

TASK FORCE TAKES STOCK OF ZAGREB'S WAR CRIMES COOPERATION

European Report
September 21, 2005

Austria is pushing for the start of accession talks with Croatia as other members of the EU task force looking at the candidate country's war crimes cooperation maintain they want to see more from Zagreb. That was how EU diplomats summed up the latest task force meeting held on September 18 in New York. This reportedly brought together senior officials from past, current and future EU presidencies (Luxembourg, UK, Austria and Finland) and the European Commission. Croatia's EU membership negotiations are to be opened once the country is deemed to be fully cooperating with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague.

ICTY chief prosecutor Carla Del Ponte is expected to visit the region at the end of September, and one EU source said there was likely to be another task force meeting held between that visit and the next scheduled meeting of EU Foreign Ministers on October 3. Croatia now looks likely to feature on the agenda of that meeting along with the supposed launch of accession talks with Turkey. Meanwhile, Ms Del Ponte was quoted in an interview with the UK's Daily Telegraph newspaper published on September 20 as saying she believed that wanted General Ante Gotovina was being sheltered in a Franciscan monastery in Croatia and shielded by the Vatican.