

*José Manuel Barroso*  
*President of the European Commission*

13. 05. 2013

*Brussels,*  
*BARROSO (2013) 308871*  
*BARROSO (2013)*

*Dear Ministers,*

*Thank you for your letter of 6 March, about a possible further mechanism to safeguard the rule of law and EU fundamental values in Member States.*

*My last state of the Union address underlined the need to strengthen the foundations of the EU, such as respect for our fundamental values, for the rule of law and democracy. A better developed set of instruments should address such issues as an alternative to the 'soft power' of political persuasion and the 'nuclear option' of Article 7 of the Treaty.*

*To this end the Commission is using the tools at our disposal. The judicial scoreboard, adopted in March, and the anti-corruption report analysing the situation in each Member State, to be adopted before the summer, are both innovative new approaches. The country specific recommendations in the framework of the European semester also identify weaknesses in the efficiency of judicial systems and shortcomings on corruption which can have a direct impact on competitiveness.*

*In addition, the Commission continues its work under the cooperation and verification mechanism for Romania and Bulgaria, from which general lessons can also be learned.*

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*Dr Guido WESTERWELLE*  
*Minister of Foreign Affairs*  
*Germany*  
*Mr Frans TIMMERMANS*  
*Minister of Foreign Affairs*  
*The Netherlands*  
*Mr Villy SØVNDAL*  
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*We need to draw on the practical experience of these initiatives and the reaction to them in public debate, in the Council of Ministers and in the European Parliament.*

*A successful, new mechanism will have to be considered as legitimate and worthwhile by Member States, and a positive contribution to reform efforts. I believe we need to build this confidence over time. The Commission will in due time present its reflections on further instruments to ensure compliance with EU fundamental values.*

*Yours faithfully,*

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a vertical line on the left and a large, sweeping arch on the right.

*José Manuel BARROSO*