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Press release | 14.10.2009

Enlargement

Greens urge further EU efforts and Western Balkan progress towards European integration

Today, the European Commission published progress reports on the progress of Western Balkan countries towards EU accession. The Greens/EFA Group is calling on the EU to step up its efforts towards the European integration of the region.

Commenting on the Croatia report, **Franziska Brantner** – German Green MEP and Greens/EFA shadow rapporteur for the country – said:

"I welcome the Commission's progress report and the raft of measures it proposes for Croatia. Critical progress still needs to be made in the justice sector. Organised crime must be fought in a more decisive and proven manner and urgently needed reforms must be concluded in the justice system. Trials against suspected war criminals must proceed without delay. The return of refugees and protection of minority rights must be strictly enforced. Real change needs to be seen on the ground.

Ulrike Lunacek, Austrian Green MEP and European Parliament rapporteur for Kosovo, commented on the Commission's Kosovo progress report

"I welcome the European perspective of the report, which signals the right direction for the region. I also welcome that discussions on visa liberalisation are at last opening up after long-term efforts in this area, but a firm date to begin negotiations needs to be set.

The report's criticisms are as important as its positive points. I welcome that demands have been underlined for a smooth-running public administration, for an incorrupt justice system and for freedom of the press. It is positive that the measures can be introduced in the areas of visa, environment, SME investment and training and education, even if Kosovo has not yet been recognised by all EU member states. The EU must improve its engagement in tackling the dramatic environmental situation in Kosovo.

The Commission's report is weak on readmission agreements, which neglect to take into account the continuing precarious situation of Roma and young women."

Dutch Green MEP **Marije Cornelissen**, member of the European Parliament delegation to several Western Balkans countries, commented:

"We welcome that the EU Commission has finally given a green light to accession talks with Macedonia. Despite doubts right until the last minute, the Greeks agreed to start talks even though the long-running name dispute is yet to be resolved. Macedonia has earned this decision, making huge

progress in many areas and setting an example to other countries in the region. The decision to open accession talks should be seen as a green light to continue its reforms.

We are however deeply concerned about the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which has made no progress at all in most areas due to the political stalemate in the country. We hope that the fresh negotiations will end this situation, but we are concerned that the EU apparently has no Plan B if they fail. We are saddened that Bosnia-Herzegovina appears to be drifting further behind on the course to European integration."

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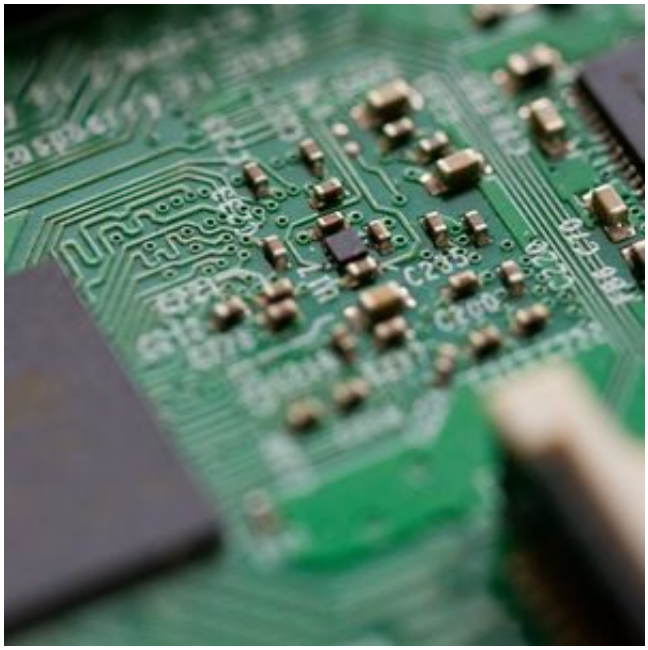


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