



## **Joint Statement of the Heads of Governments of the V4 Countries**

Warsaw, 21 July 2016

The outcome of the UK referendum creates a new situation for the European Union. We can't simply continue to look the other way and hope the crisis will pass away by itself. We need to bring the European idea closer to the citizens and narrow the existing gap between the European institutions and the expectation of the people. We need to conduct a deeper reflection on current challenges the Union is facing. The result of the referendum held in the UK has clearly shown that our reflection cannot avoid any specific concerns and even doubts our citizens may have about the EU. It has also shown that we must communicate the European project in a better way as a Union of action and trust.

We recall that until the UK leaves the EU, EU law continues to apply to and within the UK, both when it comes to rights and obligations. There is a need to organize the withdrawal of the UK from the EU in an orderly fashion. We have to save the best of our strong political and economic ties with the United Kingdom.

One of the worst conclusions that Member States may draw from Brexit is dividing the EU in small clubs. This could fuel the fragmentation of the EU, whose strength lies above all in its scale and coherence. It is mostly thanks to the effect of scale and our ability to act together in the spirit of mutual trust that we can deliver as the EU both internally and on the global stage. This is why the EU is an important trade partner to our major global partners.

To prevent possible fragmentation the EU needs to refocus on proposals with tangible benefits for our citizens where agreement can be reached while refraining from wasting energy on proposal that divide Member States. In doing so, we need to carefully approach all the key sectoral policies in order to seek the balance where added value of a common EU action is evident and the temptation of over-regulation is avoided.

Turkey is our strategic ally in NATO and the EU candidate country. We support democratically elected government and hope Turkey will ensure stable constitutional order based on international law. We all remain committed to working together with a democratic, inclusive and stable Turkey to address our common challenges.

The EU has to have a well-balanced migration and asylum policy. Recently an unprecedented and uncontrolled migratory pressure to the EU has put into trial our border guards, security and social services. A European consensus is needed concerning the objective of the European policy to stem migratory pressure on European Union as a whole including strengthening the protection of external borders of the Schengen area. Our efforts should also concentrate on the effective checks who is in need of our genuine assistance and who only tries to improve his economic status. The V4 countries offer their experience and support in this matter. However, simply better protection of external borders is not enough

– in order to solve this crisis and to better address its root causes we need better cooperation with our neighbors and other third countries and we should elaborate broader commitment at the international level. We are convinced that the legislative process on Commission proposals should follow the guidance of the European Council. We hope that the upcoming UN high-level plenary meeting, to be held on 19th September 2016, could bring further discussion on the issue.

The EU has successfully acted together in order to face global challenges like climate change and shape global policies in this matter. The Paris Agreement is the first universal lasting climate regime applicable to all parties; we have now 186 individual country targets, including the one submitted by the EU. The progress on our NDC has been made and the UK has always played a crucial role in the EU efforts to reduce GHG emissions. We should continue in this spirit, confirming and fulfilling the already submitted contribution and the individual efforts of each country jointly with the ratification procedure.

In the aftermath of Brexit the Single Market should be further deepened as a core project of the European Union that unites all Member States and continues to bring tangible results for citizens. In any case the erosion of the already achieved level of freedom in the area of free movement of workers and provision of services linked to movement of workers must be avoided.

The V4 countries will continue to be the drivers of the Single Market agenda. Nevertheless, we are also in favor of keeping the UK as close as possible to the Single Market accordingly with the guiding principle of reciprocity – more access for more obligations in all four pillars of the Single Market.

Building on the great achievements so far we should further explore the untapped potential. For example better enforcement of the Single Market rules, further liberalization of services, would make the EU more competitive, offering new jobs and growth and resulting in prosperity and strengthened legitimization of European project.

Furthermore, we need to continue our work on finalization of the Single Market in light of the digital revolution. We will support the delivery of an ambitious Digital Single Market. It should contribute to the rapid pick up of new technologies across all sectors of the economy. The successful Digital Single Market should encourage investment and innovation to transform the industry and scale-up of SMEs and start-ups in order to make European economies more competitive on a global scale.

While delivering the DSM, we should stick to the principles of better regulation with an effort to simplify and remove the regulatory burden in traditional sectors of economy so that the innovative business models can flourish. What is more, we should make sure that the DSM is designed in a way that it encourages a fair distribution of benefits throughout the EU and closes the gap in the society by focusing on digital skills.

Finalization of the EU internal energy market and strengthening of the EU mechanisms for security of energy supply building on the Member States and regional responsibilities are relevant energy policy areas and examples where the potential of cooperation on EU level should be seized, while preserving the Member States choices on energy-mix. The ability to ensure secure, affordable and sustainable energy supplies for our citizens and industry should be the measure of our effectiveness in that regard.

Stable and fully functioning EMU is in our common interest. Taking into account the positive experience of creating the banking union we should ensure integrity of the single market while working on the future architecture of the EMU.

It's time for the Union to be more pragmatic, focused on the essentials and reforms. At the same time the EU must act with due consideration and solve the problems of citizens while respecting the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality as well as the role of the national parliaments. Particularly their opinions namely yellow or orange cards should be fully taken into account by the EU institutions. Respect for diversity of the Member States shall constitute an important point as well.

As V4 countries, we are ready to take an active part in the discussion on the future of Europe. The strengths of the V4 countries and the whole region, include energy and enthusiasm for the European integration project. Our societies are positive about being part of the EU. The contribution of the V4 to EU's success lies also in its economic dynamism. Young, well educated, mobile societies generate growth and contribute to modernization of the whole Union.

With this in mind we consider the meeting of Heads of State and Government in September in Bratislava as an excellent opportunity to start the necessary political reflection on the EU and its future. It should take into account the need for the EU to increase democratic legitimacy and more effectively address citizen's needs and concerns in order to regain their trust in the common European project. To achieve this goal, the issue of communication of the EU agenda to our citizens should also have a prominent place in this reflection.