

**Question for written answer E-001003/2018  
to the Commission**

Rule 130

**Svetoslav Hristov Malinov (PPE)**

Subject: Prospects for the Western Balkan countries' accession to the EU

In his 2017 State of the Union speech, Commission President Juncker said that the prospect of EU enlargement in the Western Balkans had to be maintained. On 6 February 2018, the Commission also presented a comprehensive strategy in its communication entitled 'A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans'. The Western Balkan countries' European prospects and their connection with the EU are high on the list of priorities for the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council. Accordingly, a summit meeting is to be held in Sofia in May, at which the EU and Western Balkan leaders will discuss the commitments they have entered into. Giving fresh impetus to reforms in the region is certainly vital, and the field in which reforms are most urgently needed is the rule of law. I would point out, in this regard, that when Romania and Bulgaria joined the EU they had not made the requisite progress on judicial reform or on combating corruption and organised crime. As a transitional measure, the Commission therefore put in place a special mechanism to support the two countries in catching up with the reform agenda.

I would therefore ask the Commission:

- (1) what substantive progress it expects following the summit meeting during the Bulgarian Presidency; and
- (2) whether it can confirm, as of now, that, in the case of the Western Balkan countries, it will not use an instrument similar to the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism for Bulgaria and Romania.