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Dear Chairs,

The Commission would like to thank the the Országgyűlés, the Národná rada, the Poslanecká sněmovna, the Senát, the Sejm and the Senat for the Conclusions regarding the Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021-2027 and Strategic Agenda 2019-2024, regarding the regional and interregional infrastructure projects and the perspective of cross-border tourism.

The Commission shares the view that the future Multiannual Financial Framework should be based on a comprehensive and balanced agreement representing the interests of all the actors. The Commission especially welcomes the Chambers' support for taking action against climate change. To implement the Paris Agreement and the commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the Commission proposed to raise the level of ambition for climate mainstreaming across all European Union programmes, with a target of at least 25% of European Union expenditure contributing to climate objectives.

The Commission notes the Chambers' special support to cohesion policy and common agricultural policy. The Commission would like to underline that in its proposal for an ambitious, but still realistic financial framework, cohesion policy was allocated EUR 331 billion in 2018 prices, which makes it the main investment policy of the European Union and a major driver of job creation, sustainable growth and innovation in the European regions. While the Commission has proposed a review of pre-allocated national envelopes in 2024, based on most recent statistics and Gross Domestic Product developments, the maximum net effect would be limited to EUR 4 billion and be spread over the years 2025-2027. Such adjustment aims at reallocating resources following changes in the socio-economic situations in the Member States, as it was the case in 2017 in the current Multiannual Financial Framework.

As regards the common agricultural policy, the Commission has tabled a fair proposal for agriculture and European farmers. It reflects the Commission's commitment to a strong, well-funded common agricultural policy and recognises the continuing importance of direct payments as an essential form of income support. For the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund it reflects also the commitment to equity between Member States and to a more balanced distribution of direct support. For the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, the Commission has not proposed to reduce support to rural areas, but a rebalancing of the European Union and Member States' financing with the aim of maintaining an adequate level of support to rural areas.

The Commission appreciates that the Visegrád Group Parliaments share the view that the future Multiannual Financial Framework has to be adopted in a timely manner in order to allow for a smooth transition between the 2014-2020 and the 2021-2027 programming periods. This would enable speedy disbursement of financing to all future beneficiaries, be it European Union citizens, small and medium enterprises or public authorities.

The Commission is pleased to have this opportunity to provide some clarifications regarding its proposal and trusts that these will allay the Visegrád Group Parliaments' concerns. The Commission fully supports the opinion that improving accessibility and connectivity in regions of Central Europe still creates a challenge on their development paths. Therefore, considerable funding from the European Regional Development Fund, Cohesion Fund and Connecting Europe Facility was proposed with the main aim to close the gaps in the TEN-T network, to remove bottlenecks and eliminate technical barriers that exist between the transport networks of European Union Member States and European Union regions. As proposed by the Commission, building on the successful

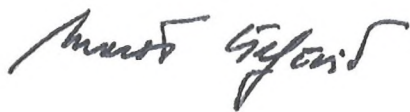
approach of the 2014-2020 programming period, EUR 10 billion of the Cohesion Fund should be transferred to the Connecting Europe Facility for that purpose. The Commission is fully convinced that the Visegrád Group Countries will effectively benefit from those funding opportunities in the 2021-2027 period.

Furthermore, the Commission agrees that there is a significant European value added in the cross-border projects in the tourism sector when developed in a sustainable way. They contribute not only to better integration of local communities on both sides of the border but they have a positive impact on regional Gross Domestic Products and create job market opportunities. In this way, economic, social and territorial cohesion is being delivered thanks to European funds. The Commission proposed to continue support to the cross-border projects in the Interreg programmes. Additionally, local initiatives in the sustainable tourism sector, based on the integrated strategies agreed with the active engagement of local communities will be supported through territorial tools under policy objective 5 – “a Europe closer to citizens”. The points made above are based on the proposals presented by the Commission in May 2018.

Finally, the Commission notes the call to manage budgetary means economically. The Commission also highlights its commitment to promote a European Union budget that delivers results, that is well managed and protected against errors and fraud. The Commission implements the Union’s budget, including its operating expenditure, according to the principle of sound financial management enshrined in the Financial Regulation. This can explain the recourse to outsourcing some tasks in order to deliver in the most economic, efficient and effective way.

The Commission hopes that the clarifications provided in this reply address the issues raised by the Országgyűlés, the Národná rada, the Poslanecká sněmovna, the Senát, the Sejm and the Senat and looks forward to continuing the political dialogue in the future.

Yours faithfully,



*Maroš Šefčovič
Vice-President*



*Elisa Ferreira
Member of the Commission*