

# GLOBSEC: Defending European Freedom

**7 April 2022, Concert Noble, Brussels**



## Informal Report

This evening, GLOBSEC Brussels hosted a debate on the defence of European Freedom in these unprecedented times. Four CEE (CZ, EE, RO, SK) ministers of foreign affairs shared their views on Russia's war of aggression, on strengthening Ukraine and sanctioning Russia.

As the negotiations on the fifth package of sanctions (as a consequence of the Russian atrocities in Bucha and elsewhere in Ukraine), set the mood for the debate, the ministers were united in their stance against Russia. Sanctions are needed, and it is of utmost importance to explain to our people that there are costs to our freedom. There is a necessity to tighten the belt, to which there is no alternative. The unity of the EU and NATO must be maintained, therefore cooperation with Germany in its current energy predicament is essential. On the other side,

Hungary's position is concerning and needs to be addressed. Being direct neighbours to Ukraine, the CEE countries are hosting the majority of the Ukrainian refugees. As these people on the run are warmly welcomed, central Europe shows its solidarity and tackles the narrative of anti-migration states. However, it is important to uphold this narrative against populists and make sure the efforts continue in the future.



More resilience in the digital sphere is of key importance as well, in order to maintain unity. This goes for cybersecurity as a military threat as well as for Russian disinformation campaigns. The Russian regime has lost the war politically. Russian disinformation campaigns confront us with the difficult task to balance between the freedom of speech and self-harming actions, because disinformation can kill. The rebuilding of Ukraine's digital infrastructure is important, and assistance will be provided. Furthermore, NATO and the EU need to step up their efforts on cybersecurity as attacks are already taking place.



Russia wants to destroy our fundamental values, the rules based international order. Response is needed in continuing pressure on Russia and isolating it internationally. The opposite of what Russia wanted, has happened. There is more NATO-EU unity and Ukraine is part of the political West. These points prepare us for the difficult times ahead. We know that we should stop using Russian oil, gas and coal, the question is not if, but when and how.



The content of the discussion has shown that a debate featuring four CEE ministers in Brussels is of utmost importance. Central Europe, being directly affected by the war and having warned

about Russia for a long time, has vital contributions to make to the EU debate on how best to defend our values. The Russian war against Ukraine caused a short-term big shift in people's minds and government policies, but we need that shift to continue in the mid and long term. The key question in this regard for the EU and NATO, is how to be more resilient and keep unity among the allies.

GLOBSEC is the constructive voice of Central Europe. With this event, it aims to bridge the gap between East and West Europe towards a more sustainable future of European security. As GLOBSEC Brussels opens its office in Brussels, it continuously seeks to cooperate with partners to reach these goals.