

Summit of the Heads of Government of the Visegrad Group

Joint Statement

The official summit of the Prime Ministers of the Visegrad Group countries (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia) took place in Prague on 22 June 2012 to mark the conclusion of the Czech Presidency and the start of the Polish Presidency of the Visegrad Group.

The Prime Ministers took stock of the outgoing Czech Presidency, which focused on the Visegrad Group's long-term priority foreign policy areas such as the Eastern Partnership, the Western Balkans as well as key strategic and sector issues as the EU Multiannual Financial Framework, energy, , military capacity building or internal cohesion of Central Europe.

More coordination, more initiatives, new cooperation with third countries and innovative approach have been applied in order to strengthen the role of the Visegrad Group in the international affairs both at the regional and European level and to enhance the internal cohesion of Central Europe. These efforts resulted among others in:

- Establishment of a new “Visegrad 4 Eastern Partnership” Programme within the International Visegrad Fund in order to promote transformation and integration processes of Eastern Partnership countries with the EU as well as to strengthen cooperation between the V4 and Eastern Partnership partners. This Visegrad Group particular contribution to the EU Eastern Partnership policy has been also supported by project based cooperation with the governments of the USA and the Netherlands. The Programme will enhance the presence of V4 in Eastern Europe. The idea to establish a Visegrad Information Centre in Ukraine follows the same objective;
- Initiative on establishment of a special Western Balkan Fund, based on the model of the International Visegrad Fund, was introduced to the Western Balkan partners. Talks between the International Visegrad Fund and the Western Balkan countries are now under way;
- Adoption of the declaration “Responsibility for a Strong NATO” and the subsequent Joint Communiqué of the Ministers of Defence expressing V4 decisive resolve to promote regional and Euro-Atlantic security by strengthening our political commitment and enhancing defence capabilities, including the establishment of a joint V4 Battle Group for the first semester of 2016;
- Foundation of a V4 think tank platform, capable of delivering long-term analyses and processing urgent assignments from the V4 governments, has been agreed and started;
- In-depth coordination of Visegrad Group countries on EU affairs, including the Multiannual Financial Framework negotiations; In this connection the Prime Ministers called on all Member States and all EU institutions including the European Parliament to intensify their efforts to adopt the Multiannual Financial Framework not later than by the end of 2012.
- Coordination of the implementation of Cohesion Policy in the current programming period, as well as of the negotiation of Cohesion Policy's regulatory framework for the period 2014-2020. Under the Czech Presidency, Visegrad countries have agreed on both working and political levels on several important issues, inter alia joint declarations and non-papers, which have found a positive reflection in the Danish EU Presidency's compromise texts.

In addition, the Prime Ministers discussed two crucial current issues: the competitiveness and the EU internal market and the energy policy, particularly energy mix.

Competitiveness – Internal Market

The internal market of the European Union has been the cornerstone of Europe's integration and the main engine of Europe's growth and competitiveness. In the midst of a European economic slowdown, the role of the internal market is now greater than ever.

The V4 countries will contribute to the agreement on key priorities of the Single Market Act, in particular those that have the greatest potential for boosting growth and employment. Specifically, we support proper implementation of the services directive in the EU with the aim to increase its cross-border dimension and the completion of the European digital internal market.

We also welcome the initiative of the European Commission to submit further proposals aimed at strengthening of the internal market later this year.

Energy mix

The national conditions, starting points and specificities should form the key frame for the EU energy policy. For that reason, the V4 countries strongly advocate the Member States' exclusive competence over the choice and structure of their national energy mixes. The right of the Member States to determine the conditions for exploiting energy resources, the choice between different energy sources and the general structure of energy supply should be clearly reflected in the European legislation in line with the provisions of the Lisbon Treaty.

The V4 countries will, in a common effort, reiterate for the role of safe nuclear energy in Europe as it remains an important source of energy in the European Union. The high standards of nuclear safety and security must be inseparable aspects of nuclear energy production in order to maintain the role of nuclear energy as an effective and sustainable technology to tackle climate change. The V4 countries acknowledge the fact that coal will keep its place in the national energy mixes. The V4 countries underline the potential of gas (both conventional and unconventional) provided that the problem of external dependency is addressed sufficiently by the diversification of gas sources and transit routes, including via the Southern Corridor. Likewise, the gas potential could be fully exploited through properly functioning gas market. The current subvention policy regarding renewables should be re-designed in a way that reduces market distortions, minimizes the increase of energy prices, while at the same time, delivers the expected impact of renewables on growth and employment. Future strategies of renewable sources of energy should be developed in consistency with national energy policies and specificities.

In light of the concerns over the future security of oil supplies, the V4 countries underline their interests in strengthening the existing pipeline system as well as exploring existing alternative supply routes and sources.

The V4 countries acknowledge the intention to establish the process of the transition to a low carbon competitive economy. This needs to be put in the context of necessary reductions by the developed countries as a group. Moreover, all activities related to achievement of agreed climate targets should be carried out in a manner that ensures the competitiveness of the European

economies. In this context, the V4 countries believe that energy efficiency is an important measure to reach the climate targets while maintaining the energy security.

The Prime Ministers also approved the programme of the Polish Presidency, which starts on July 1, 2012, and aims to further deepen mutual cooperation and to strengthen the position of the Visegrad Group countries in the international context. The Visegrad partners are ready to provide all support to the upcoming V4 Polish Presidency.

Prague, June 22, 2012