

STATEMENT OF THE PRIME MINISTERS OF THE VISEGRAD COUNTRIES PUBLISHED BY THE PRESIDENCY IN OFFICE - BUDAPEST, FEBRUARY 15, 2002

The Prime Ministers of the Visegrad countries have assessed the Common Financial Framework issued on 30 January 2002 by the European Commission. They consider that this is an important step in accordance with the road map in the accession process. They welcome that the proposed Common Financial Framework includes the introduction of the direct payments in agriculture, thereby recognising that the farmers of the candidate countries are entitled to these benefits which are an integral part of the Common Agricultural Policy. They also note that the document contains other interesting elements that might facilitate further negotiations.

It is the position of the Prime Ministers that the structural and cohesion policy and the agricultural policy of the European Union should be extended upon accession to the candidate countries and this applies to all elements of these policies. In the field of structural and cohesion policy, the candidate countries should receive the same per capita support which is granted to the countries or regions of the European Union that are at a similar level of economic development. The candidate countries and their farmers are entitled to the support defined by the *acquis communautaire* on the Common Agricultural Policy.

The Prime Ministers regret that the overall proposal of the European Commission is quite far away from their negotiating positions and their legitimate expectations. The transitional periods proposed are not justified and are not in line with the requirement of fair and even competitive conditions in the Single Market. The Prime Ministers find it particularly unfounded that the transitional period for direct payments goes beyond the expiration of the present financial framework and thus prejudices the conditions in the next financial framework starting from 1 January 2007. Other issues, in particular the size of the production quotas and reference periods, also raise concerns.

The Prime Ministers stress the need of comprehensive and substantive negotiations, taking into account all political, economic and social repercussions of these issues and not losing sight of the historic importance of starting the enlargement. The Prime Ministers emphasise the joint responsibility of the EU and the Visegrad countries to achieve a mutually acceptable outcome and to conclude successfully the accession negotiations by the end of 2002 despite the substantial differences between their positions and that of the European Commission.

The Prime Ministers will have regular consultations on these issues.

[Quelle: <http://www.kum.hu/kulugy>]