

A False and Damaging Dichotomy



The EU has delivered security and prosperity to 500 million people by developing a free and vibrant single market and an open society protected by the rule of law, the High Representative and EU Special Representative, Valentin Inzko, told a conference on the BiH business environment yesterday.

However, he warned that some senior politicians and party leaders see the process of consolidating the BiH Single Economic Space – which is a key element in both the Dayton Peace Agreement and the EU accession process – “as an option rather than an imperative.” The HR/EUSR noted that these people “seem to imagine that Bosnia and Herzegovina can climb out of recession on the back of a divided internal market and a fractured business code.”

Calling for the speedy passage of the BiH Law on Obligations and the modernisation of the Banking Supervision system, he pointed out that both of these reforms, which will help attract investment and create jobs, could be done before the October elections.

“Most people – and certainly every BiH citizen who is looking for work – would view the ensuing job-creation benefits as an unanswerable argument for getting on with these reforms,” he said. However, “routinely, we hear that – given a choice between ethnic security and prosperity – a majority of citizens would choose security. But this dichotomy itself is false, and unspeakably damaging. Because modernising the commercial law and the banking supervision system so as to help consolidate the Single Economic Space, attract

investment, create jobs and take a step closer to EU membership cannot reasonably be presented as 'giving something up.' It constitutes, instead, a sensible step towards the greater security and prosperity of everyone living in Bosnia and Herzegovina."

The HR/EUSR said "the arguments for a sensible approach to improving the BiH business environment are compelling," and in an election year could be made "irresistible." Implementing these reforms, he added, "will pave the way for what could be a rapid economic recovery, so that prosperity is not needlessly deferred for another three and a half years."

The full text of the HR/EUSR's speech can be accessed at www.ohr.int and www.eusrbih.eu