OHR BiH Media Round-up, 26/3/2006

RADIO HERCEG-BOSNA (18,00 hrs)	**TV PINK** (18,00 hrs)	**BHT 1** (19,00 hrs)
Strike in HNC schools	BiH Presidency session	Presidency adopted amendments
BiH Presidency on const. changes	"BiH and EU integration" conference	SDS Main Board in session
US Embassy on const. changes	HR on civic sector	Critics against new electricity prices
Main SNSD Board on const. changes	Halilovic signed Declaration in ZG	Reactions of citizens to new prices

NTV Hayat (19,00 hrs)	**FTV** (19,30 hrs)	**RTRS** (19,30 hrs)
BiH Presidency on const. changes	Presidency adopted amendments	BiH Presidency session
A colloquium in Italy	US Embassy on Presidency's decision	Podzic on BiH Army
HR on election campaign	HR at conference on civil society	Dodik on police reform
BiH parties on electricity prices	New employment programmes	SDS on "Privredna Banka Serb SA"

Oslobodjenje	[Electricity prices to increase:] Businessmen angry, citizens confused
Dnevni Avaz	[ESI Director] Knaus: EU's perception of crime in BiH is wrong
Dnevni List	Police detained 40 minors [*juvenile crime*]

Vecernji List	Police detained 43 minors [*juvenile crime*]
Nezavisne Novine	Copic again in Krupa [*monument of writer Branko Copic returned to his home town*]

Constitutional changes

BiH Presidency adopts draft constitutional amendments, sends them in the parliamentary procedure; Chair Tihic: Changes are in best interest of all, including Croats	**RHB, PINK, RTRS** – The BiH Presidency on Saturday adopted draft constitutional amendments in accordance with an agreement reached by seven political parties late last week, and sent them in the parliamentary procedure. BiH Presidency Chair, **Sulejman Tihic**, told the press conference that he in next 8 days he would meet with the leaders of the political parties which took part in negotiations to agree further steps that need to be taken so that the BiH House of Representatives could adopt the amendments in time and so that the amendments could be applied immediately after general elections scheduled for October. **FTV** – "*This is an important step forward. This strengthens the state's powers and establishes a more rational and effective authority*," Tihic told the press. He also voiced confidence that those who were reserved on the agreement or openly criticized it would change their minds after reading the amendments. **Hayat** – Hayat comments that there is a possibility for the amendments to be rejected in the Parliament following the announcement of five Croat HoR deputies opposing the agreement, however Tihic said he believes these changes were in best interest of Croats as well. "*I believe that Croat representatives, after gaining insight in the agreement would realize that they will not be brought in a worse position and that we all gain something [by it]*", said Tihic. **BHT 1** also commented that dissolving the HDZ-DC Caucus in the HoR in a disapproval of the constitutional changes is potential large problem for the agreement to be adopted. HoR should open a debate next week, and the public debate should last at least 15 days, after which HoR should ratify the amendments. They will go into force if they are endorsed by a two-thirds majority of deputies taking part in the vote. In order to be applied in October, the amendments must be declared by 4 May, when elections have to be called. **Dnevni Avaz** pg 2 'Proposal of amendments to the Constitution submitted to the Parliament' by Aj. Delic, **Oslobodjenje** pg 2 'Improvements of Dayton solutions', **Nezavisne novine** pg 3 'Amendments to the Constitution sent to the Parliament', **Vecernji list** pg 2 'Position of Croats will not be endangered', **Dnevni list** pg 2 'Destiny of the Constitution in hands of parliamentarians', inset 'Croats will not be in worse position' – also covered.

US Embassy welcomes Presidency's decision to send amendments to parliament	**RHB, BHT1, RTRS, Dnevni Avaz** pg 2 'US Embassy welcomes BiH Presidency's decision', **Oslobodjenje** pg 'Decision welcomed', **Dnevni list** pg 3 'US Embassy welcomes Presidency's decision' – The US Embassy to BiH welcomed the BiH Presidency's decision to sent draft of the constitutional amendments strengthening the BiH Council of Ministers and the state Parliament to the Assembly for adoption. It also welcomed the process of creating the new Constitution, which will solve important issues such as harmonization of BiH policies on the human rights with the European and international standards. **Hayat, FTV –** It was also announced that the Embassy and the Venice Commission would soon give detailed comment on the issue.
SNSD Main Board endorses agreement on const. changes	**RTRS, RHB, Dnevni Avaz** pg 2 'SNSD deputies will vote in favor of changes', **Oslobodjenje** pg 3 'Votes for constitutional changes', **Nezavisne novine** pg 3 'Police reform must be returned in the framework' – At session held on Saturday in Banja Luka, the SNSD Main Board supported the agreement on constitutional changes in BiH and asked its representatives in the BiH Parliament to vote in favour of the amendments to be proposed. **BHT 1** – SNSD leader **Milorad Dodik** commented he believes there is enough time for the proposed amendments to the BiH Constitution to be endorsed by all sides.
SDS Main Board endorses const. changes, asks its reps to support it	**BHT1, RTRS –** At the session held on Saturday, the SDS Main Board supported the agreement on constitutional changes in BiH and asked its officials in the BiH institutions to support the amendments to the BiH Constitution. **Dnevni Avaz** pg 2 'RS must remain the constant' – Cavic added that the RS, as an entity in BiH, is unchangeable constant in all potential new negotiations. **Nezavisne novine** pg 3 'Amendments to the Constitution sent to the Parliament' – also reported.

SBiH founder Silajdzic and SDA leader Tihic clash over const. changes; Patriotic Block to use all means to prevent amendments adopted; Over 28,000 viewers support Silajdzic's stances	**Hayat** by Senad Hadzifejzovic – In a debate organized by Hayat, the SDA leader **Sulejman Tihic** and SBiH found **Haris Silajdzic** clashed over the agreement on the constitutional changes in BiH. Commenting the accusations that singing such agreement was an act of betrayal, Tihic said that he has not understanding for irresponsible, narrow-political statements. He underlined that anything is better than the existing situation, pointing out to the positive sides of the agreement which including the function of the BiH President with authorities to bring independent decisions except in defence issues. Silajdzic on the other hand said no BiH citizen was going to take a rotating President seriously, and accused Tihic of depriving citizens of their right to elect the President directly. Tihic answered stating that when it comes to the state authorities situation has been very much improved in all fields. Silajdzic answered all this was agreed long time ago and continued heavily criticising Tihic for accepting entity vote in the parliament. SBiH founder pointed out the main problem was existence of the entities, claiming the agreement has only further strengthened them. Asked whether current situation in Kosovo could influence BiH, Tihic said that the state should be strengthened before the final decision on the Kosovo status so to be ready for any possible turbulences. Silajdzic said that Kosovo issue should have been solved first to avoid BiH facing pressure in terms of the constitutional changes, as two issues were being brought into connection. Tihic denies any connection Kosovo status could possibility have with BiH territorial integrity. At the end, Tihic called on Silajdzic to accept the agreement, since it was a huge step forward, to which Silajdzic answered that the Patriotic Block [SBiH, SDU, BOSS] will use all means to prevent its adoption. He concluded that the agreement made him bring decision to engage in politics again by creating a political block which would prevent similar things from happening. **NOTE**: Over 41,000 viewers voted during the debate. Tihic won 12,928 votes, wile 28,121 votes were in favour of Silajdzic's stances.

SBiH, BOSS, SDU organize public debates claiming const. changes are against BiH interests	**FTV –** The representatives of SBiH, SDU and BOSS parties stated at the public discussion held in Gradacac on Friday that the current changes of BiH Constitution are against the interest of BiH, nothing more than cosmetic changes agreed in conspiracy. **Dnevni Avaz** pg 2 'Halilovic: BiH is still a hostage of the RS' by A. Hadzic – The public debate was also held in over packed hall of Tuzla's Bosnian Culture Home, where SBiH leader **Safet Halilovic** strongly opposed the changes.

Other political issues

HR Schwarz-Schilling at conference on civic society calls on NGOs to make political leaders accountable	**Hayat, RTRS, RHB, PINK, Dnevni Avaz** pg 4 'Election campaign is about bread and salt', **Oslobodjenje** pg 3 'Make political parties and leaders accountable', **Nezavisne novine** pg 3 'Citizens must engage politically', Dnevni list pg 4 'Role of civic society is specially important in election year'**–** The Regional conference on civil society organized by the Heinrich-Boell Foundationwas held in Sarajevo on Saturday. Addressing the conference, the High Representative **Christian Schwarz-Schilling** said "*it is the role of civil society to hold political parties accountable, therefore articulate NGOs are essential.*" The October Elections in BiH will be conducted without a safety net, the High Representative said. **FTV** – "*The IC isn't going to step in and fix things on behalf of local politicians. Those who are elected have to agree on constructive policies. If citizens want more constructive politics than they have seen until now, they will have to become politically involved, either in political parties or in non-governmental organizations*." He called on civic groups to ensure that campaigning is fair and transparent and substantive. "*Politicians must be asked to explain what they are going to do and – equally important – how they are going to do it*," he said. CSS added that the economic, social and political steps being negotiated in the Stabilization and Association process, including implementation of the police reform and the establishment of a viable Public Broadcasting System as well as full cooperation with the ICTY, represent a useful core for any political manifesto. **BHT 1** – BiH officials at the conference also pointed out to the important role civil sector should have in improving democratic values, however noted that the citizens are still passive, in fear of the governmental institutions.

SDS Main Board discusses financial options to take part in upcoming elections	**BHT 1** – At the session held on Saturday, the SDS Main Board discussed difficult financial situation of the party following the court ruling ordering SDS to pay out the debts in amount of 1,9 million KM to the Privredna Bank East Sarajevo. SDS President **Dragan Cavic** stated that the Board will hold special session to discuss finances, related party's options for taking part in the upcoming general elections and the way SDS is to act politically in the ambience of "*visible discriminatory and tendentious pressure*" which threatens democratic and legal status of the party. **RTRS –** SDS has no resources to meet the obligations toward the PBES, and this issue raises a question whether SDS would register for October elections. Cavic comments: "*All these pressures, especially decision by the High Representative which stripped SDS of 1,5 million KM ……and this decision on PEBS…, put us in the position in which we have no resources at our disposal for more then two years*." **Nezavisne novine** pg 3 'On elections by 20 April' – The extraordinary session should be held by 20 April.
SNSD leader Dodik demands police reform to be returned in the framework of Agreement	**RTRS, Dnevni Avaz** pg 2 'SNSD deputies will vote in favor of changes' by Srna, **Nezavisne novine** pg 3 'Police reform must be returned in the framework' – SNSD leader **Milorad Dodik** demanded the police reform process to be returned within the framework of the Agreement on the Police Reform. "*If the Directorate for the Police Reform doesn't bring decisions through consensus, i.e. if decisions are made by over voting, that would be the violation of the Agreement*," stressed Dodik.

DA int with SIPA Deputy Director Lisak: 'Those satisfied with the current police structure are living in past'	**Dnevni Avaz** pg 5 'Those satisfied with the current police structure live in past', mentioned on cover, by Edina Sarac – In an interview to DA, SIPA Deputy Director, **Sead Lisak**, talks about results the Agency has achieved since the establishment adding that the investigative capacities in a fight against organized crime, crime, terrorism and money laundering would increase soon. Asked about the latest session of the Police Reform Directorate Steering Board, Lisak as a member of the body expressed his regret the session did not result with the agreement on the police structure models: "*This is one of the key proposals the Steering Board would have to harmonize. I hope we will do this very soon. The idea is to implement reform by stages, region by region.*" Asked why the last session was not successful, Lisak said that the problems lies "*in state of mind of some individuals or groups using every moment… to fulfill some things of their personal interest.*" Lisak concludes stressing the importance of the reform: "*Some are satisfied with the current police structure, but those are people living in the past. The future is in new and function police structures in interest of citizens*."

ESI Director Knaus: EU's perception on crime in BiH is wrong, more diplomacy/ lobbying needed; EU parliament member Pack: No diplomacy can help if Constitution remains same	**Dnevni Avaz** cover splash, pg 3 'Knaus: EU's perception on crime in BiH is wrong' by T. Lazovic – Director of the Berling based independent think tank, European Stability Initiative – ESI, **Gerald Knaus**, told that the BiH authorities must do more the remove the imagine of the country swamped by the organized crime deeming such perception of BiH was the biggest obstacle to bigger EU's confidence towards the state. "*Situation in BiH is far better than as perceived by the EU*," adds Knaus underlying diplomatic activities and lobbying must intensify. Knaus also believes that the launch of SAA talks have improved the image of the country to some extent, as well as the appointment of **Christian Schwarz-Schilling** as the HR. The President of the European Parliament delegation for SEE, Doris Pack states to DA that commends the good work of BiH Embassies in EU and Chief SAA negotiator **Igor Davidovic** stating that BiH internal issues prevent more stronger contacts with EU. Both Knaus and Pack commended the agreement on the const. changes, with Pack adding that no diplomatic activities can make up for deficiencies of Dayton 's Constitution.

Official procedure of establishing 'HDZ 1990' to start on Monday?; HDZ demands reps to return mandates to party, Raguz rejects	**Dnevni Avaz** pg 4 'Martin Raguz definitely establishes new party with his allies' by F. Vele – The deputy speaker of the BiH House of Representatives an former HDZ Presidency member **Martin Raguz** confirmed for DA that new party, HDZ 1990, would be established very soon expecting that official procedure to commence possibly on Monday. This initiative is a follow up to the announcement made on Friday that the BiH HoR reps Raguz, **Vinko Zoric**, **Martin Raguz**, **Filip Andric** and **Ivo Lozancic** dissolved the HDZ-Demo Christians Caucus and continued the work in as the Croat Caucus. Raguz claims the new party would definitely have "HDZ" in its name, but HDZ BiH stresses that the name is copy righted. Zoric dismisses this adding in this case HDZ in BiH would not exist as HDZ in Croatia was first established. HDZ Spokesperson **Miso Relota** refused to comment abolishment of the HoR caucus. He adds that he posses information that the initial board of the new party held the session, and concludes HDZ BiH expects from mentioned representatives to return their mandates to the HDZ BiH claiming party won them and not the individuals. **Dnevni list** pg 3, mentioned on cover, 'Politicians fall before Bishops' by I. Glibusic – "*Those who remained deaf for Bishops should be concerned for their political future, and [should reconsider] whose interests they articulate and for whose they mean to fight for*," stated Raguz. Commenting Relota's statement, Raguz rejected possibility that the HoR MPs would return their mandates to HDZ stressing that both current and the new Election Laws mandate belongs to the individuals not the party.

VL: HDZ BiH to face strong fall down in number of its supports at upcoming elections	**Vecernji list** pg 2 'Voters abstinence brings HDZ down' by Zoran Jurilj – VL writes that inter-party conflicts, lack of consistency in political stances, strikes of teachers in Herzegovina and the dispute with Bishops over constitutional changes brought HDZ BiH in the position to expect the strong fall down in a number of its supporters at the upcoming elections. Article carries that according to the UNDPs latest survey, Croat voters are indifferent towards the elections much more than Serbs or Bosniaks, and even Croat opposition parties mark very small support which may not be enough to reach 3% election threshold. The member of BiH Presidency, **Ivo Miro Jovic**, in a statement for VL expressed skepticism towards such surveys conducted by the international organizations, adding that every elections are marked with voters abstinence but concluding that he is certain Croats would prove at upcoming elections they can take their destiny in their hands. Otherwise, says Jovic, Croats will be doomed on immigration and business collapses.

Economic issues

Aluminij director strongly criticises FERK's decision on electricity prices increase: real increase is 19,5%	**BHT1, Dnevni Avaz** pg 8 'Electricty for Aluminij is 19,5% more expensive', **Dnevni list** pg 3, mentioned on cover 'Aluminij ceases production?' – Director of Aluminij from Mostar, **Mijo Brajkovic**, strongly opposed the FERK decisions to increase electricity prices adding the company would have to postpone projects worth millions of KM which were supposed to employ large number of people. He adds that the electricity will be 19,5% more expensive, and not 6% as announced. **Oslobodjenje** cover splash, pg 3 'Businessmen angry, citizens confused' by H. Arifagic – Daily mostly criticizes the fact that FERK failed to harmonize the prices in territories of both Elektroprivredas.
VL: FERK deceits citizens, price increase 18,3% not 6%	**Vecernji list** pg 3 'Deceit by FERK: Electricity more expensive for 18,3% not 6%!' by Zoran Kresic – VL also claims that the price increase in total will be much larger than FERK explained to citizens, calling this a deceit. Author says that the business could face even 26% of price increase.
SDP , SDU oppose electricity price increase	**Hayat –** Several opposition parties in BiH, including the SDP, demanded for the decision not to be implemented noting that the BiH citizens have already suffered a lot following the VAT introduction. **Dnevni Avaz** pg 8 'Increase of electricity prices must be prevented' – SDU against FERK's decision. **Oslobodjenje** pg 3 inset 'Citizens are already at the edge of existence' – SDP opposed decision.

FERK: FBiH Govt recommended price increases	**BHT 1** by Martina Kristo Antelj – The decision of the Federal Electricity Regulatory Commission (FERK) to increase electricity prices for approx. 6% as of 1 April caused a number of negative reactions. FERK claims the increase is justified by great losses of both electricity distribution companies in FBiH, and its official **Risto Mandala** explained the decision followed a recommendation by the FBiH Government which is a majority share owner in both Elektroprivreda BiH and Elektroprivreda Herceg Bosna. BHT 1 comments that most affected would be big companies.
DA op-ed slams FERK for decision, failure to harmonize prices in both Elektroprivredas	**Dnevni Avaz** pg 3 'Electricity impact as of 1 April' op-ed by Adi Hadziarapovic – Commenting the announcement of electricity price increase in FBiH as of 1 April, the author notes that the citizens have not yet recovered even from the VAT related increases. DA notes that introduction of the VAT already increased electricity price meaning this is another in three-months period, both for about 6%. It strongly criticizes FERK's failure to harmonize summer and winter tariffs in both Elektroprivredas. Very negative of the FERK, editorial concludes: *"Who cares about very possible social turmoil… as long as budgets and state monopolies have more money on their accounts than every before?"*

DA: IMF warns BiH authorities of fictitious exporters claiming tax return	**Dnevni Avaz** pg 9 'We carry out strengthened control of new exporters' by T. Lazovic – DA learns that the IMF delegation visiting Sarajevo warned the BiH authorities that the significant increase of expert noted in the first months following the VAT introduction could indicate existence of fictitious export. IMF believes that this could be financial fraud in which larger export is being register in order to ensure large sum of tax returns. CoM Chair, **Adnan Terzic**, comments for DA that the authorities are aware of this possibility thus *"we did not need IMF's suggestions."* Terzic adds that the institutions carry out strengthen control of new exporters. **BHT1** – features IMF and BiH institutions information on VAT impact in BiH largely differ. IMF claims that the prices marked large increase while the CoM Chair **Adnan Terzic** claims anticipated chaos has not occurred and adds price increase was below expectations.