

[Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe](#)

(Press Release)

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Liberals and Democrats call for fresh start for Western Balkans

A delegation from the ALDE Group in the European Parliament, led by Jelko Kacin (LDS Slovenia) and Diana Wallis, Vice-President of the European Parliament (Lib Dem, UK), hosted today a regional conference in of liberal democrats in Sarajevo, bringing together leaders and senior representatives from partner parties in all countries of the Western Balkans.

The aim of the conference is to examine how the reform process in the Western Balkans can be reinforced and consolidated and how the EU integration process can be speeded up. The results of the conference will be forwarded to the Western Balkans summit in early June in Sarajevo under the Spanish EU Presidency.

Diana Wallis, EP Vice-President (Lib Dem, UK) underlined that “We now need to reinvigorate the process under the new framework of the Lisbon Treaty. We must make it work for Western Balkans too”.

Jelko Kacin (LDS, Slovenia) stated that “What we are looking for are positive messages from Western Balkan countries. We need success in reforms to be completely implemented. This is why we have made it possible with common efforts.”

Norica Nicolai (PNL, Romania)

“I believe that the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina depends a lot on the respect of the main values of the EU and liberal values, and I hope that the Liberal Party of BiH will be an important player in the European future of the country. “

Pino Arlacchi (Italia dei Valori, Italy)

“The lack of EU accession prospects in the short term for many Western Balkan countries is an absurd paradox that is damaging both the EU and them. Already 20 years ago, all basic conditions existed for them to join the EU, with the exception of Albania”.

The conference will finish with adoption of The Sarajevo Declaration for a new start in Western Balkans by the Members of ALDE Group in the European Parliament and leaders of liberal and democratic parties of Western Balkans. The Declaration will reconfirm the commitment to make full EU membership a reality for all the countries of the region and the urgent need to expand visa liberalisation to all citizens of the Western Balkan countries to implement the necessary reforms and to combat organised crime and corruption.