

**Question for written answer E-000005/2022  
to the Commission**  
Rule 138  
**Angel Dzhambazki (ECR)**

Subject: Statement by Olivér Várhelyi

Enlargement Commissioner Olivér Várhelyi took part in the summit on the Open Balkans initiative, which is better known as 'Mini-Schengen'. In a statement he declared his support for this project, and even called on Montenegro, Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina to sign up to it.

I would point out that there is also an EU initiative to create a 'Common Regional Market' within the framework of the Berlin Process. Besides this, the Western Balkan countries are party to the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA), which also ensures a high level of free economic interchange.

I think it is unacceptable for the Commissioner to express support for an initiative which is clearly leading to divisions and, at the same time, to serious concerns about the motives behind the project. Serbia, which has been the initiator and the main beneficiary of the development of this initiative, has for years been unable to continue on the path of European integration because it does not meet the criteria set, while an extension of its influence in the Western Balkans would create further destabilisation.

Can the Commission therefore state:

1. On what premises Commissioner Várhelyi has based his support for the Open Balkans initiative?
2. What future there is for the Berlin Process if the European Commission is supporting projects outside that process?
3. Whether projects linked to the Open Balkans Initiative will be financed through the EU funding allocated for the Western Balkans under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance?