



BiH Dayton Project



Soreca: The Country Report is BiH's guide to get over the finish line

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The EU Delegation to BiH published the following [column](#) by EU Special Representative Luigi Soreca.

The EU is preparing to accept new members. The Country Report is BiH's guide to get over the finish line.

For the first time in over a decade, the EU is making preparations to accept new members. EU enlargement is a realistic possibility within the next few years. The urgency of enlarging the EU to take account of geopolitical shifts and ensure peace and stability across the continent makes enlargement one of the EU's highest priorities. This is also underlined by recent visits to Bosnia and Herzegovina by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, European Council President Antonio Costa, High Representative/Vice President Kaja Kallas and Enlargement Commissioner Marta Kos.

There are clear frontrunners in the enlargement process. Montenegro has set a target date for concluding its accession negotiations by the end of 2026. Albania has set a

target for the end of 2027. Bosnia and Herzegovina, despite the enormous potential of this country, has still not formally started the accession negotiations process.

The Report on Bosnia and Herzegovina in yesterday's Enlargement Package noted some positive steps, including the adoption of legislation on data protection and border control, as well as the signature of the Frontex status agreement, which has resulted in over 100 officers from Frontex's Standing Corps arriving in Bosnia and Herzegovina to support the Border Police of BiH. Nonetheless, the overall picture for 2025 was one of a lack of progress. The Report should serve as an essential guide that can help Bosnia and Herzegovina to make up for lost time. There are some signs that in the coming period Bosnia and Herzegovina might be able to adopt the Law on HJPC and Law on Courts and appoint a Chief Negotiator and negotiating team, enabling the organisation of the first Intergovernmental Conference to launch the accession negotiations.

As HR/VP Kallas noted yesterday while presenting the enlargement package, joining the EU remains a fair, tough and merit-based process. The HJPC Law and Law on Courts will need to be adopted fully in line with European standards, notably the Venice Commission recommendations, as well as the recommendations of the European Commission.

When it comes to the appointment of the Chief Negotiator and negotiating team, as with all other countries conducting accession negotiations, this is a decision for Bosnia and Herzegovina to be made in line with the Constitution and applicable laws. For the EU, what is most essential is that Bosnia and Herzegovina has a solid interlocutor with the European Commission. To do this, the Chief Negotiator and negotiating team need to be able to speak on behalf of whole country with one voice and be operational i.e. have the resources, capacity and knowledge to effectively lead Bosnia and Herzegovina's negotiations with the EU.

The first EU-BiH Intergovernmental Conference could be organised before the end of the year if all conditions are fulfilled. The situation we would like to avoid is one where the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina lose time in 2026, just when other countries in the region are using their time productively to make the final steps to join the EU.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has a complex governance structure requiring coordination and harmonisation of often diverging policy stances. As a result, decision making often takes more time. While ensuring that governance structures allow discussions from different perspectives to take place and compromise solutions found, it is also crucial that Bosnia and Herzegovina has more functional democratic institutions that are able to take decisions in a smoother manner.

One of the reasons why we are so eager to formally launch the process of accession negotiations – other than that it would be a step forward towards EU membership – is also that this is an opportunity to discuss in a comprehensive and structured manner Bosnia and Herzegovina's governance structures with greater support from the vast range of expertise that exists across the European Commission. The accession negotiations framework, with its methodology of negotiating clusters and chapters offers the best way to support the country establish more functional democratic institutions that allow the country to succeed as well as rightfully take its place in the European Union.

By agreeing on the Reform Agenda for the Growth Plan in September, Bosnia and Herzegovina's authorities demonstrated yet again that when there is political will, it is possible for the country to make negotiated, consensus-based win-win solutions that benefit everyone living here. Only a few steps are left to formally launch the accession negotiations that should have a transformative effect for the functioning of Bosnia and Herzegovina's institutions. The time is now to make them.

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