

Reforming for a European Future



The accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the European Union on 1 January is the realisation of a long-term political goal for both countries – a goal which most of their citizens view as a guarantee of future peace and prosperity – that should also act as a spur to the politicians and citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina to carry out the reforms necessary for this country to follow rapidly along the same path, the High Representative and EU Special Representative, Christian Schwarz-Schilling, wrote in his weekly newspaper column.

“The reforms that Bosnia and Herzegovina is being urged to make will deliver real benefits, Mr Schwarz-Schilling wrote in his column, which appeared in *Večernji list*, *Nezavisne novine* and *Dnevni avaz*. “If fundamental changes are successfully introduced in the economy, the judiciary, the police service, the armed forces, the public broadcasting system and elsewhere, so as to meet EU standards, the people of this country can expect to reap the kind of benefits that citizens of the European Union already enjoy.”

The High Representative and EU Special Representative pointed out that integration has had a profound impact on all the countries that today make up the European Union and it has helped create unparalleled peace, prosperity, and opportunity. “Those of us who experienced Europe’s darkest days and have since lived long enough to see the European Union grow to include countries that used to

be part of the Eastern Bloc understand how far and how fast societies can move when they are on the right track, he wrote.

Mr Schwarz-Schilling illustrated the growth potential by describing Ireland's transformation from one of Europe's poorest countries in the early 1970s to one of the richest by the late-1990s. "The Irish economic miracle began with the reforms that were an EU accession requirement and gathered momentum as EU funds were poured into modernising the country's infrastructure, followed in turn by huge inflows of European and US investment," he wrote. "This is model that Bulgaria and Romania are now utilising – and one that Bosnia and Herzegovina can utilise as well."

"This country too can make rapid progress and have its own economic miracle, Mr Schwarz-Schilling concluded. "But this will only come to pass, if Bosnia and Herzegovina's elected representatives use the coming months to focus on the reform agenda and secure a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the European Union, the first rung on the ladder to eventual membership."

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