

**JOINT STATEMENT
OF THE MINISTERS FOR SCIENCE
AND HIGHER EDUCATION
OF THE VISEGRAD GROUP**

on the future of the European Research Area and of the European Higher Education Area

CRACOW, POLAND, MAY 31, 2017

We, the Ministers responsible for Science and Higher Education of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia, present at the meeting in Cracow on May 31, 2017, in agreement with the Ministers responsible for Science and Higher Education of Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania and Romania, adopt this joint statement on the future of the European Research Area and of the European Higher Education Area.

HAVING REGARD TO the *Joint Statement of the Heads of Governments of the V4 Countries: “Strong Europe – Union of Action and Trust”*, adopted in Warsaw on March 2, 2017, in which research and innovation as well as education policies were identified as being key in the European Union (EU) together with budget and cohesion policy which were recognised as irreplaceable;

RECALLING the *Joint Paper of the Visegrad Group, Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Slovenia on Cohesion Policy after 2020*, adopted in Warsaw on March 2, 2017, in which the EU cohesion policy was named the fundamental EU investment policy supporting growth and creating jobs, and one of the key pillars of the EU budget after 2020;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the on-going process of the mid-term evaluation of Horizon 2020 and ERASMUS+ programmes;

HAVING REGARD TO the need of strengthening the European Research Area and the European Higher Education Area, especially through enhancing research excellence in the EU Member States and increasing mobility of students and researchers;

LOOKING FORWARD TO the EU Commission’s proposals on the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) beyond 2020, including proposals on the next EU research and innovation programme as well as on the next edition of the ERASMUS+ programme;

WE ARE OF THE OPINION THAT:

- I. The EU centrally managed programmes for research and innovation (like Horizon 2020) as well as those for facilitating mobility of students and academia within the EU and beyond (like ERASMUS+) are crucial elements of enhancing research excellence, innovation and higher education outcomes of the EU and its Member States, as well as driving economic growth and sustainable jobs in order to secure Europe's global competitiveness;
- II. The financial resources earmarked for research, innovation and higher education activities in the next MFF, both in the Heading 1A as well as within the Cohesion Policy, should be on an adequate level, using the MFF 2014-2020 as a reference;

Concerning the next EU research and innovation programme, WE SHARE THE VIEW THAT:

1. the European Commission in close cooperation with the Member States should improve and simplify synergy mechanisms between ESIF and the next EU centrally governed programmes, especially with regard to state aid rules, decreasing administrative burden and error risks and avoiding detriment for research organizations,
2. the European Commission in close cooperation with the Member States should improve smart specialisation development approach for enhanced alignment of regional research and innovation activities in order to bring stakeholders together, in support of strengthening European competitive advantages,
3. current efforts towards adequate geographical representation in advisory groups and evaluation panels should be strengthened,
4. effective mechanisms supporting further development of an inclusive European Research Area should be strengthened,
5. the recent improvements as regards remuneration rules should be evaluated and, if necessary, changed in order to ensure level playing field in this area for all the Member States;

Regarding the next edition of the ERASMUS+ programme, WE CALL FOR the following:

1. its budget should be adequate, which means it should be at least maintained at the same level as compared to the MFF 2014-2020,
2. its structure ought to be stable (especially, as regards the division into types of actions),
3. there should be further improvements in the electronic system of the programme, in order to make it more user-friendly,

4. new applicants ought to have an easier access to the programme,
5. there should be further improvements in the exchange of information between the European Commission and the Member States as regards the programme management.

WE ASK the European Commission and other EU Member States to take into account the considerations and requests expressed in this joint statement.

Signed in Cracow on 31th May 2017

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For the Government of the Czech Republic

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For the Government of Hungary

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For the Government of the Republic of Poland

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For the Government of the Slovak Republic