

European Integration of the Western Balkans

The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party convening in Budapest, Hungary on 19 to 21 November 2015:

Whereas:

- the member parties of LIBSEEN share common democratic and liberal values;
- the EU integration process constitutes a pillar of a modern and secure Europe;
- challenges and problems still persist in the Western Balkans and need to be addressed swiftly and efficiently;
- the Western Balkan countries have EU accession as their primary goal;
- the EU integration process of the Western Balkans is an effective tool to foster reforms and counter populist and radical tendencies as well as unwanted geopolitical influence;
- the President of the Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, stated that no new countries were expected to join the Union in the next five years. This enlargement stalemate has a negative psychological effect on those countries applying for membership and questions the present results, threatening and weakening motivation, and could jeopardise further EU integration efforts; the EU has a clear set of criteria governing the accession of new countries to the EU;
- capacity at local and regional level is key for successful accession to the EU;

Therefore:

- believes that the safety and security of the Western Balkans can best be guaranteed within the framework of the European Union;
- encourages all these political communities to look for efficient and sustainable solutions to all issues regarding their relations, in line with the best European achievements and practices;
- encourages the development of a genuine and independent civil society in the countries of the Western Balkans; considers that only a strong civil society can help to build and promote European values of tolerance, freedom of speech, freedom of association, freedom of the press, democracy and multicultural;
- affirms LIBSEEN's commitment to keep all its activities inspired by the ideas of common values shared by its member parties, and of assisting the latter in promoting and politically strengthening the liberal, democratic and reform process in the region;
- initiates under the auspices of ALDE and LIBSEEN the establishment of liberal debate club for discussions on the state of the democracy and

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civil societies in the region, and Liberal solutions for open political matters in the Western Balkans;

- calls on the Commission to revise the enlargement process and to prepare a common European approach for the Western Balkans in order to stabilise the EU aspirations of those countries and return them on their path towards EU integration;
- stresses the crucial importance of involving local and regional authorities within the candidate countries and potential candidate countries in the accession process as it often is these levels of government are responsible for implementing legislation;
- expresses its continuous support for the EU integration process of the Western Balkans; and believes that bringing the Western Balkans closer to the EU will help to foster stability and security in the European political and economic space, as well as helping to reduce terrorist and extremist threats;
- support the suggestion of the Presidents of Croatia and Slovenia for an extraordinary meeting of European Council to discuss enlargement of European Union;
- underlines that the future enlargement of the EU should be based on the assessment of candidate countries fulfilling the accession criteria, and not dominated by the internal political agenda;
- encourages the intent of governments and political parties in the region to promote Atlantic ideas as an inseparable element of Euro-Atlantic cooperation, and encourages countries which are striving for Atlantic integration as a general frame for security and guarantee of peace and stability in the region.

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