



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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Dear Chairs,

The Commission would like to thank the Národná rada, the Poslanecká sněmovna, the Senát, the Országgyűlés, the Sejm and the Senat for the Conclusions of the Meeting of the European Affairs Committee of the Visegrád Group Parliaments and of Serbia, which took place in Bratislava on 16 – 18 June 2019.

The EU enlargement policy remains based on established criteria, fair and rigorous conditionality, and the principle of own merits. A credible enlargement policy is a geostrategic investment in peace, stability, security and economic growth of the whole of Europe. The Commission has repeatedly stressed that this firm and credible perspective for all countries remains essential to drive transformation, foster reconciliation, export stability to the region and promote EU values, norms and standards.

The Commission would like to thank the Národná rada, the Poslanecká sněmovna, the Senát, the Országgyűlés, the Sejm and the Senat for their appreciation of the Commission's 2019 Enlargement package, published on 29 May. The package presents progress in an objective manner while looking at the serious challenges facing the aspiring Member States. It recognises concrete and significant results achieved by North Macedonia and Albania, and stresses that this welcome progress calls for the Union's concrete and fast action. This is crucial in order to reward individual progress and to lock in long-term positive momentum across the whole region.

For the process to move forward, candidates and potential candidates need as a matter of priority to deliver genuine and sustainable results on key issues: the rule of law, justice reform, fight against corruption and organised crime, security, fundamental rights, functioning of democratic institutions and public administration reform, as well as on economic development and competitiveness. The Western Balkans also need to make progress on reconciliation, good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation, following the example of the historic agreement between North Macedonia and Greece.

The EU itself needs to ensure that it will be ready institutionally to welcome new members once they have met the conditions. The Union must be stronger and more solid before it can be bigger. This is why the Commission has put forward a number of initiatives aimed at improving the democratic, institutional and policy framework for the Union of 2025, based on the current Treaties.

It is essential for Serbia to make progress on the rule of law and the normalisation of relations with Kosovo¹, which will continue to determine the overall pace of accession negotiations. Serbia needs to accelerate significantly the pace of rule of law reforms in particular as regards the independence of the judiciary, the fight against corruption, media freedom, the domestic handling of war crimes and the fight against organised crime if it wants to maintain the overall balance of its EU accession negotiations.

The Commission also considers that Kosovo should revoke its decision to impose 100% tariffs on imports from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, in violation of the Central European Free Trade Agreement, and both sides must refrain from further actions that could be seen as provocative. Urgent progress is needed in the EU-facilitated Dialogue towards the full normalisation of relations between Serbia and Kosovo, which should result in concluding and implementing a comprehensive, legally binding normalisation agreement.

¹ 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".

The Commission welcomes the active involvement of the Národná rada, the Poslanecká sněmovna, the Senát, the Országgyűlés, the Sejm and the Senat in the work of the COSAC and in the debate on the future of the European Union. National Parliaments have an essential role to play in bringing the EU closer to its citizens, and the Commission supports their involvement in the policy-making process relating to the future of the Union.

The Commission would like to thank the Národná rada, the Poslanecká sněmovna, the Senát, the Országgyűlés, the Sejm and the Senat for their contribution to the unity of the EU27. As stated by President Juncker, the Withdrawal Agreement remains “the best and only deal possible”, in line with the European Council guidelines. The Commission is ready to engage constructively within its mandate to ensure the orderly withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union. The Commission has also carried out intensive preparedness work to make sure that all necessary adaptations are put in place for the EU acquis and EU systems to continue to function, in any scenario, including in case of a no-deal withdrawal. The Commission welcomes the extensive preparedness efforts undertaken at national level and encourages the main actors to use the time available until withdrawal to complement these efforts as appropriate, including public communication and support to stakeholders.

The Commission welcomes the support of the Národná rada, the Poslanecká sněmovna, the Senát, the Országgyűlés, the Sejm and the Senat to multilateralism and rules-based trade that contributes to sustainable development as well as to the World Trade Organization reform, against the backdrop of increased trade tensions. In this context, the Commission recalls its Concept Paper of September 2018 outlining ideas on the reform of the World Trade Organization and stresses its commitment to preserve and reinforce the multilateral rules-based trading system with the World Trade Organization at its core.

The Commission welcomes the views of the Národná rada, the Poslanecká sněmovna, the Senát, the Országgyűlés, the Sejm and the Senat on the importance for Member States to share a common vision of the European Education Area. As announced by President-elect von der Leyen, the implementation of the European Education Area, for it to become a reality by 2025, is one of the main priorities of the new Commission’s mandate.

The Commission acknowledges the attention of the Národná rada, the Poslanecká sněmovna, the Senát, the Országgyűlés, the Sejm and the Senat to migration and the functioning of the Schengen area. In the wake of the migration crisis in 2015, the EU prioritised efforts to reduce irregular migration through a wide range of measures, focusing on securing the external borders, enhancing cooperation with partners outside the Union and breaking the business model of ruthless smuggling networks facilitating irregular migration to the EU. Comprehensive actions taken at EU level have led to the lowest number of arrivals recorded in 5 years, with a 90% decrease in irregular border crossings into the EU compared to 2015. Reducing incentives of irregular migration has been and will remain a crucial part of the comprehensive approach to migration and is inter-linked with our policies on asylum and on legal migration. Trust in the EU’s

collective capacity to manage asylum requests, to protect external borders and to cooperate effectively to mitigate security threats are key pillars for a fully functioning Schengen area. The Commission will continue to undertake all necessary efforts to ensure the proper functioning of the Schengen area.

Before the summer 2018, the Commission put forward a package of proposals for a fair, balanced and modern budget to deliver on the important issues for Europe's future, as outlined by European Leaders and confirmed in the new Strategic Agenda 2019-2024 agreed on 20 June 2019. This package includes a strong modernisation of the EU budget with roughly a third of available resources dedicated to economic, social and territorial cohesion.

The Commission hopes that these clarifications address the issues raised by the Národná rada, the Poslanecká sněmovna, the Senát, the Országgyűlés, the Sejm and the Senat and looks forward to continuing the political dialogue in the future.

Yours faithfully,



*Frans Timmermans
First Vice-President*



*Johannes Hahn
Member of the Commission*