

The BiH Council of Ministers fails to even discuss the Law on the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, is concerned that the Council of Ministers has today failed to put the Law on the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina on the agenda for today's session.

The Court of BiH would give potential investors confidence by ensuring that there is a legal institution which can settle matters of foreign trade, an issue that is constitutionally the competence of the state. The court would also give BiH citizens a means to seek legal redress in matters such as passports, ID cards, illegal immigration, human trafficking and inter-Entity crime. Again, all these issues are, under the constitution, the competence of the State of BiH. The draft law ensures that the Court of BiH will not interfere with the work of the entities.

The new chair of the Council of Ministers, Martin Raguz, despite being informed personally this week by the High Representative and his Principal Deputy, Ralph Johnson, of the importance of this law, did not even put the draft on the agenda of the Council of Ministers. This is despite the draft being approved by a working group of the Council of Ministers own Ministry of Civil Affairs and Communications.

The troubling state of the economy indicates how important bringing investment to BiH is. Each delay in bringing this law delays foreign capital coming to BiH. Furthermore, the EU's Phare program has promised a donation of 1 million Euro's to help set up this institution. By putting off this law until

next year these funds will be lost. This means that the establishment of the Court will be delayed and also sends the signal to already disillusioned donors that BiH is not interested in reform. The law is also a requirement for BiH's entry to the Council of Europe.

The High Representative feels that it is high time the joint institutions started to act in the interest of the people they are supposed to represent. Polls show that citizens are more interested in jobs than nationalist rhetoric and all parties have stated that they wish to improve the dire economic situation in BiH. On this issue BiH's representatives can show that this is more than just an empty promise.