

The Visegrad Declaration (Visegrad, 15 February 1991)

Caption: On 15 February 1991, Václav Havel, President of the Czech Republic, Josef Antall, Prime Minister of the Republic of Hungary, and Lech Walesa, President of the Republic of Poland, establish the Visegrad Group (named after a town near Budapest) by signing a 'Declaration on cooperation between the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, the Republic of Poland and the Republic of Hungary in striving for European integration'.

Source: The Visegrad Declaration. [ON-LINE]. [s.l.]: The Visegrad Group, [09.02.2004]. Disponible sur <http://www.visegradgroup.org/declaration.php>.

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Declaration on cooperation between the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, the Republic of Poland and the Republic of Hungary in striving for European Integration (Visegrad, 15 February 1991)

The meeting, in Bratislava, of presidents, prime ministers, ministers of foreign affairs and members of parliaments of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, the Republic of Poland and the Republic of Hungary began a process of creating foundations and new forms of political, economic and cultural cooperation of these countries in the altered situation in the Central Europe.

The similarity of the situation that has evolved over the past decades has determined for these three countries convergent basic objectives:

- full restitution of state independence, democracy and freedom,
- elimination of all existing social, economic and spiritual aspects of the totalitarian system,
- construction of a parliamentary democracy, a modern State of Law, respect for human rights and freedoms,
- creation of a modern free market economy,
- full involvement in the European political and economic system, as well as the system of security and legislation.

The identity of objectives, as well as similarity of ways of achieving them in many fields poses identical tasks before the three neighboring countries. Coordination of the efforts - with respect for national peculiarities - increases the chances of attaining the desired goals and brings closer the realization of their objectives.

A favorable basis for intensive development of cooperation is ensured by the similar character of the significant changes occurring in these countries, their traditional, historically shaped system of mutual contacts, cultural and spiritual heritage and common roots of religious traditions. The diverse and rich cultures of these nations also embody the fundamental values of the achievements of European thought. The mutual spiritual, cultural and economic influences exerted over a long period of time, resulting from the fact of proximity, could support cooperation based on natural historical development.

The cooperation of nations and civil communities of the three countries is essential for joint creation of conditions that will contribute in each of the countries to the development of a democratic social system based on respect for the fundamental human rights and freedoms, liberty of economic undertakings, rule of law, tolerance, spiritual and cultural traditions and respect for moral values.

Simultaneously, the signatories of the Declaration respect the right of all other nations to express their own identity. They emphasize that national, ethnic, religious and language minorities, in accordance with traditional European values and in harmony with internationally recognized documents on human rights, must be able to enjoy all rights in political, social, economic and cultural life, not excluding education.

In unified Europe, to which the three countries wish to actively contribute, it is possible to maintain culture and national character while fully realizing the universal system of human values. A systematic fulfillment of the idea of civil society is the key question to the spiritual and material development of Central European region and an indispensable condition for establishing of a mutually beneficial cooperation with developed countries and European institutions. Drawing on universal human values as the most important element of the European heritage and own national identities should serve as the basis for developing a society of people cooperating with each other in a harmonious way, tolerant to each other, to individual families, local, regional and national communities, free of hatred, nationalism, xenophobia, and local strife.

It is the conviction of the states-signatories that in the light of the political, economic and social challenges ahead of them, and their efforts for renewal based on principles of democracy, their cooperation is a significant step on the way to general European integration.

The signatories of the Declaration shall jointly undertake the following practical steps:

- in accordance with the interests of the particular countries they shall harmonize their activities to shape cooperation and close contacts with European institutions and shall hold regular consultations on the matters of their security,
- they shall endeavor to create free contacts between citizens, institutions, churches and social organizations,
- in order to support free flow of labor force and capital, they shall develop economic cooperation, based on the principles of the free market, and mutually beneficial trade in goods and services, moreover they shall strive to create favorable conditions for direct cooperation of enterprises and foreign capital investments, aimed at improving economic effectiveness,
- they shall focus on the development of the infrastructure in communications, with regard both to links between the three countries and those with other parts of Europe, mainly in the north-south direction, and shall coordinate the development of their power systems and telecommunication networks,
- they shall increase cooperation in the field of ecology,
- they shall create favorable conditions for free flow of information, press and cultural values,
- they shall jointly develop multilateral cooperation to ensure optimum conditions for full realization of the rights of national minorities living on the territories of their countries,
- they shall support mutually beneficial cooperation of interested local self-governments of their countries and establishment of sub-regional contacts.

The signatories of the Declaration state that their cooperation in no way will interfere with or restrict their relations with other countries, and that it will not be directed against the interests of any other party.

The cooperation of the signatories will be realized through meetings and consultations held at various levels and in various forms.

Done in Visegrad on February 15th, 1991 in three identical originals in the Polish, Czech and Hungarian languages, equally valid.