



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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C(2021) 3759 final*

*Ms Anca Dana DRAGU
President of the Senat
Calea 13 Septembrie nr. 1-3, sector 5
RO – 050711 BUCHAREST*

Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Senat 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 – 2020 Communication on EU enlargement policy {COM(2020) 660 final}.

The Commission welcomes the support of the Senat to EU enlargement, which is a priority for the Commission. A credible EU accession perspective is the key driver of transformation in the region, enhancing the EU's security, prosperity and stability.

In this respect, the Communication “Enhancing the accession process – A credible EU perspective for the Western Balkans”¹, endorsed by the Council in March 2020, set out concrete proposals for strengthening the EU accession process, by making it more predictable, more credible, more dynamic and subject to stronger political steering. It emphasised that the EU accession process is based on objective and clear criteria and rigorous conditionality. The Commission's proposals underlined the importance of a merit-based accession process built on trust, mutual confidence and clear commitments by the European Union and the Western Balkans, with an even stronger focus on fundamental reforms.

The Commission notes the observations from the Senat and underlines that the rule of law continues to be a crucial aspect of democratic transformation and the key benchmark against which the EU assesses progress towards EU membership. The Commission is also carefully monitoring the situation as regards civil, political, social and economic rights, as well as the rights of persons belonging to minorities in the enlargement countries.

As noted by the Senat, reporting in the 2020 enlargement package reflects the proposals of the enhanced approach to the accession process. The Commission has equally noted in its

¹ COM(2020) 57 final.

reports accompanying the October 2020 Communication on the EU Enlargement policy the political commitment of the partner states towards the strategic objective of EU accession, which must be unambiguously communicated to the citizens.

The past year was marked by the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The EU has provided extensive support to the efforts of the governments, in particular in the Western Balkans, to address those challenges. The Commission reallocated EU financial assistance in view of the urgencies faced by the region due to the crisis, both in terms of health and socio-economic needs. The EU has mobilised a package of over EUR 3.3 billion to the benefit of Western Balkans citizens and businesses. In October 2020, the Commission launched an ambitious Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans² to spur the long-term post-pandemic recovery, boost economic growth, encompassing the dual digital and green transition, and support reforms required to move forward on the EU path, including bringing the Western Balkans closer to the EU Single Market.

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

Yours faithfully,

*Maroš Šefčovič
Vice-President*

*Olivér Várhelyi
Member of the Commission*

² COM(2020) 641 final.