SO SIMILAR, SO DIFFERENT, SO EUROPEAN.

In the European Union (EU) there is no economy class; all countries must meet first class standards if they want to join. Currently Albania (A), Bosnia and Herzegovina (B), the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (C), Kosovo* (D), Montenegro (E) and Serbia (F) from the Western Balkans as well as Turkey (G) have a European perspective. In order to become an EU member state everyone must comply with the EU's high standards in a number of areas. This strict but fair way of doing things serves potential as well as current EU members.

Here are some examples of what needs to be done before joining:

1. STABLE AND MORE DEMOCRATIC.

Countries that wish to join the EU must have well-functioning and stable democratic institutions. They must respect human rights and fight corruption and organised crime. Safer and more stable neighbours are good news for citizens and businesses across Europe.

2. ECONOMICALLY SOUND.

Countries need to reform to ensure they have a functioning market economy, able to cope with competitive pressures. This contributes to growth and job creation, which expands opportunities for our companies, investors, consumers and tourists – in effect you!

3. IMPROVED QUALITY OF LIFE.

The EU is active in many areas of our everyday life from lowering roaming charges to raising food standards. Countries wishing to become members must be equally active and ambitious, which means we all get a fair and safe deal at home and away.

4. BETTER & SAFER CONNECTIONS.

The EU already ensures a high level of aviation safety and is aiming for the highest standards of transport safety in the world. The EU is working to improve the infrastructure network across the whole of Europe – connecting North, South, East and West.

5. CLEANER ENVIRONMENT.

Pollution crosses national borders. To become a member of the EU, countries must meet high environmental standards, meaning fresher air and cleaner water for everyone. Thinking of taking a dip this break? Luckily as a result of tougher environmental standards, Europe's bathing waters are of excellent quality and are getting cleaner still.

More information:
ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement

European Commission

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.