

Committee on Foreign Affairs
The Chair

[EXPO-COM-AFET D (2023) 18119]

D 305802 23.05.2023

Dear Chair, dear Colleague,

I would like to cordially invite you, together with a small delegation from your committee, to an inter-parliamentary committee meeting of the Foreign Affairs Committee on **27 June 2023 from 9:00 to 12:30 (CET)** in the European Parliament, in Brussels on '**Moving the EU enlargement forward – 20 years since the Thessaloniki Declaration**'.

The inter-parliamentary committee meeting will be structured into two sessions.

The first session will be entitled “**The cost of (non) enlargement**”. Since the 2003 Thessaloniki declaration, the prospect of the Western Balkans’ countries accession to the EU has been faced with numerous internal and external hurdles. The EU enlargement policy has been brought back to the centre stage by the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. Russian and Chinese interference in the Western Balkans and the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood poses an unprecedented challenge to the EU, which finds itself at a crossroads: either it seizes the momentum and pushes forward with its enlargement or it risks losing influence with potentially momentous geopolitical consequences that could be felt for generations. This exchange of views aims at discussing what are the actual stakes in the EU enlargement policy, what are the challenges it is facing and how it could help the EU to increase its relevance in its neighbourhood for the years to come.

In the second session, we will focus on “**Strengthening security and democratic resilience through the enlargement process**”. Despite the best efforts by the EU and those aspiring to become its future members, further enlargement has not materialised since Croatia joined the Union ten years ago. Political obstructions, lack of will, weaknesses in the rule of law, pronounced corruption and nationalist tendencies in the region have created weak spots, presenting opportunities to malign external actors to exert their influence and play up divisions in an effort to derail the accession process, weaken the EU’s standing and wield their own strategic and business interests. The session will look at the tools available to strengthen democratic resilience in enlargement countries and boost the conditionality of the enlargement process.

The event will be followed by a **working lunch from 12:30 to 14:00 for the heads of delegation**.

The final programme and practical details regarding the meeting will be forwarded in due course to the services of your Parliament responsible for relations with the European Parliament.

I hope you will be able to join us on 27 June in Brussels and look forward to a fruitful debate.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "David McAllister". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D'.

David McAllister