

# New Year's message by High Representative Christian Schmidt



High Representative Christian Schmidt extends his best wishes for 2023 to all people in Bosnia Herzegovina.

“Behind you is a turbulent year with intense public discussions and a general election. An exciting and promising new year is in front of you. The European Union has granted the EU Candidacy Status for Bosnia Herzegovina. Though some die-hard sceptics tried to water the importance of this step down, I am convinced: this is a unique opportunity. The swift formation of governments on all levels would show that it is possible to achieve goals, and offer a clear sign that at least some politicians are willing to seize this opportunity and work to advance the country on the path towards membership in the European Union.

Indeed, there is still a long journey ahead, embracing EU standards, aligning policies, and strengthening the functionality and accountability of institutions, but a crucial milestone has been achieved.

After decades of broken promises and disappointments, there is momentum. Seize this opportunity. BiH can and will be part of the European family. That is where it belongs. Progress can happen if the necessary reforms are implemented, and the time of blockades is over for good. Remember, no one has the right

to block the future of this country and its citizens.

In this context, I am pleased to say that the integrity of the election process has been improved, though it is still far from perfect. The purpose of my decisions was to contribute to this improvement, and to make sure that voters and the choices they made on the ballot are respected.

Other improvements are yet to be introduced, such as new technologies that will ensure faster vote counting and help prevent election fraud.

Most importantly, measures must be introduced to enable citizens' participation, especially youth participation, in the work of institutions and the decision-making process. The basis for this in the FBiH has already been provided in my decisions in October. Institutions on other levels should follow suit.

I am convinced that most people in this country are tired of the cliché of BiH as a chaotic, dysfunctional Balkan state. Now BiH has the chance to show that it can do better. My message to the people of BiH is: make your politicians keep their promise to shape a country that is worth living in, give your children a perspective, a reason to stay, and a real opportunity to thrive and prosper.

Sretna vam Nova godina!"