

Interview: Werner Wnendt, Senior Deputy High Representative for Dnevni List

Dnevni List: To your opinion what is the main obstacle for BiH's faster entrance to the EU?

Werner Wnendt: Main problems are in the areas of economy and the rule of law. BiH must undergo serious reforms in the fields of fight against the crime and corruption. A lot of funds go into hands of criminals instead teachers, pensioners, health workers and other vulnerable social groups. In order to combat this you need a reform of judiciary which is able to support the fight against crime and corruption. European taxpayers are not willing to give their money if all the money here is not properly collected. For the purpose of the most efficient tax collection we are also undergoing the reform of the tax system in BiH.

Cost of administration here is very high. Administration is inflated and I am not sure that the citizens are getting the best for what they pay when we speak in terms of efficiency and professionalism.

Also, Defense reform is underway where there is a goal to have a efficient state level command and control of the armed forces which would make BiH a credible candidate for NATO Partnership for Peace Program.

Since you are coming from Mostar let me tell you that solution of the Mostar issue i.e. making of the new City Statute is also an obstacles on BiH's road to Europe. Parallel structures and waste of money in a huge ineffective administration will not help you join the EU. Equal opportunity for everybody must

be guaranteed.

Dnevni List: When it is about functioning of the authorities and the state institutions, what kind of BiH IC wants?

Werner Wnendt: I think here we have a match of what the BiH citizens want and what the EU wants. We all want a self sustainable and prosperous BiH which provides its citizens with European living conditions, good schooling for their children, good health system. What we all want is further development of the democratic processes and respect of the highest individual and collective right of all its citizens. I am positive that we have a match here with all the BiH citizens.

Dnevni List: When do the negotiations about Mostar Statute start and does the eight principles given by the HR still remains in force?

Werner Wnendt: I will start from the end by saying that 8 principles remains. My understanding was that all the relevant political figures that HR met last week in Mostar understand this fact. Also I would not call this negotiations. What we have in the next couple of weeks are consultations with all key political players in Mostar in order to find a solution. As you most probably recall the HR has said that we are in the listening mode trying to help Mostarians in finding of the compromise. Compromise foresees pain, giving up and confidence building measures and above all sincerity to find a solution for the benefit of Mostar citizens. Again let me mention the necessity of equal opportunity which must be guranteed on local level.

Dnevni List: If political parties in Mostar do not agree on unification of the city, will OHR impose the solution?

Werner Wnendt: I would not get at this stage of consultation into speculations what might or might not happen but I can tell you this question will not remain unresolved.

Dnevni List: Since the new school years starts in 20 days and Mostar Gymnasium due to poor condition and solving of its status is not ready to receive students, will this question be postponed for the next year?

Werner Wnendt: We are fully aware of the conditions of the Gymnasium building, and many other issues that will have to be resolved when it comes to Mostar Gymnasium, but what is important is that there is good will and full understanding that it is about european standards, and that the process starts as soon as possible, hopefully before the 1st September. Dragging the feet concerning this issue is not helpful for solving other essential questions in Mostar."

Dnevni List: Since you are coming from the country with developed democratic system, do you support right that professors and students in Federation and in BiH work and learn on their mother tongue? By mixing Bosniaks and Croats in Mostar Gymnasium into joint classes would produce violation of rights on use of Croat or Bosniak language?

Werner Wnendt: It is a rather complex issue. I am not an expert in Bosniak and Croat Language but I have learnt that Bosniaks and Croats are very well able to understand eachother when everybody speaks his or her own language. Do you know how for example a Norwegian and Dane are talking to eachother: Both speak their own language and they are having hardly any problem. In Germany we have dialects, which are rather different and we consider these differences as cultural wealth.

What we need is the show of the good will and immediate initiating of the process that will bring recognizable european standards into the schooling system of BiH. We need more faith into the process and less politicizing, because everyones individual and collective rights will be respected. Bringing of the european standards is also respecting these rights.