

BiH DAYTON PROJECT



Bosnia sets local polls for October 4, but Mostar excluded again – Reuters

May 7, 2020

BiH's Central Election Commission said Thursday that BiH will hold local elections on Oct. 4 but that Mostar will be exempted again.

The deadlock in Mostar, divided between Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims) and Croats since the end of Bosnia's 1992-95 war, stems from the authorities' failure to enforce a 2010 constitutional court decision on power-sharing there.

The European Court of Human Rights ruled last October in favour of a Bosnian opposition politician who had sued the state for failing to hold local elections in Mostar.

[Read more here.](#)

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Várhelyi: "Against all odds, the COVID-19 pandemic cemented EU ties with the Western Balkans"

May 7, 2020

The EU Delegation to BiH posted a [blog entry](#) by Neighborhood and Enlargement Commissioner Olivér Várhelyi. The text is below.

Blog by Olivér Várhelyi, Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement: "Against all odds, the COVID-19 pandemic cemented EU ties with the Western Balkans"

07.05.2020.

Blog by Olivér Várhelyi, Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement

In May, the Croatian capital Zagreb was due to host the European Union – Western Balkans summit where the leaders were among others meant to endorse an economic and investment plan for the region. This plan is one of the three strands of the new approach the European Commission developed for the region, to complement the first two: the revised methodology for EU enlargement, which the Commission put forward in February to bring credibility back to one of the most important EU policies, and the decision to open the accession talks with Albania and North Macedonia, endorsed by the EU leaders in March, together with the revised methodology.

COVID-19 pandemic did not throw this carefully laid out plan around: it did not change our aim, ambition nor determination. This could have easily happened: the pandemic hit the European Union and whole continent hard and caused an unthinkable loss of life. The Commission took extraordinary measures to support and assist the Member States in addressing the crisis, to save lives, protect health systems and mitigate the socio-economic impact. But at the same time the Commission was clear that the pandemic can only be defeated with global action and by working with partners.

Nowhere was this more obvious than in the Western Balkans, a region at the heart of Europe and entirely surrounded by the EU Member States. The Western Balkans was the first region where this thinking also became action. After initial difficult first days, the Commission took concrete measures already in the second part of March to provide support to all the partners in the region – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia. The measures covered support for immediate needs as well as economic recovery, and financially they are now unparalleled with €3.3 billion of grants and loans.

This unprecedented solidarity did not end there: given its European perspective, the EU is treating the Western Balkans as privileged partners by granting them access to many initiatives and instruments for the Member States. We invited the governments to join the EU's procurement agreement for medical equipment, exempted the region from the export authorisation, while the green lanes to facilitate transport of goods were extended to the borders with the region and within it. The region is associated to relevant EU health bodies and negotiating countries will be able to benefit from the EU's solidarity fund. At the same time, the EU appreciated the support it got from the Western Balkans partners with medical personnel and equipment.

The Zagreb Summit now went ahead as a video meeting, but it did happen. We entered this crisis together and we should come out of it together. We will support the region's economic recovery that will at the same time bring the partners closer to the EU. Our economies are closely integrated, and the economic and investment plan now due in the second part of this year will be even more important. Its aim will be to spur the long-term recovery, modernise the economies, boost growth, support the

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reforms needed on the EU path, and hence start closing the development gap and bringing the benefits to the people faster.

The plan will focus on connectivity, in particular in transport and energy, and on economy that works for people, also through digital and green transformation. In the coming weeks and months, the region can inspire this plan by putting forward concrete plans and ideas, and by working together closely. Regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations will indeed be key for the economic recovery. So will the continuation of the reforms, which means not just adopting legislation, but actual implementation of measures taken. Focus on the rule of law, functioning of democratic institutions and public administration needs to continue.

Together we will overcome this crisis and come out of it stronger: the COVID-19 pandemic confirmed clearly that the future of the Western Balkans is in the European Union. We have made important steps this year despite the pandemic and we need to continue to build on them for a truly united European continent.

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Dodik backs joint declaration of EU and Western Balkans countries – SRNA

May 7, 2020

BiH Presidency Member Milorad Dodik expressed his support Wednesday for a joint declaration of the European Union and Western Balkans countries, emphasizing the importance of Europe and its partners demonstrating unity at the time of the huge health, economic and social crisis resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The holding of a conference regardless of the current situation shows that there is no crisis which can prevent sincere partners from talking about models of their future cooperation,” Dodik said.

The Serb BiH Presidency member thanked the European Union for the aid it provided to all the countries of the Western Balkans in the fight against the coronavirus and for the financial support to the economic recovery after the pandemic, says a press release from the office of the Serb member of the BiH Presidency.

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EU aims to reassure Balkans with virus aid, economic support – AP

May 7, 2020

EU leaders on Wednesday emphasized that six Western Balkans countries have a future in the EU and offered them new financial assistance to deal with the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the roughly two-hour video-conference, the Europeans focused in on the 3.3 billion euros (\$3.6 billion) in emergency coronavirus funding that it recently granted the six as they look to burnish their credentials as far more worthy partners to the region than Russia.

* * *

But the leaders signaled that more is to come. "Once we put behind us this immediate phase of the coronavirus crisis, the European Union will accompany the longer-term recovery with an economic and investment plan," von der Leyen said.

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