



**ICPS**

International  
Centre  
for Policy  
Studies

# **Ukraine and V4 countries: promoting better understanding**



## **Webinar 1 Hungary-Ukraine relations**



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# Hungary-Ukraine relations

## *Background*

- Role and place of Hungary in Ukraine's foreign policy
- Role and place of Ukraine in Hungary's foreign policy
- What caused the relations' worsening?



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# Background of the relations

- ✓ Ukraine-Hungarian relations since 1991 till 2016 remained as one of the best bilateral relations in Ukrainian foreign policy
- ✓ Hungary was one of the first who acknowledged Ukraine's independence
- ✓ Bilateral relations were politically strong and friendly, thus economic links were left behind
- ✓ There had been always a silent suspicion about possible territorial claims but no real single sign which could confirm this



# Background of the relations

- ✓ Explosion in bilateral relations was a surprise and showed how fragile this relation had been

Why?

- ✓ Because political basis was thin, military and economic cooperation insignificant, economic links and investments - weak

- ✓ Only ethnic minority was a real strong link between the two countries

That is why a relatively not significant from Ukrainian point of view issue led to a real crisis in bilateral relations



# Ukraine's relations with neighbors

### Factor of asymmetry:



Price, which Ukraine pays for worsening of relations with Western neighbors, is much higher than the price paid by neighbors for worsening of their relations with Ukraine

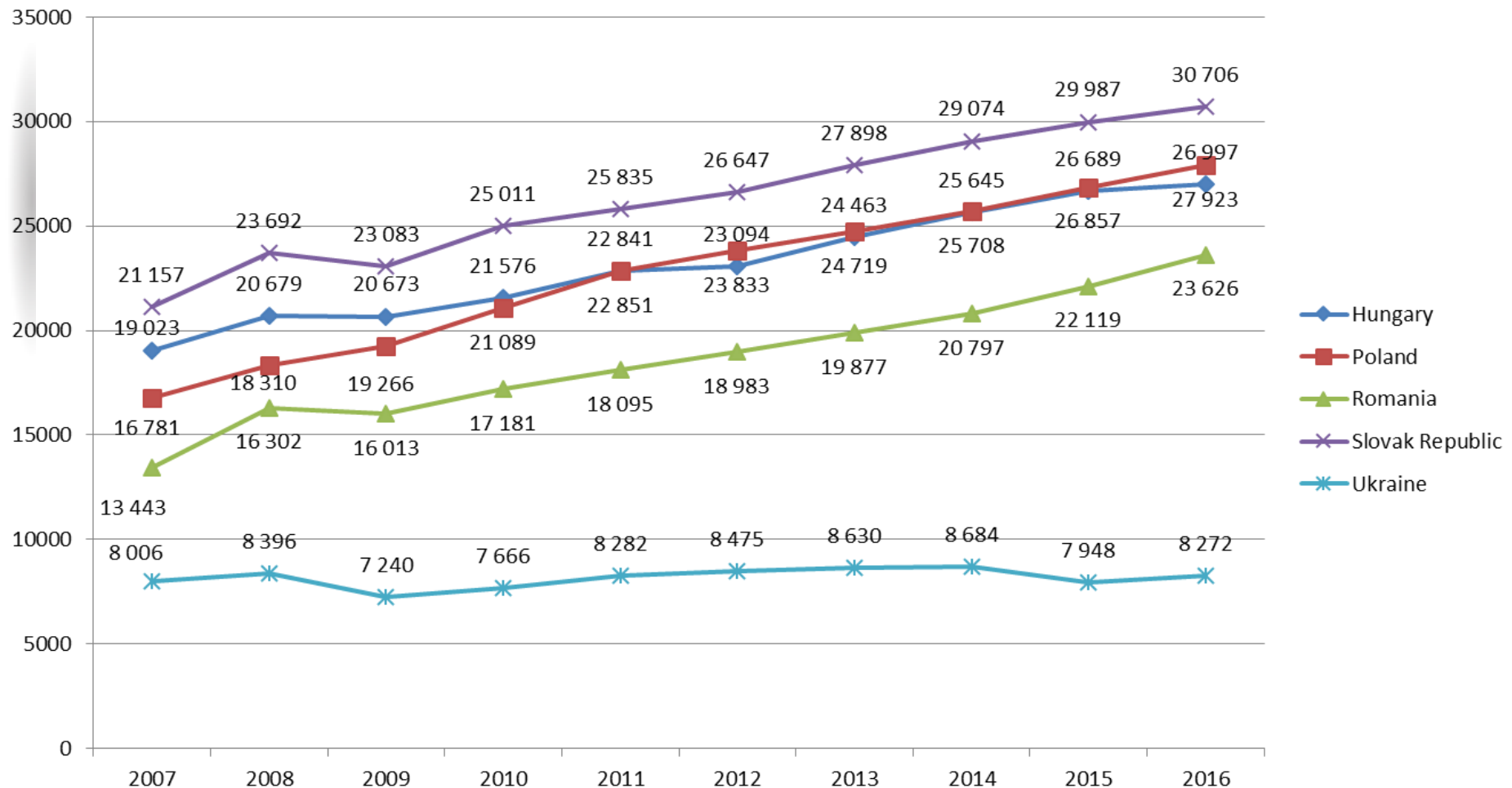
### Factor of hierarchy:



Ukraine issue is not the main priority for domestic or foreign policy agenda of Ukraine's Western neighbors and depends on other priorities

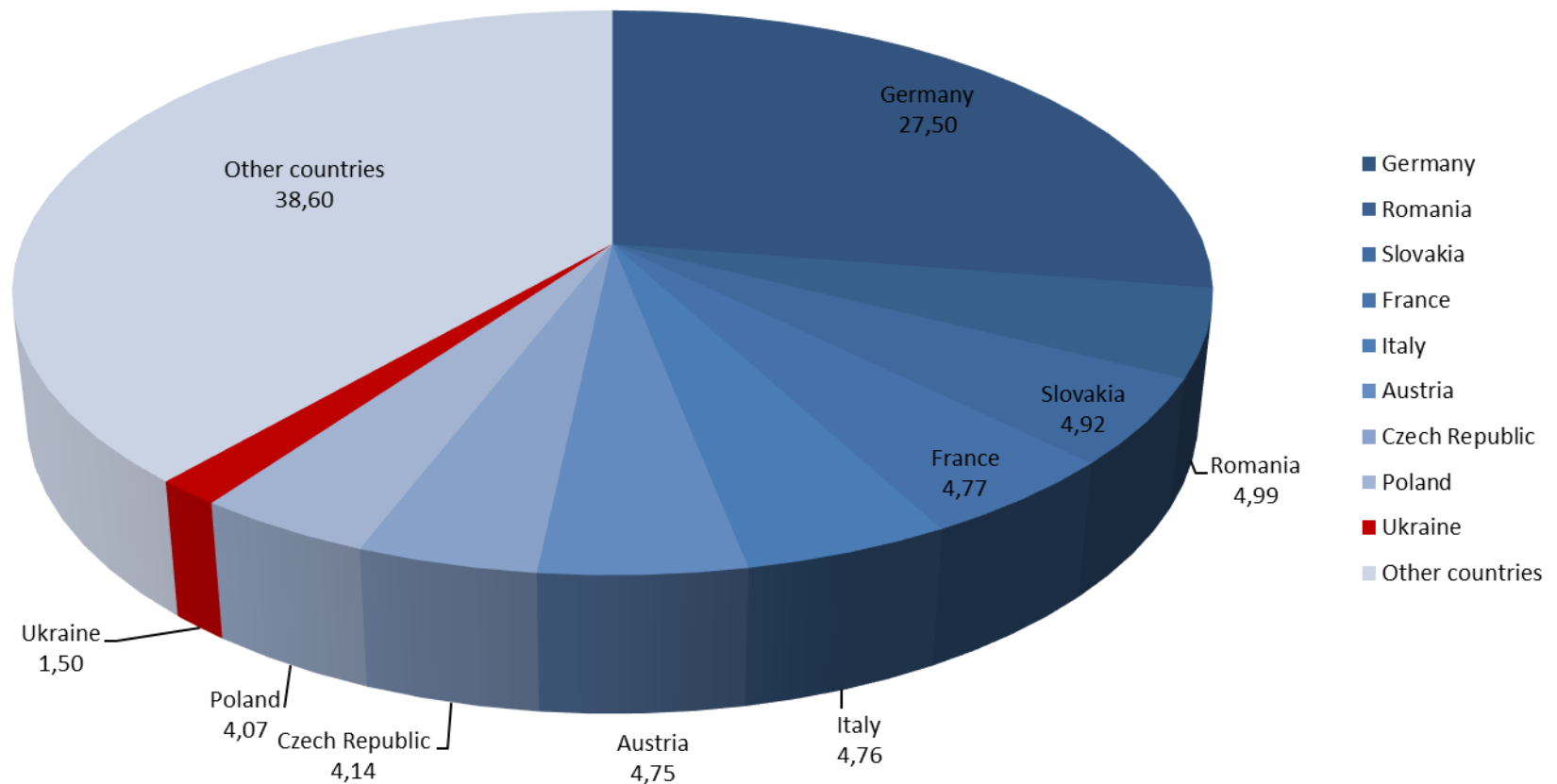


### GDP per capita, PPP (current international \$)



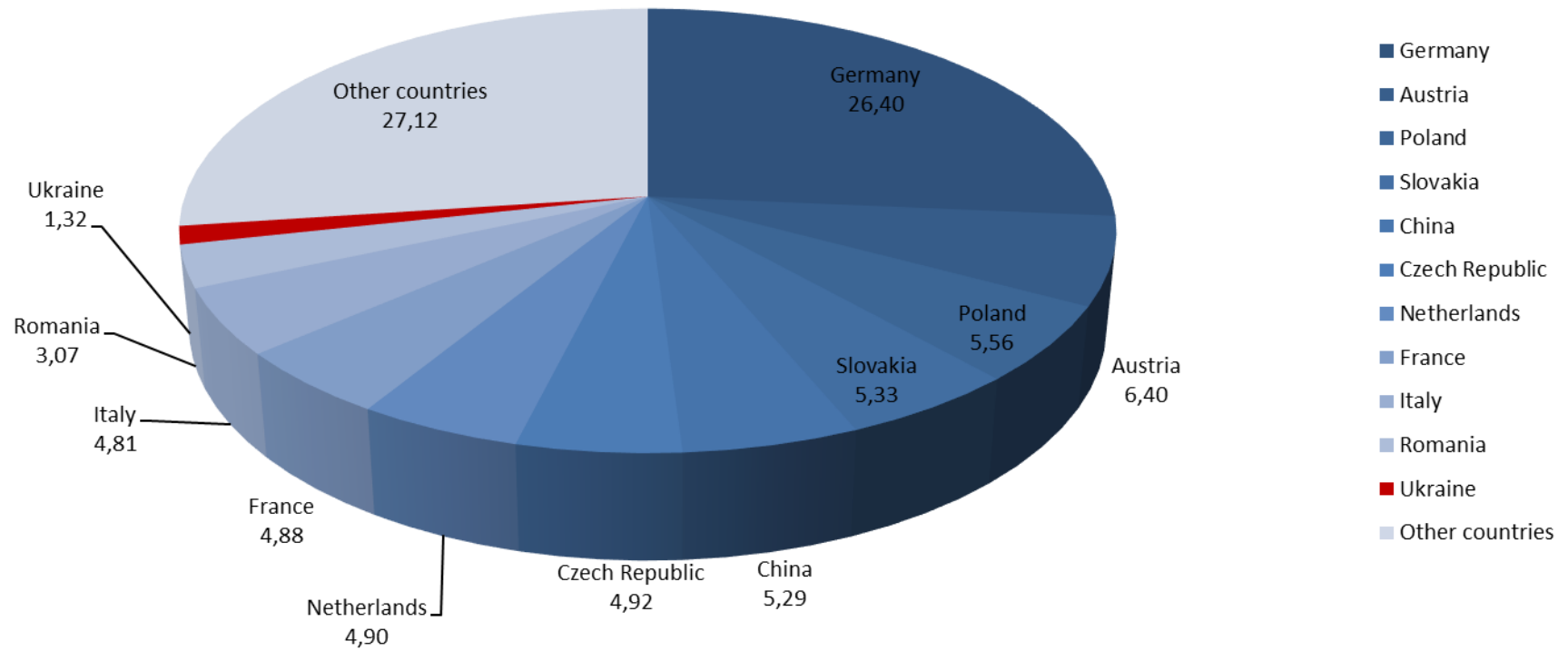


### Exports of Hungary by countries (%)





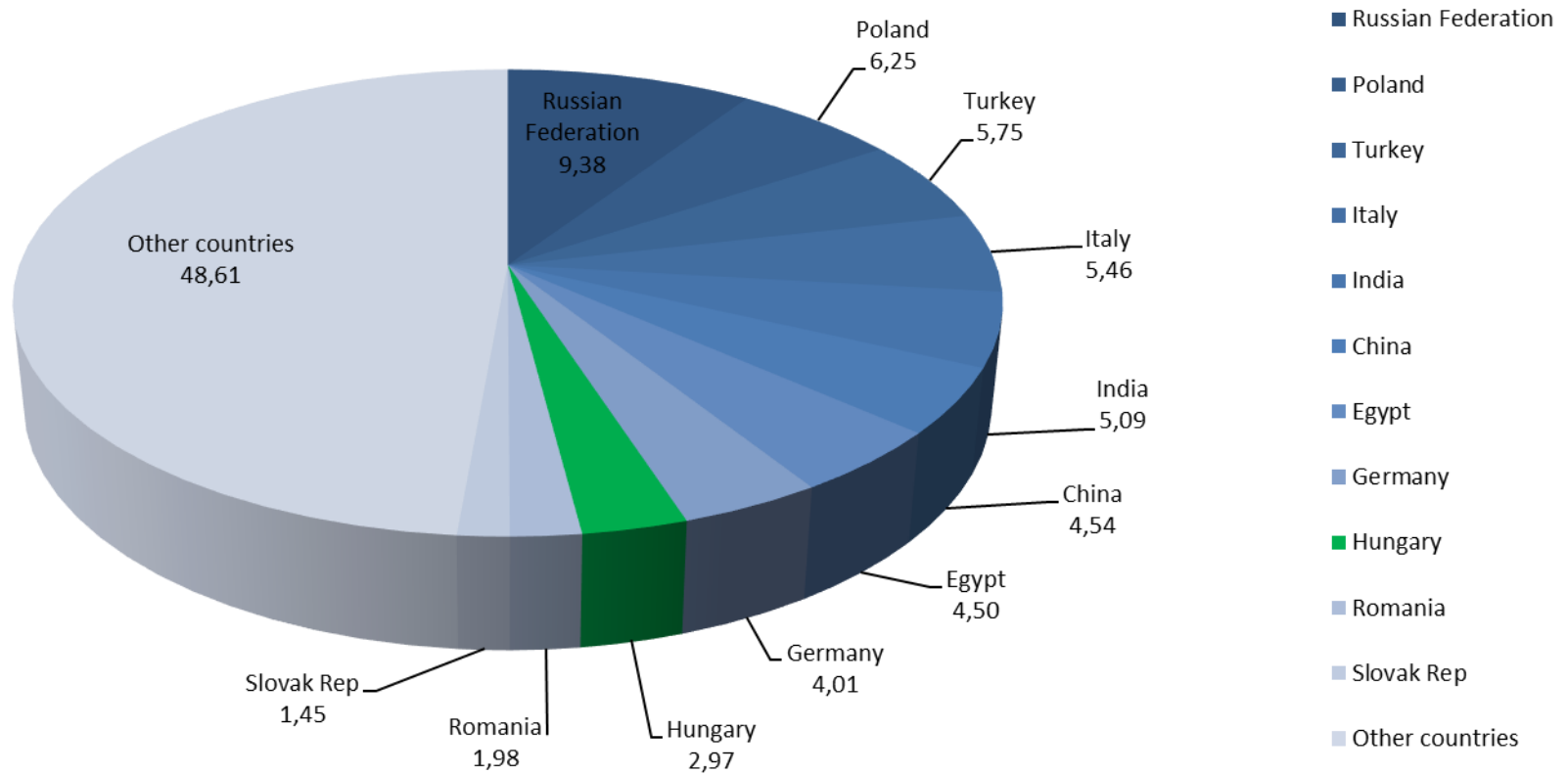
### Imports of Hungary by countries (%)





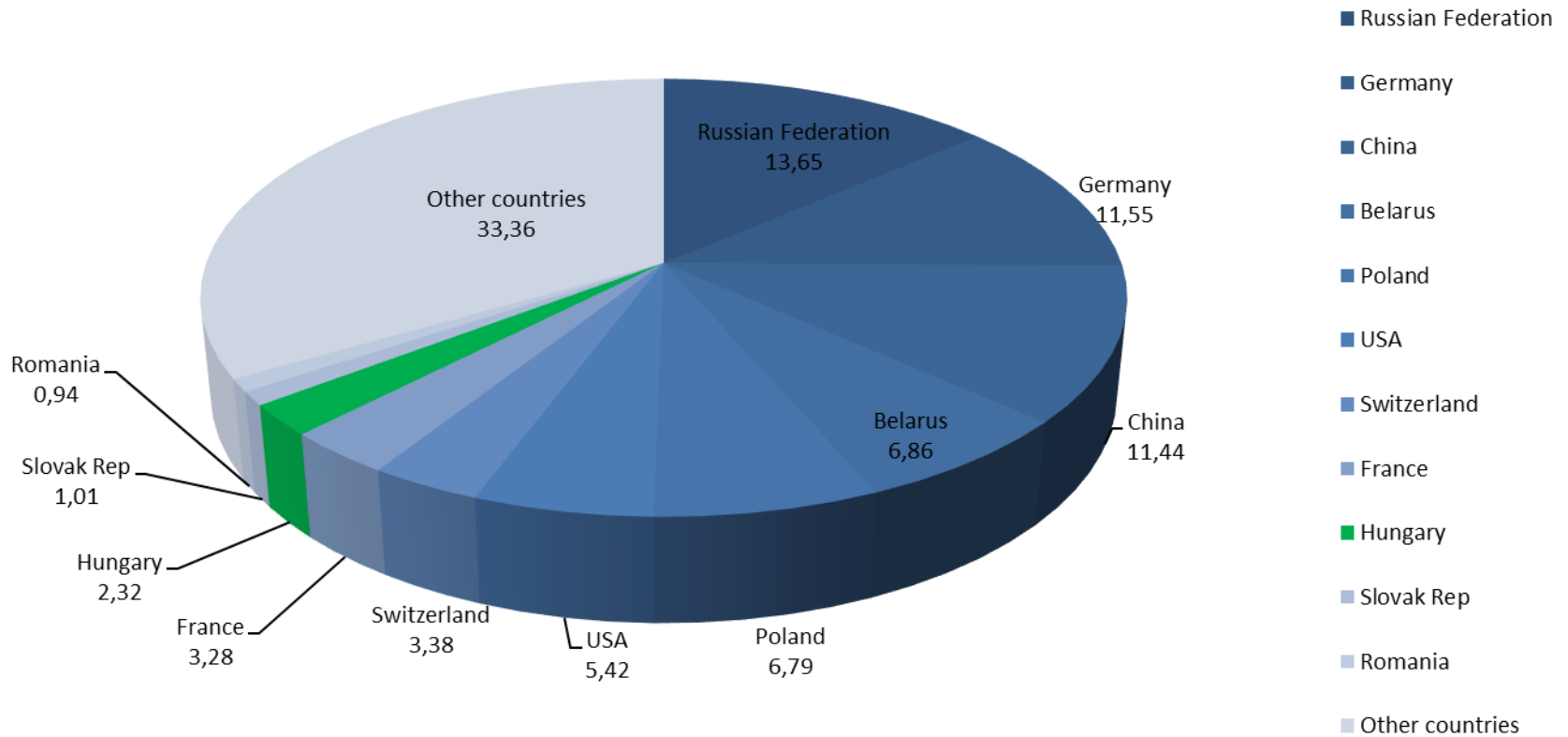


### Exports of Ukraine by countries (%)





### Imports of Ukraine by countries (%)



# Hungary-Ukraine relations

## *Current state of affairs*

- Key 'points of pain' and current challenges in the relations



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# Dynamics of the escalation

- ✓ Adoption of the **Ukraine's Law on Education** in autumn 2017

Dispute over Article 7, which foresees studying in all public schools and universities in Ukrainian language. National minorities retain the right to study in their mother tongue during primary school years (till 5<sup>th</sup> grade)
- ✓ Culmination of the dispute – Hungary's statement on blocking Ukraine's rapprochement with the EU and NATO
- ✓ Hungary blocks the Ukraine-NATO commission at ministerial and highest levels



# Dynamics of the escalation

- ✓ August 2018 – Ukraine’s MFA protests against the title of Hungarian “ministerial commissioner in charge of the development of Zakarpattia region”

*“as the competence of the Commissioner includes part of the sovereign territory of Ukraine”* – according to the Ukrainian MFA

- ✓ Ukraine threatens to ban an entry for István Grezsa if the Hungarian government decides not to change the title



# Dynamics of the escalation

## New wave of escalation – September 2018 – “Passports scandal”

- Ukrainian news agency “Ukrinform” publishes a video from a Hungarian consulate in Beregove, which became a ‘trigger’ for a new conflict wave
- A video shows a ceremony of Ukrainians swearing to the Hungarian state (ceremony of receiving a citizenship)
- FM Klimkin is outraged with the consulate’s urge to keep the fact as a secret from the Ukrainian authorities



# Dynamics of the escalation





### New wave of escalation – September 2018 – “Passports scandal”

- FM Klimkin and FM Szijjártó fail to find a common ground on the “passport scandal” issue
- Ukraine demands Hungary to withdraw its consul from Zakarpattia, otherwise threatens to expel him from the country







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### Harsh follow-up statements by officials and activists

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- Head of Parliamentary Committee for Foreign Affairs Hanna Hopko considers it as a “part of more broad plan on destabilizing Zakarpattia, in which not only Orban, but also Putin is interested” and proposed to return a military unit and deploy National Guard there
- Some nationalist movements urge to give a harsh rebuff against Hungary, and event to punish those Ukrainians who receive the Hungarian citizenship, and deploy the military forces in Zakarpattia
- Some experts fuel the discussions forecasting the Zakarpattia region as the ‘next hot spot’ on the Ukrainian territory

# Hungary-Ukraine relations

## *Future outlook*

- How UA-HU relations may look in 5 years? Possible scenarios
- Policy recommendations to make things better



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### Relations in Crisis

- ✓ Nationalism is on the rise in the Eastern Europe
- ✓ Identities are constructed along the lines of language, history, ethnicity, and symbols.
- ✓ There's a regional effect
- ✓ Rise of hostilities and mistrust. Hungary and Ukraine are part of this.



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### Lose-Lose Game

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- ✓ Both sides weaken their international positions
- ✓ Ethnic minorities are not treated in the best possible way
- ✓ Potential for regional cooperation decreases



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# Two Scenarios

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### **Clash of Identities:**

- conflicts over language
- possible conflicts over history and religion
- intensified international quarrelling
- internal bonuses for international weakness



### **Modus Vivendi:**

- compromise based
- international bonuses for internal restrictions



# Policy Recommendations

- Concentrate on political issues
- Build a broader regional context
- Be open about interests behind positions
- Look for joint actions in areas of security, energy, ecology, transnational threats
- Refrain from anti-Ukrainian and anti-Hungarian rhetoric in internal discourse



**Thank you for your attention!**