as we can no longer afford it.

Your country should not increase aid to developing countries even though it has been promised.

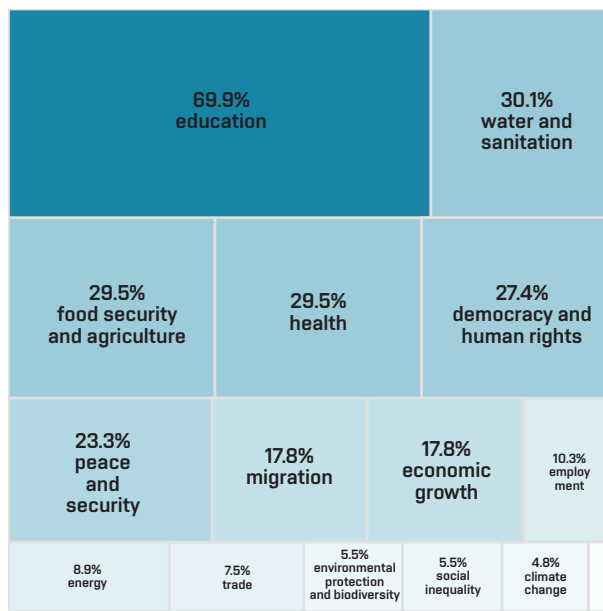
<span style="color: blue;">■</span> VISEGRAD GROUP	<span style="color: orange;">■</span> POLAND
<span style="color: darkgrey;">■</span> CZECH REPUBLIC	<span style="color: purple;">■</span> SLOVAKIA
<span style="color: green;">■</span> HUNGARY	

# Which of the following challenges, affecting developing countries, should your country's development assistance focus on the most?

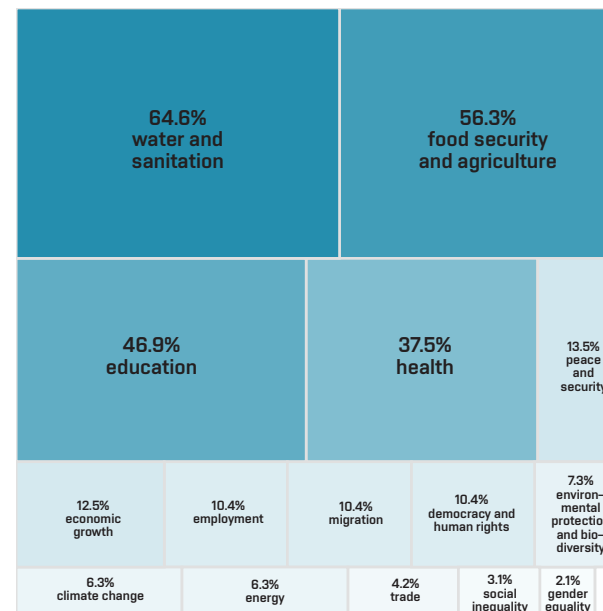
## VISEGRAD GROUP



## CZECH REPUBLIC



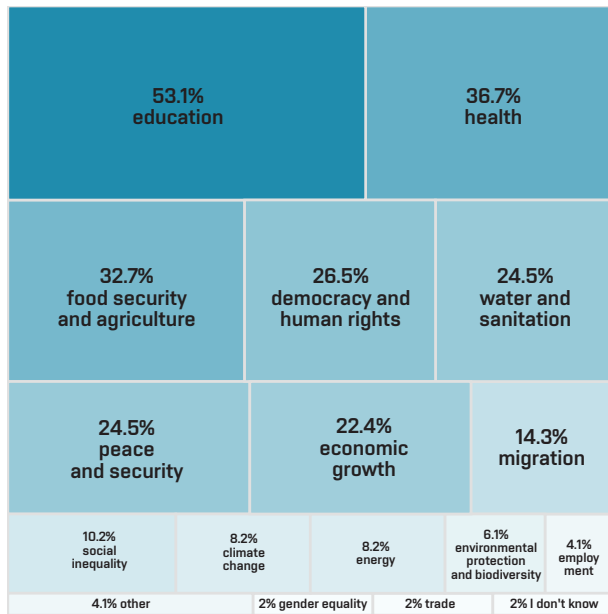
## HUNGARY



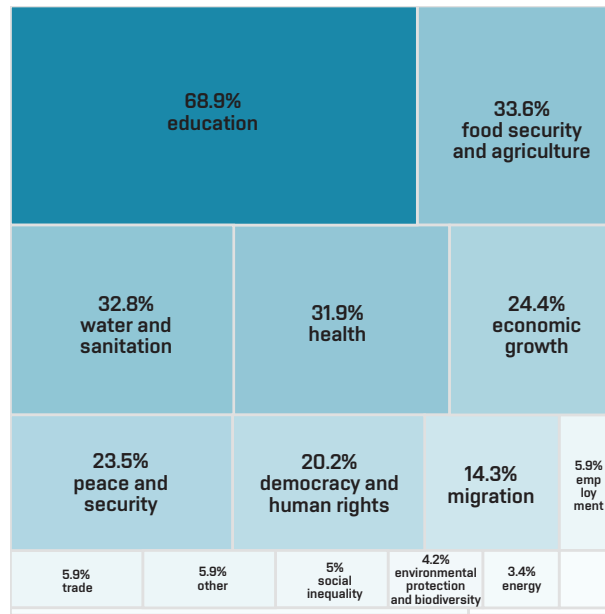
FREQUENCY OF OCCURENCE



POLAND



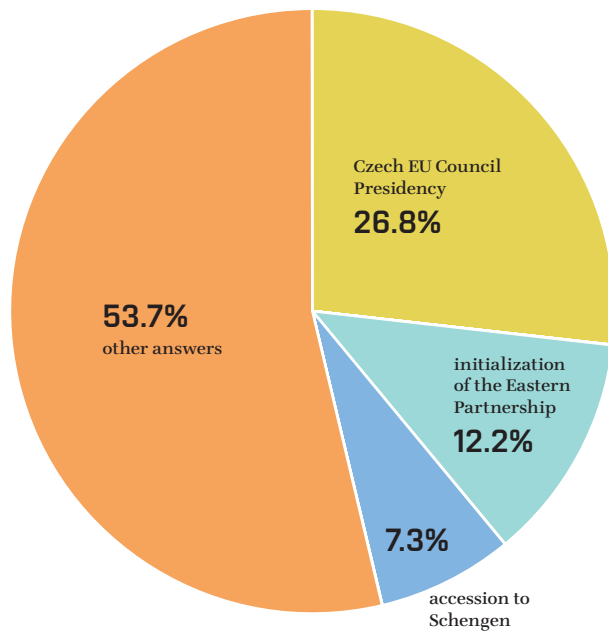
SLOVAKIA



## What, in your opinion, has been the biggest success of your country's foreign policy since the EU accession in 2004?

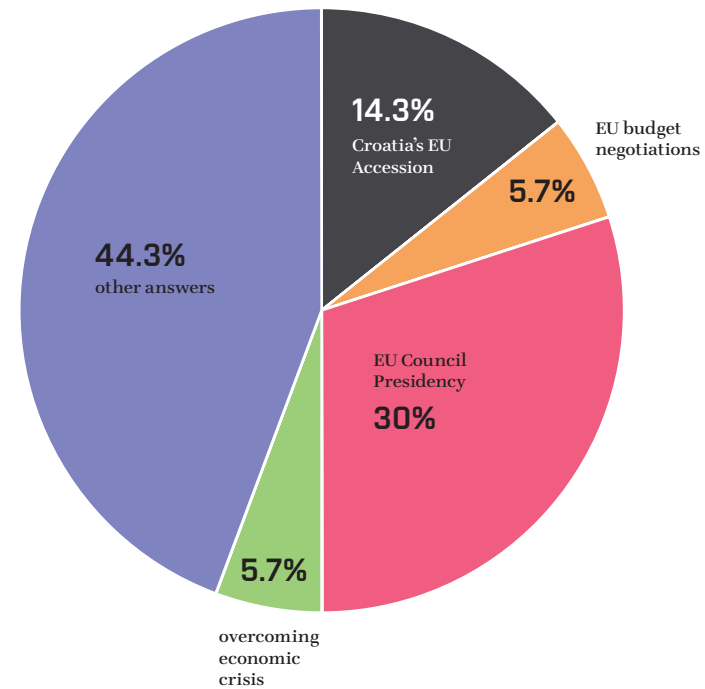
### CZECH REPUBLIC

---



### HUNGARY

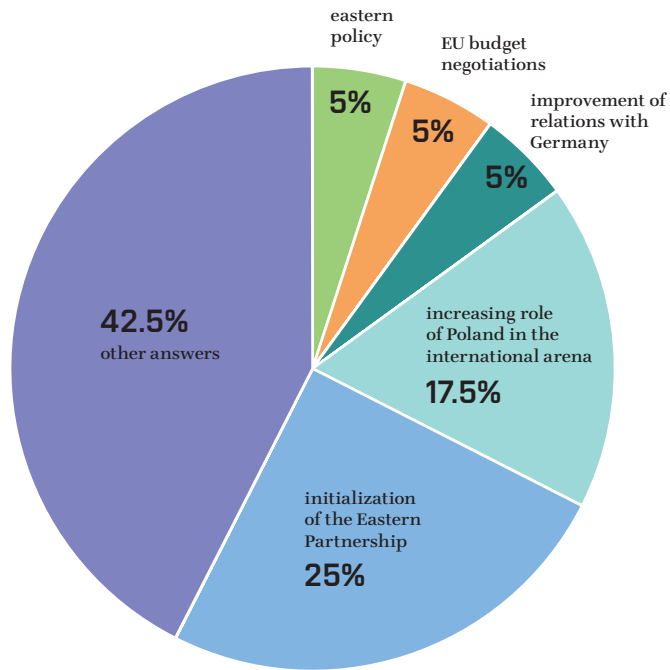
---





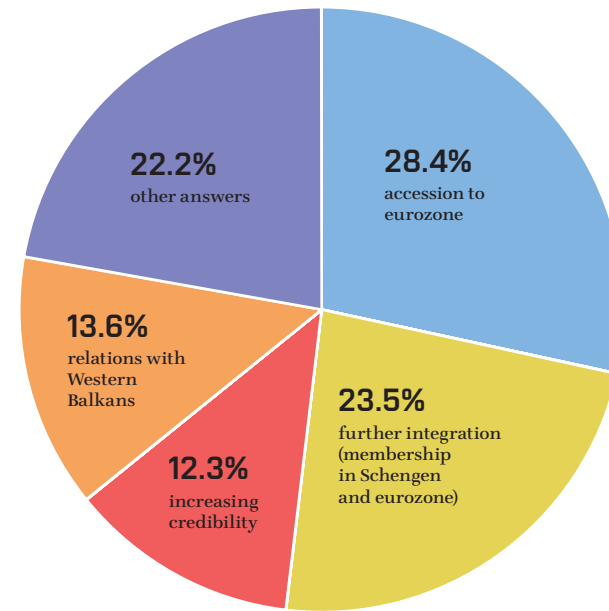
POLAND

---



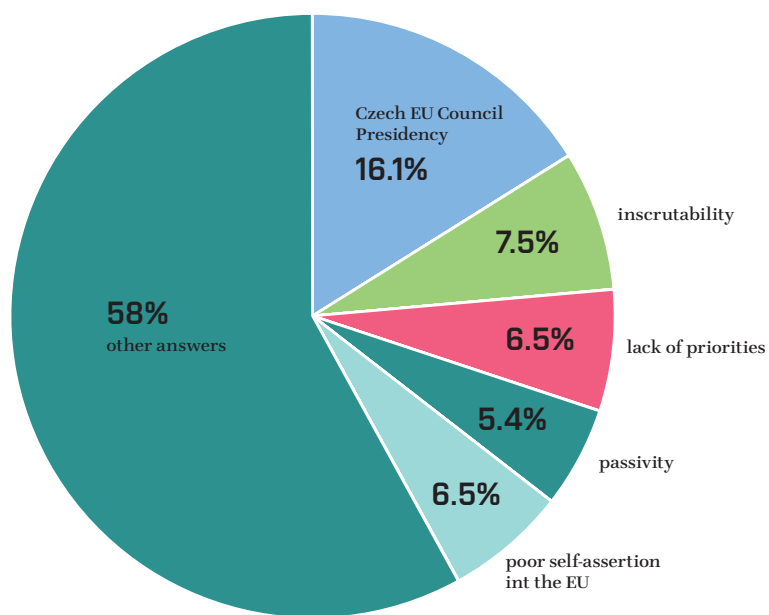
SLOVAKIA

---

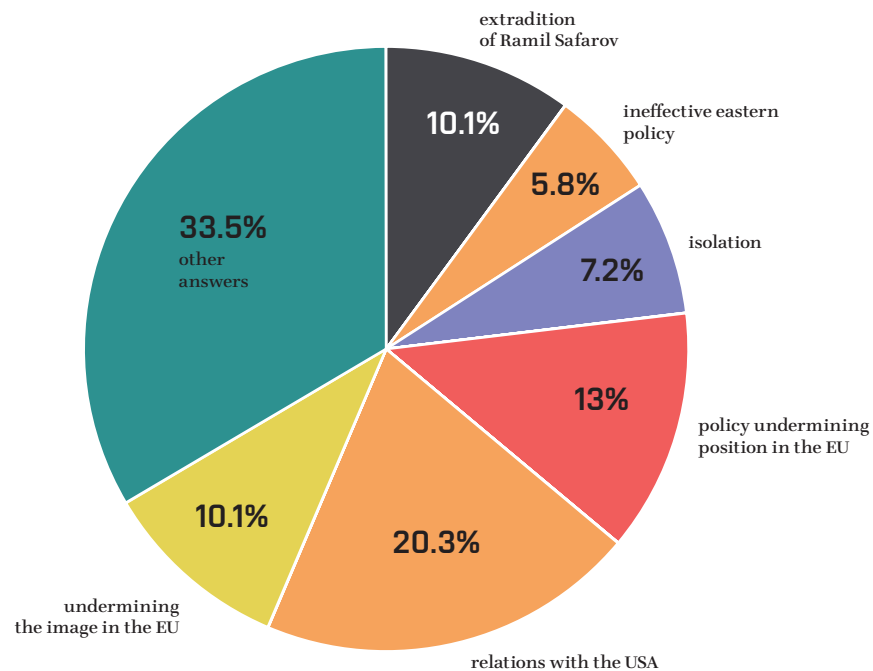


## What, in your opinion, has been the biggest failure of your country's foreign policy since the EU accession in 2004?

### CZECH REPUBLIC

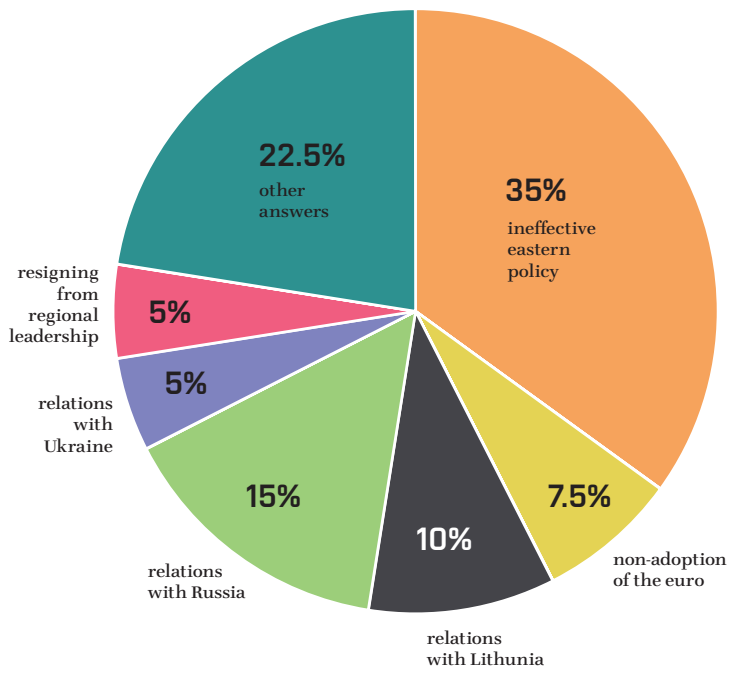


### HUNGARY



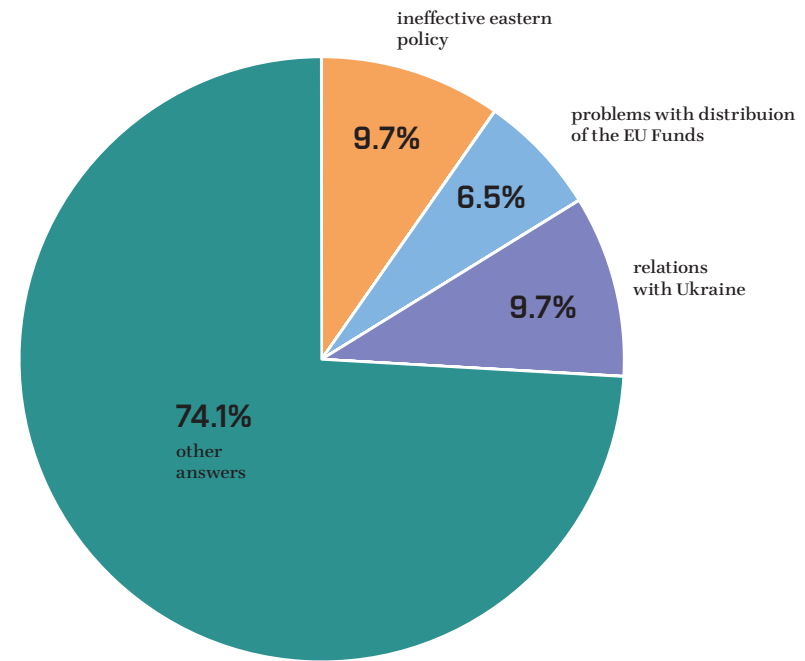
POLAND

---



SLOVAKIA

---



## About Publisher

### ASSOCIATION FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS (AMO)

Association for International Affairs is a non-governmental non-profit organization founded in 1997. The mission of AMO has been to contribute to a deeper understanding of international affairs through a broad range of educational and research activities. Thanks to its activities in the Czech Republic and abroad and long-term tradition, AMO has established itself as the Czech leading independent institution in the field of international relations and foreign policy.

### IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE ITS GOALS AMO STRIVES TO:

- formulate and publish briefings, research and policy papers;
- arrange international conferences, expert seminars, roundtables, public debates;
- organize educational projects;
- present critical assessments and comments on current events for local and international press;
- create vital conditions for growth of a new expert generation;
- support interest in international relations in the wider public domain;
- cooperate with like-minded local and international institutions.




### AMO RESEARCH CENTER

The Research Center of the Association for International Affairs is a leading Czech think-tank, which is not bound to any political party or ideology. With its activities, it supports an active approach to foreign policy, provides an independent analysis of current political issues and encourages expert and public debate on related topics. The main goal of the Research Center is systematic observation, analysis and commentary on international affairs with special focus on Czech foreign policy.

Trends of Visegrad Foreign Policy is the fourth project in row using similar methodology: collection of answers from experts on selected foreign policy theme. The pilot project was the Trends of Czech Foreign Policy: Study of Foreign-Policy Elites in 2011. It was followed by the Trends of Czech European Policy: Study of European Policy Elites in 2013 and the Trends of Eastern Partnership: Important, Forgotten, or Irrelevant? Stakeholders' Survey on Post-Vilnius Eastern Partnership conducted in 2014/2015. Results of the projects are available at [TRENDYV4.AMO.CZ](http://TRENDYV4.AMO.CZ).

### FOLLOW US!

[TRENDYV4.AMO.CZ](http://TRENDYV4.AMO.CZ)  
[#AMOTRENDY](#)  
[#V4TRENDS](#)

[www.amo.cz](http://www.amo.cz)  
 [www.facebook.com/AMO.cz](http://www.facebook.com/AMO.cz)  
 [www.twitter.com/AMO\\_cz](http://www.twitter.com/AMO_cz)  
 [www.youtube.com/AMOCz](http://www.youtube.com/AMOCz)



Asociace  
pro mezinárodní  
otázky  
Association  
for International  
Affairs