



HUNGARIAN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY



STATEMENT ON THE EUROPEAN INTEGRATION OF SOUTH-EAST EUROPE

of parliamentary delegations from South-East Europe and the Visegrád Group

(Budapest, 24 September 2021)

We, the Speakers of Parliaments from South-East Europe and from the Visegrád Group hereby reaffirm our commitment to the enlargement of the European Union and to accelerating the European integration process of South-East Europe. During the Budapest meeting, we all agreed on the following:

We underline the right of all parliaments with prospects of EU accession to constructively contribute to the dialogue on the future of Europe.

We urge that the Partners from South-East Europe should also be able to join the debate on the future of Europe, to express their views and to participate in the events of the Conference on the Future of Europe. In this context, **we welcome** the informal non-paper on this topic prepared jointly at the initiative of Hungary by the governments of the Visegrád Group countries and Austria in May 2021.

We emphasise that the EU must maintain its openness to integration and should offer a credible membership perspective to South-East Europe.

We call on all EU Member States to endeavour to accelerate EU enlargement. Slowing the process would have serious geopolitical, security and economic consequences for the European Union and its global role. We attach particular importance to parliaments in supporting the enlargement process.

We call for the opening and the continuation of the accession negotiations without further delay, as well as for having a new round of enlargement by the end of the current European Commission's mandate, or call for at least the conclusion of accession negotiations with the candidate countries that merit this, with a commitment to continue the enlargement process beyond that.

We urge to spare no effort and make use of all tools of the new methodology of the accession process agreed in March 2020 to achieve its key goal: a more dynamic, credible and predictable accession process. We consider it crucial for maintaining the commitment of the citizens of South-East Europe to the EU.

We welcome the commitment of the Partners from South-East Europe to the negotiated settlement of outstanding issues, to the strengthening of mutual relations and to the peaceful settlement of disputes as well as greater collaboration in addressing environmental and climate related regional issues.

We support the aspirations of the Partners in the region to deepen and broaden regional cooperation, enhance the coordination and exchange of experiences among them, and strengthen people-to-people contacts, to which the Visegrád Group has long provided and will continue to provide tangible assistance through EU-funded capacity building programmes in the parliamentary field, grants and scholarships through the International Visegrád Fund as well as know-how and technical support for the Western Balkans Fund.

We call for greater solidarity and swift support for South-East Europe in dealing with the SARS COVID-19 pandemic. The health of citizens, healthy recovery of economies and health of democracies in South-East Europe should be in the focus of EU institutions.

We support the principle of "own merits" for both candidates and potential candidates. At the same time we support the consistency of the process and a non-discriminatory approach by the applying the same criteria and rules for candidates, regardless of the timing of the accession process.

We will inform our parliaments and governments of this Statement with a view to coordinating governmental and parliamentary cooperation in the Visegrád Group and in South-East Europe.

We invite the Speaker of the Hungarian National Assembly, currently leading the parliamentary cooperation of the Visegrád Group, to send this Statement to the national parliaments of the European Union and to the leaders of the European Union institutions.

Partners:

László KÖVÉR

Aleksa BEČIĆ

Tomasz GRODZKI

Bakir IZETBEGOVIĆ

Boris KOLLÁR

Glauk KONJUFCA

Radek VONDRÁČEK

Talat XHAFERI

Miloš VYSTRČIL

Elvira KOVÁCS

Ryszard TERLECKI

Mimi KODHELI

Honorary guests:

Nedeljko ČUBRILOVIĆ

István PÁSZTOR

Mirsad ZAIMOVIĆ