

**JOINT STATEMENT OF THE HEADS OF GOVERNMENTS  
OF THE VISEGRAD GROUP COUNTRIES**

**TOWARDS UNION OF TRUST AND ACTION**

**BRUSSELS, 28 JUNE 2016**

The countries of the Visegrad Group deeply regret that the United Kingdom has chosen not to remain a member of the European Union. We respect this sovereign decision. The European Union of 27 Member States will continue.

The United Kingdom chose a different path. Article 50 of the Treaty is the basis on which further relations with the UK should be agreed. We need clarity.

The countries of the Visegrad Group strongly urge that the focus of the upcoming negotiations must be on protecting EU interests. European citizens and European companies cannot end up worse off than British citizens and British companies. The arrangement between the EU and the United Kingdom must be based on reciprocity and fairness.

We too, as European Union, have to look afresh at our common project. Not because of the United Kingdom's decision, but because the Union needs to come out of this challenge stronger. We need to focus our attention on a smooth secession process and a new cooperation agreement with the UK as well as the EU reform agenda.

The countries of the Visegrad Group stand firm in their common anchoring in the European Union as a natural, secure and forward-looking framework for our common future based on mutual cooperation. In a Union, we are stronger together. We are stronger together because our Union is based on a consensus on key values, principles and priorities. The challenge for the upcoming months will be to translate this consensus as effectively as possible into the everyday life of the Union. To achieve this medium-term objective, we have the necessary legislative and institutional framework at hand.

However, we can never succeed unless we create a genuine Union of trust. Trust needs to be revived on all levels. The genuine concerns of our citizens need to be better reflected. National parliaments have to be heard. The institutions of the European Union need to stick to their missions and mandates. Trust also needs to be fostered among Member States, starting with overcoming the artificial and unnecessary dividing lines we have seen emerging in past few months.

Once a Union of trust is our objective, we will be better able to provide for a Union of action. In mutual respect and founding our cooperation on trust the everyday work of the European Union will necessarily have to focus on topics that unite us. Topics pulling the European Union institutions, its Member States or even individual societies apart are contrary to the goals of Union of trust and action.

In practical terms, the work of the Union should get back to basics: upholding the fundamental principles upon which the European project has been founded, using the full and genuine potential of the Four Freedoms, achieving the still incomplete single market.

Instead of endless theoretical debates on “more Europe” or “less Europe” we need to focus on “better Europe”. The Union should focus on practical restart of convergence. We should, therefore, make sure the Union uses the key instruments to this end: cohesion, boosting investment, supporting innovation, completing the digital and energy single market, promoting free trade and free movement, and strengthening a resilient labour market bringing sustainable jobs.

Trust is, nevertheless, commensurate with security. So far, the European Union was often better in demonstrating hesitation and lack of focus than in showing unity and resolve on issues of internal and external security. We therefore need a more transparent approach to defining challenges and linking them with the existing instruments and their effective application. We need to use the synergies, especially with NATO, better. Our citizens must see the Union stand firm on issues of common internal and external security interest.

The countries of the Visegrad Group thus believe that working on these objectives will deliver a Union of trust and action only if all 27 Member States are at the table in their diversity and provide their unique inputs. Connected in such Union, we will be faster in our decision making and stronger, both internally and externally, to be able to better react to challenges before us. Only thus will we become attractive again both to our citizens as well as globally providing a tangible proof that a united Europe remains the best option.

All Member States must assume more responsibility for the future of the EU as their common project.