

# Inzko meets Amato: Bosnia and Herzegovina has its place in the European Union



Despite being amongst only a few countries that have a clear perspective of becoming full members of the European Union, Bosnia and Herzegovina has not yet given appropriate weight to this strategic objective, High Representative and EU Special Representative Valentin Inzko and former Italian Prime Minister and Chairman of the International Commission on the Balkans Giuliano Amato stressed during a meeting in Sarajevo today. They noted that other countries in the region are already making huge strides towards Brussels, and that BiH must now allow itself to fall behind its neighbours.

The European Union has numerous times stressed its commitment to Bosnia and Herzegovina and the whole Western Balkan region, and this is good, but it is also high time that political leaders in BiH translate their declarative support for EU membership into a concrete and mutually agreed action programme, which will speed up their country's progress, both interlocutors agreed.

The High Representative and EU Special Representative warned that "you cannot build democracy on an empty stomach", explaining that it is difficult to convince citizens of the European future of BiH without a tangible economic recovery and the resolution of basic social issues in the country. "This is why the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina must

continue to carry out reforms and adopting European standards, not for the sake of the European Union, but for the sake of their citizens. Reforms are indeed a condition for EU accession, but their primary goal is to improve the living conditions and rights of citizens", Inzko said.

Inzko and Amato stressed that it is important to bring the European Union closer to ordinary citizens, because recent polls have shown that many citizens are not aware of the concrete benefits of EU membership. "Media and civil society have a key role in informing citizens and including them in the process of EU integration and we will continue to support their efforts in this respect", Inzko said. In cooperation with youth, civil society and media representatives, the EU Special Representative in BiH is conducting a series of activities aimed at motivating citizens to take an active part in the EU integration process.

Giuliano Amato is in Bosnia and Herzegovina to take part in tomorrow's session of the "Parliament for Europe", at which he will discuss EU-driven economic reforms with parliamentarians from across BiH.