

BiH Dayton Project



Christian Schmidt is again trying to undermine BiH's EU integration

June 5, 2024

A *Euractiv* [article](#) last week based on an interview with Christian Schmidt, the German politician who calls himself High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), includes some revealing comments by Schmidt. Schmidt argues that BiH's accession process should be accelerated while, at the same time, undermining that argument by emphasizing that BiH does not deserve it. Schmidt told Euractiv that BiH's EU accession "is not justified, based on merit and facts."

The reality is that Schmidt has taken every opportunity to hamstring BiH's EU integration, sometimes by exaggerating BiH's problems, sometimes by downplaying BiH's progress on reforms, but most of all by manufacturing political crises through his own actions. For example, less than a week after the EU announced its decision to open accession talks with BiH, Schmidt, acting without any legal authority, issued an edict imposing 114 amendments to the BiH Election



Law. Schmidt acted despite having been warned against doing so by the EU, despite there being no exigency to justify such an order, and with the full knowledge that the edict would immediately plunge BiH into crisis.

Indeed, provoking a crisis was the edict's main purpose. Because the EU has made clear that the presence of a foreigner claiming dictatorial powers is totally incompatible with BiH's EU membership, every step BiH takes toward EU accession is a step toward ending Schmidt's despotic regime and abolishing the Office of the High Representative once and for all. That is why Schmidt has made himself the worst enemy of BiH's EU aspirations, creating crisis after crisis in order to derail them.

In his interview with Euractiv, Schmidt did make a rare acknowledgement that his edicts can have a downside, saying that "when there are too many of them, some people start to sit back and say: he'll do it for us if we can't do it." "That is not in line with the democratic principle," he added.

This formulation badly understates the corrosive effects years of edicts imposed by foreigners have had on BiH's governance. Such edicts, for instance, degrade BiH politicians' capacity for the give-and-take that is vital to any democracy. BiH's Bosniak politicians, in particular, have no incentive to compromise when they know Schmidt may well give them everything they want without the inconveniences of the democratic process.

Moreover, is not "too many" edicts that contradict the democratic principle, as Schmidt contends. Even a single edict is a terrible offense against BiH's people and its democratic constitutional order.

The Euractiv article rightly observes that Schmidt's "interventions with the country's rules have often been controversial, with the former German agriculture minister bringing little prior experience in diplomacy to the job." Unfortunately, Euractiv, like most news outlets, swallows whole Schmidt's claim to hold unilateral authority to impose laws and depose office holders. In reality, even if Schmidt were a legitimate High Representative (he is not because his appointment was never approved by the UN Security Council), the dictatorial authorities Schmidt claims are patently



illegal because they plainly violate BiH's democratic Constitution, the narrow scope of the High Representative's mandate under the 1995 Dayton Accords, and BiH citizens' human rights.

Still, Euractiv's article is useful for highlighting Schmidt's revealing comments.

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