

BiH Dayton Project



EU Commissioner lauds BiH's "huge progress" on reforms

📅 December 6, 2023

After participating in Tuesday's European Union-Bosnia and Herzegovina High Level Political Forum in Brussels, European Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Olivér Várhelyi praised BiH's recent reform efforts, saying, "We see huge progress in the reforms." Várhelyi said that "of course we need further delivery for Bosnia and Herzegovina on the key aspects and key reforms. However, we also see that with this commitment and with this level of delivery we are ready to propose and recommend to the Council to open accession negotiations with Bosnia and Herzegovina."

Commissioner Várhelyi's full [remarks](#) are below.

Remarks by Commissioner Várhelyi at the joint press point with Borjana Krišto, Chairwoman of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, after the Second High-Level Political Forum between the European Commission and BiH

"Check against delivery"

Dear Prime Minister,

it is a pleasure to have you here today. The occasion was the second of our High-Level Political Forum. By now, I think it became an established point of reference when it comes to checking on the progress made by Bosnia and Herzegovina on its European path.

My first point would be to thank Chairwoman Borjana Krišto for her continued commitment, for the stamina with which she is getting out the work in the Council of Ministers and with which she has been able to turn the tide in Bosnia and Herzegovina together with the new political construction we have seen emerging after the elections.

Because last year you have seen we have proposed to grant candidate status to Bosnia and Herzegovina. The proposal and recommendation that was followed by the European leaders, and by now, I think, we are all, we are all convinced that this was the right choice to make. Because we see that this recommendation was not only followed by the leaders, but it has brought about results we have not seen in development, that we have not seen before in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We are convinced that Bosnia and Herzegovina can do more. We are convinced that Bosnia and Herzegovina can do better. And this is what this government led by Chairwoman Borjana Krišto has been actually doing and has been delivering.

We see huge progress in the reforms. We have seen new governments being set up at all levels, with budgets adopted rapidly with public commitment of all political parties to recognize the European integration as the sole strategic priority for the country. And this has brought also considerable results when it comes to the work in the Parliament.

We have seen laws passed about the judiciary reform, designating the Ombudsman as a national preventive mechanism for eradicating torture and prevention of torture; the law on foreigners; the freedom to access to information. And these are only a few examples the Parliament has already delivered based on all the proposals made by the Government. We have also seen the Europol contact point in full motion, and we have seen also a different approach when it comes to CFSP alignment or when it comes to following our EU foreign policy where we have a very high level of alignment on both sides.

Moreover, I think that very important political strategies have been created, also important part of the European path, I could mention the fight against money laundering, the action plans on migration and fighting terrorism or the implementation of the national war crimes processing strategy. I think that with these developments we see a major change in the approach. A major change in the working of all the institutions, and the functioning of the institutions throughout the country. And for these achievements I think we would all have to appreciate the dedicated work the government is doing for the country and in the country.

And I think that since we met last May it was for the first meeting, we can just enlarge this list of achievements and we have discussed with the Chairwoman and also the representatives what else could be done, what more could be done still this year.

Now, of course, we were very clear in our assessment this year in the enlargement report, that of course we need further delivery for Bosnia and Herzegovina on the key aspects and key reforms. However, we also see that with this commitment and with this level of delivery we are ready to propose and recommend to the Council to open accession negotiations with Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Once we have further progressed pretty much along the same lines that we have seen now being delivered. So I think the meeting has confirmed not only that at all levels of the state, from state government to the entities and the parliaments at all levels, but also to the canton levels – these priorities are shared.

Second conclusion I think we could draw is that they are not only shared but they are followed.

And the third one, is that everybody is willing and ready to work for these priorities.

So now we want to see even more being delivered by the country. So that the next time, should the Council follow our recommendation, the next time we are coming with an update on these developments, let's say in March next year, the Council can actually adopt the decision to start the actual negotiations with the country.

I think that this is very good news for Bosnia and Herzegovina. This has been a major encouragement also for us here in Brussels to see, that the work continues, the commitment is stronger than ever, and this is why we need everybody in Bosnia and Herzegovina now to deliver on that.

Thank you!

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