

The European Commission is pushing for the completion of accession negotiations with Croatia

On 10 June the European Commission issued a recommendation for the Council of the European Union relating to the completion of accession negotiations with Croatia. At the same time it was announced that the European Commission would monitor the process of implementing reforms until Croatia join the EU. The announced introduction of the control mechanism is aimed at persuading EU member countries to finalise accession negotiations in summer 2011 and to grant consent to Croatia's membership in the EU. It is not ruled out that monitoring will also be maintained after Croatia has joined the EU.

According to the EC, the reforms implemented by the Croatian government allow the completion of the negotiations in the most problematic chapters for Zagreb: 8 and 23 relating to competition policy, the judicial system and fundamental rights; also and two remaining chapters that deal with technical issues (budget questions and the remainder). The decision about this matter is set to be made by EU member states at the summit on 23-24 June. The EC has also announced that the process of introducing reforms will be monitored and evaluated in annual reports until Croatia becomes an EU member state. Reports will be published every six months regarding the areas which provoke the largest fears of EU member countries i.e. the negotiation chapters 8 and 23 and equally the chapter devoted to justice, freedom and security.

This recommendation proves the EC strongly supports the finalisation of the negotiations. At the same time however a section of EU countries, for example the Netherlands, express their concerns that Croatia is not sufficiently prepared for the EU membership and draw attention to the country's ineffective judicial system, the high level of corruption, the unresolved problems of the status of minorities, the return of refugees and accountability for war crimes. The decision to introduce monitoring mechanisms may facilitate the completion of the negotiations but, on the other hand, it may considerably prolong the ratification of the accession treaty. EU member countries may make its acceptance conditional on the fulfilment of additional requirements, including commitments to extending special monitoring to the problematic areas also after the country's accession to the EU. <MarSz>