Press release | 12.10.2011

EU-Balkans

Serbia must normalise relations with Kosovo to move closer to EU

The European Commission today presented its enlargement package, including the recommendation to grant EU candidate status to Serbia on the "understanding that Serbia re-engages in the dialogue with Kosovo" and implements agreements already reached. Membership negotiations should not be started, according to the Commission, until Serbia has achieved significant progress in normalising its relations with Kosovo. Commenting on the proposals, Green foreign affairs spokesperson **Franziska Brantner** said:

"Opening membership negotiations with Serbia at this juncture would have sent a totally wrong signal, with heightened tensions between Serbia and Kosovo. The Commission is, however, correct to recognise the progress made by Serbia - in terms of internal reforms and delivering key war criminals to The Hague - by recommending candidate status. Failure to do so would have played into the hands of those in Serbia who want to derail its EU destiny. The Commission has struck the right balance by linking its recommendation for candidate status with a clear message that Serbia must re-engage in the dialogue with Kosovo and implement agreements already reached with Pristina without delay.

"Serbia must now normalise its relations with Kosovo and achieve concrete progress in this field as a precursor to the opening of accession negotiations. However, there are also other areas that it needs to address and the recent unacceptable cancellation of Belgrade's gay pride parade is a case in point."

Green foreign affairs spokesperson and EP draftsperson/rapporteur for Kosovo **Ulrike Lunacek** added:

"The EU must do more to give Kosovo a real EU perspective, such as through a trade agreement. An important step in this regard would be setting out not just a visa dialogue but a roadmap for visa liberalisation. Failing to give Kosovo a perspective for the travel freedoms enjoyed everywhere else in the region is an unacceptable situation that needs to be ended.

"The recommendation to open membership negotiations with Montenegro is a welcome development. Montenegro has made real progress but it must now continue to do so, notably in terms of implementing legislation and fighting corruption and organised crime, especially in the area of public procurement."

"The Greens support the general new approach proposed by the Commission for the negotiating chapters on judiciary and fundamental rights and justice, freedom and security."

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Ulrike Lunacek

EP Vice-President, Member

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