

BiH Dayton Project



Statement by EC President in Sarajevo

January 23, 2024

The EU published European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's [statement](#) at her press conference Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte, Croatian Prime Minister Andrej Plenković and BiH Council of Ministers Chairwoman Borjana Krišto. The text of the statement is below.

Statement by President von der Leyen at the joint press conference with Dutch Prime Minister Rutte, Croatian Prime Minister Plenković and Chairwoman of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina Krišto

23.01.2024

Thank you, Madam Chair, dear Borjana,

Thank you very much for having me in Sarajevo so soon again. It is a pleasure to be here. This time, I am here with Team Europe, with the Prime Minister of Croatia and the Prime Minister of The Netherlands. We had a very informative

and good meeting with the different authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

First of all, let me praise and thank Bosnia and Herzegovina for fulfilling and aligning 100% with the foreign policy of the European Union. This sends a very clear and strong message. Indeed, you have demonstrated your commitment to the EU accession path. This was one reason why in 2022, you successfully became a candidate country. This was a big step forward. And now, last December, the European Union has taken the historic decision to open accession negotiations once your country has sufficiently complied with the membership criteria. What does this mean? We have seen some progress. We have seen a real commitment to the accession goal with important laws adopted, for example, on the integrity of the judiciary. So you have shown that you can deliver if your country moves forward as one. The more you deliver, the more convincing you are, and the better it is, the more you help me to produce a report that reflects this movement forward. To be very clear: We all four here share the idea that the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina is in the European Union as a single, united and sovereign country. That is our common goal, and that is what we are working for. It is in Bosnia and Herzegovina's hands to embrace the path you have chosen. Let nothing steer you off course.

Today, we have discussed, with the different authorities, the next steps to take. There is more work to be done. We need to see progress, especially – and this means, adoption of laws – on the 'fundamentals' of the EU accession: That is democracy and the rule of law. It starts with the fight against money laundering, the conflict of interest, and for example the law on Courts. As you know, the Commission will report to the Council on the progress by March. And EU Leaders will then discuss on the basis of this report.

Besides that, today we have discussed intensively the Growth Plan. The Growth Plan is an offer of the European Union to integrate Bosnia and Herzegovina earlier, right now, into the Single Market. In other words, we open the doors in seven very important sectors of the European Single Market. This has to be accompanied with reforms – economic reforms for a level playing field. So it is in our common interest that our businesses do well.

These reforms can be accompanied by EUR 1 billion of EU investment, if done. So, it is a huge opportunity to increase the prosperity of this country. Specifically, if the Western Balkans develop their Common Regional Market. This will give a growth of GDP of about 10%. So if you organise your Common Regional Market and you have access to the Single Market, it is a big step forward for the prosperity of your country, and to create perspectives in the country for the youth.

And therefore, I want to emphasise that we have designed this Growth Plan in a way that no other Western Balkan country can block its neighbours. It is only your decision to move forward towards the integration of the Single Market.

We had many useful meetings today. And later, we will meet with representatives of the civil society who play an important role. And I am now happy to give the floor to my colleagues Prime Minister Rutte and Prime Minister Plenković.

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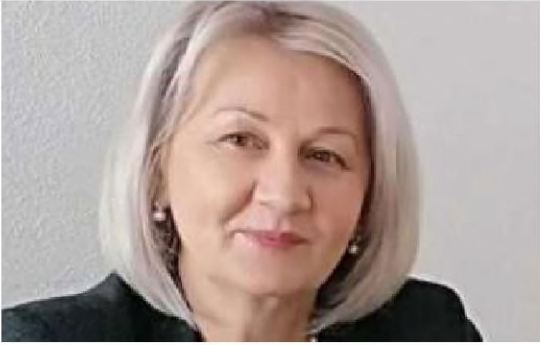
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