

Memorandum of Understanding to set up a platform

"VISEGRAD+ for Renewable Energy"

Prague - May 15, 2019

The Visegrad Cooperation of Central and Eastern European Countries was established on February 15, 1991, ten days before the end of the Warsaw Pact. The motivation was cooperation in the transition from totalitarianism to liberal democracy. The return of Central and Eastern European Countries back to the Western civilization circuit (joining NATO and the EU) was fast. Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia have gone a long way since, not always forward. There is already second generation of the children born into democracy and freedom in V4 countries, yet countries still struggle with the heritage of communism.

The Communist regime was characterized by the limitation of all types of freedoms and also by the devastation of the environment. The centrally planned economy plundered raw materials and damaged the air and health of its inhabitants. The situation has improved radically since. Nevertheless, the Visegrad Group is still heavily dependent on coal. Poland produces 80% and the Czech Republic 47% of electricity from coal. V4 is characterized by the highest carbon intensity, i.e. carbon emissions per unit of GDP. So far, none of the V4 countries has submitted plans to shut down coal-fired power plants as the vast majority of Western Europe. Is there a two-speed Europe again?

Undoubtedly, Visegrad has fulfilled its main task, i.e. the transition from totalitarianism to democracy effectively and quickly. However, subsequently has mutated into an association that hampers the adoption of robust common European policies and instruments for climate protection: V4 countries have rejected proposals for more ambitious targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, rejected national binding targets for renewable energy and refused to support the date, when the EU should be carbon neutral. The V4 countries either halted or significantly reduced the support for the development of renewable energy sources and are betting on postponing the phase-out of coal-fired power plants and dreaming of building new nuclear reactors, regardless of the fact that their construction economy makes them completely uncompetitive. The influence of coal and nuclear interests hampers the development of clean, cheaper RES, which in addition delivers decentralization and thus democratization of the energy sector.

Key renewable energy associations from V4 countries and Austria consider Visegrad cooperation based on ignoring climate threats, attempting to extend fossil fuel

burning, exempting air pollution limitations and underpinning RES development as a dead project, which in addition hurts interests and health of its own citizens. However, they see a great potential for cooperation between Central and Eastern European countries in transforming energy from fossil to renewable energy at the same time. That is why we are calling together: "Visegrad is dead. Long live Visegrad+".

Memorandum signatories perceive the continuation of Visegrad+ cooperation positively. The + sign means not only a qualitative shift of V4+ from coal to renewable energy, but also the openness to cooperate with other Eastern European countries, which have similar historical experience, high energy intensity of their economies and are facing deep economic, environmental, energy as well as mental transformation.

Visegrad+ is the cross-border cooperation of renewable energy associations in order to promote and accompany sustainable transformation of the regions through joint political advice, communication and cooperation, as well as to balance the voice of conventional energy producers, to actively accelerate energy transformation to sustainable and fairly distributed renewables. Therefore, V4 representatives have invited Austria, which has extensive experience in renewable energy, to co-operate. Austria borders three out of four countries and a cross-border cooperation has already underway in many other areas, unfortunately not in the field of renewable energy and climate protection. The aim of the cooperation is to fill the white space.

Signatories hereby establish "Visegrad+ for Renewable Energy" (V+RE) and confirm their interest in cooperating in the following areas:

- Build a strong regional coalition based on this platform and invite other representatives of renewable energy from CEE countries who are interested in greening the V4+ region's energy transition;
- Exchange of experiences in transforming the region's energy systems towards renewable and sustainable economies;
- Promote the energy transition of the V4+ region through the design of energy policy and communication on the benefits of a progressive energy policy based on the vast potential of renewable energy;
- Advice for politicians, institutions and media on the energy transformation of the region;
- Sharing and communicating best practices towards a renewable energy system;
- Actively work on the earliest possible phase out of coal within the V4+ region;
- Actively work on a gradual phasing out of nuclear power from the V4+ region;
- Reduce the EU's dependence on fossil fuel imports and actively promote the European goals of energy transformation and climate protection;
- Support the process of just transition in Central/Eastern Europe towards the green economy compatible with the Paris agreement.

List of signatories:

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