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Purpose and framework of the analysis

The aim of this study is the analysis of the profitability of cooperation between the member states of the Visegrad Group (V4): the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia and Hungary, in the legislative process of the European Union (EU). More detailed research was conducted on what this cooperation looks like and how it influences the bargaining success of V4 countries in this process. Cooperation of these countries under the V4 was defined as construction of a coalition in the Council - the key legislative body of the EU, consisting of representatives of government ministries of the member states - that is, development of a common or similar position (preferences) during negotiations on EU legal acts. The profitability of the V4 coalition is analyzed in the process of determining the content of the so-called EU legislative acts, i.e. regulations, directives and decisions adopted on the basis of the EU treaties in the ordinary (OLP) or special legislative procedure (SLP, consultation option). In short, in OLP a legal act is proposed by the European Commission (EC) and then adopted jointly by the European Parliament (EP) and the Council. However, in consultation mode (variant of SLP), the legal act is adopted by the Council after the opinion of the EP or by the EP after the opinion of the Council[1]. Therefore, the process of enacting acts of primary EU law (e.g. EU treaties), legislative acts adopted in variants of the SLP other than consultation (e.g. budgetary procedure, consent) and non-legislative acts, e.g. concerning CFSP or comitology (procedures for adopting EU executive acts).

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[1] More about OLP and SLP in: A. Kirpsza, *Jak negocjować w Brukseli? Proces podejmowania decyzji w Unii Europejskiej*, Wydawnictwo Scholar, Warsaw 2016.

Methodology of analysis

The influence of the Visegrad Group coalition on V4 countries success was examined in accordance with the following quantitative methodology. In the first step, a database containing the preferences of the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia and Hungary in regard to EU legislation was constructed. For this purpose, the DEU (Decision-Making in the European Union) database was used[2]. It consists of 364 of the most conflicting legislative issues (observations), which emerged during the negotiations on 141 key EU legal acts in 1999-2019. These acts were adopted under two of the most important legislative procedures - co-decision (currently OLP) and consultation, and were also politically very important (as stated based on the number of media mentions about them). For each legislative issue, DEU provides three pieces of information relevant to this analysis:

1. preferences of EU member states, EP and EC measured on a scale of 0-100, where the value of 0 means the most conservative preferences, and 100 - the most far-reaching, revolutionary ones in relation to the others;

2. the final result of the negotiations on political issues, also given on a scale of 0-100;

3. the level of importance assigned to a given issue by a given actor, also coded on a scale from 0 (no importance) to 100 (the highest importance).

The above-mentioned issues, preferences, negotiation results and levels of importance were identified and coded based on the interviews with key decision-makers who participated in the negotiations on selected legal acts[3]. Since the V4 countries entered the EU in 2004, the DEU has been reduced only to legislation adopted after that date. Moreover, several legislative issues considered after 2004 were removed from the DEU, because the database did not contain information about the positions of Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia or Hungary (the so-called unavailable data). As a result, the final database includes 134 issues concerning 58 legislative projects.

In the second step, variables were designed that will be used to statistically analyze the impact of Visegrad coalition on success. The dependent variable, **SUCCESS**, measures the success rate of each V4 country for each legislative issue as the absolute distance of its preferences from the final negotiations result. It takes values from 0 to 100, where 0 means the highest level of success (the negotiation results are the same as the country's position, i.e. the distance between the result and country preferences is 0), and 100 — the greatest failure (the greatest possible distance between the negotiation results and the position of the country). In turn, the independent variable, **V4**, informs whether V4 countries have formed a coalition in the negotiations on a given issue. It is 1 — if all V4 countries had identical position on the matter, or 0 — if at least one of them had a different preference[4].

Additionally coded were the control variables expressing the influence of other factors which, according to the scientific literature, should determine the success of countries in the EU legislative process[5]:

2 R. Thomson, J. Arregui, D. Leuffen, R. Costello, J. Cross, R. Hertz, T. Jensen, *A New Dataset on decision-making in the European Union before and after the 2004 and 2007 enlargements (DEU II)*, „Journal of European Public Policy" 2012, vol. 19, no. 4, pp. 604-622; J. Arregui, C. Arregui J., Perarnaud C., *A new dataset on legislative decision-making in the European Union: The DEU III Dataset (1999-2019)*, „Journal of European Public Policy" 2021, forthcoming;

3 More about the DEU structure and the methodology of data collection in: R. Thomson, J. Arregui, D. Leuffen, R. Costello, J. Cross, R. Hertz, T. Jensen, *op.cit.*, pp. 605-614

4 In five cases the distance between the preferences of one V4 country and three others was low and amounted to max. 2o points on a scale of 0-100. Such cases were classified as "similar position" and grouped under category 1.

5 See J. Arregui J., *Determinants of bargaining satisfaction across policy domains in the European Council of Ministers*, „Journal of European Public Policy" 2016 vol. 54, no. 5, pp. 1105-1122; J. Arregui, R. Thomson, *States' bargaining success in the European Union*, „Journal of European Public Policy" 2009, vol. 16, no. 5, pp. 655-676; S. Bailer S., *Bargaining success in the European Union: The Impact of exogenous and endogenous power resources*, „European Union Politics" 2004 vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 99-123; J. Cross J., *Everyone's a winner (almost): bargaining success in the Council of Ministers of the European Union*, „European Union Politics" 2013, vol. 14, no. 1, pp. 70-94; A. Kirpsza A., *Better together? Explaining Poland's and Germany's bargaining success in EU lawmaking*, „Comparative European Politics" 2020, vol. 18, no. 5, pp. 729-750; A. Kirpsza A., *A colossus with feet of clay? Assessing Germany's prevalence in European Union lawmaking*, „International Politics" 2021, vol. 58, no. 6, pp. 864-883; M. Lundgren, S. Bailer, L. Dellmuth, J. Tallberg, S. Târlea, *Bargaining success in the reform of the Eurozone*, „European Union Politics" 2019, vol. 20, no. 1, pp. 65-88; R. Thomson, *Resolving Controversy in the European Union. Legislative Decision-Making Before and After*

EP – measures the level of compliance of a given V4 country preferences and the EP as the absolute distance between the positions of these actors for each legislative issue;

EC – measures the level of compliance of preferences of a given V4 country and EC as the absolute distance between the positions of these actors for each legislative issue;

KWG – determines whether any given legal act was adopted in the Council by a qualified majority (1) or unanimously (0);

VALIDITY – based on DEU data defines the severity level of a given legislative issue for a given V4 country on a scale of 0-100;

RADICALISM – measures the extremity of preferences of a given V4 country as the absolute distance of its position from the median position of all other EU member states for each legislative issue.

In the third step, a statistical analysis was carried out on the basis of the above-mentioned variables and DEU. First, the frequency of forming a coalition between V4 countries in the EU legislative process was examined by means of descriptive statistics, and then the influence of the coalition on the bargaining success on the individual V4 countries as well as the whole group was determined. The latter task was accomplished using Multilevel Multiple Linear Regression – a statistical technique that measures linear relationships between a dependent variable and several independent and control variables in hierarchically structured databases[6]. This type of structure is found in the DEU, in which issues (level 1) are nested in projects (level 2). As a result, in this analysis, two-level multiple linear regression models with random effects for projects (*random intercept model*) were estimated.

How often is the Visegrad coalition formed in the EU legislative process?

Before analyzing the impact of Visegrad coalition on the bargaining success, it is worth checking how often this coalition is built at all, that is, how often the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia and Hungary present identical preferences on EU legislation. Chart 1 shows the percentage of legislative issues in the DEU, for which the specified number of V4 countries had the same preferences. Overall, in the years 2004-2019 four V4 countries had identical position in as many as 65.7% of all the cases (88 out of 134 in absolute numbers), while for approx. 18.7% issues (25) a coalition of three V4 countries was observed. On the other hand, only in approx. 1.5% cases (2) each V4 country presented a different preference, while in 14.2% (19) cases the Visegrad Group was split in two mini-coalitions (two V4 countries each). The above numbers indicate a fairly high level of compliance of preferences and in turn the coalition potential of V4 countries, because in as many as 84.4% cases they were able to form at least a three-country coalition in their own group. This percentage becomes signi-

ficant when you take into account the fact that the DEU includes only the most conflicting issues concerning the most important legislative projects. Nevertheless, approx. 35% cases (46) were identified, in which the V4 countries did not manage to build a unified four-country coalition. This result reveals the presence of some unconquerable interest discrepancies within the V4.

Graph no. 2 shows the distribution of compliance of preferences of the V4 countries based on the matter of the legislative project in 2004-2019. The matter was defined by the formation of the Council in which the given regulation was negotiated. The graph shows that in virtually every EU policy, Visegrad coalitions consisting of four countries were formed. V4 members were the most unified in education and culture (EYCS) and foreign affairs (FAC) – the four-country coalition of the Visegrad Group was present in 100% and 80% cases in these areas, respectively. A high, above average percentage of such coalitions

Enlargement, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2011;
[6] A. Gelman, J. Gelman A., Hill J., *Data Analysis Using Regression and Multilevel/Hierarchical Models*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2007.

GRAPH NO. 1.

Compliance level distribution of preferences of V4 countries in EU legislative process in 2004-2019

Source: Own calculations on the basis of DEU database.

FOUR COUNTRIES — 65,67
THREE COUNTRIES — 18,66
TWO COUNTRIES — 14,18
ONE COUNTRY — 1,493

% of legislative issues
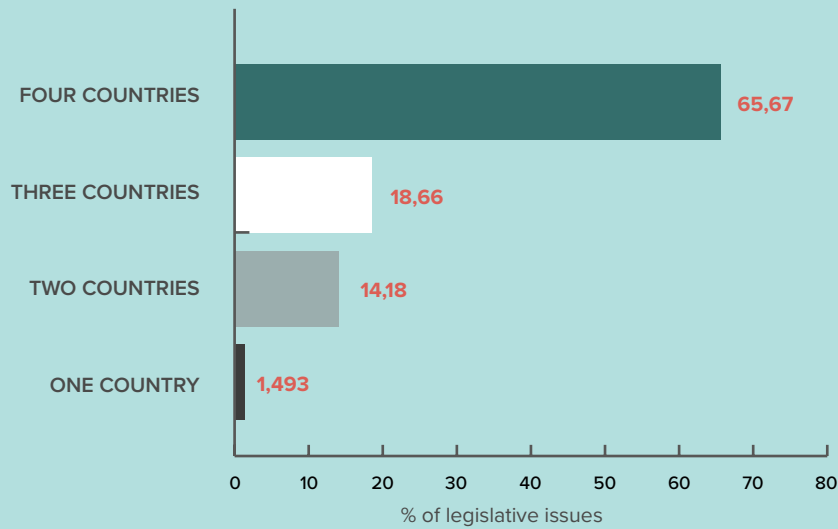
GRAPH NO. 2.

Compliance level distribution of preferences of V4 countries in terms of matter of the project in 2004-2019

Notes: AGRI - Agriculture and Fisheries Council; COCOM - Competitiveness Council (Internal market, Industry, Research and Innovation, Space); ECOFIN - Economic and Financial Affairs Council; EMPL - Committee on Employment, Social Affairs, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Protection; ENVI - Committee on the Environment; EYCS - Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council; FAC - Foreign Affairs Council; JHA - Justice and Home Affairs Council; TTE - Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council. Source: Own calculations on the basis of the DEU database.

AGRI
58,62
13,79
20,79
6,897

EYCS
100

ECOFIN
66,67
33,33

EMPL
71,43
28,57

ENVI
70,83
16,67
12,5

FAC
83,33
16,67

COCOM
46,15
23,08
30,77

JHA
68,18
13,64
18,18

TTE
68,42
21,05
10,53

% of legislative issues

FOUR COUNTRIES   THREE COUNTRIES   TWO COUNTRIES   ONE COUNTRY

was observed also in employment (EMPL), economy and finance (ECOFIN), transport and energy (TTE), justice (JHA) and environmental protection (ENVI), although some conflicts of interests are noticeable in the last three policies, signalled by the presence of numerous three- and two-country coalitions. It is worth noting that over 43% of all cases where a full coalition of V4 countries was not in action were observed in one of those fields. On the other hand, the greatest discrepancies of preferences were evident in agriculture (AGRI) and the common market (CO-COM). In these policies, not only was the percentage of four-country coalitions the lowest of all, oscillating around 50%, but also there were numerous cases where the V4 was divided, and even its members held different positions. These two areas accounted for 41.3% of all cases where a full coalition of V4 countries was not observed. The above results lead to the conclusion that the compliance of preferences of the V4 countries differs and depends on sectoral policies. Thus, it is safe to say that the matter of the project is an important factor generating problems in forming the Visegrad coalition in the EU legislative process, observed in the previous paragraph.

The lack of unity of V4 noticed in approx. 1/3 legislative issues may also be the result of the presence of particular discrepancies of preferences between the individual members of the V4. Therefore, Table no. 1 presents the differences of positions for all possible pairs of V4 countries, as well as the paired results of respective t-tests. The "contrast" values represent the difference between the average preferences of the first and second country of a given pair. Overall, the table reveals a slight discrepancies of preferences between the selected V4 countries. The biggest difference concerns the pair of Poland and Slovakia, but it is only approx. 6 points on a scale of 0-100, while the smallest concerns Slovakia and Hungary, not even exceeding the value of one. Importantly, no p-value, in any given pair, is below the conventional 0.05 level of statistical significance. This means that differences of positions between the selected V4 countries are not significant.

PAIR OF COUNTRIES	CONTRAST	TEST STATISTIC	P-VALUE
Poland vs Czech Republic	3.90	0.75	0.452
Poland vs Hungary	5.48	1.06	0.291
Poland vs Slovakia	6.14	1.18	0.237
Czech Republic vs Hungary	1.58	0.30	0.761
Czech Republic vs Slovakia	2.24	0.43	0.666
Slovakia vs Hungary	-0.656	-0.13	0.899

Table No. 1 Differences between preferences of V4 countries in 2004-2019 and results of paired t-tests
Explanations: Contrast - difference of preferences on a scale of 0-100. A positive value of contrast means that the mean position of the first country was higher (more revolutionary) than the latter, while a negative value indicates the opposite.
Source: Own calculations on the basis of the DEU database.

Therefore, it is difficult to talk about the presence of permanent conflicts in the Visegrad Group between its individual members or the existence of even one country, the so-called extreme case that would differ from the rest or much more often remain outside the Visegrad coalition. In general, V4 appears to be highly homogeneous in terms of distribution of preferences, and cases of non-formation of a unified coalition are rather the product of an exceptional or random configuration of positions of one or two V4 countries in relation to a given project or under a given sectoral policy. This is confirmed by an additional statistic describing how many times a given V4 country presented a different position than the other

three in the situation of formation of a three-state coalition, and thus led to the failure of the formation of a full coalition within the Visegrad Group. Poland accounted for 24% of such cases (6 times), the Czech Republic – for 16% (4 times), Slovakia – for 24% (6 times), and Hungary for 36% (9 times). Differences between these values are small, which makes it impossible to identify any country that, compared to the others, was noticeably less willing to cooperate in order to form coalition of the Visegrad Group.

What is the impact of forming the Visegrad coalition on the success of V4 countries in the EU legislative process?

How does the significantly high level of compliance preferences and coalition potential described above affect the success of V4 countries in the legislative negotiations in the EU? The answer is provided in Table no. 2, which presents the results of multi-level linear regression. It presents directional regression factors (*β*), standard errors (*S.E.*), statistical significance levels, and model matching parameters (bottom of the table). Eleven models were estimated to study the effectiveness of V4 coalition thoroughly. Models no. 1-3 analyze the impact of this coalition on the success of all V4 countries studied together. Model no. 1 examines the independent effect of the Visegrad coalition (without the influence of other factors), containing only the *V4* variable, model no. 2 adds four control variables – *EP*, *COM*, *KWG* and *VALIDITY* to model no. 1 , while model no. 3 complements model no. 2 with the *RADICALISM* variable, due to its strong influence on the *V4* predictor. In these models, the position of each of the four V4 countries on all matters nested in each project (4 countries x legislative issue x project) is observed[7]. In contrast, models no. 4-11 study the profitability of the Visegrad coalition for of individual V4 countries, that is, Poland (models no. 4-5), the Czech Republic (models no. 6-7), Slovakia (models no. 8-9) and Hungary (models no. 10-11). For each country, two models were estimated – with and without the *RADICALISM* variable – to show once again the significant impact of this factor on the effectiveness of V4 coalition. In these models, a single legislative issue

is observed. Due to specific operationalization of the dependent variable (see *Methodology of analysis*), a positive value of the coefficient *β* means that a given factor increases the distance of the V4 country position from the final result, and thus reduces the level of its success in negotiations. And *vice versa* – a negative coefficient indicates a positive impact of a given factor on the success.

The results of the statistical analysis lead to the conclusion that forming the Visegrad coalition, i.e. developing common or similar position of V4 countries in regard to EU legislation, is generally very profitable for them. This is indicated by the coefficients of the *V4* variable, which are high, negative and statistically important in models no. 1-3. This means that the success of the V4 countries is visibly increasing, i.e. the distance between their position and the final result of the negotiations decreases when all V4 members form a coalition. On the basis of model no. 2, it can be argued that when Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia and Hungary have the same preferences in relation to a given legislative issue, the final result of the negotiations is on average about 11 points closer to their position on a scale of 0-100 than in the situation when a common coalition is not formed, i.e. when at least one V4 country has a different preference. The effect of the *V4* variable is therefore quite significant, which means that the adoption of a common position visibly increases the level of success of these countries examined together.

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[7] Because the DEU reduced for the purpose of this analysis amounts to 134 cases, the total number of observations in these models should be 536 (4 countries x 134 cases). In reality the database lacks data on the positions of EP and EC and the results of negotiations (i.e. due to the lack of adoption of a given regulation before 2019) on selected legislative issues. Such cases were removed from the DEU. As a result the regression analysis is based on 464 observations (116 for each V4 country).

	All V4 countries			Poland		Czech Republic		Slovakia		Hungary	
	(1) β (S.E.)	(2) β (S.E.)	(3) β (S.E.)	(4) β (S.E.)	(5) β (S.E.)	(6) β (S.E.)	(7) β (S.E.)	(8) β (S.E.)	(9) β (S.E.)	(10) β (S.E.)	(11) β (S.E.)
V4	-9.46***	-11.27***	-5.45*	-13.56**	-7.85	-9.40*	-3.74	-11.33**	-7.38	-3.72	1.82
	(3.24)	(2.96)	(3.05)	(5.81)	(6.30)	(5.59)	(5.93)	(5.46)	(5.56)	(5.46)	(5.71)
EP		0.27***	0.25***	0.23***	0.22***	0.29***	0.27***	0.28***	0.26***	0.25***	0.24***
		(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.08)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)
EC		0.13***	0.08**	0.10	0.07	0.12*	0.08	0.16**	0.11	0.20***	0.13**
		(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)
KWG		-9.18	-6.73	-3.87	-3.82	-9.30	-9.01	-11.79	-11.89	-8.31	-3.43
		(8.12)	(8.35)	(9.38)	(9.30)	(9.67)	(9.41)	(8.66)	(8.46)	(8.74)	(9.08)
VALIDITY		0.06	0.05	0.16*	0.13	0.12	0.10	0.03	0.02	-0.04	-0.03
		(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)
RADICALISM			0.23***		0.18**		0.20**		0.21**		0.22***
			(0.04)		(0.08)		(0.08)		(0.08)		(0.08)
Constant	40.96***	27.14**	19.63**	21.73**	17.77	21.30*	16.48	28.83***	25.63***	20.49*	10.63
	(3.49)	(8.37)	(8.63)	(10.75)	(10.81)	(10.89)	(10.77)	(9.90)	(9.76)	(10.67)	(11.26)
Projects (s.d.)	17.79	14.98	15.69	6.75	7.20	9.13	8.63	0.00	0.00	2.60	7.24
AIC	4429	4355	4328	1111	1112	1110	1110	1108	1107	1105	1102
BIC	4445	4388	4365	1133	1137	1132	1134	1130	1132	1127	1127
Wald–Wolfowitz runs test	8.50***	108.11***	151.18***	23.67***	28.99***	28.95***	36.41***	33.29***	41.24***	32.97***	43.72***
N (legislative issues)	464	464	464	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116
N (legislative projects)	52	52	52	52	52	52	52	52	52	52	52

Table No. 2 Results of multi-level linear regression – the influence of Visegrad coalition on the success of V4 countries.
Explanations: Multi-level models with random effects for legislative projects. Standard errors are provided in parentheses. The models were estimated in STATA. Abbreviations: s.d. – standard deviation, AIC – Akaike Information Criterion, BIC – Bayesian Information Criterion. Statistical significance levels: * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Interestingly, after the introduction of the *RADICA-LISM* variable in model no. 3, the *V4* effect definitely weakens, although it still maintains a negative value; at the same time, it is statistically significant only at the level of $p<0.1$. A detailed analysis revealed two reasons for this effect. First, the extremity of preferences of V4 countries is strongly correlated with the occurrence of Visegrad coalition. This problem is illustrated by the left part of Graph no. 3, which presents a histogram of the frequency of V4 coalition for individual values of radicalism of positions of the V4 countries. It shows that as many as 76% of the identified Visegrad coalitions were created when the V4 countries occupied position identical to the median actor, meaning that the radicalism of their preferences was the lowest (value of 0 on the scale of 0-100). For higher values of extremities, however, the share of such an alliance was dramatically low, oscillating between 0 and 6%. This means that the radicalism of the V4 countries had a huge impact on the probability of forming a coalition (independent variable) – the higher it was, the lower the chance that such a coalition would be formed. This observation is therefore a value added to previously obtained conclusions, proving that V4 countries have serious difficulties building mutual coalition in the event of having more radical preferences. When the position of one or more V4 countries in relation to EU legislation significantly deviates from the preferences of a median actor, the likelihood that the other V4 members will showcase a similar position visibly decreases.

Secondly, radicalism of preferences is also strongly correlated with the impact of Visegrad coalition on V4 countries success. This is indicated by the right part of Graph no. 3, which presents the relationship between the radicalism of V4 countries and their average success in the situation of forming the Visegrad coalition or failure to do so. It shows that as the extremity increases, the influence of V4 coalition on success (V4 = 1) is basically identical to the impact of the lack of such a coalition (V4 = 0) - the observations for these two

groups are very close to each other, while both linear functions estimated on the basis of these points almost coincide. This means that after taking into account the radicalism of the positions in the analysis, which, as Graph no. 3 shows, significantly reduces the level of success of V4 countries, the Visegrad coalition loses its significance – in that situation formation of a coalition does not provide clearly better or even different negotiating results for individual values of radicalism. The extremity of preferences of V4 thus weakens the impact of the Visegrad coalition on their success, somehow "swallowing" the variance generated by it. As a result, radicalism is a better and accurate predictor of this success. At the same time, the above observations lead to the conclusion that the Visegrad coalition does not weaken the negative impact of higher extremity of V4 countries on their effectiveness, which calls into question the profitability of its formation when they present radical positions in relation to remaining member states.

Moreover, detailed analysis described in models no. 4-11 proves that forming the Visegrad coalition is not as beneficial for every member of the V4. This is indicated by the V4 variable effect, which is negative and statistically significant for Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia and negative but not significant for Hungary (models no. 4, 6, 8 and 10). This means that Visegrad coalition almost always (in a statistical sense[8]) increases the success of the first three countries, but is not always profitable for Hungary. Formation of a coalition is the most profitable for Poland and Slovakia, making the final result of the negotiations on average approx. 13 and 11 points closer to their preferences compared to the absence of such an alliance. It is the least beneficial for Hungary – not only does it bring the negotiations effect to the preference of this country only by 3 points, but also – as shown above – this effect is not statistically regular.

However, as in the case of general analysis, the individual influence of Visegrad coalition on suc-

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[8] The point is that the effect of V4 coalition on success of these countries is not a coincidence, but occurs in the entire population of EU legal acts with the examined characteristics.

GRAPH NO. 3.

The frequency of Visegrad coalition for specific values of radicalism of preferences of the V4 countries (left graph) and the relationship between radicalism of the preferences of the V4 countries and their average success in situation of formation of when a Visegrad coalition is or is not formed (right graph).
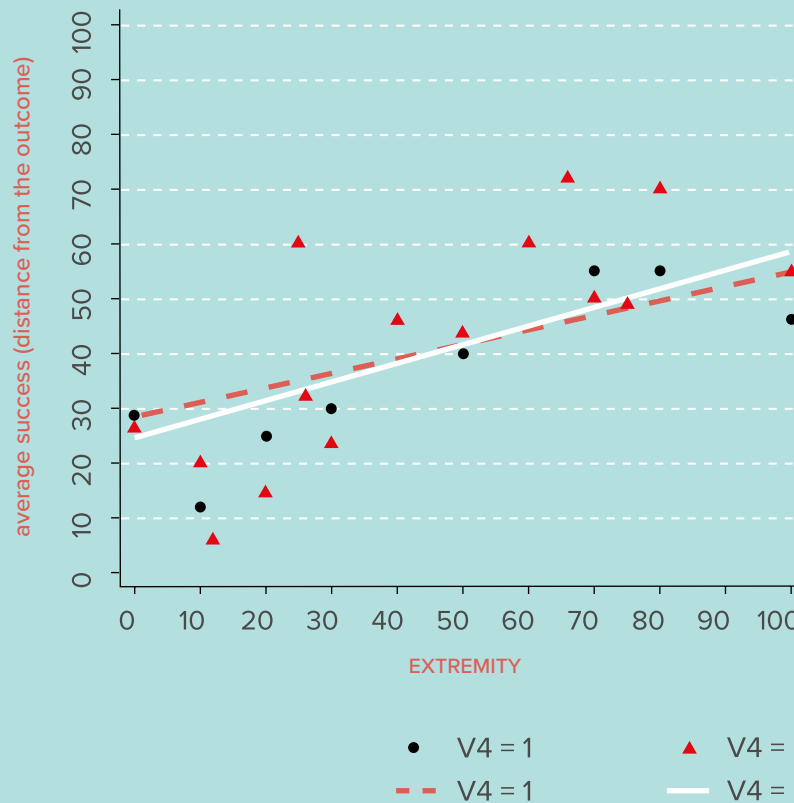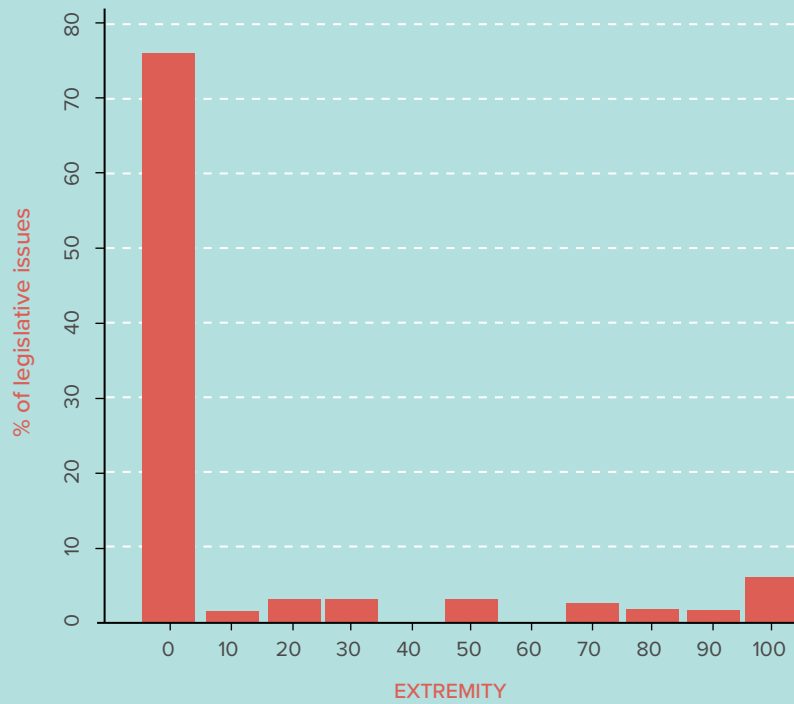
Source: Own calculations on the basis of DEU database.

cess of V4 countries is strongly conditioned by the extremity of their preferences. With the *radicalism* variable added, the **V4** factor loses its statistical significance in models no. 5, 7, 9 and 11, and its value is significantly reduced. In the case Poland, Czech Republic and Slovakia it still retains a negative sign, but for Hungary it is positive, informing about rather negative impact of the V4 coalition on the success of this country. As previously argued, these fluctuations are the result of a strong correlation between radicalism of preferences and the likelihood of formation of a coalition and its impact on success.

Conclusions and recommendations

On the basis of the results presented above, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1

The Visegrad Group has a fairly high coalition potential in the EU legislative process. In 2004-2019 V4 countries presented identical position and formed a solid coalition in as much as 65.7% of the most important and the most conflicting legislative issues.

2

At the same there is a noticeable percentage of cases where the V4 countries failed to reach a common position. 2) The phenomenon can be observed especially in five general EU sectoral policies: a) transport, telecommunications and energy, b) justice and internal affairs, c) environmental protection, d) agriculture and fisheries as well as e) common market.

3

Under of the Visegrad Group there are no permanent, particular conflicts between its individual members, which is good news. Differences between preferences of V4 countries are minor. At the same time, not one country was observed to systematically and more often than others scuttle the formation of a full Visegrad coalition.

4

There is a serious problem with building the Visegrad coalition in when the preferences of the V4 countries are radical. 4) When one or several V4 countries present an extreme attitude to EU legislation compared to other EU member states, the chance of forming such a coalition shrinks. According to estimates, V4 coalition is by far the most common (almost 76% of cases) when V4 countries have moderate (median) preferences.

5

In general, formation of a Visegrad coalition is highly profitable for V4 countries. When four V4 members form a coalition and present identical or similar attitude to EU legislation, their general bargaining success increases significantly compared to the lack of such an alliance.

6

But at the same time the Visegrad coalition is not profitable for of every single V4 country – in a statistical sense, the success of Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia significantly increases, but this does not apply to Hungary. Moreover, the V4 coalition is the most beneficial (its positive influence on the success level is the greatest) for Poland, Slovakia, and the least for Hungary. This may result in the possible lack of profit from cooperation under the V4 group for the latter country – the fact that Hungary most often (although not significantly more often than the rest) prevented the V4 countries from forming the Visegrad coalition in 2004-2019, when the remaining three countries agreed or had identical preferences, should be a warning sign.

7

After the addition of the extremity of preferences of the V4 countries in the analysis, the positive effect

of the Visegrad coalition on their success decreases significantly or even loses significance. The reason for this is the fact that both the formation of this coalition and its influence on the success are heavily dependent on the extremity of the attitudes of V4 members. This factor reduces the influence of the Visegrad coalition and is a better, more accurate predictor of the effectiveness of V4 countries – the more extreme the preferences, the lower the level of success. According to the results, the Visegrad coalition does not weaken this negative impact, but is also less often formed in situation of high extremity of positions of the V4 countries, which may translate into observed results.

On the basis of these findings, several actions can be recommended that should increase the effectiveness of the Visegrad coalition in the EU legislative process in the future. Firstly the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia and Hungary should intensify and institutionalize mutual contacts within V4 on the EU level. It is recommended that, as soon as the European Commission presents a legislative project, representatives of the V4 countries in COREPER I (deputy ambassadors) and COREPER II (ambassadors) meet in their own circle in order to work out, on the basis of the mandates received from the ministries, a common or similar position in relation to the EU legislation in question. Such activity should be particularly intense in relation to the projects on EU sectoral policies in which the V4 countries showcase significant discrepancies in preferences.

Secondly, in order to increase the effectiveness of the process of building a common stance in the EU, the V4 countries should apply the linkage technique[9]. That means reaching an agreement between several actors by exchanging their preferences, with the necessary condition that there are many of these preferences and that they differ in scope (they cannot be the same) and intensity (importance for individual actors). For example, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia accept Hungary's different position on legislative issue A, which is particularly important from Hungary's perspective, but less important for the remaining V4 countries. In return Hungary adopts the position of Poland, and Slovakia on issue B, which is crucial for them and less important for Hungary. Such trade may take place also in relation to numerous issues in which all four countries have contradictory preferences of varying intensity - according to research results, in such cases, actors are able to achieve mutually beneficial compromises[10]. It is worth adding that linkage may concern issues under one project, but also several different projects. This way it is possible to form a Visegrad coalition in negotiations on several legislative issues or projects at the same time, even if they are adopted   somewhere in the future or in another sectoral policy. Thanks to linkage, the number of such coalitions should increase significantly.

Thirdly, the V4 countries should form a coalition more often when one or more of them has extreme preferences in comparison with other EU member states. Radicalism can be a big obstacle in the convergence of positions, and linkage is once again the best way to overcome it. In the light of scientific research, this technique is the most effective in such conditions – countries trade preferences[11] on issues that are less important to them and towards which they have moderate attitude, in exchange for support on issues that are the most important to them, in which they showcase extreme preferences.

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