EU takes centre stage in BiH public debate

The European will be the focus of public debates in Bosnia and Herzegovina next week, as part of a stronger engagement of domestic forces and the European Union in realizing BiH's ambition to join the EU.

On Monday, EU Defence and Foreign Affairs Ministers are expected to issue conclusions on the situation in BiH and the EU's future engagement in the country. The following day, senior European officials will arrive in Sarajevo to share the expectations of the EU and the experiences of other countries in the EU integration process with parliamentarians in BiH.

Among the expected participants of a one-day conference entitled **"Parliament for Europe"** are the Director for the Western Balkans in the European Commission's Directorate General for Enlargement, Pierre Mirel, and Slovak parliamentarian Eduard Kukan, who was his country's Minister for Foreign Affairs during the key period (1998-2006) of Slovakia's accession to the European Union.

Young people from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, (the former Yugoslav Republic of) Macedonia and Serbia will gather in Sarajevo on Wednesday for a two-day regional conference about youth policy and the participation of young people in public life. They will be joined by representatives of government institutions with responsibility for youth issues, youth and students councils, political parties and

international organisations.

The debates will focus on the participation of youth in decision-making and strengthening their capacities to play an active role in society. In particular, the conference will address the position and status of young people in the process of EU integration, and their contribution to further democratization of the countries in the region through political activism and civil society pressure.

Representatives of the **NGO sector** from across Bosnia and Herzegovina will meet on Thursday with the most senior officials of the European Union in BiH to define guidelines for joining efforts on the road towards the EU.

“A pro-European engagement by all sectors of society in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the perfect answer to the challenges ahead of the BiH authorities. We have been encouraging all domestic actors for a long time to take an active part in the process of European integration, and the coming days are the best opportunity for them to prove that they are ready to assume a leading role”, High Representative and EU Special Representative Miroslav Lajčák said, stressing that he would personally take part in all the announced events.

Citizens will be able to follow and comment next week’s events and their outcome through the website www.reci.ba.

Over the last few months, Miroslav Lajčák travelled to 17 cities across BiH to speak directly to citizens and encourage all sectors of society to get involved in the process of EU integration. The events next week are the result and continuation of those debates.