

---

## AUSTRIA AND V4 AGREE ON EVERYTHING BUT NUCLEAR

-

17.01.2020

---

EurActiv (17 January 2020)

The leaders of the V4 group met on Thursday (16 January) in Prague's renovated national museum to discuss migration, border security, competitiveness, enlargement and climate. The newly appointed Austrian chancellor Sebastian Kurz, also in attendance, said he wanted to fight the gaps between Western and Eastern Europe.

We want to live in a diverse Europe, that is yet unified when it comes to the main goals, said Kurz after meeting Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in Brussels on Tuesday (12 January).

Kurz emphasised that the V4 as a group are the second most important partner for Austria after Germany, but admitted that his country, a net contributor to the bloc's budget, has a different point of view from the Visegrád partners when it comes to the distribution of European funds.

In the context of talks on the future EU budget for 2021-2027, Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia are members of the so-called Friends of cohesion group, while Austria and other rich countries are members of the so-called group of frugal countries.

It is very important for Austria not to support nuclear energy but the funds should be allocated on development of renewable energy sources, said Kurz.

I respect Austria's efforts with respect to the use of nuclear energy, said Slovak Prime Minister Peter Pellegrini, but maintained that member states of the EU should have a right to their own energy mix.

The Austrian position is set to prevail. The bloc's cohesion chief Elisa Ferreira revealed on Tuesday (14 January) that nuclear energy is excluded from the Just Transition Mechanism, the key financial component of the European Green Deal that proposes to make the EU climate neutral by 2050.

### Nuclear 'excluded' from EU's new Just Transition Fund

The EU's regional policy Commissioner Elisa Ferreira revealed on Tuesday (14 January) details of the €555 billion Just Transition Mechanism, a key financial component of the European Green Deal that should make the bloc climate neutral by 2050.

Hungarians and Slovaks are currently building new reactors to enlarge their existing power plants, a sore spot for the Austrian government that has previously pledged to fight the construction of new nuclear facilities in neighbouring countries with all available political and legal means.

It is a big leap forward, it is a success, said Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, on the decision to allocate the upper limit of 100 billion to coal-dependent Poland under a proposal sent to national governments on Wednesday (15 January).

However, Austrias position on nuclear energy has often been criticised as hypocritical. Since Austria passed a law banning the importation of nuclear electricity in 2015 it has claimed to be 100% nuclear-free. But a substantial part of the electricity it imports and consumes is still of indisputably nuclear origin.

There was more agreement between Kurz and the Visegrád group on migration and border protection.

Pellegrini proposed the suspension of international and development aid to countries not willing to take back the illegal migrants from the EU member states.

Austria will remain an important security partner for us, because when it comes to migration, we are walking in the same shoes, said Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, pointing out that migrants entering Hungary continue on to Austria.

Orbán also suggested that Czech PM Andrej Babiš, as current president of the V4, proposed inviting the Western Balkan countries to the conference on the Future of Europe, set to be held this spring.

Although not having joined yet, they are directly concerned by the issue, said Orbán.

[Edited by Georgi Gotev. Zuzana Gabrižová contributed to this article]

---

Kaynak/Source: