

To:

Ursula von der Leyen

President of the European Commission

20 March 2020

Dear Madam President,

First of all, we want to thank you for your leadership in these challenging times. It is important that we Europeans stand together and coordinate our responses to fight the Covid-19 pandemic as good as possible. However, we strongly believe that this should also include the six Western Balkan countries that need our solidarity now more than ever.

The recent restrictions on the export of medical equipment could have severe consequences for the Western Balkans. Health systems in these countries are generally weaker, which is why the citizens of the Western Balkan countries need enforced protection from the EU side. Therefore, we urge you to include all six Western Balkan countries in the EU+ export authorization scheme that currently covers the EU member states as well as Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. What is more, Western Balkan countries should also be able to participate in joint procurement of crisis-relevant goods.

The people of the Western Balkan countries feel and live as Europeans. The EU has repeatedly put the process of integration of the Western Balkans on hold. Nevertheless, these countries have supported us for years in matters of migration and other areas. Now it is our turn to show solidarity. The pandemic affects everyone, and the solidarity of all European countries can save lives.

We are confident that you will treat this matter seriously and wish you all the best for the difficult weeks ahead. Stay healthy!

Yours sincerely,

MEP Lukas Mandl

MEP Viola von Cramon-Taubadel

MEP Ilhan Kyuchyuk

MEP Andrey Kovatchev