

Joint Statement of the Heads of Governments of the V4 Countries

Brussels, 15 December 2016

We, the Prime Ministers of the Visegrad countries, convening in Brussels on 15 December 2016 in the margins of the European Council, adopt hereby the following Joint Statement. The Visegrad Group countries welcome the focus of the December European Council on key challenges which the EU needs to face.

Migration

The Visegrad countries appreciate important efforts of the Slovak Presidency to broaden consensus concerning the application of the principles of solidarity and responsibility in the context of migration policy. They recognize that good progress has been made in the convergence of views on various aspects, including the external dimension of migration and the protection of EU external borders. At the same time, further effort is needed to reach consensus on the internal dimension of the migration policy. The Visegrad countries are ready to continue working towards this objective. They believe that any new European migration policy can only be built for a common area where full control of external borders is ensured and migratory pressures can therefore be resisted effectively.

Security

Internal security agenda remains of crucial importance. Instruments enhancing citizens' confidence in safe environment are of major importance. That is why Counter Terrorism Directive should be adopted and Passenger Name Record Directive implemented.

The Prime Ministers of the Visegrad countries underline their commitment to the strengthening of the Common Security and Defence Policy in line with the Council conclusions of 17 October and 14 November.

To respond to the deteriorating security environment, we must make the security of the EU, its Member States and citizens our top priority. Therefore, we call on the Member States to act responsibly and step up efforts to tackle the threats and challenges of the present day, notably hybrid and cyber threats or terrorism, in a coherent and effective way.

In line with the European Council Conclusions of December 2013 on security and defence, the Visegrad countries reiterate the need to enhance the effectiveness of the CSDP and the development and maintenance of Member States' defense and security capabilities, supported by a more integrated, sustainable, innovative and competitive European Defence Technological and Industrial Base, with full participation of SMEs, which also contributes to jobs, growth and innovation across the EU and can enhance Europe's strategic autonomy, strengthening its ability to act autonomously when and where necessary and with partners wherever possible.

The Prime Ministers of the Visegrad countries emphasize that close cooperation of the EU and NATO is a vital to enhance the Common Security and Defence Policy and the security of Europe. In this light, they welcome the progress on the implementation of the EU-NATO Joint Declaration which provides for measures to advance the practical cooperation of the two organisations. Avoiding unnecessary duplication and ensuring complementarity between the EU and NATO will guarantee that our resources and capabilities are used efficiently.

AA/DCFTA with Ukraine

The Visegrad countries reiterate their support to the process of ratification of the Association Agreement with Ukraine and emphasize their will to look for a solution that will allow for a swift conclusion of this process by all Member States of the EU.

The Prime Ministers of the Visegrad countries reaffirmed the importance of the Association Agreement/Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (AA/DCFTA) with Ukraine. It is an important element of the Eastern Partnership policy, which the Visegrad countries consider as a strategic dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy.

The implementation of AA/DCFTAs is a key commitment of all contracting partners, the associated states as well as the Community and its Member States. Therefore, the Visegrad countries reaffirmed the importance of full application of the Agreement as soon as possible. Only then cooperation with the EU will be more effective and bilateral ties will be strengthened.

The Visegrad countries reiterate their support to the European aspirations and the European choice of concerned Eastern Partnership partners. In this respect, Visegrad countries note that the decision of the heads of states or governments concerning the ratification of the AA/DCFTA EU-Ukraine does not contradict art. 49 of the Treaty on European Union.

The procedure leading to the lifting of visa requirements for Ukraine should be completed without any further delay.

Digital Single Market

The Prime Ministers of the Visegrad countries expect that the European Council will reiterate the importance of a stronger and more coherent Digital Single Market, which is essential to boost growth and jobs in all regions across Europe. That is why we call on the European Commission to implement the DSM strategy in a swift and timely manner. We should consequently eliminate barriers that hinder cross border development of digital economy, also in the area of free flow of data, which is crucial for modern economies to thrive in future. We believe that only by supporting digital infrastructure and applying modern technologies across industries, Europe will become more competitive on a global scale.