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Press release | 05.02.2020

Commission's enlargement proposals on Western Balkans

Quotes from Viola von Cramon MEP & Reinhard Bütikofer MEP

The European Commission has just presented its 'Communication on the Enlargement Methodology' to the Foreign Affairs Committee of the European Parliament, aimed at updating the EU accession process. This follows on from French President Macron's veto late last year of North Macedonia and Albania for accession talks, despite significant progress towards European integration in both countries.

Viola von Cramon MEP, Greens/EFA rapporteur on Kosovo, comments:

"We welcome the proposals as they are in-line with the Thessaloniki commitments, strengthen a merit-based approach and reward a higher pace of reform with increased access to EU policies and funds. However, it is concerning that these proposals suggest the direct contribution of Member States' experts to the Commission's annual progress reports. Only long-standing Commission experts should work on these technical reports to avoid politicising sensitive areas such as the rule of law, media freedom and democracy."

"The Commission has not been clear on the role of the European Green Deal in these proposals and this is a wasted opportunity to support accession and candidate countries in their path toward the green transition. All countries in the Western Balkans are European and those who meet the standards should be able to start the accession negotiations to take their rightful place at the heart of the EU. The package the Commissioner has offered is good and the mandate is clear, now the Commission needs to deliver."

Reinhard Bütikofer MEP, Foreign Affairs Coordinator for the Greens/EFA group, comments:

"There is a chance it seems, that there will be a new dynamic in the EU's enlargement policy. Hopefully that will result in finally opening accession talks with both North Macedonia and Albania during the Croatian presidency. The new methodology for enlargement negotiations that the Commission proposes will only be acceptable if it would be combined with a removal of the vetoes, in particular from Paris, that have so far frustrated these two countries and the wider Western Balkans."

"Politicising the accession policy will not be without risk because that might encourage temptations to play into nationalist and xenophobic, domestic sentiments. It is a simple fact that enlargement will never fly if

European policymakers cannot convince European citizens of our shared responsibility in that regard and of the benefits that the inclusion of the Western Balkan countries in the European family of nations holds for all of the EU."

More:
The Greens/EFA group are calling for flexibility in the ongoing negotiations with Serbia and Montenegro.
The Greens/EFA group support the Commission proposals for the idea of clustering negotiation chapters, while allowing parallel negotiations on the different clusters.
According to the Greens/EFA group, it is problematic that the Commission is calling for a normalisation agreement between Serbia and Kosovo, as the goal of the dialogue should be the full recognition of Kosovo.

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