

Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue: Remarks by the EU Special Representa



We just finished our second in person high-level meeting of the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue with President [of Serbia, Aleksandar] Vučić and Prime Minister [of Kosovo, Avdullah] Hoti in Brussels.

It is important that both leaders this morning, coming from the meeting in the White House and ahead of our Dialogue session, confirmed that they attach the highest priority to the EU integration and to continuing the work on the EU-facilitated Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue. Having this clear joint commitment and understanding of priorities is essential for progress in their respective European paths.

In our meetings today, we spoke about economic cooperation and missing and displaced persons – the topics which were opened in our last high-level meeting. And I am happy to announce that we made full progress on the discussions.

We also discussed for the first time, as part of the negotiations of a legally binding comprehensive agreement, arrangements for non-majority communities and also the settlement of mutual financial claims and property. This was a first exchange that allowed us to define the next steps in our discussions. Our next meeting will be dedicated to these two topics.

Our negotiations today were intense, as usually, and not always easy, but what prevailed was the will of both sides to advance the discussions despite the painful and complex issues at hand.

We agreed to follow-up on our discussions at expert level next week and to re-convene at the level of leaders later this month.

Press release – REACT-EU: EU support to mitigate immediate effects of the COVID-19 crisis



The report was adopted on Monday with 37 votes in favour, none against and 4 abstentions. The REACT-EU instrument proposed by the Commission before the summer mobilises additional investment and offers great flexibility for Member States to address the immediate effects of the crisis.

Focus on quality projects and reaching most affected regions and people

To encourage national authorities to finance good quality projects, MEPs voted to allow EU countries use the additional resources also in 2023 and 2024, beyond the Commission 2022 deadline. MEPs insist on ensuring that the resources reach the most affected regions and people and want investments to focus on: health and social infrastructure, health systems and services for all, including cross-border areas, outermost regions, areas affected by industrial transition and depopulation, tourism and culture sectors, youth employment, disadvantaged groups.

Allocation of financial resources

MEPs underline the need to maintain the level of REACT-EU financial resources tabled by the Commission, i.e. EUR 55 billion, despite the European Council proposed budget cuts. MEPs also agreed that expenditure for operations covered should be eligible as of 1 February 2020.

Ensuring respect of cohesion policy and democratic principles

As REACT-EU provides considerable new funding whilst reducing administrative burdens as well as controls on spending, MEPs stress that the various derogations must remain temporary. Parliament requests the Commission to

provide an evaluation of the exceptional measures' impact and efficiency. Moreover, MEPs reintroduced the eight-week period for national parliaments consultation.

Quotes

Co-rapporteur Constanze Krehl (S&D, DE) said: "It is important to support regions and people who have been hit hardest by the crisis. Funding from REACT-EU should also go to cross-border projects, to the most deprived people and to the youth. Therefore, we introduce minimum shares for the support of Interreg, the European Social Fund (ESF), the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD), as well as to the Youth Employment Initiative. No region and no people should be left behind."

Co-rapporteur Andrey Novakov (EPP, BG) said: "The role of the EP is to turn REact-EU into PROact-EU. We want to allow the funds to cover COVID-19 expenses since 1 February 2020. This will ease the burden on central and regional budgets to support sectors like SMEs, healthcare, tourism and the creative industry. We ask that the Commission greenlights investment in 10 days – the shortest in the history of Cohesion policy. The most important lesson after COVID-19: It is time for policies, not for politics."

Next steps

Parliament plenary is expected to give the mandate for inter-institutional negotiations during its September sitting. MEPs wish a timely adoption of the measures, to allow Member States to use the additional funds as soon as possible.

Background

REACT-EU is a proposal made by the Commission to address the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic, in the form of an amendment to the [Common Provisions Regulation](#) governing the current cohesion policy programming period. It follows two earlier proposals relating to cohesion policy, the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative (CRII) and the Coronavirus Response Initiative Plus (CRII+), which both modified the rules for regional spending in order to facilitate recovery.

[Funded traineeship for young graduates at the EU Delegation to S](#)

*Are you a **young graduate** interested in international relations? Are you curious to learn more about work of a diplomatic mission and how the EU Delegation represents EU interests and values in Serbia?*

What we offer?

A traineeship of up to 6 months within the Information, Communication and Press Unit – Political Section of the EU Delegation to the Republic of Serbia, starting in November 2020, **subject to respect to the local legislation as well as the national legislation of the candidate(s) if non-resident.**

Description of the Section:

The ICP is responsible for Communication, Information and Media sectors, all visibility events, media reporting. It supports and monitors work of three Info centres in Serbia: in Belgrade, Novi Sad and Niš.

Main tasks:

- Contributing to the work of the press and public affairs unit at the EU Delegation to Serbia and cooperation with the EU Information Centres in Belgrade, Niš and Novi Sad;
- Analysing impact of conducted press and public affairs and preparing reports on them for dispatch to EU headquarters in Brussels;
- Contributing to reports on press freedom;
- Liaising with EU-funded projects and assist in planning workshops on press and public affairs;
- Contribute to the social media networks of the EU Info Centre and the EU Delegation;
- Filling in for any other ad hoc and urgent requests for the section;
- The trainee may also be requested to contribute to the work of other sections of the EU Delegation

Qualifications or special requirements:

- **In assessing the applications received, account will need to be taken of the COVID-19 situation and its possible effects on access possibilities to Country and thus candidates currently residing in Country might be preferred (to be modified by HQ)**
- Minimum Bachelor degree, preferably in political science, journalism, marketing, EU affairs or law;
- Sound drafting and communication skills;
- Fluency in English and Serbian language, both written and spoken;
- Ability and willingness to work in an international environment;
- Ability to deliver good quality work output in tight deadlines;
- Computer literate with practical experience in Microsoft packages;
- Initiative, flexibility, good organisational skills and a team player is an advantage

How to apply?

Please send the following documents to the e-mail address DELEGATION-SERBIA-ADMINISTRATION@eeas.europa.eu:

- A detailed Europass curriculum vitae ([CV](#))

- a cover letter describing why you want to participate in a EU traineeship
- and an [application form](#)

Please mention in the subject of your e-mail: Funded Traineeship – Name/ICP Unit – POL Section

Important information

Before applying you are requested to examine the [dedicated website](#) as well as the [general eligibility criteria](#) for a paid traineeship (Article 8 of the Decision ADMIN(2017)28 – Paid traineeship)

Each selected trainee will receive a monthly grant to cover living expenses. All costs related to travel inside the country of residence, visa, insurance, accommodation must be borne by the trainee.

Applications from non-eligible candidates will not be considered. After the evaluation of all applications, shortlisted candidates will be contacted and invited for an interview. Unsuccessful candidates will be notified by email. In case the selected candidate is not able to present the required documents, his/her candidacy will be rejected.

Non-resident candidates must provide proof that they will be covered against the risk of a pandemic and the costs of repatriation.

The Delegation informs that even if our Headquarters confirm the eligibility of the selected application, traineeships could be postponed, suspended or even cancelled considering the very evolving context of the COVID-19 outbreak in the host country as well as in the country of origin.

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Description of the Section:

The OPS I Section is responsible for assistance linked to two negotiating chapters, notably Chapter 23 (sub-chapters are judiciary, against corruption, fundamental rights and freedom of expression) and Chapter 24 (Fight against organised crime and migration, asylum, borders and security). It also provides support to the work of the political Section in these two chapters, including inputs for briefings and background information for high-level visits of EU representatives.

The portfolio of the section is composed of different kinds of contracts (grants, services, works, supplies, etc.) of different sizes (small amounts for local NGOs to bigger contracts with international organisations).

Main tasks:

- Support to the work of the Operations 1 Section;
- Researching and compiling documentation, drafting reports and analysis, preparing briefings and answering queries related to the work of the section (justice, home affairs, social inclusion);
- Organising, attending and reporting from relevant events (conferences, meetings, round tables).

Qualifications or special requirements:

- **In assessing the applications received, account will need to be taken of the COVID-19 situation and its possible effects on access possibilities to Country and thus candidates currently residing in Country might be preferred (to be modified by HQ)**
- Minimum Bachelor degree, preferably in law, economics, political or social science;
- Sound drafting and communication skills;
- Fluency in English and Serbian language;
- Demonstrated gender awareness and sensitivity, as well as the ability to integrate a gender perspective into tasks and activities;
- Good understanding of the Roma and Sinti situation in Serbia, including, policies and initiatives addressing Roma and Sinti.

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[Online outreach event for the launch of the new EU priorities fo](#)



This timely event started with a presentation of the priorities followed by a brief presentation of the three main thematic annexes: human rights, rule of law and democracy. Our panel included a good mix of prominent speakers both from the EU and the Council of Europe. The subsequent discussion revealed concrete possibilities to further strengthen the cooperation between the two organisations.

In her opening remarks, **EU Ambassador Meglena Kuneva** stressed the need to discuss *“a document of utmost importance for our Delegation”*, i.e. the new [EU priorities for the cooperation with the Council of Europe 2020-2022](#). The Ambassador reaffirmed that the new priorities constituted the guiding principles of EU’s actions, reflecting our common values and goals with the Council of Europe, driving our work for the next two years and a half. She also highlighted the significance of a strong multilateral cooperation at a regional level to address the consequences of the pandemic.

Ellis Mathews presented the new priorities as a landmark for EU-Council of Europe cooperation in the areas of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. He reaffirmed EU’s strong commitment to promote the highest level of human rights protection, to ensure the proper functioning of the Rule of Law across the continent and to uphold democracy both within Europe and in its wider neighbourhood. In the view of those shared values, the Council of Europe is seen as providing a comprehensive and complementary platform to achieve these objectives. In doing so, he reasserted Council of Europe’s central role in the areas of Human Rights, Rule of Law and Democracy, as well as its extensive experience and widely recognised expertise. He stressed that the EU was regularly using Council of Europe’s monitoring bodies’ work as a

point of reference. Regarding the challenges posed by COVID-19, he stressed that both organisations managed to modify their common projects in order to adapt to this new reality whilst preserving their core shared values. Moreover, he highlighted the importance of the newly adopted priorities for the EU's enlargement and neighbourhood policies.

EU-Council of Europe's cooperation on **human rights, democracy and rule of law** were presented respectively by **Luisa Ragher, Patrick Costello and Niovi Ringou**. **Luisa Ragher** highlighted the timeliness of the adoption of the priorities regarding the new challenges arising from the pandemic. In that sense, she stressed the impact of the COVID-19 on human rights, such as the rise of gender-based violence, inequalities, discrimination, the shrinking of freedom of expression and association, as well as the silencing of journalists. She also reaffirmed the importance to reinforce multilateral cooperation in all of these areas. She presented EU's accession to the European Convention of Human Right as one of the key priority for the next two years, along with the adoption of new policy tools aimed at facilitating EU and Council of Europe's cooperation and synergies in areas such as artificial intelligence the asylum and migration policy, the protection of children against sexual abuse, the protection of journalists, human rights defenders, and civil society.

Patrick Costello stressed that the threats to democracy have been exacerbated by the pandemic. According to him, *"those values should not be taken for granted"*. He reaffirmed the priority of the right to health but also stressed the need to have necessary, proportionate and time-limited measures in order to avoid authoritarianism. Moreover, he highlighted the importance of the work of the Venice Commission, underlined the complementarity of both institutions and highlighted the standard setting work of the Council of Europe through the European Court of Human Rights. Thus, he stated: *"Thematic cooperation for democracy and Human Rights protection is the guiding thread of our partnership with the Council of Europe. Curbing disinformation, tackling Artificial Intelligence and environmental threats, promoting a rule of law culture along with the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) and the Venice Commission are among our main joint goals"*.

As for **Niovi Ringou**, she stressed the long and fruitful history of cooperation between the EU and the Council of Europe in the field of Rule of Law. She stated that the European Commission relied on the Council of Europe's expertise, notably through the European Court of Human Rights, the Venice Commission, GRECO, the Commissioner for Human right and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). She announced the adoption by the European Commission of the first annual report on Rule of Law, including developments in the justice system, anti-corruption and media pluralism. Moreover, she reiterated EU's commitment to pursue cooperation with neighbourhood countries in the framework of the Council of Europe and the Eastern partnership.

Christos Giakoumopoulos and **Snežana Samardžić-Marković**, addressed EU priorities viewed from the Council of Europe's side. They both presented the priorities as the most ambitious and comprehensive document of cooperation between both institutions. **Christos Giakoumopoulos** underlined the importance

of referring to the CoE as a standard-setter in the field of Human Rights, Rule of Law and Democracy and described the EU as a strategic partner in internal and external policies. Moreover, he referred to numerous areas of cooperation in the field of Human Rights, such as the European Convention on Human Rights' accession, freedom of expression, Artificial Intelligence and data protection, bioethics, migration and detention under newly adopted prison rules. Regarding the upcoming perspectives, he stressed that the environment was high on the agenda of both the Council of Europe and the EU, as well as social rights and the Rule of Law mechanism. **Snežana Samardžić-Marković** also stressed the timeliness of this discussion and the importance of joining forces. She mentioned the 25th anniversary of the joint programmes with the EU on the education sector and stressed the importance of explaining to the young generation that democracy should not be taken for granted. She also emphasized the Youth Partnership as a top priority, as well as the importance of involving children in the formulation of Council of Europe's instruments. *"Democratic culture and digital citizenship education are at the core of Council of Europe's work on education"*. Finally, she stressed the threat to civil society and freedom of expression and reaffirmed the need for the civil society to participate in the democratic process.

Verena Taylor presented EU-Council of Europe's Joint Programmes as an essential tool to implement the priorities. She highlighted numerous multilateral and thematic programmes of cooperation such as the programme HELP or the Youth Partnership. *"EU-Council of Europe facilities help innovate in order to offer a rapid response to Human Rights and Rule of Law challenges faced by Council of Europe's Member States"*. She also reaffirmed the importance of the cooperation in the field of the Rule of Law and called for the strengthening of the EU-Council of Europe's cooperation in areas such as violence against women, human trafficking, environment, education and EU neighbourhood. *"Our enlargement and neighbourhood policies are a component of the cooperation framework with the Council of Europe. Our joint programs are meant to address sustainable justice reform, fight against corruption, support for free media and a strong civil society"*, she stated. Finally, **Ambassador Panayiotis Beglitis** highlighted the next steps in the implementation of the newly adopted priorities as regard to the Greek's Chairmanship. As Ellis Mathews rightly described, the priorities are *"a compass for the future"*.