



Reykjavík, 13 March 2015

COMMISSIONER

Johannes Hahn
European Commission
Rue de la Loi / Wetstraat 200
1049 Brussels
Belgium

Dear Mr. Hahn,

We, the leaders of all the opposition parties in the Icelandic parliament, Alþingi, write this in order to clarify the status of the Icelandic application of membership of the EU.

The Government of 2009-2013 lodged an application to join the EU on the basis of a mandate given by the Alþingi in a resolution of 16 July 2009, with the support of MPs from all political parties. The accession process was slowed down two months before the elections in April 2013. The current Government then “paused” the accession process when it took office in May 2013 and stated that the process would not continue unless the people would decide so in a referendum. No such referendum has been held. The Government presented a proposal for a resolution mandating the withdrawal of the application to the Alþingi in February 2014. In spite of its strong parliamentary majority, the Government could not get the proposal passed in the face of widespread public opposition and calls by more than 20% of the population for a referendum to be held. The proposal was debated in first reading, but not passed to second reading by the Foreign Affairs Committee.

As a result, the only mandate approved by the Alþingi on the application remains the original mandate to apply for membership from 16 July 2009. The legal authority behind the application is therefore unchanged.

The letter by Foreign Minister Sveinsson of 12 March 2015 describing “the firm position of the Government that Iceland should not be regarded as a candidate country for EU membership“ has not been discussed with the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Alþingi, as is required by law for major foreign policy decisions. The letter has been kept secret from the public and not debated in the Icelandic Parliament. Therefore it cannot be considered to change the existing position of the Alþingi from 16 July 2009 and can only be considered to be a description of the political position of the current government.

The parties of the opposition have different views regarding membership of the EU. However all four parties agree that the letter in question cannot change the status of Iceland vis-à-vis the EU in line with the long-standing principles of the European legal order respecting the primacy of formal Parliament resolutions over simple government statements and that it is only for the Alþingi to decide to change that status.

Árni Páll Árnason,
Leader of the Social Democratic Alliance

Guðmundur Steingrímsson,
Leader of Bright Future

Katrín Jakobsdóttir,
Leader of the Left-Green Movement

Birgitta Jónsdóttir,
Leader of the Pirate Party