

The EU's pseudo-success in Bosnia and Herzegovina

On 13 May, in effect of negotiations conducted by the EU's representative for foreign affairs, Catherine Ashton, and the president of Republika Srpska (RS), Milorad Dodik, the government of RS abandoned their plans to hold a referendum which was to determine whether the laws imposed by the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina are legal. In exchange, Ashton agreed to start a dialogue on the reform of the judicial system in BiH. This deal *de facto* means success for the president of RS, whose real goal was not to hold the referendum but rather to reinforce his position in dealings with the central government and the international community's High Representative in BiH, and also to distract public attention from internal economic problems.

The National Assembly of RS on 13 April voted for an act on holding a referendum to determine whether the laws imposed by the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina were legal. Those laws questioned included regulations determining the powers of the courts and public prosecution authorities at the state central level. This decision was strongly criticised by the international community, according to which the referendum could put at risk the unity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. For this reason, the international community's High Representative for BiH, Valentin Inzko, demanded that the government of RS annul their decision to hold the referendum. However, he refrained from exercising his powers and invalidating the adopted act. Finally, the government of RS gave up their plans as a result of the talks with Catherine Ashton.

Milorad Dodik, wishing to reinforce his position, has already used the threat of holding a referendum in RS, which in fact would not be beneficial for him, on numerous occasions. Most citizens would probably vote for autonomy from the central government, which would mean the need to proclaim independence and, for Dodik himself, alienation on the international arena. Dodik's main goal was to strengthen his own position, undermining the competences of the courts at the central level and proving that the High Representative has no real power. He has managed to achieve all these goals, and the direct negotiations with the European Union's representative for foreign affairs have additionally proven his position as a partner for the most senior authorities of the EU. This has not solved BiH's main problem—that being, the inability to form a central government since the elections held in 2010. <MarSz>