

7TH MEETING OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AFFAIRS COMMITTEES OF THE NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS OF THE VISEGRAD GROUP COUNTRIES

Statement adopted in Eger, 19 March 2008

At the meeting of the parliamentary European Affairs Committees of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate of the Czech Republic, the National Assembly of the Republic of Hungary, the Sejm and the Senate of the Republic of Poland and the National Council of the Slovak Republic (Visegrad group countries)

the delegations have adopted the following statement:

The participants

regarding the European perspective of Western Balkan countries and the status of Kosovo

- recall the conclusions on Kosovo adopted by the Council of the European Union on 18 February 2008;
- expect that Kosovo shall respect the principles of democracy and equality of citizens, the protection of minorities;
- welcome the commitment of the EU to fully and effectively support the European perspective for the Western Balkans, with special emphasis on Serbia, and invite the European institutions to further enhance their efforts to ensure long-term peace and stability;
- encourage the Union to accelerate the accession negotiations with Croatia, and to move forward a visa-free regime for the Western Balkan countries;

regarding the new energy package of the European Commission and the issue of climate change

- express their conviction that Europe should take upon global leadership in tackling climate change to face up to the challenge of secure and competitive energy, and to make the European economy suitable for sustainable development in the 21st century;
- fully agree with the goals of the new energy package, however underline the importance of setting proportional and balanced requirements for each Member State taking into account their economic situation and bearing capacity;

regarding the preparation for accession to the Euro zone

- emphasize that besides the monetary criteria the real economic convergence is of major importance in the process of preparation for euro zone membership for the new EU Member States;

regarding the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy

- recall the already achieved reform measures in the sugar and wine sector and recognize the need of amelioration of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in the framework of the EU budget review;
- point out that the CAP after 2014 should remain an exclusive EU competence and ensure the equal treatment between the old and new Member States with special regard to direct payments and contribute to the competitiveness of agriculture, the enforcement of the cohesion between regions as well as the balanced economic development;

regarding the review of the EU budget

- confirm the necessity of the reform of the EU budget in order to enable Europe to meet the main challenges of the 21st century, namely globalization, climate change, energy security, migration, ageing society;
- urge that the EU budget should promote modernization, competitiveness, security of European citizens, the EU's global role and sustainable development. The cohesion policy, which contributes to the overall competitiveness of the EU, should be concentrated primarily for less developed countries and poorer regions;
- underline that the revenues of the EU budget should also be revised including the correction factors guaranteed for certain Member States;
- encourage broad public and parliamentary debates on the future budgetary framework;

regarding the bilateral agreements between certain EU Member States and the USA on visa-free travel

- regret that due to lack of appropriate interest and concern by some old Member States and the European Commission, the EU has failed to achieve a common approach concerning visa free regime to the USA for all European citizens, therefore the Member States concerned had to negotiate bilaterally and sign memoranda of understanding with the USA.