

Joint Statement

**by the Foreign Ministers of the Visegrad countries
– Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia –
on the Free Movements of Persons**

The EU has been built on the four inseparable fundamental freedoms, i.e. the free movement of goods, capital, services and workers. Free movement of persons is a cornerstone of EU integration – an indispensable functional building block of a truly integrated Single Market. The single market however is “single” not only in terms of geographic extension but also by virtue of its cohesion. It is characterised by a delicate balance between its ingredients. The free movement of persons is as essential as the rest of the “freedoms”.

Available data show that migrants from Central and Eastern Europe to the UK have been hugely beneficial for the British economy. They are younger and economically more active than the average British workforce (80% under the age of 44, 70% active), they also contribute to UK national revenues far in excess of the social benefits they use. They are also more likely to return home than those arriving from developing countries or conflict-ridden hotspots outside the EU.

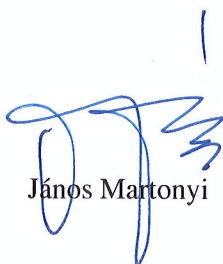
The V4 countries recognise, however, that generous national welfare systems can and have been subject to abuse by some. However, such abuses must and can, as a priority, be tackled effectively under the existing EU legal framework.

The V4 countries have always regarded the United Kingdom as a champion of the Single Market and a friend of the integration of Central and Eastern Europe into the EU. Selective application of these core freedoms by Member States would lead to the erosion of the Single Market, an important source of growth for the entire Europe. The V4 countries hope that any measure to be introduced in this context by the United Kingdom, or any other Member State, will be compatible with the legal requirements of the European Union.

The V4 countries remain committed to solve the pressing problems faced by societies everywhere in the EU, not just those subject to immigration: unemployment, abuse of the welfare state, tax avoidance and a decline in public order and public safety. However this can only be done commonly and on the basis of robust data and analysis.



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