

Question for written answer E-003769/2026
to the Commission
Rule 144
Erik Kaliňák (NI)

Subject: Associate membership, a status not recognised by the Treaties. Does the TFEU still apply to the Commission?

In her State of the Union address on 16 September 2026, the President of the Commission proposed opening the door for Canada to become the first ‘associate member’ of the European Union. However, the Treaties do not recognise such a status, and its specific details have not yet been defined. The Commission subsequently described the proposal as a ‘big, bold idea’ and stated that it would still need to negotiate its parameters with the Member States and Canada¹.

Article 217 TFEU allows the Union to conclude association agreements with third countries. However, under Article 218 TFEU, it is the Council which authorises the opening of negotiations on an international agreement and adopts negotiating directives.

In the light of the foregoing:

1. Does the Commission consider it to be compatible with the principle of conferral and the institutional balance for its President to publicly offer, before the plenary of the Parliament and in the presence of a foreign Prime Minister, a completely new category of relationship with the Union to a third country – a status not recognised by the Treaties, which the Council has not approved and which the Member States have not agreed to in advance?
2. On what specific legal basis, in the Commission’s view, is the proposed ‘associated membership’ to be established, given that such a status is not recognised by the EU Treaties?
3. Does the Commission perhaps consider that the Treaties do not apply to it and that exceeding its powers can be justified on the grounds that this is a ‘big, bold idea’?

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¹ <https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/media/video/I-294577>.