



European Council
Cabinet of The President

S&S 20 / 002325

Brussels, 10. 06. 2020

Dear Mr Goudriaan,

Thank you for your letter of 5 May 2020 setting out the position of the European Public Service Union on the European Union - Western Balkans Zagreb Summit, held by videoconference on 6 May 2020.

The Summit focussed on three core elements: cooperation to tackle the Covid-19 pandemic and its fallout, reaffirming the European Union's support for the European perspective of the Western Balkans, and reiterating the Western Balkans' continued commitment to European Union values and reforms.

As also pointed out in your letter, the Covid-19 pandemic requires urgent and concrete measures to support economic, political and social development. From the outset of the crisis, the European Union has been providing substantial assistance to the Western Balkans. At the summit, we also reiterated our commitment to further intensify our support to the Western Balkans' political, economic and social transformation.

Once we exit the immediate measures to contain the pandemic, a new phase of close cooperation to tackle the socio-economic impact of the crisis will follow. The European Commission was invited to come forward with a robust economic and investment plan for the Western Balkans region, aiming to boost the economies while improving their competitiveness, to better connect them within the region and with the EU. As a result, Western Balkans should be able to improve their business and investment climate, create jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities. Focus should also be put on the association of the region to the EU's climate-related agenda, as well as on social development, and in particular on areas of health, education, social policy, and on creating further opportunities for the youth.

Mr Jan Willem Goudriaan,
General Secretary of the European Federation
of Public Service Union

Let me underline that the European Union's engagement also entails the responsibility of the Western Balkans to reinforce their commitment to European values and principles, and to carry out and effectively implement reforms. As you also point out in your letter, fundamental values and principles, notably rule of law, independent justice systems and strong democratic institutions, are of key importance. In this respect, the increased EU's assistance will be linked to tangible progress in the rule of law and in socio-economic reforms, as well as to the Western Balkans partners' adherence to EU values, rules and standards. I welcome the fact that the Zagreb Declaration¹ reflects the commitment of the Western Balkans partners to the primacy of democracy and the rule of law, notably to the fight against corruption and organised crime, and to good governance.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'R' followed by the name 'Roux' in a cursive script.

François ROUX

Head of Cabinet

¹ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/43776/zagreb-declaration-en-06052020.pdf>