



*The bottlenecks on the borders have not deterred the dynamic development of trade within the group, but there is still significant economic potential to explore*

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In 1991, the V4 states declared they would pay special attention to the infrastructural development within the region and cross regional co-operation was seen as crucial in Central Europe. The previous economic plans were to be erased including any transport schemes from the old communist bloc, which had often served Soviet transit and military needs.

Establishing connections with Western Europe became the priority. Naturally, it resulted from the significant transportation needs associated with the quickly developing economic co-operation; the V4 had become the greatest trade partner in the world for Germany, and it also turned Vienna into one of the biggest European transport hubs. However, the strengthening of the internal cohesion of the individual countries was poorly synchronised with the consistency of the whole V4 region. Each V4 state needed to develop its domestic links between its larger cities and importance was not placed on developing the intraregional infrastructure. There is just one new motorway between the V4 members (between Poland and the Czech Republic), and many of the rail connections seem to be poorer than in 1991.

Although the bottlenecks on the borders have not deterred the dynamic

development of trade within the V4, there is still significant economic potential to explore and tap into once the connections have improved. This also means that broader infrastructure will create opportunities for the peripheral areas to become attractive for investors, especially the mountainous regions so popular among tourists. That being said, the Carpathian mountain range is where the most barriers and bottlenecks are located in Central Europe; however, this issue has been addressed in the Common Spatial Development Strategy of the V4 + Romania and Bulgaria.

In recent years, territorial cohesion has become an important element of EU policy. Trans-European networks are aimed at supporting the development of internal markets and to increase the economic and social cohesion within the EU (e.g. to connect the regions without access to any sea and the more peripheral countries with the centre of Europe). More specifically, the V4 states are responsible for developing connections between the Adriatic, Baltic and Black seas. Most of the options for Romania and Bulgaria go through the V4, and Poland remains the main land link which the Baltic States have with the rest of the EU.