



To: Heads of States and Governments of the European Union Council
Cc: Mr. Charles Michel, President of the European Council
Ms. Ursula Von der Leyen, President of the European Commission
Mr. David Sassoli, President of the European Parliament
From: Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe
Sign on: CEE Bankwatch Network
Subject: EU Accession and the Climate Emergency
Date: December 20, 2019

Our European house is on fire. The climate action required to put it out is only meaningful through collective engagement across our continent. With this letter, CAN Europe¹, urge you to take concrete measures to swiftly unlock the stalled progress of EU accession negotiations not only with North Macedonia and Albania, but also with Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as with Kosovo. We will not achieve a climate-neutral Europe without full integration of the entire Western Balkans.

The European Union has proven itself time and again as one of the greatest endeavours taken by the peoples of Europe - a model which people from around the World look up to. Our shared European vision is one of the main drivers of cooperation and regional reconciliation in the Western Balkans.

Successful accession to membership in the EU by Croatia marks the last enlargement of the Union. The rest of the region has developed profound cooperation with relevant EU bodies and shown its firm commitment to work closely with the European Commission on the accession negotiations.

Furthermore, this cooperation has been extended with the progress of the Berlin Process, promoting multilateral ties between the region and a number of key EU Member States, thereby ensuring regional cooperation related to infrastructure and economic issues.

The current climate urgency has raised climate change to top priority for the new European Commission and the Parliament. Now the EU will be the main driver of change and a lighthouse of ambition to fully decarbonise the continent by 2050. This inevitably means illuminating the path to decarbonisation to its immediate neighbourhood.

The Energy Community Treaty in particular, aims to create a pan-European electricity market by working to integrate the energy markets of the Union and those of its neighbours. Given that many of the Contracting Parties generate their electricity primarily from low-grade, highly polluting and carbon-emitting lignite, the success of the Energy Community Treaty is key to Europe's climate ambition. Yet, the current state of pollution has dire consequences, with far-reaching impacts beyond countries

¹ Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe is Europe's leading NGO coalition fighting climate change. With over 160 member organizations from 35 European countries, representing over 1.700 NGOs and more than 40 million citizens, CAN Europe promotes sustainable climate, energy and development policies throughout Europe.



of the Western Balkans and well into EU Member States.

The region (except for Kosovo as it is not yet a member of the UN) has ratified the Paris Agreement. Moreover, all countries have Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). The Energy Community's role is now crucial to raise the ambition of the region. The National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs) are being drafted by countries of the region with the support by European Commission.

Beyond energy and climate action, the Western Balkan countries have achieved considerable progress with respect to their work on the EU accession. This is reflected in the annual enlargement reports related to recommendations by the Commission, which also indicated a positive attitude to opening negotiations with North Macedonia and Albania.

The recent failure, however, to reach an EU-wide consensus to open negotiations with these two countries could be said to have tested both the confidence of Western Balkan citizens in their European future and our shared ability to achieve a climate-neutral Europe.

Our European house is on fire. The climate action required to put it out is only meaningful through collective engagement across our continent. With this letter we urge you to take concrete measures to swiftly unlock the progress of EU accession negotiations not only with North Macedonia and Albania, but also with Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as with Kosovo. We will not achieve a climate-neutral Europe without the entire Western Balkans.

Inability to take measures towards ensuring the region's progress towards its EU future, will undermine the accomplishments achieved to date jointly by the region and the EU. Civil society has been one of the key stakeholders in these processes. We urge you to continue engaging with us in future endeavours, embedded in the core mission of the Union, sublimely expressed by the preamble of the Treaty of Rome, which calls upon "other peoples of Europe" to join energies in realizing a shared ideal.

Best regards,

Wendel Trio,
Director Climate Action Network Europe