



Schwarz-Schilling: Europe's Doors are Open

Twelve years after the end of the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the peoples of this country face many of the same challenges faced by citizens of Western Europe in 1957, when they had just embarked on what was to be the longest and steepest development curve in economic history, the High Representative and EU Special Representative, Christian Schwarz-Schilling, wrote in his weekly column, which appeared today.

"Today, in Bosnia and Herzegovina the circumstances are difficult indeed," Mr Schwarz-Schilling wrote in *Dnevni avaz*, *Nezavisne novine* and *Večernji list*. "But much has been done to get the underlying framework for prosperity and security in place."

He warned that: "Some people, including senior politicians, seem to believe that the Euro-Atlantic integration project cannot succeed because of the disagreements, distrust and recrimination that have, unfortunately but understandably, been a continuing by-product of the war that ended a dozen years ago."

And he pointed out that: "These people may be too young to remember the distrust and recrimination in the rest of Europe after the cataclysm of 1939 to 1945. I'm not."

"The statesmen who launched the EEC half a century ago were able to see beyond their immediate difficulties to the prospect of a prosperous and secure future. That's what the leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina have to do today, building on the progress that has been made since 1995."

"The founders of the EEC responded to the massive – sometimes almost insurmountable – challenges facing them, with common sense, with enlightened self-interest, with imagination, and with optimism," the High Representative/EU Special Representative continued.

"If the leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina can start showing these qualities – and I believe that they can – this country can embark on the same kind of rapid development that was experienced by the European Union's founding members in the 1960s and more recently and at even greater speed by the latest group of countries to join. History doesn't just happen – it has to be made."

Mr Schwarz-Schilling reminded readers that when EU Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn visited Sarajevo last week he stressed one crucial fact, namely that the European Union's doors are open to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

"The European Union has marked out an accession path clearly, and it has assisted – and continues to assist – Bosnia and Herzegovina with active and detailed material, technical and political support so that it will be able to follow that path," Mr Schwarz-Schilling wrote, adding that Commissioner Rehn also made clear that: "It is up to this country's leaders to traverse that path."

The text of the High Representative/EU Special Representative's weekly column can be accessed at www.ohr.int and www.eusrbih.org.