

The EU Council has adopted Serbia's accession application

On 25 October, the EU Council adopted Serbia's accession application and submitted it to the European Commission for further consideration. This decision is a great success for the Serbian government; however, obtaining candidate status for EU accession has forced the government in Belgrade to pursue reforms and hold a dialogue with the authorities in Kosovo.

Serbia submitted its EU accession application in December 2009. Some EU countries (including the Netherlands) objected to accepting the application because of Serbia's insufficient cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), its unsuccessful hunt for people accused of war crimes, and its confrontational policy towards Kosovo.

The fact that Belgrade agreed to launch technical negotiations with Kosovo led to a significant increase in support for accepting the application among the EU member states and in the EU administration. The countries which have been sceptical of Serbia's application agreed to accept it on condition that the further stages of Serbia's integration with the EU are conditioned on a constructive Serbian policy towards Pristina and cooperation with the ICTY. These reservations were included in the conclusion of the EU Council. The European Commission can now begin preparing an opinion on Serbia's application (which will take a year). On this basis, the EU Council will be able to take a decision about granting Serbia official candidate status.

The adoption of the EU's accession application provides a strong support for the policy of the Serbian government, which is trying to gradually implement socially delicate reforms and modify its policy towards Kosovo in spite of protests from part of the public. The decision of the EU Council will be an impetus to continue the reform process. <MarSz>