

MEETING OF MINISTERS OF THE VISEGRÁD GROUP RESPONSIBLE FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Budapest, 9 December 2013

Joint Statement on the Enhanced Collaboration of the Visegrád Countries within the ERA

We believe that together the Visegrád countries have a near perfect combination of size, resources, location, skills, and ambition to become a major hub for innovation within Europe and internationally. It is only by acting together that we can achieve the necessary scale of RDI to impact global markets consistently and significantly. This forum provides an excellent opportunity to build bridges to jointly overcome these gaps.

Addressing the issue of the regional dimension of research and innovation, the following intervention areas should be considered: the stimulating role of financing from the national budgets, the role of cohesion policy and smart specialisation, and the actions under Horizon 2020. Possible synergies resulting from their respective coordinated implementation shall help reducing these regional disparities.

It is our belief that the success of the process of spreading excellence and widening participation in ERA activities, and thus closing the research and innovation divide, will depend on enhanced strategic cooperation and collaboration between our countries. Therefore we believe that it is us, the “widening countries”, who have to increase synchronisation of our respective policies, incentivize collaboration of our organizations, and even perform joint actions to achieve these widening targets.

The V4 countries are facing several common challenges in the field of research and innovation – but then again, we have several common strengths and opportunities as well. Therefore we strongly believe that our countries can play a pioneer role in the widening process. The main instrument to implement this is better transnational coordination of our policies, and even dedicating our resources to joint transnational activities.

The policy areas where these common actions should be established or strengthened in the near future, are the following:

- The V4 countries are vitally interested in joint identification of the grand societal challenges which are common to them, and in assessment of the available research potential at transnational level to tackle them.
- The ERA reforms must be rooted in the governance cycle of the European semester in order to set national research policies in the broader economic context, therefore the V4 countries aspire to mutually inform each other on their national ERA reform measures annually.
- The V4 countries recognize that transnational joint programming initiatives contribute to thorough ERA integration of policies and of activities of research performing organizations, therefore agree on promoting and aligning their participation in these initiatives.
- Significant research infrastructures provide the most efficient basis for stairway to excellence, and present the most apparent area of possible synergies between H2020 and cohesion policy measures, therefore it is important to harmonize our existing and future research infrastructure roadmaps. Moreover, necessary steps should be taken to encourage the collaboration between V4 countries' institutions during the operational phase of these infrastructure hosted by any of our countries.
- Smart specialization is another tool where transnational cooperation enables regions and states to make use of the opportunities arising from the complementarities and combined strengths of our innovation systems. The V4 countries agree on exchange of views and information resulting from respective S3 processes.
- As all V4 countries experience similar difficulties and opportunities arising from the relative development of their capital regions, finding and applying the relevant policies should be ground for mutual learning. It is of utmost importance for our beneficial integration to the ERA to secure international visibility and significance of the research potential of our capital cities.

The Ministers of the V4 countries responsible for research and innovation express their commitment to engage in cooperation in the above mentioned areas. The Ministers decide to enhance strategic harmonisation of their efforts and to form an expert process to analyse the situation, investigate good practices, reveal concrete cooperation opportunities, and identify areas for further action.

The provisions laid down in the Joint Statement will continue to be the subject of annual evaluation done by the Ministers during their meetings in the framework of the Visegrád Group Presidency.

Signed in four identical copies in English language on 9 December 2013.

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