



HUNGARIAN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY



15 months Presidency 2013-2014 of the
VISEGRAD GROUP

6th Meeting of the Committees on Public Administration and Regional Policy of the Parliaments of the Visegrád Group Countries

Budapest, 4-5 February 2014

JOINT STATEMENT

The participants of the meeting exchanged their views on the possibilities offered by the EU cohesion policy for the period of 2014 - 2020, aiming to raise the dynamics of social and economic development efficiency of all EU member States, including less developed countries and regions. In addition, they discussed the impact of the development of big cities on the capacity of regions to attract resources and analysed the further opportunities for developing cross-border cooperation.

Regarding raising the efficiency of convergence for less developed regions, the participants concluded the following:

- In the Visegrád countries similar territorial transformations have taken place in many respects, and though the extent of regional inequalities is different in these countries, the transformations have resulted in similar regional structures and area types.
- On the whole, it can be concluded with regard to the effects of the developments of the EU programming period 2007 - 2013 that territorial cohesion was improved thanks to the contribution of EU funds. Nevertheless, the efficiency and, in particular, the effectiveness of the use of resources needs to be improved in each V4 country.
- Therefore, in order to implement the cohesion policy more effectively, in the next programming period greater emphasis must be put on achieving the best possible use of resources, on the effective use of EU funds and on ensuring sustainability, both economically and in terms of environmental protection.
- It is a priority task to finalize the ongoing 2014 - 2020 programming successfully and to develop the Operational Programmes effectively following the submission of Partnership Agreements.

- Overall target is to ensure efficient institutional system to promote economic growth and job creation.
- Due to macroeconomic conditionalities and the stricter sanctions applied in the cohesion policy, proper implementation and, as a means of prevention, the efficient flow of information between the member states will be even more important in the future.
- The integrated and territorially-based approach must be used at all levels of governance for the purpose of solving economic, social and environmental problems effectively. During the implementation of this, local characteristics, challenges and results need to be taken into consideration and, at the same time, the intensification of cooperation and coordination among all levels of governance needs to be encouraged.
- Effective means of realising some of the objectives could be the Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) and the Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI).
- The participants appreciate the fact that during the negotiations concerning the EU's Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and the cohesion policy, an 85% EU co-financing rate could have been maintained for less developed regions, with the V4 cooperation playing an important role in achieving that.
- The participants welcome the development of a *Common Spatial Development Strategy of the V4+2 Countries* to be drawn up by the V4 countries together with Romania and Bulgaria, in line with the European Union document titled *Territorial Agenda 2020*, which was adopted during the Hungarian EU presidency. The coordinated and joint exploitation of the special features of the East-Central European area, as well as the effective representation of the interests of the area in European processes may become possible as a result of the territorial planning cooperation.

Regarding the development of big cities, the delegations agreed on the following:

- In accordance with the document entitled *Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020*, adopted by EU Ministers, and recognising the effects of cities on territorial cohesion, the development of a polycentric network of cities, integrated approaches, the improvement of relations between urban and rural areas and the development of functional urban areas should be supported.
- The poles of development and the zones of metropolitan growth include the most developed regions and metropolitan areas of the V4 countries. The majority of the economic and innovation potential of the V4 countries is concentrated in these areas.
- The importance of regional centres and regional capital cities is increasing, since they are the centres of development of their respective areas and are also instrumental in the dissemination of innovative economic and technological results. The attraction of cities and the exploitation of their development potential can be increased by creating place-based economic profiles (smart specialisation).

- The development of urban areas is also of high priority in the development documents of the V4 countries with respect to the period between 2014 and 2020. It is important to draw up these documents as soon as possible and to implement the principle of sustainability in them.

Regarding territorial cooperation, those present emphasized the following:

- The participants welcome the favourable processes that started in the border areas after the abolition of frontiers and the strengthening of an increasing number of cities in previously underdeveloped areas, which carries significant development potential.

- The territorial integration achieved through cross-border cooperation may reduce economic, social and ecological division and can increase employment and the mobility of workers.

- In addition to the projects successfully implemented until now, it is recommended to strengthen the cooperation in the following fields in the period of 2014 - 2020: improvement of the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises; the promotion of resource efficiency; sustainable transport, employment and the mobility of workers; and institutional cooperation.

- The participants welcome the increasing significance of European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) Programmes, which as objective 2 of the cohesion policy in the period of 2014 - 2020, provide an opportunity for Member States to develop and participate in cross-border, transnational and interregional programmes that serve exchange of experience, transfer of knowledge and creating common solutions contributing to the competitiveness and growth of the V4 regions.

- The participants underline that the European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) can play an important role in cross-border cooperation in the future, as a mean for strengthening cohesion through increasing legal certainty and stability.

- By coordinating the tackling of regional development challenges at the V4+2 level, the *Common Spatial Development Strategy of the V4+2 Countries* to be accepted this spring will contribute to macro-regional cohesion as well as the regionally more balanced development of the countries participating in the cooperation, thereby also promoting the territorial cohesion of the European Union.

- Implementation of the Strategy encourages the territorial focus of sectorial policies that have an influence on the development of areas and it can be an important factor in increasing global competitiveness, which means that it supports the achievement of the objectives identified in the document titled *Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020*, in accordance with the common challenges and opportunities of the V4+2 countries.

- For the purpose of supporting the achievement of the above objectives, the participants urge the strengthening of personal relations and consultations among Members of Parliaments representing the border regions.

As regards the future cooperation of the committees on public administration and regional development of the V4 member countries, the participants agreed that the regularity of the meetings of specialised committees should be maintained, experiences should be exchanged and opportunities for the further development of the cooperation should be continuously discussed.

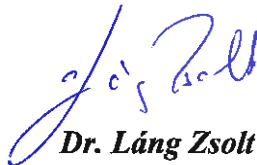
Budapest, 5 February 2014

Signatories:



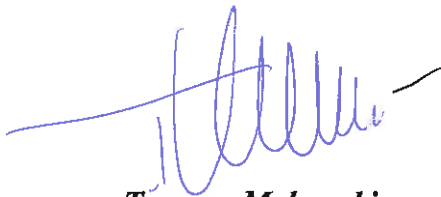
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