

UKRAINE

Ukraine is a key strategic partner for the European Union. Our relationship is based on a joint commitment to democratic values and a rich common history. The EU shares a common border with Ukraine. And we all stand to benefit enormously through the further development of our joint political, economic and human potential.

As the European Union's Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy I believe strongly in the importance of further strengthening the relationship with Ukraine, in the context of the Eastern Partnership.

We are currently negotiating an ambitious and forward-looking Association Agreement with Ukraine. **This Agreement will help us to achieve the twin goals of political association and economic integration.** The Agreement includes as an integral part a deep and comprehensive free trade area – it is also a pioneering document in terms of the attention which Ukraine is giving to approximating its laws and standards to those of the EU. The DCFTA will in due course provide Ukraine with full access to the EU's market of 500 million consumers. It promises to double trade between the EU and Ukraine. It will also help anchor the domestic reform process so as to create a dynamic economy which can compete in both EU and global markets. I look forward to the conclusion of these negotiations early in my five-year mandate.

Easier travel to the EU is an issue of great importance both in the EU and in Ukraine. The Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements have already made an important contribution to easing travel to the EU, while jointly tackling risks of irregular migration. We expect to make further improvements in visa facilitation in the near future. We are also making good progress in our dialogue on the establishment of a visa free regime as a long term goal.

Reform is at the heart of our relationship. Ukraine faces many political and economic challenges. Decisive action on reform is urgently needed if Ukraine is to achieve the stability and prosperity its citizens hope for. Stabilization packages and anti-crisis measures are useful in navigating the economic crisis, but they do not provide a long-term solution: that can only be derived from a sound business and investment climate, generating growth, jobs and stable public revenue. This, in turn, requires a stable, democratic political environment.

As the largest donor to Ukraine we will continue to support Ukraine in implementing reform in concrete and practical ways. We will deepen our cooperation in key strategic areas such as energy, justice, transport and people to people contacts. We will work to develop an environment in which business and investment can thrive. We will support efforts to consolidate the process of democratisation in Ukraine and respect for human rights. In all of our activities we will maintain a close partnership with Ukraine's political leadership with civil society leaders, business and the mass media.

I believe in Ukraine's future as a strong, prosperous and democratic European state. As Ukraine makes genuine progress in carrying out internal reforms and adopting European standards, I am committed to work towards deeper and stronger EU Ukraine relations.