



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Brussels, 10.1.2012
C(2011) 44 final

Dear President,

I would like to thank you for sending to the Commission the Opinion of the Czech Senate on the joint European Commission and High Representative Communication on a new response to a changing neighbourhood {COM(2011)303}.

The Commission fully shares the Senate's view on the importance of differentiation and conditionality based on an evaluation of reform efforts. However, such conditionality makes it impossible to clearly specify in advance the funding allocations to each country and, in aggregate, to each region of our neighbourhood. Allocations should be guided by the principle of "more for more": more support for more reform. The Commission feels this should apply also to the period up until 2013.

As the Senate suggested, allocations for partner countries will thoroughly reflect the political situation in individual partner countries. If reforms stall or are non-existent, and if human rights and fundamental freedoms are not respected in a given country, funding for that country's government will be reduced or cancelled, as has been the case in Syria and Belarus. However, funding for civil society in that country will increase. In Belarus, the EU increased its support for civil society and students in the aftermath of the December 2010 events.

Additional funding for the Neighbourhood for the period until 2013, as proposed in the joint Communication, will result from the reallocation of resources within the ceiling of the current financial perspectives. It will not require any increase of Member States' contributions to the EU budget beyond the agreed 2007-2013 financial framework.

The EU should provide partners with incentives for reform not only in terms of financial support, but also in terms of market access and of improved mobility of people. This is what we call the "3Ms": Markets, Mobility and Money. Market access is essential for our partners' economic and social development. The EU should conclude Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas with all our partners as soon as the relevant conditions are fulfilled. Such Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas will pave the way for our partners to integrate gradually into the EU internal market.

Mr Milan ŠTĚCH
President of the Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic
Valdštejnské náměstí 17/4
CZ – 118 01 PRAHA

As for mobility of people, the Commission is seeking to negotiate new Mobility partnerships with neighbours both to the East and to the South. The EU should move forward on the road towards visa facilitation and visa liberalisation with its partners. Visa facilitation and liberalisation are not only incentives for governments to carry out reforms, but also tools to increase people-to-people contacts and to promote reform from the bottom up. That is why we need to improve mobility of people also with those partners that are lagging behind in reform, including Belarus.

These are all areas where the support of Member States and of national parliaments will be crucial. I look forward to our fruitful cooperation in the future whilst apologising for the undue delay in our response.

Yours faithfully,

*Maroš Šefčovič
Vice-President*