Press release | 26.11.2009

Enlargement/Western Balkans

EU Parliament victory for supporters of EU enlargement

The European Parliament today adopted a resolution on the EU's enlargement strategy in the Western Balkans. **Ulrike Lunacek** and **Franziska Brantner**, members of the Greens/EFA Group and EP Delegation to the region, commented:

"We are very pleased that the European Parliament has reaffirmed the EU's strong commitment to future EU membership of Western Balkan states in its resolution today. This sends a strong message to the few remaining opponents of EU enlargement in this region.

Conservatives and Social Democrats voted to fix a mid-2010 timeframe to conclude negotiations with Croatia. This shows how little the EP's two largest groups have learned from the accession debacles with Bulgaria and Romania. It is entirely irresponsible to promise Croatia the successful conclusion of negotiations in mid-2010 at this point in time, given that major justice sector reforms are still outstanding. We strongly support the rapid accession of Croatia but by including a final date in the resolution, the EP has let slip an important lever to incentivise the Croatian government to implement judicial reform swiftly.

We regret that the visa liberalisation programme will only come into force on 19th December 2009 for Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, while visa-free travel for Bosnians and Albanians is merely mentioned as a prospect in mid-2010.

We welcome that the EP decided to initiate a visa dialogue with Kosovo aimed at visa liberalisation. Given the deplorable situation of over 12,000 Roma people, who are currently being deported from EU member states to Kosovo, it is irresponsible that Parliament rejected our amendment on this issue. We call on all member states to refrain from deportations to Kosovo until a safe return can be guaranteed.

Furthermore, the resolution states that all members shall intensify their efforts to protect their citizens from discrimination and violence, particularly against women, ethnic or sexual minorities."

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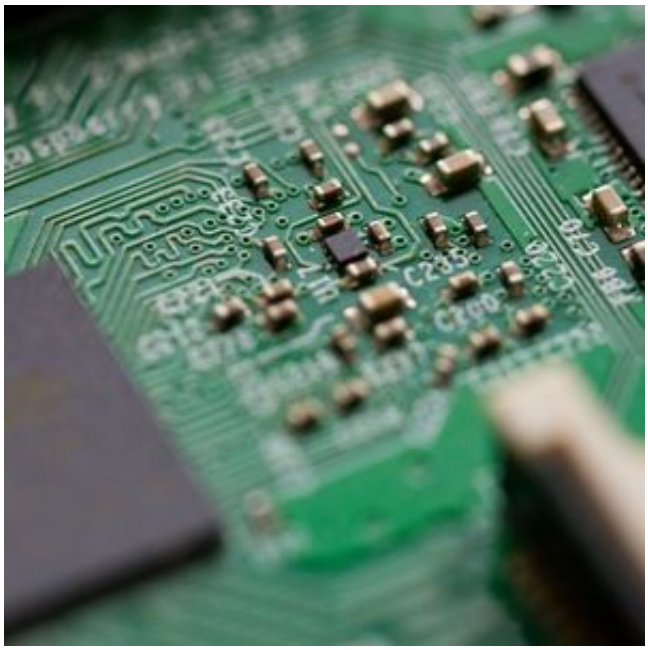


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