

Joint statement
from the Ministers of State for European Affairs
of the Czech Republic and of France
(November, 28th 2019)

1- The Czech Republic and France are committed to build a strong, sovereign and united Europe and work together at the European level to promote our shared priorities. This cooperation is framed by our strategic partnership and is rooted in strong historical and bilateral ties, as recalled in 2018 by the centenary celebrations of the creation of Czechoslovakia and the visits of Prime Minister Andrej Babiš to France and President Emmanuel Macron to Prague.

2- A year after these visits and as the European Union is set on a new ambitious programme, **the French Minister of State for European Affairs, Ms Amélie de Montchalin, visited Prague on 28 and 29 November 2019 at the invitation of Ms Milena Hrdinková, Czech State Secretary for European Affairs,** to hold in-depths talks on the future of the European Union. These talks highlighted many issues of common interest where the Czech Republic and France want to work more closely together:

a) **Climate change is at the top of European citizens' concerns, especially young people.** Milena Hrdinková and Amélie de Montchalin stressed the need for the European Union to be at the forefront of the fight against climate change, with the objective of stepping up efforts to reduce European Union's greenhouse gas emissions and achieve carbon neutrality.

To this end, the European Union must combine all relevant policies and instruments in a coherent manner while ensuring a just and socially fair transition. The two ministers therefore agreed to hold closer talks to prepare for the European discussions on the European Green Deal and the Just Transition Fund. They highlighted the need to facilitate the transition by ensuring adequate financial resources through EU policies – including dedicated instruments that are flexible and easy to use – as well as public and private investments and recalled that nuclear energy, alongside renewable energy, must play a role in achieving low-emission energy mixes. We will work together to promote this view at the European level.

Moreover, the Czech Republic and France encourage the Commission to propose a carbon inclusion mechanism at the borders of the European Union to help combat carbon leakage, in a manner consistent with WTO rules and accompanied by a thorough impact assessment. Our two countries will cooperate on the technical groundwork.

b) **The two Ministers agreed that the European Union's budget must be a political instrument to reach our collective goals,** especially as set out in the new strategic agenda. Regarding the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), the Czech Republic and France therefore reject the opposition between traditional policies and new priorities. Strong, sovereign, safe and prosperous Europe requires adequate level of financing for the new challenges as well as existing Treaty-based policies with clear European added value,

specifically the Cohesion Policy, and the Common Agricultural Policy whose budget must be kept at the current EU-27 level.

Both our countries also consider that the way the budget is financed must be modernised and made consistent with our shared objectives. **In particular, we support the abolition of all rebates.** We will hold bilateral technical work to explore different options on new own resources and discuss a way forward.

Furthermore, the budget must also reflect our shared commitments, including by introducing stronger conditionalities in particular aimed at protecting the EU budget against generalised rule of law deficiencies.

c) **Economic, social, territorial cohesion and convergence is a key promise of the European Union to the Europeans.** Major progress has been achieved, thanks in particular to the Single Market, one of our greatest assets and which we are committed to continue to deepen and to strengthen. This also means ensuring fair competition within the EU, promoting market access, fighting against unfair practices, ensuring fair and effective taxation as well as adequate social protection and inclusive labour market. In particular, the European Pillar of Social Rights should be implemented at EU and Member State level, which would help fight against social exclusion.

An integrated approach also requires an industrial policy fit for the future. The Czech Republic and France call for increased efforts to ensure the technological autonomy of the European Union, in particular through integrated value chains in our strategic sectors inspired by the European Battery Alliance model. Communication infrastructures that are safe, secure and stable are the cornerstone of our societies, with 5G networks to become building blocks of a new digital environment.

The two Ministers emphasised their support for the Digital Single Market, including in the area of Artificial Intelligence and new technologies, to provide a sustainable environment for European digital companies. In this context, the Czech Republic and France are at the forefront of the endeavour to ensure a fair and sustainable digital taxation and continue to support actively the efforts for reaching a global solution at the OECD level.

The two Ministers also recalled their support for European space policy and for the European Global Navigation Satellite Systems Agency (GSA), headquartered in Prague, which exemplifies a great European success and a source of European sovereignty, innovation, industrial cooperation and job creation.

d) **The two Ministers highlighted their shared ambition for a European Union that ensures protection for its citizens.** They reiterated the will of both governments to continue working together to strengthen **European defence and strategic autonomy**, as well as European space policy, and welcomed the success of our defence partnership in both its capability and operational aspects.

The two Ministers agreed on the need for an appropriate and sustainable **European response to the migratory challenges**, based on a comprehensive approach to migration which combines effective control of the EU's external borders, increased cooperation with countries of origin and transit, further convergence of national asylum systems, fight against illegal migration and human trafficking and effective return policy. They support the proper functioning of the Schengen Area and a reform of the Common European Asylum System.

3- The two Ministers also reviewed the implementation of our strategic partnership, particularly with respect to education, language and culture. Our cooperation in these fields will be marked in 2020 by the centenary of the Institut Français in Prague and the Czech

section in Dijon in 2020, and will benefit from closer ties between the Pompidou Museum and the National Gallery of Prague. Our academic cooperation is also excellent and is reflected in European university projects, such as the “4 EU+” consortium based around the Sorbonne University and Charles University. Finally, the Czech Republic and France are committed to strengthening European initiatives to protect cultural heritage.

4- On all these topics, Milena Hrdinková and Amélie de Montchalin agreed to increase cooperation between our two countries, with the goal of translating our shared priorities into tangible results that meet citizens’ expectations. In particular, we will coordinate closely ahead of key European discussions and in view of the French and Czech Presidencies of the Council of the European Union in 2022. We will also contribute actively to the Conference on the Future of Europe, in order to make the functioning of the EU more effective, build more tangible and reactive European policies and bring Europe closer to its citizens.

The European cooperation between the Czech Republic and France also contributes to reinforcing the Union’s cohesion. In a year that marks the 30th anniversary of the 1989 Velvet Revolution and the events that enabled the reunification of Europe, the Czech Republic and France reiterate their strong rejection of divisions and their shared commitment to European unity.