

CONCLUSIONS

of the Meeting of the Committees on Economic Affairs of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate of the Czech Republic, the Sejm of the Republic of Poland and the National Assembly of Hungary

Bratislava, 25 February 2015

The Representatives of the Committees on Economic Affairs of the Visegrad Group Countries

With regard to the European Union Energy Framework after the year 2020:

- acknowledge the agreement on the EU Climate and energy framework for the period between 2020 and 2030 reached by the October 2014 European Council;
- underline that the implementation of the already agreed climate and energy targets for 2030 should be incorporated in the European Energy Union architecture. However, sovereignty of Member States over the national energy mix has to be fully respected and climate and energy targets for 2030 should not be incorporated into the national binding targets;
- stress that measures to develop European Energy Union and achieve the 2030 targets have to fully take into account impacts on energy prices, costs and competitiveness. It is important to get the necessary support from citizens and industry. Also consumers need to be able to actively benefit from the energy and climate policy developments;
- will generate joint effort within the European Union with the aim that nuclear energy was included among the renewable energy sources;
- appeal to the institutions of the European Union to support decentralized energy production at the place of its actual consumption.

With regard to the energy security in the EU and the V4 countries and completion of the interconnections in the sector of gas, oil and electricity:

- stress that energy security can be reached effectively only through a well-balanced and diversified energy mix built upon an effective use of all indigenous energy sources and adequate gas, oil and electricity infrastructure;
- underline that the V4 energy policy should be based on liberalisation, energy efficiency, mutual solidarity and cooperation in order to improve energy security and competitiveness on EU energy market;

- diversification of sources and transport routes of gas, oil and electricity remains a priority for the V4 countries, especially because of fact that the energy prices in the V4 countries are among the highest in the European Union;
 - welcome the intention of the V4 countries to jointly undertake efforts to elaborate regional preventive and emergency plans based on common risk assessment, in order to further enhance the cooperative approach towards the increased regional security of supply;
 - ask the institutions of the European Union to pay increased attention to security of energy networks against external attacks from a digital environment and through this to support the improvement of energy security in the European Union.
- concerning the sector of gas**
- highlight that the level of security of supply in the V4 countries is higher compared to 2009 gas crisis, also due to the commonly realised measures including the reverse gas flows and new gas interconnections. However, additional measures, especially regarding timely implementation of the gas projects of common interest within the North-South Gas Corridor is needed to further improve energy security in the region;
 - welcome that the realisation of the project of interconnection between the Slovak Republic and Hungary, which represents a significant part of the North-South Gas Corridor, is in the final stage;
 - strongly support inclusion of the project of interconnection between the Slovak Republic and Poland, which is still in initial phase, in the second list of projects of common interest;
- concerning the sector of oil**
- note that the project of reconstruction and reinforcement of capacity of the Adria pipeline is important project from the point of view of diversification of oil sector; it has been included among the projects of strategic importance on the European level;
 - welcome that the Prime Ministers of the Slovak Republic and Hungary officially opened the faucet of reconstructed part of the Adria - Friendship 1 pipeline between Šahy and Százhalombatta on 9 February 2015;
 - note that the project of oil transport connection between Bratislava - Schwechat is a perspective project of diversification, which will allow transport of oil in the direction east-west/west-east; the project will

improve energy security and is internationally recognised as a strategic corridor;

- **concerning the sector of electricity**

- o the key cross-border projects are Slovak-Hungarian interconnections between Gabčíkovo – Gönyű and Rimavská Sobota – Sajóivánka, which were included among the projects of common interest; they will contribute to the increased security of electricity supplies as well as increase of net transmission capacity of the north-south energy flows.

With regards to the future and support of research, innovations and technological development:

- support the development of cross-border cooperation of the V4 countries in research and development in the form of joint research and development projects and promoting cross-border mobility of PhD students and researchers in the V4 countries;
- stress that longtime active cooperation of the V4 countries creates preconditions for successful entry in the European Research Area. The V4 countries have the potential and top research institutions, which may contribute to the development of excellence in research and development in the EU;
- underline that cooperation of the V4 countries should focus in particular on the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation Horizon 2020. Joint activities should be supported at the level of the representatives of the V4 countries in committees and working groups of the European Commission. We also consider as important joint support activities aimed at increase of participation of the institutions of the V4 countries in successful consortia projects Horizon 2020, using and linking national systems support structures for Horizon 2020, such as national delegates, national contact points and Liaison Office for Research and Development in Brussels;
- note that other priorities for cooperation of the V4 countries should be the European Space Agency, Danube Strategy and the Strategy for the Baltic region, the European Institute of Technology, as well as large pan-European research infrastructures from the Roadmap of the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures, including the promotion and exchange of experience with implementation of national roadmaps;
- highlight that the decisive force in the economies of the EU countries are becoming small and medium-sized enterprises. The V4 countries are challenged to find an effective way to support the creation and development of innovative businesses. Cooperation of the V4 countries should include the exchange of knowledge in order to support small and medium-sized enterprises, for example in the form of support for start-up and spin-off companies;

- underline as priority to enhance competitiveness of industries through the support of higher added value production;
- consider that it is necessary to redirect a research from supply to demand oriented, to support research within the companies as well as to improve commercialization of the results of research in practice;
- stress the need to improve the access of innovative small and medium sized enterprises and start-up companies to the Venture Capital Funds;
- recommend the creators of the EU programmes for supporting research and innovation, to respect the principles of support of these projects according to the rules of Venture Capital Funds.

With regards to the establishment of an integrated system of transport among the V4 countries:

In the field of road transport

- emphasize continuing attention to build the missing transport link among the countries of Central Europe region, from which largely depend the intensification of trade exchange, tourism, inward investment and competitiveness of the region as a whole;
- invite governments of the V4 countries, especially Slovak Republic, Poland and Hungary, to speed up the process of preparation and implementation of transport infrastructure, which is part of Via Carpatia road. This north-south transport link will significantly boost the social-economic development in less developed regions of the country. We are also of the opinion that it is necessary to achieve that Via Carpatia was included among the projects of common interest;
- invite governments of the V4 countries to speed up the implementation of road transport infrastructure in section Skalité - Zwardoň, Šahy - Parassapuszta and Lysá pod Makytou - Horní Lideč that are part of the core network with the highest strategic importance for achieving the development of TEN-T network;
- in the field of financing transport infrastructure and development of TEN-T it is necessary to focus especially on strengthening cooperation and coordinated approach in presenting project proposals for the implementation of cross-border projects within the network of TEN -T corridors and the effective use of resources from the tool Connecting Europe Facility;
- recommend the European Commission to more respect economic interests of the member states while formulating rules of environmental impact assessment.

In the field of air transport

- deem it necessary to pursue active promotion of interests of the V4 countries, deepen the cooperation and experience exchange in relation to Single European Sky Package II +;

In the field of railway transport

- support opening of general discussion about the future of high speed rail network within the V4 countries, also with regard to the need of north-south high-speed rail links;
- emphasize the need for coordination between the V4 countries in question of completion of the railway TEN-T network, especially the core network, in particular as regards cross-border sections and missing parts of the network, the technical specifications and interoperability;

In the field of waterways and harbors

- note that the development and modernization of waterways and ports with the possibility of public access has the potential to significantly contribute to the development of economic and employment growth in the V4 countries;
- well-managed, efficient and secure infrastructure, that provides the required parameters of the fairway waterways throughout the year, is a guarantee of competitiveness and development of the waterways and their integration into the transport chains by means of equipped and functioning ports.

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