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Press release | 16.10.2013

EU enlargement

Enlargement fatigue must be overcome

The European Commission today presented its enlargement strategy and progress reports on the EU candidate countries. The Greens gave a broad welcome to the package but urged EU member states to bring new impetus to the enlargement process. Commenting on the overall package, Green foreign affairs spokesperson **Ulrike Lunacek** said:

"We need to overcome enlargement fatigue. EU enlargement remains in the interest of both the EU and the candidate countries. EU governments need to make the case for the enlargement process more than ever. The Commission must continue to be vigilant in monitoring accession criteria and progress along the accession path must depend on candidate countries fulfilling these criteria."

Commenting on Kosovo and Montenegro, **Ulrike Lunacek** (who is the EP's draftsperson for Kosovo) said:

"This year's landmark Belgrade-Pristina agreement represents a fundamental change in relations between the two sides. It is a success for EU soft power and has paved the way for further EU integration of both countries. Renewed security incidents in northern Kosovo, ahead of municipal elections in November, show efforts from all sides are still needed. By formally opening negotiations for a Stabilisation and Association Agreement this month the Commission is giving Kosovo a real and palpable accession perspective. All agreements reached between Belgrade and Pristina must continue to be implemented and there is a need for constructively engagement on all issues, with the facilitation of the EU.

"Montenegro has already achieved much but corruption is still widespread, with the political elite, as well as foreign investors, deeply involved. We fully support the Commission's focus on the implementation of reforms on the rule of law and believe this must be linked to measures to combat corruption and organised crime."

Commenting on Serbia, Albania, Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, Green foreign affairs spokesperson **Marije Cornelissen** added:

"Accession talks with Serbia are planned to start by January 2014 but, before this happens, it is imperative that the Serbian government first adopts a credible action plan against violent hooligan groups and their supporters within the state and the business sector. Last September, Belgrade's gay pride parade was banned for the third year in a row by the authorities, citing a threat to public safety from right-wing hooligans.

"We welcome the proposal to open negotiations with Albania, conditional on further reforms. Seeing how the parliamentary process was hampered by infighting the past decade, we need to closely monitor the progress on reform.

"It is highly embarrassing that for the fifth year in a row, the Commission has had to recommend opening of negotiations with Macedonia, because the Greek government continues to block this in Council. A solution to the name issue must be found, but this has nothing to do with the accession process. Meanwhile, the support for reform in Macedonia is dwindling. Citizens are getting fed up.

"The new approach towards Bosnia-Herzegovina is most welcome. After years and years of offering carrots to break the political stalemate, and failing dismally, it is time to start using the stick."

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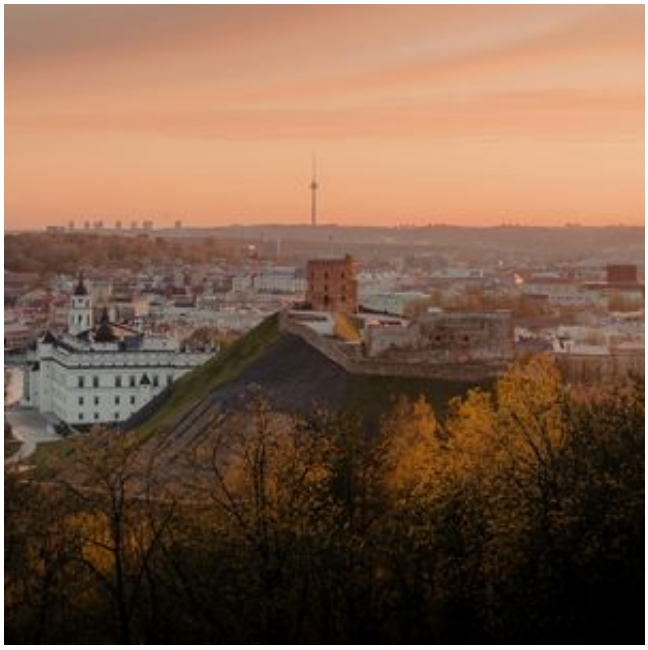
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Ulrike Lunacek

EP Vice-President, Member

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