



## EUROPEAN COMMISSION

*Brussels, 27.9.2022*

*C(2022)6986 final*

*Dear President,*

*The Commission would like to thank the Senát for its Opinion on the Conclusions of the European Council held on 23-24 June 2022.*

*The European Council endorsed the recommendations of the Commission's Opinions on the applications for membership to the European Union of Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, adopted on 17 June 2022.*

*The Commission is pleased that the Senát agrees with the decision to grant candidate status to Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova and supports granting candidate status to Georgia, once the priorities set out in the Commission's Opinion are met. The European perspective now opens a clear path forward – anchored in the European Union values of freedom, democracy and rule of law – to all three applicants. The Commission will closely monitor and report on the fulfilment of the conditions specified in all three Opinions.*

*The path towards the EU is based on well-established criteria that applicant countries need to meet, which will require time and substantial effort. Any future decisions on the next steps in this context will continue to be in the hands of the EU Member States. In the meantime, we will further strengthen our bonds and deepen our partnerships with the three countries.*

*The European Union leaders also reconfirmed their full and unequivocal commitment to the European Union membership perspective of the Western Balkans. The European Council called for the acceleration of the accession process and to further advance the gradual integration between the European Union and the region already during the enlargement process itself in a reversible and merit-based manner, according to the revised methodology. The Commission is committed, more than ever, to bring the entire region within the European Union, something which also counts on the support of the Senát.*

*Miloš Vystrčil  
President of the Senát  
Valdštejnské náměstí 17/4  
CZ – 118 01 PRAGUE 1*

*Regarding the Senát's call for an early resolution of the pending bilateral issues between Bulgaria and North Macedonia, the Commission is pleased that the first intergovernmental conferences formally opening the accession negotiations process with Albania and North Macedonia took place on 19 July 2022, following approval by the Council of the respective negotiating frameworks. This was a historic moment, which sends an important signal to the citizens of Albania and North Macedonia, to the region and beyond. This is also a major deliverable right at the beginning of the Czech Presidency. We are convinced that the Czech Republic will play an important role in swiftly advancing this process. On our side, the Commission has immediately started the so-called 'screening process' with both countries to evaluate their level of alignment with the European Union acquis, to outline steps for further alignment and to obtain preliminary indications of issues that will most likely arise in the accession negotiations. The Western Balkans are a geopolitical priority for the European Union and the Commission is committed to turn their European perspective into reality.*

*The Commission fully supports the EU-facilitated Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue on normalisation of relations between Kosovo\* and Serbia, which is a key component of the European Union's engagement with the Western Balkans. It is now more urgent than ever for Kosovo and Serbia to reach a comprehensive normalisation agreement under the auspices of the EU-facilitated dialogue, while fully implementing all past agreements. Kosovo and Serbia's respective European paths go through the EU-facilitated dialogue.*

*Furthermore, the European Council gave a clear sign that it stands ready to grant the status of candidate country to Bosnia and Herzegovina once the country delivers on a substantial set of reforms, in line with the Commission's Opinion on its European Union membership application, which sets out 14 key priorities for the country to open European Union accession negotiations. The Commission will report through the upcoming 2022 enlargement package on the implementation of those priorities. By delivering on concrete reforms in line with the Commission's Opinion, Bosnia and Herzegovina will demonstrate that it deserves to be recognised as a candidate country.*

*The Commission hopes that the clarifications provided in this reply cover the points raised by the Senát and looks forward to continuing the political dialogue with the Senát in the future.*

*Yours faithfully,*

*Maroš Šefčovič  
Vice-President*

*Olivér Várhelyi  
Member of the Commission*

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*\* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.*