

OPINION

Open letter to president Juncker on the Dutch Ukraine vote

By **SAMMY VAN TUYLL**

HAARLEM, TODAY, 01:41

Dear Mr President,

On 6 April a referendum will be held in the Netherlands on the Association Agreement of the European Union and Ukraine. Although this referendum is not binding, an unambiguous outcome could hardly be ignored.

Last month [you said in an interview](#) in one of the Dutch newspapers that a 'no' vote in the Netherlands could "open the door to a major continental crisis". You therefore recommended to the Dutch voters to express themselves in favour of this Agreement.

Though many voters will approve of the Association Agreement itself – given the bilateral advantages – there is a fear in the Netherlands that this Agreement will be a first step towards full EU-membership of Ukraine.

In fact, the Association Agreement does not provide for future EU-membership of Ukraine and the preamble states that "this Agreement will not prejudice and leaves open future developments in EU-Ukraine relations".

In practice, however, an Association Agreement or another partnership with a European country is often a step towards candidate membership and subsequent membership.

Past experience shows that the Union often swiftly decides to enlarge, mostly without consulting the voters. It starts with a promise and before very long, the

promises made and the expectations raised make it almost impossible for the Union to back out. There are many examples. This explains the fear of many Dutch voters and the resistance to voting in favour of this Agreement.

It would therefore be helpful if this – in my view justified – fear could be removed as much as possible by an explicit declaration of the European Commission and of the Council that this Agreement is not a first step towards EU membership and that before any country is offered the prospect of membership, voters should and will be asked to express themselves first in the next elections for the European Parliament.

If such a declaration could be made, we can plainly declare ourselves in favour of the Agreement and Dutch voters will hardly have any reason to vote against the Agreement any longer.

If you are serious about what you said in the abovementioned interview, it would be helpful if you were to ensure that the Commission and the Council make such a statement well before the referendum.

Yours sincerely,

Sammy van Tuyll

Chairman Liberal Democratic Party in the Netherlands