

Visegrad Democracy Platform: Workshop I

The Current and Future Capacity of the V4 Countries' Support for Democracy in Third Countries: Democratic Values vs. Economic Interests

Sunday, October 12, 2014, 16.00–18.00, Hotel InterContinental, Klementinum

In cooperation with the International Visegrad Fund and the National Endowment for Democracy

Chatham House Rules

Introduction: Karla Wursterová, Wojciech Przybylski

Panel Discussion: Jiří Schneider, Christopher Walker

The main purpose of the workshop was to identify the motivation and the potential of the Visegrad countries (V4) to assist democracy in third countries. The Eastern Partnership countries will remain the IVF's priority and the fund's support will continue to rest on three pillars: 1) the backing of civil society projects; 2) student and expert mobility and 3) supporting capacity-building in state institutions.

The Visegrad Group's motivation for assisting democracy abroad was discussed. Participants pondered whether the V4's efforts in this arena are driven primarily by material interests like business or energy security. A disquieting trend was identified in the V4's foreign policies – *“economic relations are starting to trump human rights standards.”*

Participants asked how credible V4 democracy assistance really is, when a Prime Minister of one of its own member states, Hungary, claims that his country is not a liberal democracy. It was emphasized that there is still “unfinished business” in the V4 democratic transitions and that political apathy is increasing in Central Europe.

The main question the V4 states should ask is *“How can we revive and accommodate the Havelian tradition to contemporary circumstances?”* Education of the younger generation was identified as a way to affirm liberal democratic values.

The participants found it very disquieting that *“It is currently so easy to undo Václav Havel's legacy – you can do this with the snap of a finger.”* One proposed way to reverse this trend was to involve more stakeholders (not only NGOs, but also private enterprises and business) in democracy assistance processes. “Corporate democratic responsibility” (similar to Corporate social responsibility) could be established in Central Europe.

The fundamental choice of V4 government was laid out as being between *“economic growth and the promotion liberal values.”*