



REPUBLIKA SLOVENIJA

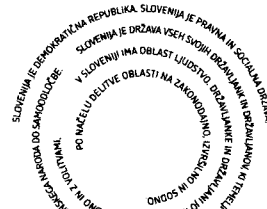
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Courtesy translation

Mr Štefan Füle
Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy
The European Commission
Brussels B-1049

Dear Commissioner,

At a joint session of 15 March 2013, the Committee on EU Affairs and the Committee on Foreign Policy discussed the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council – Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2012-2013. In addition to the members of both committees, the meeting was attended by representatives of the academic sphere, the Government, and the Representation of the European Commission to Slovenia. The outcome of the debate is that despite the current European Union's focus on intensifying the integration process, the EU enlargement policy must remain high on its agenda.

Following the debate the two committees adopted the following decisions:

The Committee on EU Affairs and the Committee on Foreign Policy support the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council – Strategy and Main Challenges 2012-2013.

The committees stress that the enlargement policy in the European Union needs to remain high on the agenda of EU institutions. The possibility of accession in fact provides a strong incentive for the implementation of the necessary political, economic and legislative reforms in the countries involved in the enlargement process. Furthermore, the committees note that previous enlargements have benefited the EU as a whole and provided it with a better starting point for addressing key global challenges.

The committees support the enlargement policy based on the principle that the pace of an individual country participating in the enlargement process depends on its own merits. Such principle in fact ensures a just enlargement process. They emphasise that the countries need to fully meet the conditions for membership, as this is the only way to preserve the credibility of the enlargement process and to actually implement the required reforms in those countries. Also, the committees underline the significance of responsiveness of the EU after the required conditions have been met.

The committees welcome the beginning of accession negotiations with Montenegro and expect that at the upcoming accession conference it will open the second negotiation chapter.

The committees also welcome the high-level dialogue on the accession as a tool introduced by the European Commission for Macedonia's integration into the EU, but take it as an additional incentive and not as a substitute for the negotiation process. The committees expect that the EU will actively continue with all the necessary activities so that after eight years the accession negotiations with Macedonia will finally start this year.

As regards Serbia, the committees expect that it will continue to constructively solve the open issues with Kosovo, so that it will be able to begin the accession negotiations already in this year.

Moreover, the committees expect that important steps towards EU integration will be made by Kosovo, Albania, and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The committees expect that in the light of EU integration of the Western Balkan countries, further efforts will be made towards the implementation of the 2001 Agreement on Succession Issues, which remains the key basis for enhancing regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations. The committees will thus monitor the progress of the countries successors of the SFRY involved in the enlargement process also on the basis of the fulfilment of commitments contained in this Agreement.

The committees underline the importance of negotiations with Turkey and believe that a positive agenda with Turkey cannot represent an alternative to accession negotiations. At the same time, the committees expect that in this year Turkey will open or temporarily close one of its negotiation chapters.

The committees express satisfaction with the successful integration process of Iceland and believe that its accession would positively contribute to Union's reputation. Given the current public opinion in Iceland concerning the country's EU accession, the committees hope that upon completion of the negotiations Iceland will actually opt for accession.

The committees are also of the opinion that a possible withdrawal from the negotiation process or a decision against EU accession taken by one of the existing candidates upon the conclusion of negotiations would have a negative impact on the EU as a global player.

The committees expect the Unions' institutions, particularly the European Commission, to intensify communication strategies in the countries involved in the enlargement process, so as to better inform the citizens of the current plans concerning the Union's development, in particular the shaping of a deep and genuine economic and monetary union.

The committees expect the Government to consider the above decisions in its activities in EU institutions related to the enlargement process.

Yours sincerely,

Roman Jakič
Chair of the Committee on EU Affairs

Jožef Horvat
Chair of the Committee on Foreign Policy

Cc:

- Representation of the European Commission to Slovenia
- Government of the Republic of Slovenia
- Council of the President of the National Assembly
- Committee on EU Affairs
- Committee on Foreign Policy