Press release | 09.11.2010

EU enlargement

Welcome progress in western Balkan accession countries a major positive for Europe as a whole

The European Commission today presented its EU enlargement package 2010, including 'progress reports' on the EU accession countries and assessments of two membership applications. Commenting on the package and the progress of the western Balkan countries, Greens/EFA foreign affairs spokesperson and EP rapporteur on Kosovo **Ulrike Lunacek** said:

"While it is clear that major problems remain - notably as regards organised crime, corruption and the rule of law - the clear message from all these reports is that the western Balkan EU accession countries are continuing to make significant political and social progress. The destiny of the western Balkan countries lies within the European Union and we should welcome the progress they are making in implementing reforms to this end.

"It is crucial that the growing enlargement fatigue within the EU does not translate into a reform fatigue in the western Balkan accession countries. The EU must continue to offer incentives to reform along the path to ultimate EU membership. The example of Croatia clearly shows that the efforts of individual countries, as well as a collective EU effort, are worth it. However, the accession countries must clearly step up their efforts to tackle corruption and organised crime.

"As EP draftsperson (rappoteur) for Kosovo, it is encouraging to see the significant progress being highlighted in the areas of democratic reforms and decentralisation. Kosovo's efforts in judicial reform have also gained due recognition. From the EU end, it is now all the more urgent to recognise this progress.One important step in this regard would be to put an end to Kosovo's isolation, as the last remaining exception to the rule of the inclusion of Balkan countries in the EU's visa-free travel scheme. The Commission must waste no time in resolving this anomaly."

Commenting on the progress reports of Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, Dutch Green MEP **Marije Cornelissen** said:

"Clearly the issue of Serbia's cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) remains a key concern and we welcome that the Commission has stressed the need for Serbia to fully co-operate with the tribunal. This means arresting Ratko Mladi? and Goran Had?i? for the crimes committed during the war. While there has been some progress on the ground as regards anti-discrimination - notably this year's gay pride parade in Belgrade - there is clearly a need to make more progress in this area both in terms of institutions and policy. Concerns also remain with regard to the treatment of ethnic minorities and the position of women and children. Further measures to end to all discrimination are a key condition for EU membership.

"Without help or due external pressure Bosnia will not be able to adopt the necessary constitutional and institutional reforms. This is the reason why Bosnia-Herzegovina is the Balkan country that has made the least progress comparatively, notably in the areas of human rights and the protection of minorities, as well as judicial and public sector reform. This lack of progress is mirrored with regard to the economy. High representative Ashton must present a new convincing initiative in order to trigger a genuine reform process that can create the necessary momentum and pave the way for accession."

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Ulrike Lunacek

EP Vice-President, Member

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