

Real Debate and High Voter Turnout Can Restore this Country's Fortunes



Bosnia and Herzegovina's European future is there for the taking – but it hasn't been taken, and citizens should demand to know why, High Representative and EU Special Representative Valentin Inzko said in Banja Luka yesterday.

"This country's European future means moving toward the kind of prosperity that EU member states have been able to achieve," the HR/EUSR said during an address to members of the European Academy.

The HR/EUSR stressed that implementing the European agenda is not the difficult option for Bosnia and Herzegovina: "Not implementing that agenda is the difficult option."

He rejected the claim that moving towards Europe means giving up prerogatives. "Joining the EU means acquiring the same personal and political guarantees that are enjoyed by 500 million EU citizens," he said. "Joining the EU means enjoying the same human rights, the same civil rights, the same protection under the law as 500 million EU citizens. Joining the EU means gaining – not losing – security, stability and prosperity."

"I believe there is an overwhelming majority in support of returning to the European road. It is the road we *can* return to. But for that to happen, the issue of how best to lead the way into Europe has to be placed at the centre of the campaign

debate – and that is why the next two weeks are so crucial.”

The HR/EUSR said that during the campaign he would “articulate principles – not support parties” and that he would work to ensure that citizens have access to the facts. “There are two weeks until polling day – two weeks that will affect the destinies of millions. This is a serious business and it cannot be conducted through party slogans and nationalist mantras. It needs serious debate. It needs real analysis.”

“Citizens often complain that they don’t vote for any party because ‘they’re all the same,’” the HR/EUSR concluded. “Actually they’re *not* all the same. Some will get back on the road to Europe and some will not. More people will vote if they sense that they have a real choice. If they want a European future then they must take an active role in making it happen – and that means casting a ballot.”