Press release | 10.10.2012

Western Balkans

Crisis must not slow down EU enlargement process

The European Commission today presented its enlargement strategy and progress reports on the EU candidate countries. The Greens agree with the general line taken by the Commission, whilst urging EU member states not to succumb to enlargement fatigue amid the economic and political crisis within the EU.

Commenting on the enlargement strategy and Croatia and Serbia, Green foreign affairs co-spokesperson **Franziska Brantner** said:

"EU enlargement remains in the interest of both the European Union and the candidate countries. EU governments need to make the case for the enlargement process more than ever. One lesson from the Eurozone crisis is that the accession criteria must be strictly monitored by the Commission however, and progress along the accession process must depend on the candidate countries fulfilling these criteria. This applies notably also to Croatia, which must not slow down its reform process with EU accession in sight. Croatia must redouble its efforts in the fields of judicial reform, the fight against corruption and the domestic prosecution of war crimes.

"We welcome the decision by the Commission not to recommend a date for the start of accession talks with Serbia at this stage, as Belgrade has not yet sufficiently improved its relations with Kosovo. In particular, it has failed to fully implement the agreements concluded between Serbia and Kosovo under EU facilitation. The Serbian government's decision to ban the Pride Parade in Belgrade is also deeply regrettable. The Commission must closely monitor the protection of minority rights in Serbia and the wider region."

Commenting on Kosovo and Montenegro, Green foreign affairs co-spokesperson and EP draftsperson/rapporteur for Kosovo **Ulrike Lunacek** continued:

"The Commission is giving Kosovo a real and palpable accession perspective with the feasibility study for a Stabilisation and Association Agreement. EU member states should follow the Commission's proposal. However, Kosovo needs to increase the functioning of its state institutions and start delivering tangible results in the fight against corruption and organised crime, as well as in establishing rule of law for all its citizens. The promised electoral reforms need to be swiftly implemented.

"The situation in northern Kosovo remains a cause for serious concern: All Serbian parallel structures must be dismantled by Belgrade, and the Kosovar government must do more to reach out to the Serbs living there.

"Montenegro has already achieved much but corruption is still widespread, with the political elite as well as foreign investors being 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 Macedonia, Green foreign affairs co-spokesperson **Marije Cornelissen** added:

"For the fourth year in a row the Commission has recommended opening accession negotiations with Macedonia. The country has been on hold for far too long. It is unacceptable that one country can block the progress of another. The Council must now step up the pressure on Greece to remove its veto and allow the opening of accession negotiations."

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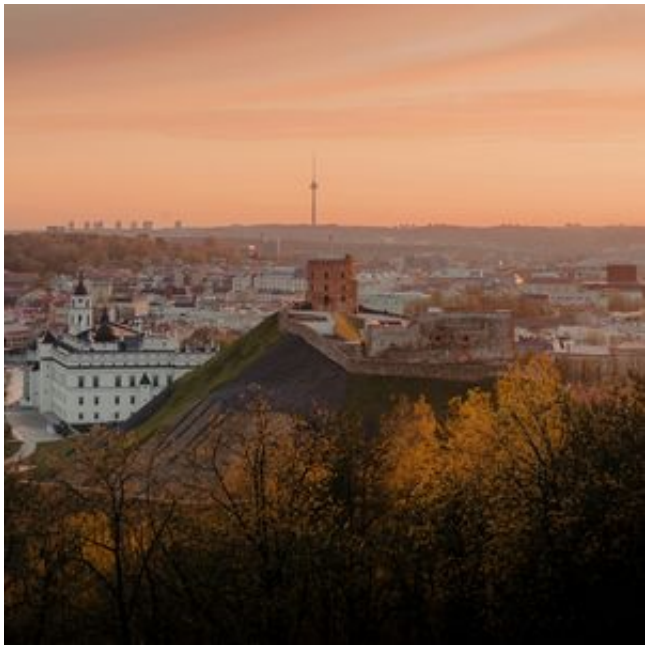
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Ulrike Lunacek

EP Vice-President, Member

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