



At the proposal of Malta, currently holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, members of COELA, Working Group of the Council of the EU on enlargement, as well as representatives of the EU Council and the European Commission are visiting Belgrade, from 28 February to 3 March 2017.

The EU Council's working group on enlargement comprises representatives coming from all the EU Member States, closely monitoring and directing the Republic of Serbia's accession process. The aim of the visit is that COELA members, in meetings with Serbia's top officials, be informed first-hand about the reform process Serbia has undertaken in order to accelerate its European integration, and also to discuss current issues related to the Republic of Serbia's EU membership talks. Considering that the goal of the Republic of Serbia is to open new negotiating chapters during the Maltese EU Presidency, the visit should be viewed as highly important in the context of Serbia's accession process as the country continues its constructive dialogue at meetings with a body which convenes on a regular basis, twice a week, to discuss Serbia's EU membership talks.

The comprehensive programme of the visit was made in cooperation between the Presidency of the Council of the EU (Malta), Delegation of the EU to the Republic of Serbia and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia.

During their stay in the Republic of Serbia, members of COELA will have an opportunity to exchange views with top executive officials – Prime Minister, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior, Minister of Justice, Minister of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, Minister without Portfolio responsible for European integration, Head of the Negotiating Team, Acting Director of the European Integration Office, Director of the Office for Kosovo and Metohija, State Secretary of the Ministry of Finance and President of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Members of COELA will also hold discussions with lawmakers – Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, and Chair and Members of the Assembly's European Integration Committee.

Seeing that economic reforms are a priority of the Government of the Republic of Serbia and that Malta has expressed particular interest for economy issues, meetings will also be held with representatives of international financial institutions, representatives of the civil society active in

these areas, as well as representatives of independent regulatory bodies and the National Convent on the EU.

A special segment of the visit will be focused on concrete projects in the Republic of Serbia realized with financial support from IPA pre-accession funds, both in Belgrade and eastern Serbia.

Taking into account that most of COELA members are staying in Serbia for the first time, the visit will present them with an excellent opportunity to, with the support of the Tourism Organization of Serbia, get acquainted with Serbia's tourist potential and taste national dishes, and take a tour of the most important cultural and heritage sites of Belgrade. In cooperation with local governments and tourist boards, trips to Golubac, Veliko Gradiste and Smederevo will be organized as well, where cultural landmarks of eastern Serbia and a broad variety of wines available in the Danube District will be presented to the European representatives.

The Republic of Serbia is grateful to the Republic of Malta, which during its first term as Presidency of the Council of the EU decided that it was our country in particular that COELA should visit, clearly demonstrating a stable dynamic in the course of Serbia's accession process, in which framework eight negotiating chapters were opened so far and two closed provisionally.

The Government of the Republic of Serbia remains committed to its goal – to achieve full membership of the European Union, and expresses its expectation that the accession process would be continued and accelerated in the coming period, where Serbia has high reform and administrative capacities.