

**Federal Ministry for
Europe,
Integration and Foreign
Affairs
Republic of Austria**

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Czech Republic**

**Ministry for Foreign Affairs
and International
Cooperation
Republic of Italy**

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Republic of Poland**

**Ministry of Foreign and
European Affairs
of the Slovak Republic**

**Ministry for Foreign Affairs
Republic of Slovenia**

H.E.
Jean-Claude JUNCKER
President of the European Commission
Brussels

18 November 2019

Excellency,

Since the Thessaloniki Summit in 2003, the EU has consistently reiterated its openness for membership of all countries of the Western Balkans who are able and willing to meet the Union's criteria. Over the years, this European perspective has been a source of motivation for the reforms in the countries of the region and has delivered concrete results, including the historic Prespa Agreement.

Last month, the EU did not reach consensus on opening accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia. At the time when we are celebrating the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Iron Curtain that ushered in the era of Europe's unification, we reiterate that the consolidation of Europe cannot be completed without the Western Balkans.

Moreover, there can be no doubt that durable stability and security as well as the continuation of the reform processes in the region can best be achieved through EU-integration. The accession process is the quintessential instrument for achieving this goal, thus making a key contribution to the Union's security and prosperity. It therefore must continue without unnecessary delay. There is no viable alternative to full-fledged membership of the Western Balkan countries in the EU if we want to safeguard our interests in the region effectively.

It is true that the current accession process in the Western Balkans progresses slowly and somewhat unevenly. We are therefore ready to engage constructively in an effort to improve this process. We will do so on the understanding that such an exercise be conducted in an effective and result-oriented fashion and that it enables the EU to reach consensus on opening accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia in March 2020.

In parallel, we call on the European Commission to elaborate by January 2020 concrete proposals for ways to enhance the effectiveness of the accession process as an instrument to support reform and integration efforts in the region.

The EU's openness to all European nations who share our values and are ready to accept the *acquis communautaire* is pivotal for the Union's historic mission of completing European unification.

Sincerely,

(signed)
Alexander Schallenberg
Federal Minister for Europe,
Integration and Foreign Affairs
Republic of Austria

(signed)
Tomáš Petříček
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Czech Republic

(signed)
Luigi Di Maio
Minister for Foreign Affairs
and International Cooperation
Republic of Italy

(signed)
Jacek Czaputowicz
Foreign Minister
Republic of Poland

(signed)
Miroslav Lajčák
Minister of Foreign and
European Affairs
of the Slovak Republic

(signed)
Miro Cerar
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Republic of Slovenia