

ROADMAP			
TITLE OF THE INITIATIVE	<b>Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on Enlargement</b> <i>(Exact full title to be identified)</i>		
LEAD DG – RESPONSIBLE UNIT – AP NUMBER	DG NEAR – A1 - 2015/NEAR/008	DATE OF ROADMAP	January 2016
LIKELY TYPE OF INITIATIVE	<b>Commission Communication</b>		
INDICATIVE PLANNING	<i>Autumn 2016</i>		
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	<a href="http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/countries/package/index_en.htm">http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/countries/package/index_en.htm</a>		
<b>This indicative roadmap is provided for information purposes only and can be subject to change. It does not prejudge the final decision of the Commission on whether this initiative will be pursued or on its final content and structure.</b>			

A. Context, Subsidiarity Check and Objectives
<p><b>Context</b></p> <p>The Copenhagen European Council of June 1993 stated that those candidate countries of Central and Eastern Europe who wish to do so shall become members of the Union if they meet the following conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities;</li> <li>• the existence of a functioning market economy, as well as the ability to cope with competitive pressures and market forces within the Union;</li> <li>• the ability to take on the obligations of membership, including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union.</li> </ul> <p>The same requirements apply to the countries of the Western Balkans and Turkey. The EU's association agreement with Turkey recognises Turkey's membership perspective, which has since led to candidate status in 1999, and the opening of accession negotiations in 2005.</p> <p>The Feira European Council (2000) explicitly recognised the Western Balkan countries' vocation as "potential candidates" and outlines "a clear prospect of accession" once the relevant conditions had been met. The "Thessaloniki Agenda for the Western Balkans" of June 2003 reconfirmed the "European perspective of the countries of the Western Balkans, as potential candidates". The Thessaloniki European Council enriched the EU's policy for the region, borrowing some elements of the enlargement method, and decided that the Stabilisation and Association Process "will constitute the overall framework for the European course of the Western Balkan countries, all the way to their future accession." The December 2006 European Council established the renewed consensus on enlargement. It is based on consolidation of commitments, conditionality, and communication, in combination with the EU's capacity to integrate new members. The European Council has since repeatedly reconfirmed this consensus.</p> <p>The Western Balkan countries must also meet the criteria specific to the regional approach as set out in the Conclusions of the General Affairs Council in April 1997 and in accordance with the Commission Communication of May 1999 on the establishment of the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP)<sup>1</sup>. These criteria include full co-operation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY)<sup>2</sup>, respect for human and minority rights, the creation of real opportunities for refugees and internally displaced persons to return and a visible commitment to regional cooperation.</p> <p>The Commission adopted on 10 November 2015 a Communication on a medium-term enlargement strategy and</p>

<sup>1</sup> COM (99) 235

<sup>2</sup> Cooperation with the ICTY is a legal obligation under UN Security Resolution 827 of 25 May 1999. It is also an obligation under the General Framework Agreement for Peace (the "Dayton/Paris Peace Agreement").

<p>accompanying country reports. This package has maintained the Commission's approach of addressing fundamentals first, which prioritises reforms related to the fundamental issues of rule of law, economic governance and competitiveness, and public administration reform (PAR).</p> <p>The 2015 package has also recalibrated the reporting methodology; the aim is to further enhance its credibility and quality and to increase transparency and comparability between the countries. Key elements are a stronger focus on the state of play (in addition to progress over the last year) and more harmonised reporting and assessment scales, which allow for directly comparing the countries in the key areas. 2015 has been a pilot year, introducing the new methodology to the fundamental areas (rule of law, PAR and economy) and chapters 5, 18 and 32, which are closely related to the fundamentals. The reports also provide clearer guidance and focused recommendations.</p>
<p><b>Issue</b></p> <p>In order to assess progress achieved by each country in preparing for accession, following the 1997 Luxembourg European Council, the Commission submits country reports to the Council and the European Parliament. The enlargement Communication and the accompanying reports serve as a basis for the Council to take decisions on the overall conduct of the negotiations.</p> <p>The 2016 Communication will take stock of the implementation of the Communication on a medium-term enlargement strategy adopted on 10 November 2015; the country reports will build on the recalibrated methodology introduced in this strategy and expand it to new areas; overall the package will provide a detailed assessment of the reform efforts in the enlargement countries.</p> <p>The impact of the package will be primarily on enlargement countries, EU institutions and the Member States.</p>
<p><b>Subsidiarity check</b></p> <p>Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union, together with its Article 2 sets the legal framework and conditions, as well as the respective roles of the EU institutions - amongst them the Commission - with regard to the application of European states to become new Member States of the Union.</p> <p>Enlargement of the EU can only be dealt with at EU level.</p>
<p><b>Main policy objectives</b></p> <p>This Commission Communication aims at allowing the European Council to define main strategic orientations on enlargement at the end of each year. The Commission has been invited by the Council to regularly report on the candidate and SAP countries.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>B. Option Mapping</b></p> <p>The Copenhagen criteria set out precise criteria (economic, political and regulatory or acquis-related) against which applications from non-member European countries are to be assessed by the Union on a case by case basis. The Treaty and the Copenhagen criteria thus effectively set the framework for the whole of the enlargement processes.</p> <p>Progress achieved by each country in its preparations for accession is regularly assessed by the Commission. The Commission submits its reports to the Council and to the European Parliament every year. The reports also serve as a basis for the Council to take decisions on the conduct of the negotiations.</p> <p>The annual reports are the main tool for the Commission to present its assessment to the Council and to the European Parliament of the progress in the reform process, including the implementation of the SAP in the region. The reports assess developments with respect to the political and economic criteria, as well as to the EU rules and policies. They also discuss some of the instruments of the process, such as the assistance and the trade measures. On the basis of this analysis, the Commission makes recommendations related to the countries and the region.</p>
<p><b>Proportionality check</b></p> <p>This initiative in its objective and form seeks to remain as simple as possible. It will be composed of one communication and a single set of country reports both building on an existing strategy. It does not create any financial or administrative cost for stakeholders. It remains focused on the enlargement policy which can only be dealt with at EU level.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>C. Data collection and Better Regulation instruments</b></p>
<p><b>Data collection</b></p> <p>The data available includes the Commission opinions on each country's application, the Commission annual country reports providing detailed analysis of where each country stands in the various areas.</p> <p>Ongoing monitoring is required to update assessments of the 2015 enlargement package. Information will be largely gathered internally. External support may be called upon for very specific areas. There will be extensive</p>

consultations with international organisations, EU Member States, national authorities in partner countries and civil society. EU delegations in enlargement countries will be actively involved in this information gathering process.
<b>Consultation approach</b>
The country reports draw on expertise available within the Commission services as a whole but also on information and opinions gathered from a range of external official and non-official sources.  The Commission receives contributions from the governments of the countries concerned, from the major international organisations and a number of NGOs which are active in the countries concerned and in the fields covered by the assessment (such as rule of law and public administration; fundamental rights; economic policy). The sources used also include Council deliberations and European Parliament reports and resolutions.
<b>Will an Implementation plan be established?</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
This initiative per se does not require any transposition.
<b>Will an impact assessment be carried out for this initiative and/or possible follow-up initiatives?</b>
No impact assessment will be carried out for this initiative as the accession negotiations follow a specific assessment and reporting procedure.  Regarding possible related initiatives, in line with the 2006 Council conclusions on enlargement, the Commission will provide assessments on key policy areas in the Commission's Opinion on a country's application for membership and in the course of accession negotiations.