

## **Füle laments Bosnia's lack of progress**

**Euractive**

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Enlargement Commissioner Štefan Füle told the representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo yesterday (27 November) that they have not been able to honour their main commitments for the country's progress towards EU integration.

### **Background**

The European Commission presented on 10 October the "progress reports" on the nine countries on their way toward EU accession - Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Iceland, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey.

Croatia, Turkey, Macedonia, Montenegro, Iceland and Serbia are candidate countries, whereas Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania and Kosovo are considered potential candidates. Croatia is due to join the EU in 2013.

The big laggard in the group is Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the Commission notes that governance reforms are stalled.

Diplomatic language appears to indicate that the EU seriously doubts that the main ethnic entities - Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks - are interested in pursuing a common future.

"A shared vision among the political representatives on the overall direction and future of the country and its institutional set-up for the qualitative step forward on the country's EU path remain absent," the Commission said.

"There is still no political agreement on the implementation of the Sejdić/Finci ruling. A model for a coordination mechanism of all levels of government in EU matters has not been submitted. It is clear that this will delay the EU integration of your country," Füle said in a Commission communiqué.

The Sejdić-Finci case lodged with the European Court of Human Rights in 2006 revealed that Roma and Jews were prevented by the Constitution and the country's electoral law from being candidates for the presidency and parliament solely on the ground of their ethnic origin.

"Let me recall that the implementation of the Sejdić/Finci ruling is necessary to eliminate the discrimination against minorities. A credible application for EU membership cannot be submitted before this is done," Füle said.

Bosnian wanted to apply for EU membership last summer, but was discouraged from doing so by Commission until there is a constitutional overhaul. It is seen as the laggard among its Western Balkan neighbours in the queue for EU membership (see background).

At the end of the 1992-95 war, Bosnia was split into two autonomous regions linked by a weak central government, the Federation, dominated by Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims) and Croats, and the Serb-dominated Republika Srpska.

The European Parliament rapporteur for the Western Balkans Eduard Kukan (EPP, Slovakia) recently told EurActiv that the question of whether Bosnia and Herzegovina could survive, or have a viable development with its present constitution, was "very, very pertinent".

“There are not many optimistic signs coming from the country that this would be possible,” the MEP said.

Füle repeated that the Commission saw no obstacle to Bosnia and Herzegovina going through the long accession process as a country with a decentralised structure.

“The only prerequisite is trustful and effective coordination of all levels of government according to their constitutional competences. Achieving this goal is the task of your institutions and of the leaders of the political parties,” he said.

The Commissioner cited the lack of coordination and the unclear division of responsibilities as one of the main reasons why agricultural goods of animal origin cannot be exported from Bosnia and Herzegovina to the EU – including to Croatia as from 1 July 2013.

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