



## EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations

A - STRATEGY AND TURKEY

A.2 - INTER-INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS AND COMMUNICATION

# MORNING PRESS BRIEFING: ENLARGEMENT COUNTRIES

## 20 December 2016

### Albania

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The Constitutional Court met on Monday and the eight judges said that they would study in the meantime the Amicus Curiae [brief](#) issued by the Council of Europe's Venice Commission on the **vetting law**.

Foreign Minister Ditmir BUSHATI received on Monday Michael ROTH, German Minister of State for Europe, and said that Germany remained Albania's main partner in the path of European integration. Bushati pledged that Albania would implement the **vetting law** and continue on the path of reforms with regard to the 5 key priorities for EU integration. Bushati was convinced that the implementation of vetting would lead to results in the fight against corruption and crime. German Minister Roth told media in a joint press conference with Bushati that justice reform was essential and the vetting law was a success not only for Albania but also for all European countries. Roth said reforms of the last years were clear and were on the right path. Regarding accession talks with Albania, Roth said that in spite of crises and problems, the EU enlargement process was a leading topic on the agenda in Brussels and Berlin, adding that he hoped accession talks with Albania would open as soon as possible.

During an event on Monday, Prime Minister Edi RAMA said that the **new property law** is the most complex and the most difficult. Although at first sight it does not provide a fair solution to the situation, it does produce a definite solution because the law offers deadlines for the return and compensation of property. At last, Rama said, the country would have an idea how long the process would last. Rama had harsh words for the courts and their impact on property rights and the property situation in the country when he said that no invader has done through centuries what the corruptive decision of courts have done to property in Albania. Rama hailed justice reform as a desperately needed reform that would put an end to injustice with regard to property rights.

Democratic Party (DP) MPs filed **criminal charges against Minister** of Health Ilir BEQAJ on Monday for abuse of office through the alteration of procedures of companies participating in hospital tenders only to favor a pharmaceutical company. DP MP Jorida TABAKU accused the Minister for interference with tender procedures by changing the criteria of selection of companies, namely waiving the certificate of origin and the producer certificate. According to DP MPs, the prosecutor's office needed to conduct investigations to the very end because the wrongdoing had caused harm to citizens by violating the security of medicaments.

## Bosnia and Herzegovina

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EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy **Federica MOGHERINI** and European Commissioner for Neighborhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations **Johannes HAHN** replied to the letter sent by member of BiH Presidency **Dragan COVIC** in the beginning of November, Dnevni Avaz and Vecernji List report. The EU officials thanked Covic for the information that BiH Presidency unanimously adopted the Conclusions on changes and amendments to the Master Plan for Process of BiH's Integration in the EU at the session held on September 27<sup>th</sup>. Covic assessed this document as one of the most important mechanisms of internal harmonization of European goals, because it contains exact time framework for their implementation. **The EU officials welcomed the part referring to implementation of the ruling by the European Court of Human Rights in case 'Sejdic-Finci vs. BiH', for which Covic promised will be implemented by January 31<sup>st</sup> at the latest.** They also said that the EU encourages BiH to continue the positive processes and implementation of the Reform Agenda, emphasizing that the EU will pay particular attention to implementation of 'Sejdic-Finci' ruling when it approaches review of the membership application.

Analyzing the possibility to implement **SNSD-HDZ BiH's proposal of Law on BiH Constitutional Court (CC)**, stipulating elimination of foreign judges from the CC's work, N1 TV explained that it is **not possible without changing BiH Constitution** i.e. Article 6 that stipulates structure of judges in BiH CC. According to Article 6 of BiH Constitution, four judges are appointed by the FBiH Parliament and two by the RS National Assembly. The remaining three judges are appointed by the President of the European Court for Human Rights after consultations with BiH Presidency. None of the previous convocations of authorities in BiH managed to change BiH Constitution, as none of the state-level coalitions had the capacity and enough political agreement for that.

In its press release issued yesterday, **SDA said that the agreement between SNSD leader Milorad DODIK and HDZ BiH leader Dragan COVIC to "weaken" the Constitutional Court (CC) of BiH is unacceptable.** SDA announced that they will reject any kind of proposal of a law that would undermine the competences, the method of decision-making and the structure of this institution. According to SDA, the case is about Dodik's "*desperate*" attempt to disturb the constitutional order and cause a crisis that would obstruct the country's path towards the EU, given the fact that he is increasingly afraid of judicial institutions of BiH.

BHT1 reported that a session of BiH House of Representatives (HoR) scheduled for December 29, may result with **adoption of Law on excise duties, which is a condition for the next tranche of the International Monetary Fund.** Besides, officials of the EBRD recently warned that funds of this institution amounting to EUR 221 million which were intended for BiH, will be blocked due to the same reason. Announcements said that a political deal about this issue has already been reached, but some details related to distribution of funds from a single account may be disputable. Goran MIRASCIC, Councilor of FBiH Prime Minister (PM) Fadil NOVALIC said over phone that they do not find increase of excise duties on oil and oil derivatives disputable but that they have remarks to changes of Law on payments on the single account and distribution of money between the entities. Namely, data from 2015 show that the FBiH Government pays over 65 percent of the money to the aforementioned single account. Editor of web portal 'Capital.ba' Sinisa VUKELIC said that a Letter of Intent sent by authorities of BiH already informed the IMF that excise duties have been already increased. "*We are well-aware that this issue is not solved yet*", warned Vukelic.

<p><b>Iceland</b> <i>Klemens</i> <u>THRASTARSON</u> *80662</p>	<p><b>Free trade agreement better than tolls</b></p> <p>Joining the EU would raise prices in trade, says Ágúst Þór Eiríksson, the CEO of Icewear, a large company in Iceland. "Icelandic trade would not be better of within the EU. Iceland is the only Western country with a free trade agreement with China, which makes it possible for us to buy and produce products in China and bring them here customs free." He says that if Iceland would join the EU, the free trade agreement with China would expire, and he claims that that would lead to purchase prices rising by 20%.</p> <p><u>Morgunblaðið reports.</u></p>
<p><b>The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia</b> <i>Konstantin</i> <u>JOVANOVSKI</u> *81283</p>	<p>On Monday, <b>the Administrative Court held a public session regarding the two lawsuits filed by the coalition led by SDSM.</b> The lawsuits concern the objections rejected by the State Election Commission in polling stations 1978, in Tetovo, and 2025, in Tearce. After the judges-rapporteurs had read the lawsuits, without any debate, the five judges from the Court's council started deciding on them without the public's presence. <b>The decisions on the two lawsuits will be published on the Court's website by Tuesday at 7 p.m.</b> at the latest. So far, no public sessions have been scheduled regarding the three other lawsuits, two of which have been filed by SDSM and one by VMRO-DPMNE.</p> <p>On Tuesday, <b>EC spokesperson Maja KOCIJANCIC called for the State Election Commission (SEC) and the courts to be left to work smoothly, without pressure and political influence.</b> As she pointed out, the EC has noted the preliminary election results and is now expecting the outcome of the appeals process. <i>"The relevant national authorities, including the SEC and the Courts, should be allowed to work smoothly, without pressure and political influence. We are very concerned over the tensions of the past days and the increase of the negative rhetoric. The Commission urges all interested sides to act responsibly so that the citizens' trust in the public institutions and the democratic processes is strengthened,"</i> Kocijancic stressed. The spokesperson also reiterated the part of the statement on the 11 December elections issued by Federica Mogherini and Johannes Hahn.</p> <p>According to VMRO-DPMNE's <b>Nikola TODOROV, his party's lawsuit against the State Election Commission's (SEC) decision to annul the voting in a polling station in Gostivar is founded on three legal bases.</b> He said on Monday that the Administrative Court had to decide only in line with the laws. As Todorov added, any other action will mean that that the will of the majority of the citizens expressed on 11 December will be <i>"falsified and stolen"</i>. In response to his press-conference, <b>SDSM accused the VMRO-DPMNE member of pressuring the Court.</b> <i>"Nobody and nothing can stand in the way of the started democratic processes in Macedonia. Nikola GRUEVSKI's attempt to pressure the Court through Todorov's press-conference proves the panic Gruevski is in because of the changes that will follow,"</i> SDSM stressed in the press-release.</p> <p>On Monday, <b>SDSM leader Zoran Zaev, accompanied by Radmila SEKERINSKA and Oliver SPASOVSKI, met with the U.S. Ambassador, Jess BAILY.</b> The institutions, Zaev said, have the duty to serve the citizens. According to the opposition party, the citizens have chosen a better life, freedom and democracy. <i>"That the citizens haven't fallen for the manipulations and the provocations over the past days once again confirms that the society is mature enough for changes,"</i> Zaev added. As the SDSM leader also pointed out, the coming days will show that nobody can stop the democratic processes that have already started.</p>

<p><b>Montenegro</b> <u>Nemanja TEPAVCEVIC</u> *81930</p>	<p><b>Strong explosion rocked one of the residential neighbourhoods in downtown Podgorica last night, leaving one person injured.</b> An explosive device is believed to have been activated under a car used by Marko Martinovic, alleged bodyguard of one of the bosses of a local mafia clan from Kotor. The bomb exploded when Martinovic was entering the car. He was subsequently admitted to a local hospital with burns which are not life threatening. Martinovic had been arrested on previous occasions on various charges, including for possession of weapons and shootings. He became known to the wider public in October 2014 when he was arrested for pelting with stones the Embassy of Albania in Podgorica. Press speculates that last night's incident may be a continuation of a mafia showdown between different drug cartels in Montenegro.</p> <p><b>Montenegro is steadily progressing on its EU path; it was stated at the 6<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Stabilisation and Association Committee held yesterday in Brussels.</b> According to the press release issued by the Ministry of European Affairs, last week's opening of two additional negotiation chapters was a sign of good dynamics of Montenegro's progress towards EU membership.</p> <p><b>One of the DF leaders, Andrija MANDIC, gave a statement to the Special Prosecutor yesterday about the Election Day events.</b> Mandic told reporters that the DF had no trust in the Special Prosecutor Milivoje KATNIC. "We have a very poor relationship with Katnic because he is biased and unprofessional" said Mandic who was invited to give a statement regarding the charges the DF originally filed five days before the elections. Mandic said that in those charges they listed all the criminal acts that had been planned by "the DPS, people from the criminal underworld and those that are against free and fair elections".</p>
<p><b>Serbia</b> <u>Aleksandar DJORDJEVIC</u> <u>Nadezda DRAMICANIN</u> *80696</p>	<p>PM Aleksandar VUČIĆ announced that <b>during his upcoming visit to Moscow he will discuss the purchase of six Mig 29 fighter jets</b>, which would make Serbian skies and citizens safer. Vučić said that the planes are being paid "from our own money" and that he was proud of it. He repeated that Serbia would not attack anyone but wants to be ready to protect its freedom and sovereignty. The purchase would bring the number of owned mig planes to ten which meant more security for citizens, Vučić stressed.</p> <p>Speaking at a press conference after he visited the national electric power transmission operator EMS, <b>PM Aleksandar VUČIĆ repeated that the decision whether new parliamentary elections would be held would be made public in January or February.</b> This will be the moment when it will be known if his party would still hold the majority in the parliament, he said. "We will see whether there will be a majority in the parliament, whether the SNS or other parties will support this majority or whether there will be another majority" Vučić declared. Declining to comment on a statement by Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) deputy leader Marija OBRADOVIĆ who said that the SNS should rethink its relationships with coalition partners, Vučić said he was visiting the EMS as PM and that political matters and relationships should be discussed by party bodies. Media are speculating whether disagreements between coalition partners the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) and the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) could be the reason and trigger for new parliamentary elections.</p> <p>The Serbian government appointed the general secretary of the Association of Serbian Journalists (UNS) <b>Nino BRAJOVIĆ as the new state secretary for information and media</b> in the Ministry of Culture and Information. The Ministry believes that Brajovic's years of experience in journalism and editing, his professional engagement in the Association and a series of awards provided the best recommendation for the important post. Politika daily writes that Brajović is an advocate of the privatisation of this newspaper and solving of its debts as well</p>

	<p>as the debts of public broadcaster RTS, the "survival" of Tanjug news agency, the abolition of restrictions on media project financing, as well as the obligation of local self-governments to allocate two percent from their budgets towards financing of local media.</p>
<p><b>Kosovo</b></p> <p><u>Dinka ZIVALJ</u></p> <p>*81425</p>	<p>North Mitrovica Mayor, Goran RAKIC, said that the <b>concrete wall between south and north of Mitrovica</b> will not be removed but redesigned, <i>KTV</i> reports. "Everything will be based on the project, which was defined last year and was reconfirmed by Brussels in 2016," he said. Rakic said that an agreement was reached for the wall to be redesigned with introducing of the stairway, and that Kosovo Minister of Dialogue, Edita TAHIRI, has agreed with the proposal. "Talks were held in Pristina and lasted for many hours," he said. "Everything was cleared out by all parties that the wall should be shortened to 90 cm and stairs needs to be built." According to Rakic, also the EU Office in Pristina has rejected the decision of Kosovo authorities for removal of the wall and presented a new design. Minister Tahiri denied Rakic's claims. "The wall was not part of the Brussels deal. In fact, Serbia has violated the Brussels agreement by constructing this wall," Tahiri said.</p> <p>The Assembly Chairmanship decided for an extraordinary Assembly session on <b>the case of Vetevendosje activist Astrit Dehari</b>, who died on 5 November at Prizren detention center, to be held today all dailies report. The session was called at the initiative of some ruling Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) and Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) Members of Parliament. According to opposition representatives, the Chairmanship has ignored the petition signed by more than 23 thousand citizens, that in addition to an extraordinary session of the Assembly, asked for dismissal of Minister of Justice Dhurata HOXHA and Minister of Interior, Skender HYSENI. Kosovo Assembly Speaker Kadri VESELI, told journalists that the petition was not addressed to the Chairmanship and it was not requested holding of an extraordinary session. However organisers said the petition was handed over to the Committee on Human Rights, Gender Equality, Missing Persons, and Petitions. Vetevendosje representative to the Committee, Aida DERGUTI, said the decision taken by the Assembly's chairmanship is in violation with the Regulation of the Assembly. According to her the decision was taken without any written request submitted to the Presidency.</p> <p>After a four-month investigation, Kosovo Police Inspectorate (<b>PIK</b>) <b>has detained 59 police officers</b> suspected of misuse of official duty and receiving bribe, all dailies report. "This has been done after a four month investigation. They are suspected of abuse of office and accepting bribes," said the head of PIK, Hilmi MEHMETI. He said that suspension from official duty has been requested for all detainees. One K-Bosnian, 35 K-Albanians, and 23 K-Serbs were arrested. Shyqri SYLA, head prosecutor in Mitrovica, said that the Mitrovica municipality was the most affected region from this action. The police officers were investigated through wiretaps and hidden cameras. "The investigations started after we received a lot of information from citizens who reported that these officials accepted bribes. Most of the officials are traffic police or control police on the highway," said Syla. The Police announced filing criminal reports to the respective prosecution offices also against 30 citizens for giving bribe to police officers.</p>
<p><b>Turkey</b></p> <p><u>Sumbul EREN</u></p> <p><u>Selda DUZENLI</u></p>	<p>Murat Karayilan, de facto <b>leader of the PKK</b>, threatened Turkish politicians with <b>suicide bomb attacks</b> if the life of imprisoned PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan is threatened. Karayilan also acknowledged the presence of a "battalion" established solely for this purpose. Reporting on the story, pro-government daily said the alleged threat on Öcalan's life was spoken of by Zübeyir Aydar, a PKK official in Europe, during the "Turkey, the Kurds and the war in the Middle East" section of</p>

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the **13th International Conference at the European Parliament**. The daily also claimed that the PKK has enjoyed open support from EU politicians despite being recognized as a terrorist group. [Read More](#)

A pro-government daily devoted its front page to statements by German diplomat Günther MEINEL, head of the International Association of Diplomats (DMW), headlining, “The EU will collapse, Turkey will win.” Meinel is quoted as saying, “The EU will be destroyed because the organization no longer defends its foundations.

**Russia’s ambassador to Turkey, Andrey Karlov, was assassinated in the capital Ankara**, all outlets headlined. Karlov was shot by a gun while making a speech at a photo exhibit. The attacker was a 22-year-old police officer identified as Mevlüt Mert Altıntaş, who was killed in a special operations police operation at the scene. Altıntaş’s father, mother, and sister were detained in an operation at their residence in Söke in the western province of Aydın. [Read More](#)

The attacker reportedly shouted “Don’t forget Aleppo! Don’t forget Syria! As long as our brothers are not safe, you will not enjoy safety. Whoever has a share in this oppression will pay for it one by one,” according to footage on social media. He chanted Islamist slogans also used by radical terrorist organization the **AI Nusra Front** and recited "God is great" before speaking in Turkish. [Read More](#) Most of the outlets put the blame on the Gülen movement, arguing that Altıntaş attended exam preparation schools run by Gülen sympathizers. Some pro-government dailies wrote that the police officer took two days of annual leave after the coup attempt. His official home address was given as the Turkish address of Abdullah Bozkurt, a high-ranking Gülenist militant currently living in the U.S. and the former Ankara correspondent of closed Gulenist daily Today's Zaman, they wrote. Last week Bozkurt wrote in a Gulenist outlet that embassies in Turkey are no longer safe. [Read Bozkurt’s column](#)

President Recep Tayyip ERDOĞAN said he “vehemently **condemns** the dastardly and bloodthirsty slaughter” of Karlov. The president called the assassination an “open provocation” meant to harm Turkish-Russian relations. [Read More](#) Russian President Vladimir Putin also described the assassination as “a **provocation.**” [Read More](#)

The attack drew **condemnations from world leaders** and international organizations. One of the first statements of sympathy came from EU HR/VP Federica MOGHERINI, the dailies said, quoting her saying, "I was deeply shocked to hear of the inconceivable attack against Ambassador Andrei Karlov in Ankara this afternoon. The EU condemns in the strongest possible manner this attack against your country's representative in Turkey. We wish to express our solidarity with Russia in the face of this criminal act of violence.” Donald TRUMP condemned the assassination, saying the killing was carried out by a “**radical Islamic terrorist**” and violated “all rules of civilized order.”

Many outlets wrote that the **last time a diplomat was assassinated in Turkey** was in **1971**, when Israel’s consul to Istanbul, Efraim Elrom, was kidnapped by a group of leftist militants demanding the release of their colleagues from prison. They shot him dead after their demands were refused. In 2003, Roger Short, British consul to Istanbul, along with Lisa Hallworth, was among the victims in an al-Qaeda bomb attack on the UK Consulate building.

FM Mevlüt ÇAVUŞOĞLU said, “It was an attack to derail **relations between Russia and Turkey**, which have both put their mind to mending ties,” after

landing in Moscow where he went to attend a tripartite meeting with his Russian and Iranian counterparts on Syria.

Çavuşoğlu and his Russian and Iranian counterparts Sergei LAVROV and Javad ZARIF are due to hold **tripartite talks in Moscow** today (Dec. 20) on Aleppo and the broader Syrian crisis. An official from Turkey's Foreign Ministry expressed hope the talks would provide an "impetus." Defense Minister Fikri IŞIK will also hold talks with his Russian counterpart today in Moscow. [Read More](#)

Hours after the Russian ambassador to Turkey was assassinated, a man with a **rifle fired a few rounds** into the air in front of the **U.S. Embassy in Ankara**. He was taken into custody and an investigation is underway, according to police, who said extraordinary security measures have been taken in the area.

Some 60,000 individual applications have been made to **Turkey's Constitutional Court** since the July 15 coup attempt, said Zühtü Arslan, the court's president. "The workload from 47 countries in the European Court of Human Rights [ECtHR] is around 75,000," Arslan added. [Read More](#)

Administrators of the **Istanbul High School** denied allegations of a **ban on Christmas celebrations** and songs at the school, stating that it was actually the proposal of the school's German Department to cancel the celebrations, after German media reports of the fake news caused outrage against Turkey. After the news turned out to be false, Ulf Poschardt, Die Welt editor-in-chief, shared the intended cover of Monday's newspaper on Twitter showing President Erdoğan as the "Grinch," a fictional character known for hating Christmas. [Read More](#)

But a left-wing daily quoted Mustafa Sentop, the head of Parliament's Constitution Commission, saying, "We cannot let the German state spread religious and political propaganda to the children of the Turkish state."

**Parliament's Constitution Commission** today (Dec. 20) will begin reviewing a 21-article constitutional amendment package to allow Turkey to switch to a **presidential system**. The commission has 45 days to examine the draft and issue a report to be discussed in the general assembly. The assembly will conduct two-pronged sessions on the package, first discussing the individual articles before voting on the entire bill. [Read More](#)

The ruling AKP is still mulling some **minor changes to the blueprint**, some dailies reported. Lowering the age of eligibility for being elected to Parliament from 25 to 18 and the condition that only "trueborn Turkish citizens" – those born with Turkish citizenship – can run for president are the main articles under fire, many dailies said. Hence, the qualifications of the vice presidents and ministers, such as their age, education level, and the number of vice presidents, are also not stated in the proposal, the outlets said. [Read More](#)

A **major \$1.3-billion tunnel** linking Istanbul's European and Asian sides **will be opened today** (Dec. 20) in a ceremony to be attended by President Erdogan and PM Binali Yildirim. The Eurasia Tunnel was constructed underneath the Bosphorus seabed. Open only to light vehicles, the tunnel will serve the Kazlıcesme-Goztepe route, where Istanbul vehicular traffic is heaviest. [Read More](#)

A court in Istanbul commuted a **police officer's** one year-plus prison sentence for **killing a protester** during the 2013 Gezi Park protests into a punitive fine of roughly €2,690. [Read More](#)

The Interior Ministry stated that a total of 924 suspects were detained in **operations against the PKK** and the **Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK)** across Turkey over the past week. According to the ministry, a total of 88 ISIL militants were also detained, and five were later arrested. Some 2,002 irregular migrants were also captured, the ministry stated, adding that 53 migrant-smugglers organizers were detained, and 19 later arrested. [Read More](#)

Kurdish problem-focused **HDP Iğdır MP Mehmet Emin Adıyaman** has been **released** by a court in Ankara. Adıyaman was taken into custody on Monday morning (Dec. 19) in Gaziantep and was delivered to Ankara to face charges of spreading propaganda for an illegal organization in his speeches. The Diyarbakır Governorship announced a curfew in 21 neighborhoods until further notice.

A total of **25 PKK militants were also caught** in operations in the southeastern province of Şırnak, the state-run Anadolu Agency reported. Meanwhile, two PKK militants were killed in clashes that erupted in the Hani district of the southeastern province of Diyarbakır.

Eleven suspects were detained in Istanbul-based operations targeting **alleged FETO members**. [Read More](#)

One **Turkish soldier fighting Daesh terrorists was killed** in a car bomb attack near Al-Bab, Syria, the Turkish military said, adding that 11 Daesh militants were killed in clashes on Sunday. [Read More](#)

**Bana Alabed**, a 7-year-old Syrian girl who reached out to thousands of followers with updates from war-torn Aleppo, has been evacuated to safety and will be brought to Turkey with her family following a deal between Turkish and Russian authorities for evacuating civilians and opposition fighters. [Read More](#)

Some 20,000 people have so far been evacuated from eastern Aleppo and efforts continue to bring more people out, FM Mevlüt ÇAVUŞOĞLU said. [Read More](#)