



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

*Brussels, 18.1.2019
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Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Camera Deputaților for its Opinion on the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions 2018 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy {COM(2018) 450 final}.

The Commission welcomes the support of the Camera Deputaților to the European Union enlargement policy. The Commission agrees on the importance of support and guidance to the partners from the region to pursue the necessary reforms.

The Commission shares the assessment of the Camera Deputaților that progress towards accession to the European Union is based on the respect for the Union values. The enlargement process continues to be built on established criteria and fair and rigorous conditionality. Each country is assessed on the basis of its own merits. The assessment of progress achieved and the identification of shortcomings aim to provide incentives and guidance to the countries to pursue the necessary far-reaching reforms. Candidate countries and potential candidates must deliver on the rule of law, justice reform, fight against corruption and organised crime, security, fundamental rights, democratic institutions and public administration reform, as well as on economic development and competitiveness.

Enlargement countries are increasingly cooperating with the European Union law enforcement agencies such as Europol and Eurojust and are gradually improving their capacity to deal with specific types of organised crime, including drug trafficking.

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There have been continued good efforts in all countries to align legislation and practices in the field of anti-terrorism and the fight against radicalisation with Union standards and best practices. The European Union Radicalisation Awareness Network has been supporting much of this work, and the European Union has stepped up operational cooperation with each of the enlargement countries. There remains nevertheless scope for more effective structures at national and regional levels to ensure concrete results.

The Commission agrees with the Camera Deputaţilor that the role of education is of key importance, especially in terms of fostering greater tolerance, promoting European values and strengthening the cohesion of society. The scope and reach of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office will be widened.

Fostering good neighbourly relations and reconciliation needs strong ownership in the Western Balkans and should be led primarily by the partners in the region. Good neighbourly relations should continue to be reinforced through regional cooperation initiatives. The Commission stands ready to continue to support this cooperation, whether on the connectivity agenda, through the 'WB6' format and initiatives that bring together heads of state and government from the region or other initiatives that strengthen their ownership of regional co-operation. The Commission will further extend support to reconciliation initiatives, including those that address transitional justice and seek to overcome the legacy of recent conflict.

As regards parliamentary dialogue, the Commission supports that the Conference of the committees of the national Parliaments of the European Union Member States (COSAC) during its Plenary Meeting of 17-19 June 2018 in Sofia, declared its general support for increased and stronger involvement of the Western Balkans Parliaments in COSAC work and activities in the future.

The Commission would like to thank the Camera Deputaţilor for its engagement with the enlargement process and looks forward to continuing the political dialogue in the future.

Yours faithfully,

*Frans Timmermans
First Vice-President*

*Johannes Hahn
Member of the Commission*