

Brussels, 9 November 2010

European Commission adopts 2010 Enlargement Package

Today, the European Commission adopted its Enlargement Package. This presents the Commission's annual assessment of the European Union's enlargement agenda. It outlines the current state of preparations, the challenges ahead, and the way forward for the Western Balkans, Turkey and Iceland. The Commission proposes Candidate Status for Montenegro, and recommends that accession negotiations with Montenegro and Albania should be opened once these countries have met a number of key priorities set out in the opinions. The Commission confirms that Croatia is entering the final phase of its accession preparations.

Presenting the annual enlargement package, Commissioner Füle said: "*The enlargement policy enables the EU to meet the challenges of a shifting, multi-polar world, in which we need to continue projecting our value-based system beyond our borders. A Union that shall once again build cooperation between former rivals, while upholding the highest standards of human rights, will have the magnetic soft power needed to shape the world around it, rather than be shaped by it.*"

As the Lisbon Treaty removes institutional bottlenecks and creates the opportunity for the joint implementation of all foreign affairs tools (CFSP and community tools), the enlargement agenda can move forward. Negotiations with Croatia have entered their final phase, while negotiations with Turkey advance, albeit at a slow pace. Accession negotiations with Iceland have been launched and Serbia's EU membership application is being processed. The Commission has presented its Opinions on the membership applications of Albania and Montenegro. The Commission renewed its 2009 recommendation that accession negotiations with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia should be opened, and reconfirmed the European perspective for Bosnia Herzegovina and for Kosovo.¹

Reform efforts in the enlargement countries have already started to bring tangible benefits to their citizens. Citizens of Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina will soon be able to travel visa-free to the EU. Serbia, Montenegro and former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia have already been benefitting from visa-free travel for the past year. Across the enlargement region, many economies are being strengthened despite the global crisis; the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms are moving closer to EU levels; and regional cooperation is making significant advances. Peace and stability have been consolidated, benefitting not only the region itself, but Europe as a whole.

For the candidates and potential candidates, the tough preparations for membership require a process of profound reform. Numerous challenges remain, among which good governance, the rule of law and freedom of expression are the most important. Full cooperation with the ICTY remains a key condition for the whole accession

¹ under UNSCR 1244/99

process of several countries. Constructive diplomacy is needed to prevent bilateral issues from hampering the overall accession process.

"The EU's enlargement policy provides an excellent example of how we can turn serious challenges on our doorstep into opportunities for a more secure and prosperous Europe," added Commissioner Füle. *"To be successful, we need to keep this process credible. For the EU, credibility means that the accession perspective is offered on the basis of strict and rigorous conditionality. For the candidates and potential candidates, this involves committing to reforms that are designed to bring them closer to EU standards and laws, as well as a credible EU perspective."*

COUNTRY BOX

- **CROATIA: candidate** - applied in 2003. 25 out of 35 chapters have been provisionally closed. Accession negotiations have reached the final phase and should be concluded once Croatia has met the outstanding closing benchmarks, in particular in the field of judiciary and fundamental rights.

- **TURKEY: candidate** - applied in 1987. 13 chapters are opened and 1 provisionally closed. Full implementation of the obligations under the Customs Union and progress towards normalisation of relations with Cyprus are needed before the country can advance more vigorously in its accession negotiations.

- **ICELAND: candidate** - applied for membership in 2009 and opened accession negotiations in June 2010. The screening process is about to start. As Iceland is already a member of the EEA and the Schengen area, a large part of its legislation is already aligned with that of the EU.

- **FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA: candidate** - applied in 2004. The country continues to sufficiently fulfil the political criteria and the Commission renewed its 2009 recommendation for opening accession negotiations. As a unanimous decision of Member States is required for the negotiations to start, a negotiated and mutually accepted solution to the name issue is essential.

- **MONTENEGRO: potential candidate** - applied in 2008. In its Opinion the Commission recommends Candidate Status, and the opening of accession negotiations, if progress is recorded in a number of key areas as set out in the opinion.

- **ALBANIA: potential candidate** - applied in 2009. In its Opinion, the Commission recommends the opening of accession negotiations, if progress is recorded in a number of key areas as set out in the opinion.

- **SERBIA: potential candidate** - applied in 2009. On 25 October 2010 the General Affairs Council forwarded Serbia's application to the Commission, which will begin preparing its Opinion.

- **BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA: potential candidate** - has not applied for EU membership; the lack of a shared vision by political leaders on the direction of the country continued to block key reforms and further progress towards the EU.

- **KOSOVO²: potential candidate** – has not applied for EU membership. The EU supports Kosovo's efforts to fulfil its European perspective and launched the Stabilisation and Association Process dialogue in January. The Commission will take forward Kosovo's participation in relevant Union programmes.

More information at:

http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/press_corner/key-documents/reports_nov_2010_en.htm

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² under UNSCR 1244/99