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## **EU-Western Balkans: Sassoli, “the enlargement process needs new, strong momentum”**

“This year’s EU-Western Balkans summit could not be timelier. Now more than ever, the Western Balkan countries’ accession needs new, strong momentum. The time has come to overcome the delays and the current hindrances”. In a letter to the president of the EU Council, Charles Michel, about the summit taking place in Brdo (Slovenia), the president of the European Parliament, David Sassoli, calls the leaders to overcome the current deadlock and move on with the enlargement process. “The European Parliament is ready to work, as part of Team Europe, to give new momentum to the enlargement of the EU to the Western Balkans. A truly geopolitical Europe can only start with our borders, with our closest friends, with whom we culturally and historically share the same European identity. Having a peaceful, stable and prosperous continent would benefit all European citizens. Such new momentum cannot but have beneficial effects on the region and might contribute to its democratic transformation and to good neighbourly relations. Therefore, we should be ready to work hard in the enlargement process with every one of the Western Balkan countries, depending on their progress and their ambitions”. “The enlargement process must keep being built on respect for the accession criteria. The Western Balkan countries should complete their reforms, acknowledging that dialogue and consensus building, as well as freedom of the press and freedom of expression, are fundamental to any democracy. Equally important are regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations. The fundamental values and principles which the European Union is built upon must remain the light that guides the way of every country towards enlargement”.

Valentina Bombelli