

# Rethinking the International Community's Approach

*Remarks by the High Representative Valentin Inzko at the  
Conference of the Parliamentary Committees of EU Member States  
Maintaining Momentum in the EU's Enlargement and Neighbourhood  
Policy*

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## Rethinking the International Community's Approach

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by thanking the organisers of this conference for drawing up an extremely well-planned agenda and bringing together participants whose various roles make it possible to have an informed and productive exchange of ideas.

I think this reflects the character of the Irish Presidency, which has been very businesslike and has at the same time fostered the sort of creative debate that can help resolve longstanding problems, not least those we face together on our continent in our own backyard.

### **A specific mandate**

I would say that Bosnia and Herzegovina is a specific case. My mandate is also a specific one. It is defined by the Dayton Peace Agreement and supported by a series of UN Security Council Resolutions. This mandate includes interpreting and overseeing the implementation of the Peace Agreement, which contains the country's constitution, as well as coordinating the work of the International Community.

In recent years, the OHR has, however, stepped back. We have given center stage to the European Union and we have a very

energetic and new EU Special Representative. Peter Sorensen. My friend and I are trying to increase the Brussels presence and decrease the Dayton presence. I would really like to say once more in public that I appreciate Peter Sorensen's enormous commitment, skill, assistance, good will and energy which he is bringing into his job as EUSR.

Of course, our mandates are different. I have a Dayton mandate and a UN mandate. He has a mandate of 27 countries. But I think there is a lot of complementarity and a lot of synergy.

### **Enlargement strategy**

When we speak about EU Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy in the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina:

- we must speak in terms of a tailored and targeted strategy for this country that circumvents and eliminates, unique obstacles created by the country's recent history;
- we must also keep in mind that the country's EU path is a strategic objective endorsed by European Union and repeatedly confirmed;
- Bosnia and Herzegovina's successful integration will yield benefits not only to the country, but also to the people of Europe: It is, in fact, an EU foreign-policy success waiting to happen.

### **A special case**

However, in my view, Bosnia and Herzegovina is a special case. Of course, everybody would say: "My country is a special case." But I think Bosnia is indeed a special case. So let me assess this quickly.

Today, Bosnia and Herzegovina is equipped with a number of modern institutions; it has a stable currency, one of the most stable in the region. It has an overhauled code of civil and criminal law. It has now what it did not have after the war –

a common flag, a common anthem (we still do not have lyrics but we have a common anthem), we have a Border Police etc. So it is important to continue on this path, especially continue the Euro-Atlantic path, and it is important not to re-open old questions which have been solved in the past, like the question of territorial integrity or sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The negative developments are the result of an unwillingness, or an inability on the part of the political establishment to change its mindset and its approach to politics. Their priority is power – of course this is a priority of every politician, but it is only power and there is no sense for compromise, for dialogue, or for tolerance, which were the founding policies of the European Union.

Is there an alternative to such politics? Yes there is, and we don't have to look very far to find it. When High Representative Catherine Ashton secured the landmark Serbia-Kosovo agreement in April, the stakeholders had to overcome an extraordinary number of political obstacles and they jettisoned an immense amount of historical baggage.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina the obstacles are not as great and the baggage is not as heavy.

Therefore, I am asking you: Which is easier to solve: the Kosovo-Serbia question or, for example, the City Council question in Mostar.

Or which is easier to solve: the Kosovo question or the Sejdić-Finci issue in Bosnia and Herzegovina?

Clearly, the immediate challenges facing BiH politicians are, relatively speaking, modest and easier to solve.

The same goes for registering ownership of military property, the only task that still has to be completed before Bosnia and Herzegovina can begin participating in NATO's Membership Action

Plan.

The BiH challenges are easier to overcome – but BiH leaders have resolutely demonstrated that they do not *want* to overcome them.

Failure has not happened by accident. It has happened by design.

This is a country whose people want to join the European Union but whose leaders are much more ambivalent or just pay lip-service.

And that is what makes it a special case.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina the views of the people and the views of the leadership diverge and there is a huge gap between the people and their leadership.

A successful enlargement policy has to take this divergence into account.

### **Rethinking our engagement**

I think we also need to reconsider our approach in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and you know that Stefan Fuele made some very good remarks in the European Parliament on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May. He said that we have to recalibrate our approach. The Irish Minister of State for European Affairs Lucinda Creighton has also echoed this approach.

The question is, however, how to recalibrate this approach?

I think we have to reconsider our policy of the last seven years and we have to find new ways how to approach this issue in Bosnia and Herzegovina. One of them is the recent development when thousands of citizens came out onto the streets of Bosnia and Herzegovina to express their anger at the absence of competent, honest or effective government.

The thousands who came out onto the streets two weeks ago and who may very well come out onto the streets again in the weeks to come were predominantly young and forward-looking – the very people who have grasped and embraced the fundamental European values of transparency, accountability and inclusiveness. These wonderful people have left politicians flatfooted and speechless. We should factor this fully into our approach and bring to an end an approach that has allowed obstructionists to maintain the perception that they are part of the solution and partners of the International Community.

I ask myself the question, can somebody who repeatedly advocates policies that go against European values be a partner for the EU?

### **A foreign-policy success**

The EU's breakthrough in the Serbia-Kosovo dispute has rightly been attributed to the decisive political engagement of High Representative Ashton.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina today, I also believe that success can be achieved only through a creative and stronger political engagement, with clear conditions and benefits explicitly based on European values – the values that are fully understood by the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina if not yet fully understood by their leaders.

What is abundantly clear to me, after four years in the job, is that Bosnia and Herzegovina cannot integrate into the EU if mainstream politicians inside the country are seeking to drive it toward disintegration. This is a fundamental point on which we must take a stronger stand. You cannot integrate into Europe, but disintegrate at home. This is not acceptable.

When rethinking our strategy, we should consider a number of tools for pushing change more forcefully, while still maintaining the central role of the institutions of the European Union in the country. These might include some or all

of the following:

- Linking financial assistance policies more closely to political progress.
- Confronting more directly political parties and actors who block or undermine reforms and who promote division;
- Preventing a roll-back of previous actions by reaffirming the role of the OHR and EUFOR in maintaining the progress achieved in the post-Dayton period;

Ladies and gentlemen, in five days or 120 hours the EU will be enriched by a new member. Zagreb and Dubrovnik will be even more European. And I am pleased that two former foreign ministers of Croatia are here with us, Tonino Picula and Gordan Jandroković, who have both made a tremendous contribution to this enlargement. With Croatia's membership Bosnia and Herzegovina will have 1,000 kilometres of direct European borders. And the EU is now knocking on the door of Bosnia and Herzegovina, literally. On the other side, Serbia is making tremendous and courageous progress towards EU candidacy, and Montenegro has already closed two chapters in the EU negotiation process.

The region is moving and we have the best regional situation in the last 20 years – a unique chance for regional cooperation but also for regional reconciliation. With this optimistic note I would like to close, hoping also all the best for the wonderful people and citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina.