

Summary of the conference:

V4 perspectives and opportunities

– cross-border cooperation of young researchers –



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Purpose for the conference

Between the 7th and the 10th of February 2008, a multilateral conference was organized by the Corvinus Society for Foreign Affairs and Culture with the assistance of the National Fund for Students in Hungary and the Balassi Institute. The aim of the conference was to bring together young researchers from the four V4 countries (from the partner universities) and Ukraine in order to identify the issues that can be relevant in the context of the chosen strategic priority. A selected list of proposed topics was created as the outcome of the conference, touching upon many significant areas from politics and economy to culture. This conference also served as a preparatory event for the application for the IVF Strategic Grant by clarifying details of the concept and implementation of the project.

The participating young experts worked in three working panels (a political, an economic and a cultural) and were asked to come up with two or three interesting topics each. This way, as a result of the conference, nine topics of utmost importance have been selected for future projects. The two basic criteria by which these topics have been selected are the importance of the issue for the V4 countries and their neighbouring regions, and the existence of a specific V4 know-how in the proposed area. These topics were later significantly reduced in number and narrowed down for the purposes of the application to the International Visegrad Fund.



Program of the conference

Thursday (February 7th)

arrival

8 pm Non-formal opening: welcome dinner

Friday (February 8th)

9:00 – 10:00 Opening speech and introduction to the project
10:00 – 10:30 Press conference
10:00 – 10:30 Plenary discussion: Introducing strategic priorities of the IVF
10:30 – 11:30 Panel discussions part 1: Introducing the proposed research topics
Operative-technical panel: Brainstorming project schedule
11:30 – 12:30 Lunch
12:30 – 14:00 Panel discussions part 2: Selecting the topics meeting the conditions
Operative-technical panel: Brainstorming project dissemination
14:00 – 14:30 Coffee break
14:30 – 15:45 Panel discussions part 3: Discussing topic details
Operative-technical panel: Linking schedule and dissemination
15:45 – 16:00 Break
16:00 – Departure for the Slovak Embassy
16:30 – 18:30 Reception at the Embassy
19:30 – 21:30 *Széchenyi* public bath

Saturday (February 9th)

9:00 – 10: 30 Panel discussions part 4: Finalising the topics
Operative-technical panel: Finalising full project schedule
10:30 – 10:45 Coffee break
10:45 – 12:00 Plenary discussion (discussion among the panels)
12:00 – 13:00 Lunch
13:00 – 14:00 Finalization of the project questions, closing speech
14:30 – 16:30 Sightseeing in Budapest
19:00 – 21:00 non formal ending of the conference: farewell dinner
21:30 – Live concert by the Live Act Folk Project

Sunday (February 10th)

Day of departure departure

Outcome of the conference

As a result of the conference, each panel managed to propose three topics that are considered to be worth conducting research on. The two basic criteria by which these topics have been selected are the importance of the issue for the V4 countries and their neighbouring regions, and the existence of a specific V4 know-how in the proposed area.

Below you can find the proposed topics with a short abstract and a questionnaire about their relevance, management and dissemination. The topics are listed by panel.

These proposals can be seen as a collection of issues that have a significant impact on the future of our region. Nevertheless, they don't include the 'high policy' topics that are the subject of most policy debates (like energy security, our role in CFSP, etc.). The special relevance of these issues stems from their focus on actors who are close to the grassroots level: NGOs, SMEs, individual artists, etc. Their experience is especially important when we consider the history of our region and the characteristics of the V4 cooperation.

Firstly, most of the countries who joined the EU in 2004, including the Visegrad countries, have been going through a continuous transition from a political, economic and cultural environment dominated by the state to one where the above mentioned actors are supposed to be empowered, strengthened, and they also have to take up more responsibilities.

Although the EU, including our countries, makes quite an effort in order to help the prospective member states in their accession process, this is taking place mostly on the state level. Less attention is being paid to those who should be the real drivers of meaningful democracy, political transparency, moral foreign policy, free market economy, a strong middle-class or a lively and diverse cultural field. Our future projects should focus on such 'non-state-level' actors.

Secondly, the V4 and the IVF concentrates its activities on exactly such bottom-to-top initiatives, on civil-civil cooperation between the V4 countries and on 'low politics' or 'soft policy' issues. While it can be considered to be a deficiency of the V4, an organization that can not move on to become a real institution which could effectively handle and discuss 'real' issues, such an assessment would be wrong. We have all joined the EU, which is the exact forum for such debates and discussions. The added value of the Visegrad Cooperation lays elsewhere. The V4 as an agent of fostering mutual understanding and cross-border cooperation between our societies has accumulated an unmatched experience that would help those countries who are yet in an earlier stage of this process. Its untarnished reputation as a landmark of success can help this transfer.

The proposed topics are highly diverse and can not be considered as all being part of a single research project. We regard these proposals as a pool of questions that can be used in further cooperation between the participating young scholars and institutions. We have identified nine crucial areas where the V4 has a unique experience, has been successful during the EU integration and where we can provide a valuable assistance for countries who wish to join the EU. Our current project for the IVF Strategic Grant will necessarily be much more narrow and limited, focusing on one issue in one coherent framework. The listed questions can be included in further projects financed by other sources; they can be elaborated and discussed in

detail during our upcoming meetings. The analysis of the questions below would provide not only a significant contribution to the integration efforts of prospective EU member states in our regional neighbourhood, but would also help to clarify what makes the V4 special in the sense of common identity, common values, common experience and common interests.

Viktor Friedmann

head of research

Corvinus Society for Foreign Affairs and Culture



Political panel

Proposed topic No. 1: V4 civil sector experience in democratisation and EU accession – Possibilities of know-how dissemination (emphasis on think tanks)

A vibrant civil society is a necessary ingredient for a functioning democracy and it is also an important principle of the EU. In the V4 countries, civil society has developed from humble beginnings to a strong driver towards democratic consolidation. Without this gradual process the V4 countries' EU accession would not have been possible. The NGO sector is an important *actor* for fostering transparency, good governance, democratic values and civil activism. The empowerment of such organizations is hence an important tool of helping the integration process in the target countries.

Turning the question around, the EU accession process itself presented (and the EU-membership itself presents) many new opportunities for the NGOs to increase their impact on the public sector of their respective countries. The most successful NGOs of the Visegrad countries created their own know-how of how to initiate such organizations and later sustain them in societies undergoing a transition from a state-dominated phase. They also learnt by their own successes and mistakes, how to make the best use of the funds, know-how and connections provided by the EU.

As a special characteristic of the V4, many such NGOs also cooperated in the field of EU integration using the financial sources of the International Visegrad Fund. Such international projects created new ways of sharing the know-how if NGOs within the V4. Therefore it is important to analyse to what extent these organizations actually managed to influence the transition of their societies and to move forward the integration of their countries. Those successful practices, that they have developed over the last one or two decades, add up to a valuable asset for the countries facing the accession process.

Name of the panel	Political Panel
Proposed topic (max. 100 character)	V4 civil sector experience in democratisation and EU accession – Possibilities of know-how dissemination (emphasis on think tanks)
How is the topic related to the European integration process?	A vibrant civil society is a necessary ingredient for a functioning democracy and it is also an important principle of the EU. In the V4 countries, civil society has developed from humble beginnings to a strong driver towards democratic consolidation. Without this gradual process the V4 countries' EU accession would not have been possible.

<p>What kind of know-how is present in the topic?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fundraising • Project management • PR(dissemination of ideas) • Recruitment of members • Lobbying/government relations • Networking • Organizational structures • The know-how we are looking for is essentially connected to the EU accession that is to either the conditions of the accession (rule of law, democracy etc.) or to the aftermath of the integration (like working for more “democracy” or at least civil participation in EU decision-making, raising awareness of the EU, mobilizing the civil sector in order to move forward the cause of democracy within the EU as a partly supranational organization etc.)
<p>Why is it relevant to the neighbouring countries facing the accession talks?</p>	<p>Think tanks and other NGOs active in the international field can provide the independent core research for neighbouring states and their NGOs that is needed to the transformation and transition into democratic societies, or even full-fledged members of the EU</p>
<p>How can it be connected to the activities of the V4 or the IVF? (optional)</p>	<p>The proposed topic promotes the goals of the V4 and the IVF.</p>
<p>Whose experience does the topic address?</p>	<p>This project addresses the experience of all V4 states and their non-governmental organizations from the early stages of the transition on.</p>
<p>To whom can the results of the research on the proposed topic be transferred?</p>	<p>The results of the project can and should be transferred to EU neighbouring countries, especially to the Ukraine, Moldova and the West-Balkans. Research materials can be disseminated among multiple non-governmental actors (e.g. relevant NGOs, universities, local authorities), thereby bypassing the rigor of state-level dialogue.</p>

How can it be transferred?	<p>The research materials and achievements can be disseminated by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Conferences, including workshops, lectures, roundtables and discussions- The assembled dataset would be made accessible via the related website. This website will also function as a meeting point for NGOs facilitating the flow of information and the exchange of ideas, experiences and practices between them.- A compilation of papers would be published and made widely accessible
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Proposed topic Nr. 2: *Decentralization as a process of mobilizing local actors – the V4 experience*

Local democracy and transferring power to local governments (subsidiarity) is one of the main principles of the European Union. The V4 countries are undergoing an important transition process from an era where decisions were made primarily at the state level to one where the local authorities and civil organizations have to take up more responsibilities. Subsidiarity is not only a legal issue.

The actors involved in the decentralization process must be able to make use of their newly acquired power and to deal with the attached responsibility. The Visegrad countries can offer a vast pool of both positive and negative experience of local authorities and engaged local non-governmental actors with reform-implementation (decentralization).

Name of the panel	Political
Proposed topic (max. 100 character)	Decentralization as a process of mobilizing local actors – the V4 experience
How is the topic related to the European integration process?	Local democracy and transferring power to local governments (subsidiarity) is one of the main principles of the European Union.
What kind of know-how is present in the topic?	A vast pool of both positive and negative experience of local authorities and engaged local non-governmental actors with reform-implementation (decentralization).
Why is it relevant to the neighbouring countries facing the accession talks?	Due to the similarity of the institutional, social and economic background of the target and V4 countries (post-communism), the V4 experience in the adoption of the <i>acquis communautaire</i> with regards to the principle of subsidiarity can be a valuable asset for the neighbouring countries in their accession process.

<p>How can it be connected to the activities of the V4 or the IVF? (optional)</p>	<p>It increases the role of the V4 in shaping EU political agenda in terms of common foreign policy.</p> <p>Local projects can be funded by the IVF.</p>
<p>Whose experience does the topic address?</p>	<p>This project addresses the experience of all V4 states and their local authorities from the early stages of the transition on.</p>
<p>To whom can the results of the research on the proposed topic be transferred?</p>	<p>The results of the project can and should be transferred to EU neighbouring countries, especially to the Ukraine, Moldova and the West-Balkans. Research materials can be disseminated among multiple non-governmental actors (e.g. relevant NGOs, universities, local authorities), thereby bypassing the rigor of state-level dialogue.</p>
<p>How can it be transferred?</p>	<p>The research materials and achievements can be disseminated by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Conferences, including workshops, lectures, roundtables and discussions – The assembled dataset would be made accessible via the related website – A compilation of papers would be published and made widely accessible

Proposed topic Nr. 3: *Visegrad regional identity development – emulation beyond the V4*

The Visegrad 4 regional identity and cooperation as a successful ‘brand’ was one of the key factors facilitating EU accession for its member states - through their cooperation the V4 states became credible partners of the EU-15 for the enlargement talks. Within the EU, the shared identity of Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and the Czech Republic still forms the basis of their common policies. As a successful model of identity-based regional cooperation, the V4 can be an example for states striving for EU membership.

Regional cooperation facilitates EU accession by enhancing credibility and bargaining power *vis-à-vis* Brussels. Furthermore, any regional cooperation benefits its parties within the institutions of the EU, since subsidiarity and regional cooperation *per se* are guiding principles of the Union. This project will argue that a strong, common identity as the basis of regional cooperation is crucial in enabling long lasting cooperation. The V4’s experience offers an example for neighbouring states for activating and institutionalizing existing regional identities bottom-to-top.

Name of the panel	Political
Proposed topic (max. 100 character)	Visegrad regional identity development – emulation beyond the V4
How is the topic related to the European integration process?	The Visegrad 4 regional identity and cooperation as a successful ‘brand’ was one of the key factors facilitating EU accession for its member states - through their cooperation the V4 states became credible partners of the EU-15 for the enlargement talks. Within the EU, the shared identity of Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and the Czech Republic still forms the basis of their common policies. As a successful model of identity-based regional cooperation, the V4 can be an example for states striving for EU membership.
What kind of know-how is present in the topic?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational structures • Lobbying in the EU • Brand/image creation and promotion • Activating and intensifying cross-border cooperation (intra-V4, V4 and neighbouring states) • Project management

<p>Why is it relevant to the neighbouring countries facing the accession talks?</p>	<p>Regional cooperation facilitates EU accession by enhancing credibility and bargaining power <i>vis-à-vis</i> Brussels. Furthermore, any regional cooperation benefits its parties within the institutions of the EU, since subsidiarity and regional cooperation <i>per se</i> are guiding principles of the Union. This project will argue that a strong, common identity as the basis of regional cooperation is crucial in enabling long lasting cooperation. The V4's experience offers an example for neighbouring states for activating and institutionalizing existing regional identities bottom-to-top.</p>
<p>How can it be connected to the activities of the V4 or the IVF? (optional)</p>	<p>The project promotes the goals of the V4 – it brings new inputs to public and expert debates within the V4 concerning issues of Eastern EU/V4 policies. Thus, it increases the role of the V4 in shaping EU political agenda in terms of common foreign policy.</p> <p>Local projects can be funded by the IVF.</p>
<p>Whose experience does the topic address?</p>	<p>This project addresses the experience of all V4 states and their non-governmental organizations from the early stages of the transition on.</p>
<p>To whom can the results of the research on the proposed topic be transferred?</p>	<p>The results of the project can and should be transferred to EU neighbouring countries, especially to the Ukraine, Moldova and the West-Balkans. Since this project emphasises grass-root activities, research materials should be disseminated among multiple non-governmental actors (e.g. relevant NGOs, universities, and especially local authorities), thereby bypassing the rigor of state-level dialogue.</p>
<p>How can it be transferred?</p>	<p>The research materials and achievements can be disseminated by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Conferences, including workshops, lectures, roundtables and discussions – The assembled dataset would be made accessible via the related website – A compilation of papers would be published and made widely accessible – Workshops for local media in border regions, emphasizing regional identity-related issues – Promoting regional identity as a topic for students' projects (theses, papers etc.), thereby raising their awareness of IVF funding

Economy panel

Proposed topic Nr. 1: *The link between tourism and economy – promotion of our regions*

The extended Schengen zone facilitates the development of regional cooperation in the area of tourism that corresponds with the EU's preference for regarding regions as the main units of the European economic geography.

If the neighbouring countries aspiring to the EU membership act in time and prepare for the new possibilities that stem from the extended (tourist) market of the EU, they can spare time and money and promote their own regions more effectively.

The practices that have proven to be successful should be collected from tourism institutions and relevant NGOs in the V4 countries and transferred to the neighbouring countries enabling them to make the best use of the opportunities made available by the integration process.

Name of the panel	Economy
Proposed topic (max. 100 character)	The link between tourism and economy – promotion of our regions
How is the topic related to the European integration process?	It is getting easier and easier to travel through Europe, especially within the extended Schengen zone. These new possibilities and its positive effects should be maximized. The EU tends to think in regions instead of countries, that is why we need to act together to promote our regions.
What kind of know-how is present in the topic?	A part of the money tourists leave in our countries goes to specific tax accounts. This tax should be used to promote our regions, to make our regions more known in Europe and in the V4 itself. The way this tax is used and the different means to promote ourselves (to attract more tourists and investments) could be assessed and evaluated.
Why is it relevant to the neighbouring countries facing the accession talks?	If the neighbouring countries aspiring to the EU membership act in time and prepare for the new possibilities that stem from the extended (tourist) market of the EU, they can spare time and money and promote their own regions more effectively. They need to know which is the best way to do this.

<p>How can it be connected to the activities of the V4 or the IVF? (optional)</p>	<p>The V4 has become a known “trademark” in Europe through the past decade. We should definitely exploit this possibility and strengthen the good appreciation that is linked to the V4 countries.</p> <p>The IVF itself is a means for promotion of the V4.</p>
<p>Whose experience does the topic address?</p>	<p>Tourism institutions in the four countries, NGOs active in this field. The V4 countries’ cultural institutions in foreign countries.</p>
<p>To whom can the results of the research on the proposed topic be transferred?</p>	<p>Foreign countries cultural institutions. Students of tourism. Young researchers. The emigrant communities of V4 countries in foreign countries. Tourist offices in neighbouring countries (E.g. Ukraine). NGOs active in this field.</p>
<p>How can it be transferred?</p>	<p>Workshops and conferences at universities. Academic articles. Relationship with foreign cultural institutions.</p>

Proposed topic Nr. 2: *Transition to market economies and convergence to the Euro – The V4 countries’ experience*

In the given countries these two processes, namely the transition from a socialist-type, planned, stat-owned model to market economy (through e.g. privatization, etc.) and the process of approximation of our economies to the economy of the EC (through the convergence programmes, the accession talks) were partly parallel. The first was a prerequisite and a basis for the second. The different characteristics of the transition processes have an effect on the different association and accession treaties and also on the convergent programmes.

V4 countries have all gone through the same process, but in different ways. These different ways have affected the SMEs and NGOs in the given countries, had negative and positive effects on them. The social impacts can be similar. The way these SMEs and NGOs have (tried) to come up to the new expectations since then constitute a remarkable amount of knowledge which is not yet assessed. The role of NGOs in the transition processes is also relevant, we would like to collect their experience as well.

Apart from comparing the main elements of the four countries’ transition, the major part of the research would investigate the experience of SMEs, their organisations, their possibilities and the challenges they had to take up. We would collect and analyse the ‘best practices’ in this field.

Name of the panel	Economy
Proposed topic (max. 100 character)	Transition to market economies and convergence to the Euro – The V4 countries’ experience
How is the topic related to the European integration process?	In the given countries these two processes, namely the transition from a socialist-type, planned, stat-owned model to market economy (through e.g. privatization, etc.) and the process of approximation of our economies to the economy of the EC (through the convergence programmes, the accession talks) were partly parallel. The first was a prerequisite and a basis for the second. The different characteristics of the transition processes have an effect on the different association and accession treaties and also on the convergent programmes.
What kind of know-how is present in the topic?	V4 countries have all gone through the same process, but in different ways. These different ways have affected the SMEs and NGOs in the given countries, had negative and positive effects on them. The social impacts can be similar. The way these SMEs and NGOs have (tried) to come up to the new expectations since then constitute a remarkable amount of knowledge which is not yet assessed. The role of NGOs in the transition processes is also relevant, we would like to collect their experience as well.

<p>Why is it relevant to the neighbouring countries facing the accession talks?</p>	<p>The neighbouring countries are still at the beginning of the process that the V4 countries have closed in a few years ago. They could draw the conclusions of our examples and lead their respective processes in a way where our mistakes can be avoided and the positive results (the benefits) can be strengthened.</p> <p>On the level of SMEs this means useful methods and techniques, e.g. about how to stand up to the new circumstances and how to raise money for their enterprises.</p> <p>In the neighbouring countries aspiring to EU membership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role SMEs play in the transition towards market economy is crucial. In its turn, market economy is a basic prerequisite for joining the EU community. • Growth of SMEs promotes development of middle-class and as a result, secures and enhances the not yet mature democratic practices in Ukraine <p>NGOs in the neighbouring countries could find useful getting information about the experience of NGOs in V4 countries, how they took part in the process, what their added value was, etc.</p>
<p>How can it be connected to the activities of the V4 or the IVF? (optional)</p>	<p>V4 countries have conciliated through the process of acquisition to the EU, they have tried to negotiate together in certain topics. The agendas of the V4 prime ministers' and ministerial meetings were often connected to this process.</p> <p>One of the IVF's main activities is promoting NGOs in the new situation, (among others) by connecting them and giving them new possibilities.</p>
<p>Whose experience does the topic address?</p>	<p>Apart from comparing the main elements of the four countries' transition, the major part of the research would investigate the experience of SMEs, their organisations, their possibilities and the challenges they had to take up. We would collect and analyse the 'best practices' in this field.</p>

<p>To whom can the results of the research on the proposed topic be transferred?</p>	<p>The results of the research would be introduced to the academic sector (universities of neighbouring countries), SMEs and their organisations. The good examples and practical information for newly set up SMEs in the neighbouring countries (e.g. Ukraine) are vital.</p>
<p>How can it be transferred?</p>	<p>The results of the research would be introduced in academic forums (e.g. in magazines, university papers, etc.)</p> <p>The main observations relevant to SMEs and their organisations, and also the “best practices” would be disseminated through open days, a webpage, a newsletter, and conferences - eg. at universities.</p>

Proposed topic Nr. 3: *Pre-accession aid and the following programmes with a focus on the experience of SMEs and NGOs*

Financial aid and support related to the economic transition and convergence of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe was one of the main incentives for these countries to apply for the EU accession. Now, these countries represent a unique model of the integration and which can serve as a manual for further countries applying for the membership to the EU.

The SME and NGO sector of the target countries may benefit from the research by accessing information that is not generally included in official EU materials. While many manuals and handbooks have been published on how to be successful in drawing the financial support, few deal with the actual experience of the applicants in newly integrated countries who, in most occasions, face a very different environment from what characterizes the “old” EU members.

Name of the panel	Economy
Proposed topic (max. 100 character)	Pre-accession aid and the following programmes with a focus on the experience of SMEs and NGOs
How is the topic related to the European integration process?	Financial aid and support related to the economic transition and convergence of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe was one of the main incentives for these countries to apply for the EU accession. Now, these countries represent a unique model of the integration and which can serve as a manual for further countries applying for the membership to the EU.
What kind of know-how is present in the topic?	The management of the application as well as the submission process. At the national level also the experience about how to create an appropriate legal as well as administrative framework. At the lower levels practical experience and knowledge about how to be successful in drawing the financial support, differentiated according to concrete types of applicants.
Why is it relevant to the neighbouring countries facing the accession talks?	They can see what lies behind this process and they will be provided an opportunity to share best practices and knowledge related to the accession and cohesion aid. Thus they can avoid repeating the same mistakes and they can also set the economic environment and prerequisites for optimal and most efficient drawing.

<p>How can it be connected to the activities of the V4 or the IVF? (optional)</p>	<p>Analysing this issue can provide proper evidence of the pros and cons regarding the formation of a small, political alliance among countries which have so much common from the regional as well as historical point of view when preparing for their accession to a much larger integration bloc (the EU).</p>
<p>Whose experience does the topic address?</p>	<p>General experience of all the participants in the process of drawing from funds and engaged in the process divided by numerous criteria (public authorities and institutions, NGOs, subjects from the business (SMEs) as well as economic environment.) University departments dealing with this topic.</p>
<p>To whom can the results of the research on the proposed topic be transferred?</p>	<p>Actually, the range of addresses and beneficiaries is very broad from general public, young researchers, students, academic workers to business (SMEs) and non profit entities and institutions (NGOs).</p>
<p>How can it be transferred?</p>	<p>Through a means of written materials such as studies, analyses, presentations, in media depending on the type of a target group. Sessions, workshops and seminars will have an important role, or any other forums where best practices and knowledge can be shared with people in a direct way.</p>

Cultural panel

Proposed topic Nr. 1: *Cultural Representation: Experiences and new opportunities of the civil cultural actors in V4 countries within the EU and Ukraine*

The EU accession brought to the individual artists and NGOs active in the field of culture a great range of new opportunities in the form of both funds and better access to the European cultural market (increased mobility). Cultural representation is hence one of the most interesting fields worth analyzing in the context of European integration. The above mentioned actors had to learn from their own failures and successes how to take advantage of the new situation, how to take autonomous action and start cultural enterprises.

The know-how that has been gathered over the years by such actors in the V4 countries is highly useful not only for their counterparts who need to be more aware of the new opportunities but also for the prospective EU members.

It is important for the neighbouring countries to become better known by the present-day EU member states, so that the wider public becomes convinced about including them in the EU. The culture is the best way of promoting a country and it is also a means to combat negative stereotypes.

Name of the panel	Culture
Proposed topic (max. 100 character)	Cultural Representation: Experiences and new opportunities of the civil cultural actors in V4 countries within the EU and Ukraine
How is the topic related to the European integration process?	It is important for the neighbouring countries to become better known by the present-day EU member states, so that the wider public becomes convinced about including them in the EU. The culture is the best way of promoting a country and it is also a means to combat negative stereotypes. The EU itself provides new opportunities for such cultural actors. Representation will be easier by an improved access to the EU's cultural market.
What kind of know-how is present in the topic?	On the one hand, introducing one's country to a wider European public was approached by the V4 countries and Ukraine in many ways, that included the state promotion by diplomacy, Institutes of Culture, tourism promotion, organising study tours and inviting foreign students to the V4 countries etc. On the other hand, we can focus on the individual activities of non-state actors.

<p>Why is it relevant to the neighbouring countries facing the accession talks?</p>	<p>The neighbouring countries are on their way to the EU accession so they will get an opportunity to promote themselves in the EU to create a positive image of themselves through artists and other cultural actors of their countries in an attractive way.</p>
<p>How can it be connected to the activities of the V4 or the IVF? (optional)</p>	<p>The activities of the V4/IVF is more effective than the initiatives taken by the countries individually, it also is a means of funding the promotion of the region, facilitating cultural exchanges, organising common cultural events.</p>
<p>Whose experience does the topic address?</p>	<p>Non-profit cultural institutions, tourism organisations, NGOs, commercial chambers, language schools.</p>
<p>To whom can the results of the research on the proposed topic be transferred?</p>	<p>Counterparts in neighbouring countries</p>
<p>How can it be transferred?</p>	<p>Media (electronic and traditional), database of good practices, leaflets/brochures, conferences, informal social and cultural events</p>

Proposed topic Nr. 2: *Role of the media in identification with/within the European Union*

The EU accession is not just an opportunity for promoting our national and regional cultures in the “old Europe”, not only a new way to access the cultural markets of Western-Europe but also a power shaping and transforming our own cultural identification. The reaction that the process triggers can be manifold but may be collected under two main labels. One of these is a kind of self-defence maintaining and strengthening national, regional or local identity. The other one is the promotion and acceptance of European identification. These two processes take place at the same time creating multiple tensions. The newly accessed V4 countries have a unique experience of such phenomena that follows from their history of nationalism and the desire to join the West.

The media is a central actor shaping such identification processes. Being a member of the EU does not only mean a political decision but also the formation of an ‘imagined cultural community’. Accession talks require a commitment from the public. This could be achieved by informative actions like organizing events, creating and constructing a framework in which people find their affiliations towards the EU.

Name of the panel	CULTURAL PANEL
Proposed topic (max. 100 character)	Role of the media in identification with/within the European Union
How is the topic related to the European integration process?	The project could be aware of how to balance out both European and national identifications with each other by media since it has been a basic pillar of the Union to, on the one hand, maintain national identity but, on the other hand, promote European identification.
What kind of know-how is present in the topic?	The proposed project raises awareness of national identity. However, it questions its exclusivity and introduces another perspective. The project will be able to enhance the effect and influence of media on public opinion and common sense.
Why is it relevant to the neighbouring countries facing the accession talks?	Being a member of the EU does not only mean a political decision but forming an ‘imagined cultural community’. Accession talks require a commitment from the public. This could be achieved by informative actions like organizing events, creating and constructing a framework in which people find their affiliations towards the EU.

<p>How can it be connected to the activities of the V4 or the IVF? (optional)</p>	<p>There are different levels of identification and commitment to the V4 is one of them. These levels are based on, overlap and assume each other.</p>
<p>Whose experience does the topic address?</p>	<p>Identity is not a given, static phenomenon but rather an ongoing shifting of the identity-boundaries. Culture is not a given base of collective activities however the unstable quality of social life is embedded not only in the human notion but also in conscious identity producing activities. We should deal with the experience of different actors, such as politicians, intellectuals etc., and an analysis of the results considering the EU Barometer.</p>
<p>To whom can the results of the research on the proposed topic be transferred?</p>	<p>To the academic and research institutions and to the interested wider public.</p>
<p>How can it be transferred?</p>	<p>The best way to disseminate the results could happen through conferences, seminars, public lectures and publications.</p>

Proposed topic Nr. 3: *Education and scholarships as tools for cultural exchange*

Establishing links and forging relationships among students and teachers will promote affiliation towards EU and will shift the exclusively essentialized emphasis from the V4 and Ukrainian nation-states towards the EU.

The countries of the V4 had to adapt to a context after the integration where their students became more and more mobile and chose primarily western countries as their destination for taking part in foreign education. Still, while it is desirable to widen such opportunities for students in our region, we also had to make efforts to make it appealing for our university students to take part in exchange programs in countries in the region.

The maintenance and development of national and regional identity as an important tool of success in the EU requires, among many other conditions, a lively interaction between the educational institutions of our countries. The scholarship program of the IVF and the links that have been established between educational actors in the region provide for such an experience that is undeniably useful for pre-accession countries.

Name of the panel	CULTURAL PANEL
Proposed topic (max. 100 character)	Education and scholarships as tools for cultural exchange
How is the topic related to the European integration process?	Establishing links and forging relationships among students and teachers will promote affiliation towards EU and will shift the exclusively essentialized emphasis from the V4 and Ukrainian nation-states towards the EU.
What kind of know-how is present in the topic?	Sharing knowledge, developing tolerance, observing the world from a much more critical point of view.
Why is it relevant to the neighbouring countries facing the accession talks?	Acquire common standards, experience of V4, Ukraine and EU. Creating a unified system of education on academic and research area, in addition introducing freedom of mobility will maintain and promote commonality.
How can it be connected to the activities of the V4 or the IVF? (optional)	Courses and exchange programs are supported by the IVF to establish a common knowledge basis.

Whose experience does the topic address?	High-school and university students, university faculties, student associations and scholarship providers.
To whom can the results of the research on the proposed topic be transferred?	Counterparts of the neighbouring countries, professional leaders and university researchers as well as businessmen.
How can it be transferred?	The best way to disseminate the results could happen through internet (websites, mailing lists, blogs etc.) conferences, university events, teacher trainings, student associations.