

Article by Christian Schwarz-Schilling, High Representative for BiH “Beyond zero-sum politics”

You don't have to be bright to know what you want – a child knows what it wants. But it takes imagination to understand what other people want. The history of former Yugoslavia is littered with failed politicians who only knew what it was they wanted.

Focusing exclusively on your own aspirations is a sign of weakness. It absolves you from having to reconcile your interests with the interests of others; it removes the obligation to seek outcomes in which both sides win. But in a functional democracy that is the only way to get what you want – by ensuring that the others get what they want too.

This capacity to understand what others want and to find creative ways to reconcile different aspirations is the key to prosperity and security in the Western Balkans and to full membership of the European Union and NATO.

When I hear politicians reiterate impossible demands I hear the sound of failure. If the failure were their own it wouldn't matter. However, they do not have the right – after so much pain, and after so much has been achieved to recover from that pain – to fail their citizens again.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, we have seen a great deal of political grandstanding in recent weeks. I hope in the coming weeks to see more strength and more imagination. I believe a majority of citizens share that hope.

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