

The Visegrad Group Joint Statement on 10th Anniversary of the Eastern Partnership

1. The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Visegrad Group (V4) and the Eastern Partnership countries met on May 6, 2019 in Bratislava under the Slovak Republic Presidency of the Visegrad Group. The Foreign Minister of Romania, as the representative of the current Presidency of the Council of the European Union, the Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations and the Secretary General of the European External Action Service attended the event too.
2. The meeting focused on assessing current state of play and outlining future cooperation with the partner countries of the Eastern Partnership. The participants discussed the results of the 10 years implementation of the Eastern Partnership, the vision, goals and tools for the policy's next decade, as well as future tasks in view of the challenges in the region. The participants acknowledged that the values enshrined in the Prague Declaration adopted by the founding summit of the Eastern Partnership (Prague, May 2009) are still valid.
3. The V4 Ministers underlined the importance of keeping the Eastern Partnership high on the EU's agenda and reaffirmed the mutual interest to continue this unique policy of the European Neighbourhood based on shared fundamental values and the common commitment to the principles of international law, human rights and democracy, rule of law, accountability and good governance, sustainable development and market economy. Political association and economic integration of the Eastern partners with the EU remains the main goal of the program.
4. The V4 Ministers underlined that reforms strengthening democracy, rule of law and human rights including rights of persons belonging to minorities, enabling functioning market economies, improving macro-economic stability, business and investment environment, mobility and people to people contacts are the prerequisite for achieving stability and prosperity that the people of the Eastern Partnership's countries desire. The implementation of these reforms in the partner countries represents a corner stone of each country's modernization process, thus improving living standards of population in each partner country and their resilience. The V4 countries acknowledged the progress made individually by partners in implementing reform agenda and encouraged them to continue delivering concrete results for the benefit of own people. Having their own transformation experience of joining the EU 15 years ago, the Ministers of V4 countries reconfirmed their commitment to offer a national transformation expertise for partners' reform processes.
5. The V4 Ministers expressed their determination to develop the Eastern Partnership agenda beyond 2020, with full respect to the principles of co-ownership, differentiation, inclusivity and conditionality. They are committed to start a strategic and structured reflection on future cooperation, notably in view of the next Eastern Partnership Summit. The V4 Ministers expressed their preference to hold the Summit in 2020.
6. The V4 Ministers agreed that the discussion about the future of the Eastern Partnership should entail reflection about further institutionalization of the Eastern Partnership. Steps in this direction should aim to increase the regional integration, to facilitate planning and cooperation among EaP countries and increase their common ownership. Ministers underline that regular EU28 – EaP6 ministerial

meetings in key sectorial areas (like trade, energy, digital or environment) could be a chance for EaP countries to present their common position.

7. The V4 Ministers pointed out that the increased EU cooperation with the Eastern partners was not directed against anyone. At the same time, the right of every country to choose freely its own way of development has to be respected.

8. The V4 countries condemn the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol by the Russian Federation that they will not recognise. They remain committed in their support of Ukraine's unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. They call on all parties for a swift and full implementation of the Minsk Agreements.

9. The V4 Ministers reaffirmed their support to the Eastern Partnership as a strategic dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy based on shared values, mutual interests and commitments. They acknowledged the Eastern partners' sovereign right to choose the level of the ambition in their relations with the European Union and their readiness to continue to shape bilateral relations individually. They underlined the need to differentiate the European Union's support towards the Eastern partners according to the level of commitments and aspirations made by the Partners and their readiness to meet conditionality of this support.

10. The V4 countries voiced their continued support to the efforts of the Eastern partners to build a modern, democratic and united society, in which the rights and freedoms of all citizens are fully respected.