



On the lessons from the EU decision to open negotiations with Turkey and Croatia

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If the negotiations were not **opened** last week with Turkey it would have been a disaster. EU would have been in an even deeper crisis and the voices would have raised to say that enlargement is stopped. The fact that the enlargement continues is for the Balkans a very positive message. The second positive message is that enlargement does not seem to keep Heads of states and governments off starting negotiations with the country of 70 million people. This should be a positive message for Macedonia with 2 mil people and all the WB. Unfortunately there is a third message. Unless you have very powerful friends inside the EU you are not going to make progress. Is not enough just to meet the standards. We will see how serious the EU is when it comes to the decision on Macedonia in December. That would be the real test to see whether the EU applies consistent standards or you need friends that lobby for you. Croatia started negotiations because one EU member state, with the support of others which were less visible but there, made this a condition. This is not unusual for the EU that it has not made explicit the trade. The EU functions because there are trades which are not always explained to everybody. But in this case it was too obvious. It is unfortunate because there are strong arguments why it is good to start negotiations with Croatia now and with Turkey. But the fact that Croatia and Turkey are dependent on each other that is just the reality of EU politics.

Do we assist to a big step forward of the WB towards the EU?

I would be cautious. I would say that we will know only after December. There are two sets of statements from EU institutions and governments. They say the enlargement has not changed, the standards are the same, the door remains open for the Balkans. And this is particularly the Commission. I'm convinced that they say what they believe. But there are member states who say something very different. Turkey and Croatia had promises before, but now we need to stop and make a pause. The decision on Macedonia, whether it will receive candidate status and whether it will receive a date for negotiations or at least a very credible process on how to get to the date, this decision will tell the rest of the Balkans if the door for the Balkans remains open for the next few years. If Macedonia, the most advanced country that has done most to implement the Ohrid Agreement, is not receiving this status and it is blocked because of the internal debate of the EU and if EU says we need to block Macedonia because of the enlargement fatigue among our people but

we start negotiations with Turkey, all of Macedonia is half the size of Ankara, that this will be perceived in the region as the EU abdicating of its responsibilities. And would be very unfortunate.

On the name issue for Macedonia

Most people are tired of this issue and tend to think – let's focus on relations and leave this as a bilateral issue between Greece and Macedonia. This I think will not work for a very simple reason that we saw last week. Countries need strong sponsors. If you look from Skopje's perspective and look who could sponsor Macedonia, the sad truth is the country that has the most reasons to do that is Greece. The name issue prevents Greece to play for Macedonia the role that Austria played for Croatia. For that reason it does matter enormously to find a solution. I understand people in Skopje who say "we don't have problem, it's a Greek problem". But I don't think any more that this will be sufficient. On the other hand, for Greece to risk the coherence of its Balkan policy because of unwillingness to accept a reasonable proposal from the UN is also a big risk. I hope there is intensive engagement to find a compromise. Perhaps one of the ways will have to be a Greek promise to Macedonia, openly or secretly, that Greece will be playing that role that Austria played for Croatia. That would be constructive. Many people in Skopje believe that Greece will not block in December. I agree but I don't think this is enough. You don't need countries just not to block, you need countries who want you to be a candidate. Proactive countries. If Greece does not block you will have a lot of countries in Europe, and I think really this is the most likely outcome – you know if the Council was to say ...today they would just say let's take a break. In this situation what Macedonia needs is what Croatia had, a very small number of countries with interests there to say no we will not postpone, we want this to be resolved. If you don't have those allies the likely outcome is postponement. So Macedonia not only needs countries not to block but countries to actively support.

On the situation in Serbia Montenegro

The EU started negotiations with a country most people expect will fall apart next year or at least to have a serious crisis in the spring. What we see is a tension in approach between the European Commission who wants a serious process to discuss with the government about standards. And then you have member states who think this is a political issue. These two approaches would clash. I fear that this could make the conclusion of SAA with Serbia and Montenegro extremely difficult. I hope

EU finds the way to minimise the risk and to do what it does best despite political problems. The big problem is that the EU is in danger of entering of gloomy period about Europe. They say we don't know what Europe is about, we shouldn't take decisions and the bizarre thing in that pause of reflexion is that it does not stop the EU on issues like Turkey. It might stop the EU to have the right policy in the WB. So for the second time after the 90s you would have an EU introspective debate about the future of Europe. In the 90s the Balkans were the victims. It wouldn't be as dramatic as it was the last time. But I think it is unfortunate. The EU, if it wants to be serious actor, can not afford to run away from its responsibilities in the WB. On the contrary it is only in the Balkans that it can prove that it has a foreign policy.

On the ESI proposal for financial assistance for the WB – IPA (Instrument for Pre-Accession) – lack of Balkan lobbying

There is a lively debate but not broad enough. The idea we put was that tools of assistance should be the same for Bosnia and Serbia Montenegro as they are for Turkey and Croatia. The argument was gaining support among people who work on the Balkans. The difficulty is to convince people that work on the budget but not on enlargement. In order to reach this people you need lobbying. The Balkan is not very good at lobbying. I haven't seen a joint letter from presidents or PM's of the region pushing for IPA nor any activity in Brussels or member states. Obviously there is lot of informal talk./ But this is not sufficient. On the other hand I haven't seen someone saying that our proposal on IPA can not be done. It is more a sense of passivity. There is an opportunity on continuing making the case on the part of WB. If we want the WB to be up to the same standards and submitted to the same discipline as Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey, it is absurd to have the EU building up institutional capacity and strength of the agro-industry in Anatolia and not in Vojvodina or Bosnia and Herzegovina.