



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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C(2016) 4290 final

Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Camera Deputaților for its Opinion on the Communication "EU Enlargement Strategy" {COM(2015) 611 final}.

The Communication sets out a medium-term strategy for EU enlargement policy to cover the period of the mandate of the Commission. Enlargement policy is an investment in peace, security and stability; it is – as stated by the Camera Deputaților – of particular relevance in the light of the ongoing refugee crisis.

The Commission thanks the Camera Deputaților for its overall positive consideration of the EU enlargement policy as a successful, effective and credible policy instrument, and for its suggestions to further improve this policy. It also takes note of the shortcomings outlined by the Camera Deputaților.

Since the introduction of the new approach on rule of law in 2011 and of the "fundamentals first" approach in 2013, the Commission has continuously worked on ensuring that the most crucial reforms are given priority early on in the accession process and has thus strengthened the credibility of enlargement. In this regard, it took into account lessons learnt from previous enlargements. The new reporting elements introduced in the Enlargement package 2015 further increased the transparency of the process by focusing not only on progress but also on the state of play. This makes it easier to compare both between countries and over time. The reports and enlargement policy more generally also put great emphasis on implementation and actual results on the ground. This approach helps to ensure that progress on the EU path can only be made when reforms deliver concrete results.

This "fundamentals first" approach aims to cover many of the concerns raised by the Camera Deputaților.

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Bilateral issues among enlargement countries and with Member States need to be addressed by the parties concerned, including under UN auspices where relevant. The Commission stands ready to support such processes, but, in the absence of relevant acquis, points out that its role is limited in this regard.

The Commission remains fully committed to continue supporting the candidate countries and potential candidates in their reform efforts which will allow them to progress on their European path. It shares the view of the Camera Deputaților that the process needs to be strict but fair, based on well-established criteria and lessons learnt from the past.

The Commission also agrees with the Camera Deputaților that relations with the Eastern Partnership countries are of great importance and is actively involved in the implementation of the 2015 European Neighbourhood Policy review.

The Commission hopes that the points made above address the concerns raised by the Camera Deputaților and looks forward to continuing our political dialogue in the future.

Yours faithfully,

*Frans Timmermans
First Vice-President*

*Johannes Hahn
Member of the Commission*