

**COMMON DECLARATION OF THE MINISTERS OF AGRICULTURE  
OF THE VISEGRAD GROUP AND BULGARIA, ROMANIA AND SLOVENIA**

**for the stronger inclusion of the research potential of the Central and Eastern European (EU-13) countries into the implementation of projects within the Horizon 2020 in the field of agriculture, including the bioeconomy.**

The European Commission is currently preparing the Work Programme 2018 -2020 under the Horizon 2020 Societal Challenge 2 (*Food security, sustainable agriculture and forestry, marine, maritime and inland water research and the bioeconomy*). At the same time, the European Commission completed the work related to the *Long-term EU strategy in the field of agricultural research and innovation* that, in accordance with the European Commission information, should provide the guidelines and the contribution to the programming of the Horizon 2020 for the years 2018-2020.

An analysis of the existing participation of the EU-13 countries in the Horizon 2020 still indicates, that the widening participation principle of the present programming period has not been reached yet. The EU-13 countries account for less than 5% of the total budget spent under the Horizon 2020 until now.

The Ministers of Agriculture of the Visegrad Group and of Bulgaria, Romania and Slovenia:

APPRECIATE the efforts undertaken by the European Commission. However UNDERLINE that, despite the increasing budget for the programme and structural changes implemented so far (widening package, simplification of measures, actions towards synergies with ESIF instruments), low participation of the EU-13 countries is still persistent.

BELIEVE that in case of many research areas the EU-13 countries perspective is part of the scientific excellence and without EU-13 countries knowledge and involvement the basic principle of scientific excellence is seriously constraint.

UNDERLINE a need to find effective solutions to ensure a stronger involvement of the research needs and potential of the Central and Eastern European countries in co-creating and functioning of the European Research Area (ERA) in the field of agriculture, bioeconomy and rural areas.

COMMITTED to work together and to contribute to the further development of the European Research Area by organizing joint programming exercises. The support from all the member states and the European Commission is crucial. In the frame of the already existing tools, like research and innovation actions, collaborative and support actions, pilot and flagship initiatives, joint programming initiatives should be found solutions to focus the common efforts for a successful co-construction.

REQUEST the European Commission to take urgent measures aimed at the stronger use of the research potential of all Member countries in the process of building the single European Research Area (ERA).

CALL ON the European Commission to introduce instruments reducing disproportions in participation of the EU-13 countries in the Horizon 2020 Programme, *inter alia*, by:

- considering the needs and possibilities of the EU-13 countries, related to the climatic and social specificity of the agri-food, bioeconomy and rural areas of the EU-13 countries;
- flagging certain topics as requiring research scope from across all the macro-regions of the EU;
- supporting the macro-regional cooperation actions, e.g. the BIOEAST Initiative;
- enhancing incentives for new participants;
- introducing research and innovation actions, coordination and support actions and joint programme initiatives for the EU-13 countries in the order to increase their activity in creating and functioning of the European Research Area (ERA);
- strengthening the efforts foreseen in the Horizon 2020 regulations i.e. balance between small and large projects and geographical balance of evaluators;
- considering further simplification of rules within the Horizon 2020, including remuneration schemes for participants.

PROPOSE to introduce into the Work Programme 2018-2020 under the Horizon 2020 Societal Challenge 2 the common developed proposals of the topics in order to increase the use of the research potential of the Central and Eastern European countries. Joint proposals of the topics (attached) have been formulated in the following thematic areas:

- (i) development of regional, national and European Bioeconomy in the Central and Eastern European countries,
- (ii) sustainable agri-food sector,
- (iii) rural renaissance.

Warsaw, 26.10.2016

On behalf of

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Krzysztof Jurgiel, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development
- Czech Republic:   
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Jiří Šír, Deputy Minister of Agriculture
- Hungary:   
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Sándor Fazekas, Minister of Agriculture
- Slovakia:   
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Gabriela Matečná, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development
- Bulgaria:   
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Vassil Groudev, Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Food
- Romania:   
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Teodor Mihalcea, State Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
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Tanja Strniša, State Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food