



REPUBLIKA SLOVENIJA

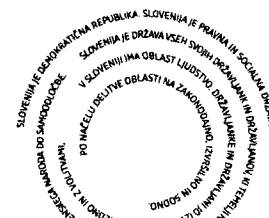
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Courtesy translation

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

Dear Commissioner,

At a joint session of 22 January 2014, 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 2013-2014.

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 – the Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2013-2014.

The committees welcome the new approach to accession negotiations, attributing an important role to the issues of judiciary and the fundamental rights, freedom and security already at an early stage of negotiations. They are aware that consistent compliance with all membership criteria is key to maintaining the authenticity of the enlargement process, whereby the above areas turned out to be problematic. They also stress that the European Union and the Member States should enable the countries involved in the enlargement process to make progress in negotiations after they have met the required conditions and criteria.

The committees support the position contained in the Communication from the Commission on Good Neighbourly Relations, the regional cooperation and the call to address open issues, including those arising from the disintegration of the SFRY. In this context, they underline the significance of implementing the legally binding agreements, including the Agreement on Succession Issues.

The committees welcome the European Commission's intention to enhance the dialogue with the enlargement countries in the field of economic governance which will support progress towards meeting the required economic criteria and allow the countries to better prepare for membership in the European Union – the development of which goes in the direction of a deep Economic and Monetary Union.

The committees welcome the successful negotiating conference between the European Union and Montenegro held in December 2013, and express hope that Montenegro will, as early as possible, fulfil the action plans determined under the chapters on judiciary and fundamental rights and on justice, freedom and security,

since the entire dynamics of its accession to the European Union depend on the progress made in these areas.

The committees welcome the first negotiating conference between the European Union and Serbia held on 21 January 2014, at which a general negotiating framework was adopted. The committees expect that Serbia will continue meeting its obligations set out in the agreements with Kosovo, developing constructive relations with all neighbouring countries and successfully implementing all the necessary reforms, particularly with respect to the rule of law on which the pace of the negotiating process depends.

The committees regret that the accession negotiations with Macedonia have not yet started, despite the fact that the European Commission has for the fifth consecutive time recommended the opening of negotiations with Macedonia, since it considers that Macedonia meets the criteria required to start accession negotiations. They expect that all parties involved will constructively address the open issues in the light of good neighbourly relations and the European spirit. Furthermore, the committees encourage Macedonia to implement further reforms, particularly in relation to the rule of law and freedom of expression, and to meet the obligations under the (Ohrid) Framework Agreement.

The committees welcome Albania's progress to date in the field of rule of law, and encourage it to implement further reforms which call for support from all political forces of this country. The committees expect that Albania will be granted the status of a candidate country at the European Council meeting in June 2014.

The committees regret the slow progress of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the European Union's integration process. They call on all political options in the country to implement as soon as possible the European Court of Justice judgement in the Sejdic-Finci case, and to establish a uniform mechanism for the coordination of EU affairs. The committees also support Union's further activities regarding the dialogue with this country.

The committees take positive view of Kosovo's progress to date in the EU integration process, particularly underlining the normalisation of relations with Serbia and emphasizing the significance of implementing the adopted arrangements, and call for the adoption of all reforms needed, specifically in the field of the rule of law. The committees encourage the European Union to take a constructive approach to negotiations on the Stabilisation and Association Agreement and the dialogue on visa liberalisation, as these could make an important contribution to facilitating Kosovo's engagement in adopting and implementing reforms and at the same time give a positive signal to Kosovo as regards its European future.

The committees recognize the significance of Turkey as a political and economic powerhouse and its contribution to ensuring the stability in the region. The committees welcome the recent opening of chapter 22 – Regional Policy and Coordination of Structural Instruments – as an important moment in the negotiations with Turkey, and hope that this will contribute to overcoming the current state of the negotiation process between the EU and Turkey. In this respect, they welcome the signature of the EU-Turkey readmission agreement and a start of the dialogue towards visa liberalisation, and express hope that this will provide new impetus to relations and greater confidence between both partners.

The committees agree with the positions of the European Union as regards the willingness to continue with the negotiating process with Iceland, should this country express such interest.

Moreover, taking into account the adopted decisions, the committees note that the Republic of Croatia, by violating and disrespecting treaties, harms the efforts of other countries from the Western Balkans region.

Yours sincerely,

Jožef Horvat
Chair of the Committee on EU Affairs

Janja Klasinc
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