

Integration of the Western Balkan countries should remain a top EU priority, insist European and regional civil society organisations



More than 100 civil society representatives adopted their contribution to the EU-Western Balkans Heads of State Summit in Sofia

The participants at the high level conference, which took place on 15 May, were convinced that the enlargement of the EU, and in particular the spread of its democratic values and legal standards to the Western Balkan region, was in the interest of both the Western Balkan countries and the EU. Promoting EU values in the region guarantees security and stability, enhances social and economic development, as well as democracy and the rule of law in these countries which in turn means stability and security for the EU.

“The future of the region is a European future”, Luca Jahier, President of the European Economic and Social Committee, underlined in his statement before the conference. “I am convinced that there is no other alternative for both the EU and the Western Balkan countries than to make steady, transformative and sustainable steps towards full membership.”

“I truly believe that it is in the interest not just of the countries and citizens of the Western Balkans, but also of all of us in the EU, to integrate this region into our common Union as soon as possible”, said **Dilyana Slavova**, President of the External Relations Section at the European Economic and Social Committee at the opening of the conference. *“Organised civil society from the region and from the EU should and must have a prominent role in promoting this process, as an important controlling mechanism that guarantees the quality of its end result”*.

The Bulgarian Deputy Prime Minister for Judicial Reform and Minister of Foreign Affairs **Ekaterina Zaharieva** also underlined the need to involve civil society: *“The social partners have an important role in the socio-economic development and cohesion in the Western Balkans.”* She expressed hopes to see two of the Western Balkans countries become EU members by 2025.

The economies of the Western Balkan countries continue to grow but, despite that, the countries of the region remain among the poorest in Europe. It is estimated that full convergence with EU living standards could take as long as 40 years. The participants recommended that social, economic and territorial cohesion be assessed when evaluating the fulfilment of EU membership criteria. The discussions emphasised the paramount role of education and of a free and independent media for overcoming the legacy of the past and for enhancing democratic values. The representatives of civil society organisations paid particular attention to **the rights and empowerment of vulnerable groups in the region**. They urged the national governments to do more to tackle challenges that women are facing such as domestic violence, limited labour market opportunities, harassment and violence in the workplace, salary and pension gaps between women and men, reproductive and maternity rights and unequal access to participation in high-level politics. The participants also stressed the need to **pursue inclusive policies towards minorities in the Western Balkans**.

The participants noted that the social partners and other civil society organisations, both at EU and national level, must be meaningfully involved in the entire process of integrating the Western Balkan countries into the EU. The conference called on the Heads of States at the EU summit in Sofia to set out their clear commitment to more consistent and direct support for civil society organisations at all levels and stressed the need to organise a joint event with representatives of civil society organisations from the Western Balkans and the EU ahead of each following summit.

Background: *The Western Balkans Conference is a contribution from organised civil society to the EU-Western Balkans Heads of State Summit. It was jointly organised by the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the Technical Assistance and Information Exchange Instrument of the European Commission (TAIEX), with the support of the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the EU and the Economic and Social Council of the Republic of Bulgaria. Representatives from employers’ associations, trade unions and other civil society organisations from the EU and the Western Balkans, as well as representatives of EU institutions, Bulgarian officials and members of Bulgarian organised civil society gathered to discuss concrete recommendations from civil society to be put forward to the national*

authorities and the European institutions.

The final conclusions from the conference can be found [here](#).

[Codification of restrictions in ERATV and ECVVR](#)

Codification of restrictions in ERATV and ECVVR Reference: ERA/TD/2011-09/INT Publication Date : 16/05/2018 Published by: Interoperability Document Types: Technical Document Keywords: ERATV, NVR Description: This document presents a pragmatic solution intended to facilitate overcoming the language barriers in the registration of additional authorisations. This solution consists of a “pre-codification” of non-coded restrictions, so that these “pre-codes” may be used in the NVR and, if the European Commission so decides, included in the list of coded restrictions at a future revision of the NVR specification. There should be a single list of coded and pre-coded restrictions valid for both NVR and ERATV.

This document includes codes:

- indicated in [1] NVR Specification set out in Decision 2007/756/EC as amended by Decision 2011/107/EU;
- identified by the ERATV work party ([2] Decision on ERATV includes a provision for management by ERA of a list of codes for restrictions). Related documents:

□Codification of restrictions in ERATV and ECVVR ver. 1.03 ([EN](#))

[WTO rejects vast majority of US claims in Airbus dispute](#)

The Appellate Body definitively dismissed all US claims that any of the EU support is outright “prohibited” under WTO rules.

Commissioner **Malmström** said: *“Today the WTO Appellate Body, the highest WTO court, has definitively rejected the US challenge on the bulk of EU support to Airbus, and agreed that the EU has largely complied with its original findings. Significantly, it dismissed the vast majority of the US claims that this support had damaged Boeing’s aircraft sales. The EU will now take swift action to ensure it is fully in line with the WTO’s final decision in this case. Also, we look forward to the upcoming ruling by the Appellate Body on US compliance with the WTO findings of the massive and persistent government support to Boeing.”*

The Appellate Body found that the majority of EU support to Airbus challenged by the US had expired in 2011. It ruled that under WTO rules the EU is not required to take any further action regarding state support that no longer exist, such as the alleged support for the A300, A310, A320 and A330/A340 aircraft models.

This ruling leaves the EU with only a few remaining compliance obligations in order to bring itself fully into line with WTO rules. These are linked to repayable loans provided to the newer A380 and A350 XWB models. There are no obligations that remain regarding single-aisle aircraft.

The Appellate Body also significantly downgraded the assessment of the economic damage that the remaining EU support has allegedly caused to Boeing's aircraft sales. The US had put forward 218 claims of 'adverse effects' – such as lost sales – to Boeing as a result of alleged support to Airbus. The Appellate Body rejected 94% of US claims and only upheld 14 instances where the support had negatively affected Boeing, related only to the support for the A350 XWB and A380.

The EU will now take swift action to bring itself into line with WTO rules as regards its remaining obligations.

Background

The original WTO case was initiated in 2004. The US challenged support provided by France, Germany, Spain and the UK to Airbus for the development and production of its series of large civil aircraft programmes.

The WTO ruled on the case in 2011, but the US considered that the EU, France, Germany, Spain and the UK had failed to take sufficient steps to withdraw subsidies to Airbus, or remove the economic impact of those subsidies on Boeing. The US therefore brought compliance proceedings against the EU which challenged the European efforts. Today's step marks the end of those compliance proceedings as the Appellate Body is the highest WTO court.

The EU launched a parallel case against US government support for Boeing aircraft in 2005. In that case we are also at the stage of the compliance proceedings after the EU argued before the WTO that the US had not made any efforts to remove its subsidies.

[Letter from President Donald Tusk to the members of the European Council ahead of their informal dinner and the](#)

EU-Western Balkans Summit in Sofia

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Following Prime Minister Borissov's kind invitation, we will meet in Sofia tomorrow for an informal working dinner ahead of the EU-Western Balkans Summit. As planned, our discussion will focus on innovation and the digital economy – two themes of strategic reflections under the Leaders' Agenda. The enclosed Note outlines the main issues at stake to guide our discussion. You will be invited to reflect on two questions: *What should be done at the EU level to support and boost breakthrough and disruptive innovation? How can the EU become a major player in the field of big data?* This will be an open debate, without written conclusions at this stage. However, as always, it will help to steer the European Council decisions in June.

During our meeting, we will also reflect on recent global developments, in particular following President Trump's announcements on Iran and trade as well as the latest, dramatic events in Gaza.

As regards the US decision to withdraw from the Iran nuclear deal, I will ask the three leaders who are signatories to the agreement, that is Prime Minister May, Chancellor Merkel and President Macron, to present their assessment of the situation following the US withdrawal. I would like our debate to reconfirm without any doubt that as long as Iran respects the provisions of the deal, the EU will also respect it. This is the line already discussed by our foreign ministers and presented by the United Kingdom, Germany and France, who are working hard to sustain the deal. We should also get an update from High Representative Mogherini, while President Juncker will share his thoughts on how the interests of the European companies engaged in economic cooperation with Iran can be best preserved.

When it comes to the US trade measures, President Juncker will debrief us on the state of play. As we know, the US tariffs on steel and aluminium cannot be justified on the grounds of national security. This is why we agreed in March to call for the permanent exemption of the EU from these tariffs and strongly supported the steps taken by the European Commission to ensure that the interests of the EU are fully protected. This includes the possibility to respond to the US measures as appropriate and in a proportionate manner, in compliance with the World Trade Organisation rules. While recalling the European commitment to strong transatlantic relations as a cornerstone of the security and prosperity of both the United States and the European Union, we also underlined our support for dialogue on trade issues of common concern. Tomorrow night I will propose we stick to our guns. Our renewed and full

support for the European Commission will strengthen its position in the negotiations with the US. This is the only way to protect European interests. It is clear that it is not the EU that is putting transatlantic trade relations at risk. But we need to be sure that we have done everything in our power, and within the limits of the international trade rules, to avoid a negative scenario.

The following day, we will meet our Western Balkan partners collectively for the first time in 15 years. After my recent trip to the region, I am convinced that the EU is the only partner that cares genuinely about the stability of the entire region and a prosperous future for its peoples – as opposed to treating it as a geopolitical game of chess, in which the people are pawns. The European perspective for the Western Balkans should remain a firm commitment on both sides. But apart from the political declarations about the future, we must demonstrate that we care about the economic development of the Western Balkans here and now. Investing in infrastructural and human connections with and within the Western Balkans region is in the EU's best interest. And the objective of our summit is to prove it.

[Visit the meeting page](#) [Download as pdf](#)

Déclaration conjointe à la presse à l'occasion de la 14ème session du Conseil d'association UE – Tunisie

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La quatorzième session du Conseil d'Association entre l'Union européenne et la Tunisie s'est tenue à Bruxelles le 15 mai 2018. Elle a été co-présidée par Madame Federica MOGHERINI, Haute représentante de l'Union européenne pour les affaires étrangères et la politique de sécurité et Vice-présidente de la Commission et par Monsieur Khémaies Jhinaoui, Ministre des Affaires Etrangères de la République tunisienne. M. Johannes Hahn, Commissaire européen chargé de la Politique européenne de voisinage et des négociations d'élargissement, a aussi pris part aux travaux de cette session.

A cette occasion, nous nous félicitons de la visite en Tunisie de Monsieur Jean-Claude Juncker, Président de la Commission européenne, prévue les 23 et

24 juillet 2018, en réponse à l'invitation qui lui a été adressée par Monsieur le Président de la République tunisienne.

Cette session nous a permis de faire le point sur nos objectifs communs et de saluer les nombreuses avancées depuis la session précédente du 11 mai 2017. Notre coopération s'est notamment intensifiée autour de questions essentielles comme l'employabilité des jeunes et les réformes, la consolidation démocratique et la promotion de la bonne gouvernance – avec le rôle toujours essentiel de la société civile, la réponse aux défis sécuritaires communs et la gestion concertée de la migration. Nous nous sommes engagés aujourd'hui à fixer des objectifs encore plus ambitieux pour le futur.

Les priorités stratégiques 2018 – 2020 sur lesquelles nous nous sommes mis d'accord reflètent notre détermination à consolider notre partenariat en visant des résultats concrets et visibles au profit des citoyens. Les priorités cibleront le développement socio-économique inclusif et durable ; la démocratie, la bonne gouvernance et les droits de l'Homme, le rapprochement entre les peuples, la mobilité et la migration; ainsi que la sécurité et la lutte contre le terrorisme.

Les deux parties ambitionnent d'approfondir davantage leur rapprochement au-delà de 2020 et ont convenu de poursuivre leur réflexion sur la vision future pour le partenariat d'ici la prochaine session du Conseil d'Association en 2019.

Les deux parties ont convenu de la mise en place d'un mécanisme d'alerte précoce de manière à rendre plus efficace leur coopération et à améliorer leurs méthodes de travail. Au vu des résultats positifs réalisés dans de nombreux domaines, nous allons encore renforcer l'impact et la visibilité de nos efforts conjoints.

L'annonce par l'Union européenne d'une enveloppe supplémentaire sous forme de dons pour 2018 qui atteindra, encore une fois, la somme maximale possible de 300 millions d'euros illustre l'importance accordée par l'UE au partenariat privilégié.

L'élargissement des perspectives d'avenir pour la jeunesse constituera une composante majeure de nos efforts. En plus du programme de 25 millions d'euros qui permettra la création de 1000 startups tunisiennes, notamment au profit des jeunes, l'UE financera un nouveau programme dédié à la jeunesse axé sur l'emploi, l'employabilité et les initiatives innovantes des jeunes tunisiens pour la relance socio-économique du pays.

L'UE se félicite de la réussite des élections municipales tenues en Tunisie le 6 mai 2018 et s'engage à soutenir la Tunisie dans le parachèvement de la mise en place de la démocratie dans sa dimension locale et du processus de décentralisation en tant que vecteur important de développement régional. Au-delà des programmes en cours, nous œuvrerons au renforcement des capacités des municipalités nouvellement créées et au développement régional. Une enveloppe additionnelle sera allouée à ce volet de coopération.

Nous nous félicitons des programmes d'appui annoncés au profit des régions défavorisées, au développement du tourisme avec de plus fortes retombées économiques locales. Aux secteurs prioritaires comme l'agriculture et le tourisme s'ajoutera un soutien à la modernisation de l'économie, avec un accent particulier sur l'innovation, l'économie numérique, les énergies renouvelables, la recherche et la spécialisation intelligente qui fera l'objet d'un accord spécifique à conclure prochainement.

La feuille de route qui a récemment été adoptée par le Conseil des Ministres tunisiens, et présentée à l'UE lors de la visite du Chef du Gouvernement Youssef Chahed à Bruxelles, reprend les mesures les plus urgentes (législatives, stratégiques et opérationnelles) nécessaires à la relance socio-économique du pays et servira comme outil opérationnel pour assurer leur mise en œuvre rapide, y compris les mesures d'appui financées par l'UE.

Monsieur Johannes Hahn, Commissaire européen pour le voisinage et les négociations d'élargissement, conduira une mission en Tunisie avec les institutions financières courant 2018 pour discuter des réformes en cours et de l'appui nécessaire pour accompagner ces réformes.

L'accord de libre-échange complet et approfondi (ALECA) contribuera de manière structurelle à l'ancrage de la Tunisie à l'espace européen et à la modernisation de l'économie tunisienne, et nous nous félicitons de notre décision commune de fixer un agenda de négociations ambitieux sur l'ensemble des chapitres en vue de conclure les négociations dans les meilleurs délais.

Eu égard aux opportunités et défis posés par la migration, nous avons réitéré notre engagement à avancer dans les négociations sur la facilitation des visas et l'accord sur la réadmission afin de les conclure dans les meilleurs délais. Les synergies possibles entre ALECA et la facilitation des visas ont été discutées.

Nous avons convenu de continuer notre coopération dans le domaine de la sécurité et de lutte contre le terrorisme, tout en promouvant le plein respect de l'Etat de droit, des droits de l'Homme et des libertés fondamentales. Nous avons à cet effet noté avec satisfaction la reprise de l'activité économique dans le domaine touristique grâce aux efforts constants de la partie tunisienne à améliorer la situation sécuritaire. Nous comptons sur les mesures annoncées pour avancer dans la mise en œuvre du programme-phare sur la réforme du secteur de la sécurité.

Nous poursuivrons nos efforts conjoints afin de soutenir les réformes tunisiennes pour répondre aux normes internationales et européennes en matière de gouvernance fiscale et de lutte contre le blanchiment d'argent et le financement du terrorisme.

Notre objectif commun est que la Tunisie remplisse rapidement ses engagements au titre du plan d'action agréé avec le Groupe d'action financière (GAFI), et sorte de la liste du GAFI, ainsi que de la liste de l'Union européenne, aussi vite que possible.

Le lancement d'un programme de coopération et d'échange diplomatique entre le

Service européen pour l'Action Extérieure et le Ministère tunisien des Affaires Étrangères permettra un partage d'expertises et une meilleure connaissance des méthodes de travail respectives. A cet égard, nous nous sommes félicités de la signature de l'accord administratif relatif aux stages de diplomates.

La coopération dans le domaine de la valorisation notamment économique du patrimoine culturel tunisien et la diplomatie culturelle est une autre action inédite illustrant la place de la culture dans le partenariat Tunisie – UE, en vue de la mise en place à terme d'une stratégie nationale de diplomatie culturelle en Tunisie.

Par ailleurs, nous avons souligné l'importance que nous accordons à la dimension parlementaire de notre partenariat privilégié.

Nous avons continué nos échanges sur les questions régionales d'intérêt commun, notamment la situation en Libye, en Syrie, au Moyen-Orient ainsi qu'au Sahel.

Le Ministre tunisien des Affaires Etrangères a réitéré les remerciements de la Tunisie pour l'appui qu'apporte l'UE à la transition démocratique ainsi que pour son soutien à la réussite des réformes économiques. La Haute Représentante a renouvelé l'engagement de l'UE à poursuivre et à renforcer son appui à la Tunisie.

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