

**Joint Statement of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs
of the Visegrad Group countries on the Western Balkans
Rogalin, June 28, 2021
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The Polish Presidency of the Visegrad Group (V4) organized on 28 June 2021 in Rogalin the annual meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Visegrad Group (V4) and the Western Balkans. The meeting was also attended by [the Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement], the EU Special Representative for the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue and other Western Balkan regional issues as well as the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of Croatia.

The V4 Ministers of Foreign Affairs expressed their determined and unequivocal support for the European aspirations of the Western Balkan partners and the firm prospect of their full European Union membership. They emphasised that EU enlargement is a joint strategic goal of the EU and the Western Balkans, and that the future of the whole region lies in the Union.

The V4 countries remain committed to further supporting and assisting the Western Balkan partners in their continued reform efforts linked to the EU integration process – bilaterally, in the framework of the V4, and within the European Union. The overall pace of negotiations must match the progress in preparing for accession, including the fundamental principles on which the EU is founded. Progressive alignment of policies towards third countries and positions within international organisations with the Common Foreign and Security Policy is also of essence.

The V4 ministers emphasized the need for reinvigoration of the enlargement process, based on the revised enlargement methodology. The accession negotiations with both Albania and North Macedonia should start without further delay, in line with the Council decision of March 2020. The V4 welcomed the holding of political intergovernmental conferences with Montenegro and Serbia on June 22 and expressed support for concrete progress in the negotiations with both countries in the near future.

The V4 Ministers of Foreign Affairs underscored the assistance provided by the EU and its Member States to the Western Balkans in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, expressed their commitment to supporting the green and digital transformation of the region and emphasized the role of the EU's Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans from the perspective of the post-pandemic recovery.

Taking into consideration the common European future of the current EU Member States and the Western Balkans, the V4 ministers expressed their support for including the Western Balkan partners in the framework of the Conference on the Future of Europe. They underlined the need for effective communication on the benefits of the enlargement process for the candidate countries and its citizens as well as for countering disinformation.

The V4 ministers welcomed the briefings by the Executive Directors of the International Visegrad Fund and the Western Balkans Fund on the cooperation between the two institutions

during the past year and on projects carried out in the Western Balkans [as well as the signing in Rogalin of a Memorandum of Understanding on further technical assistance to the WBF]. The ministers reaffirmed their commitment to supporting the Western Balkans Fund and its activities aimed at strengthening regional cooperation, mutual understanding and good neighbourly relations, based on the successful model of the International Visegrad Fund. They expressed their readiness to extend the V4 Start-up Force program to the Western Balkans and facilitate the sharing of the V4 think tank network expertise (Think Visegrad) with the Western Balkan partners (Think Balkans).