

Disappointing Progress of Bosnia and Herzegovina on the Path to Closer European Integration

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, met this morning with the Head of Delegation of the European Commission, Hansjörg Kretschmer, and officials from the European Commission in Brussels to review Bosnia and Herzegovina's prospects for European Integration. To their regret, the participants at the meeting were obliged to note that BiH has not fulfilled a number of conditions in the BiH/EU Road Map. Fulfilling the Road Map conditions is an indispensable precondition for the European Commission to launch a Feasibility Study assessing whether this country is ready to negotiate a Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA). SAA is the first step in the process of integrating with the European Union. The lack of progress on a number of items in the Road Map means that it is unlikely that the European Commission will be mandated to start the Feasibility Study.

At the Zagreb Summit in November last year, the BiH authorities firmly committed themselves to fulfilling the conditions outlined in the Road Map by 30 June 2001. They pledged their continued effort at the last EU/BiH Consultative Task Force meeting on 29 March 2001. Very little progress has however been made since, which is not only highly disappointing but also gives grave reason for concern. Important conditions have not been met. The adoption of the Election Law is the most visible example. The Civil Service Law, another important condition in the Road Map, which aims to create a professional and merit-based civil service in BiH based on best European practice, appears to have run into

problems at the level of the CoM. Other legislation related to economic reform, such as the Law on Competition and the Law on Consumer Protection, is still pending before the Parliamentary Assembly.

Other countries are moving faster – Croatia recently concluded negotiation of its SAA with the EU. The High Representative urges responsible politicians to straighten out their priorities and to increase their efforts to fulfil the conditions in the Road Map as soon as possible. Integration with Europe is the only way to improve the life of citizens throughout the country and should be pursued with unrelenting determination for the benefit of all citizens.