

CONCLUSIONS

of the

Meeting of the Foreign Affairs Committees of the Parliaments of the Visegrad Group Countries

25 – 26 February 2019

The Representatives of the Foreign Affairs Committees of the Visegrad
Group Countries, participating in the meeting in Bratislava,

**Brexit and the post-Brexit era: Implications for the future of the
European Union**

appreciate the negotiation and preparation of the draft Agreement on the withdrawal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland from the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community (henceforth “Brexit Withdrawal Agreement”) by the European Chief Negotiator for the United Kingdom Exiting the European Union Michel Barnier and his negotiating team;

appreciate the unprecedented unity and constructive approach of the Member States of the European Union during the negotiations of the Brexit Withdrawal Agreement;

take in mind that the House of Commons of the United Kingdom rejected the Brexit Withdrawal Agreement on 15 January 2019;

appreciate that the House of Commons of the United Kingdom declined a “no deal” scenario in a political declaration on 29 January 2019;

note that, despite this political declaration, it is not possible at this time to exclude the possibility of a “no deal” scenario on 29 March 2019; which we **consider** to be undesirable and the least favourable of all possible scenarios;

note that the Visegrad Group countries are well preparing for all development scenarios, as well as to the “no deal” scenario, as a series of legislative and non-legislative measures have been adopted at national level to mitigate the negative impacts on citizens, entrepreneurs, national economies and the protection of commercial and economic interests of the Visegrad Group Countries;

underline that the negotiated text of the Withdrawal Agreement represents the most optimal way to end the EU membership as it addresses all aspects of leaving, in particular, guarantees citizens' rights and financial compensation from the United Kingdom in relation to the current EU budget;

call on both the European Commission, EU27 Member States and the United Kingdom to look for solutions which would ensure an orderly withdrawal of the United Kingdom on the basis of Withdrawal Agreement;

stress that the EU27 Member States should stay committed to work tirelessly on the strengthening of good cooperation with United Kingdom;

note that, even after the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union, there is an eminent interest in continuing to develop supranational bilateral relations with the United Kingdom and to continue bilateral cooperation in foreign policy, security and defence issues, as well as in international organizations;

note that no future agreement between the European Union and the United Kingdom will be able to fully replace EU membership;

note the Treaty on Franco-German Cooperation and Integration signed in Aachen on 22 January 2019; **propose** to put on the agenda V4plus format meeting with Germany and with France and **stress** the importance of effective future cooperation between EU27 Member States;

Towards the 10th Anniversary of the Eastern Partnership: priorities, perspectives and challenges in the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood and beyond

stress that the Eastern Partnership, in its ten years of existence, has confirmed to be a successful European Neighbourhood Policy project; and **welcome** all the achievements of the Eastern Partnership to date;

note that it is in our interest to continue to consider the Eastern Partnership to be amongst the priorities of the Visegrad Group Countries;

acknowledge the European aspirations and European choice of Eastern Partnership partners, who signed association agreements with the EU, namely Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine; and **recognize** the right for other Eastern Partnership countries to freely choose the level of ambition they aspire to in their relations with the European Union; and also the EU's incentive-based approach ("more-for-more") will continue to benefit those partners most engaged in reforms with an emphasis on their pace and quality because sustained and effective reform progress is the key to the continued success of the Eastern Partnership;

stress repeatedly that the Eastern Partnership aims at building a common area of shared democracy, freedom, peace, prosperity, stability and cooperation and is not directed against anyone;

welcome that there is a number of celebratory events organized by the EU institutions, Member States, Partner countries and/or stakeholders scheduled for this year, at the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Eastern Partnership's inception; and **point out** that the 10th anniversary is an opportunity not only to celebrate this unique partnership, but also to inject new dynamism and to make our relationship even stronger and more attractive;

support the implementation of the ambitious work plan and joint policy initiative, 20 Deliverables for 2020, agreed during the 5th Eastern Partnership Summit, aiming at bringing tangible benefits to the daily lives of citizens across the region in four key priority areas with a focus on good governance, better transport links, energy security, independent media and people's mobility;

support an Indicative trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T), the Investment Action Plan co-authored by the European Commission and the World Bank, which identifies priority projects in the Eastern Partnership countries aimed at better connectivity and stronger growth in the region;

appreciate that the situation in Ukraine is currently a top priority of the Slovak Republic's Chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe; and **reaffirm** in particular its commitment to support the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine, as well as other Eastern Partnership countries;

remind Ukraine the commitment in fulfilling the recommendation of the Venice Commission regarding the educational law;

look forward to further increasing the dynamism and efficiency of our broadened and deepened Eastern Partnership cooperation; and **support** strongly all EU programs contributing to this goal;

appreciate that the Slovak Republic, which is currently holding the Visegrad Group's presidency, is planning to organize a ministerial meeting in the V4+ EaP6 format in early May 2019 in Bratislava (on the eve of High Level Conference in Brussels); and **believe** this meeting will yield concrete ideas and proposals;

call upon the Governments of the Visegrad Group Countries to sustain their strong opposition to the Nord Stream 2 project that is a heavy blow against the security and economic interests of Central Europe and would serve as a source of money for Russian budget;

International Visegrad Fund and its contribution to the V4's cohesion

support the activities of the International Visegrad Fund and appreciate the ongoing effort of the Fund's secretariat, the Council of Ambassadors and the Ministers of the Foreign Affairs of the Visegrad Group Countries to continually improve the Fund's functioning in the context of its long-term vision;

consider the Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, the supreme decision-making body of the Fund, to be an especially important platform for discussions and exchange views and best practices;

call upon the Ministers of the Foreign Affairs of the Visegrad Group Countries to rigorously consider to increase the amounts of annual contributions of the Fund;

stress that the International Visegrad Fund is a key instrument of the Visegrad Group for facilitating and promoting the development of a closer and deeper cooperation

among V4 countries and other countries, especially with non-EU Member States in Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans and the South Caucasus;

observe with delight that the total number of approved grant projects and the total approved sum (€) keeps increasing in time, which contributes to the increase of mobility, the deepening of people-to-people contacts, and to the development of civil society in the region.

Signed in Bratislava, on 26 February 2019

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