



**D-RS\_PV(2020)1105\_0**

# MINUTES

**of the meeting of 4 November 2020, 13.30-15.00**

**Brussels (remote through WebEx)**

The meeting opened at 13.32 on Wednesday, 4 November 2020, with Tanja Fajon (Chair) presiding.

## *1. Adoption of the draft agenda*

The Agenda was adopted without any changes as in the draft.

## *2. Chair's announcements*

Ms Tanja FAJON (S&D, SI) stressed the absence of a “viable opposition” in the new Serbian Assembly, which creates a situation not conducive to political pluralism in the country, as also stated by the Serbia 2020 Commission report, where the oversight of the Parliament over the executive is described as purely “formalistic”. She noted that the new government was composed of all three coalitions that crossed the 3% threshold in June. She also said that the European Parliament’s SAPC Delegation would closely monitor implementation of the OSCE/ODIHR’s 29 recommendations to improve the conduct of elections. D-RS Chair also stressed that the EP remained committed to relaunching the Inter-Party Dialogue (IPD), which should be broad, involving all pro-European political forces. She expects the new government to speed up EU related reforms, while also noting the fact that the current parliament will have a limited term, as President Vučić announced snap elections by April 2022. Ms FAJON also drew attention to a drastic rise in physical attacks on journalists this year, and also on attacks on NGOs and individuals critical of the government. D-RS Chair stressed the importance of the implementation of all agreements and commitments reached in recent years within the framework of the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue and welcomed the fact that several high-level meetings had taken place since June.

3. *Exchange of views with H.E. Ms Ana HRUSTANOVI , Ambassador of the Republic of Serbia to the EU, Mr Christos MAKRIDIS, Deputy Head of Unit for Serbia in the European Commission and with Ms Elsa FENET, Head of Division 'Western Balkans' in the European External Action Service on the post-electoral landscape in Serbia - including the political, economic and pandemic situation - and on Serbia's relations with the European Union*

Serbia's Ambassador H.E. Ms Ana HRUSTANOVI started the meeting with presenting her condolences to French and Austrian colleagues for the recent terrorist attacks in Vienna, condemning any sort of radicalism. After having presented the worsening pandemic situation in Serbia, she went on to present the 21 June elections results and the priorities of the "reform oriented" and "crisis-mitigating" government. The Ambassador stressed that Serbia had partially or fully accomplished 70% of the EP-facilitated IPD objectives. She said that the current parliament of Serbia still represents the dominant public preference, with an almost two-million strong support to the ruling party. The main priorities of the new government, voted in on 28 October 2020, include fight against COVID-19, preserving Serbia's interest in Kosovo, fight against organised crime, preserving neutrality and acceleration of reforms, especially in the area of rule of law.

Serbia has opened 18 chapters out of 35, with 2 provisionally closed. The Ambassador said to be "very disappointed" with the dynamics of the process, hoping that the new enlargement methodology will inject more dynamism into it. She hopes for new chapters to be opened under the German Presidency.

On media freedom, the Ambassador informed participants on the implementation plan of the new media strategy, which is expected to be adopted by the end of this year. She promised to look into particular cases of attacks on individuals mentioned by the Chair in her opening address. Ambassador also touched upon the results in the fight against corruption, and Serbia's encouraging achievements in macro-economic stability softening COVID-19 effect. The country's predicted GDP drop by 1% in 2020 would be one of the best results in Europe, Ambassador said. Serbia's current CFSP alignment rate is 60% and it remains among the top three contributors to CFSP missions. Although Serbia "is not pursuing any red lines" in the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue, it insists on "no cherry-picking" on previous commitments, mentioning the establishment of the Community of Serb Municipalities (CSM) in particular.

Mr Christos MAKRIDIS, Deputy Head of Unit for Serbia in the European Commission presented the key findings of the European Commission 2020 report on Serbia. Among positives, Mr MAKRIDIS mentioned Serbia's pre-crisis macro-economic developments, which have helped managing setback from COVID-19. The European Commission new Economic and Investment Plan will also help Serbia's post-pandemic recovery. He expressed hopes the 2020 country report would be used by the new government as a springboard for EU-related reforms, including implementation of OSCE/ODIHR recommendations and that of the new media strategy, constitutional amendments in the field of judiciary, and full implementation of merit based recruitments in public administration. He emphasised that the progress on the rule of law was not as fast and productive as it should be expected from a negotiating country. The annual Stabilisation and Association Council (SAC) is planned to be held later this year<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> It is planned to be held on 17 December 2020.

Ms Elsa FENET, Head of Division 'Western Balkans' in the European External Action Service, while acknowledging Serbia's 60% CFSP alignment rate, including positive recent alignments on Nagorno-Karabakh and Belarus, also drew attention to cases of non-alignment (Russia, Venezuela, Myanmar, Hong-Kong) and urged for further progress in that regard. On the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue, she commended the renewal of the process and reiterated that the establishment of CSM must be addressed.

Following the statements of the guests, Chair opened the floor to the members of the Delegation.

MEP Andor DELI (EPP, HU) positively assessed the fact that minority MPs were part of the leadership of the new parliament. He also noted the gender balance in the composition of the new government. In his view, a government of national unity is an important message in the light of the challenges (primarily COVID-19 crisis) and highlights the urgency of the reform processes and dialogue with Pristina. He suggested that the EEAS and DG NEAR should outline in a potential roadmap what would happen once Kosovo and Serbia reach an agreement in terms of EU accession processes of both countries, which would, he said, prevent the EU from repeating the mistake made with North Macedonia.

MEP Franc BOGOVI (1st Vice-Chair, EPP, SI) said that Economic and Investment plan was a good sign for Serbia, given the fact that, in his view, IPA funds were not big enough. He asked the Ambassador if the EU had provided enough resources to Serbia for priorities such as green energy transition, stopping brain drain and managing migration on the Balkan route.

MEP Vladimír BILÍK (EPP, SK), Standing Rapporteur for Serbia, expressed his hopes to present the Draft Report on Serbia to the Committee on Foreign Affairs next month, circumstances permitting. He asked Ambassador HRUSTANOVIĆ how Serbia's goal of pursuing an independent foreign policy and European integration process go hand in hand. He also asked what the priorities of the new government would be, given its short mandate, and was in particular interested in the public communication strategy on the benefits of EU membership, since he sees room for improvement in the area of Serbian public opinion. He finally asked about the Serbian parliament's plans for continuing the Inter-Party Dialogue in the coming months.

Ambassador HRUSTANOVIĆ called the proposal put forward by MEP DELI for DG Near and EEAS roadmap a "courageous idea". She said that Serbia would like to see more funds for the Western Balkans, but it had to be realistic and was satisfied with the current amount. The new government will continue to deal with the priorities mentioned by MEP BOGOVI. The Ambassador stressed that Serbia was pursuing an independent foreign policy in the frame of the EU accession. She also said that the new government would continue to be active in promoting the benefits of the EU membership, but this was a two-lane road - apart from constructive criticism, she said, Serbia would need the EU institutions to send messages that EU needs the country.

Ms Elisa FENET stressed that commitment to the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue was key for the overall progress to the EU and that a lot of reporting made by the EEAS on the process was already going on at the Council, which is responsible for decisions on progress in the EU accession process.

Mr Christos MAKRIDIS said that the aim of Commission's Economic and Investment plan was

not to provide more funds but to enable more projects that can use the funds. He reassured the interlocutors that any progress in the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue was very much expected and appreciated by all Members States.

*4. Exchange of views with Ms Nataša DRAGOJLOVI , President of the National Convention on the European Union in Serbia (NCEU) and Mr Raša NEDELJKOV, Program Director, Center for Research, Transparency and Accountability (CRTA), Chief of CRTA Election Observation Mission on the June 21 parliamentary elections and their outcomes for the future of Serbia's democracy and performance of democratic institutions*

Ms Nataša DRAGOJLOVI , President of the National Convention on the European Union in Serbia (NCEU) drew attention to an ever-widening gap in a deeply divided Serbian society and the necessity to return dialogue to Serbia's National Assembly and restore conditions for free and fair elections. She said that the dialogue with the Government of Serbia was nevertheless possible, both on and off the record, from the point of view of her organisation.

Mr Raša NEDELJKOV, Program Director, Centre for Research, Transparency and Accountability (CRTA), Chief of CRTA Election Observation Mission, said that the June elections had taken place in the ambience of a long-term democratic decline and featured a drastic inequality in favour of the ruling party. While 70% of recommendations from the first phase of the Inter-Party Dialogue had been fully or partially implemented, government cherry-picked technical reforms instead of those focusing on the media freedom, pressure on voters and abuse of resources. In Mr Nedeljkov's view, the problem is that there is no recognition of the existing problems by all actors. He also said that the post electoral atmosphere was not conducive to democracy in Serbia, with civil society organisations continuing to face pressure.

MEP Andor DELI asked Ms DRAGOJLOVI if there were any pressures on the National Convention either from the government or from organisations which are not a part of NCEU.

MEP Franc BOGOVI expressed his view that a fragmented opposition and a divided society were the main problem in Serbia. He assessed that the NGOs sometimes seem to be taking over the role of the opposition, which is a problem for their future work and the level of democracy in Serbia. He asked in which direction the EP and Serbian partners should go to address the divisions and lack of dialogue in the country.

MEP Vladimír BIL ÍK asked if the National Convention was a platform that could help bringing the divided actors closer together. He said that there was also a huge level of expectations and encouragement for the new parliament and the new government to tackle these issues.

Ambassador HRUSTANOVI stressed that she would have many reactions to what Mr NEDELJKOV had said, but that it would require at least half an hour. She urged for the discussion to be "more about facts and less about perceptions".

Ms DRAGOJLOVI stated that the National Convention regularly criticised the government, but not individual politicians, and that it was ready to support good laws, strategies and dialogue. Some of the member organisations of NCEU are under attack by pro-government tabloids and right-wing GONGOs, but during the meetings with the government representatives, even though they are not always pleasant, there are no insults or attacks. The

opposition, on the other hand, sometimes attacks the Convention for “giving legitimacy to the government”. Ms DRAGOJLOVIĆ said that she did not know how to overcome the gap between reality and ideal modes of democracy, but that Serbian civil society was not able to make changes without the support of EU.

Mr NEDELJKOV said that the way to proceed is to implement ODIHR recommendations to improve electoral conditions. Commenting on Mr BILJAK's remark about the communication strategy of the new government, he said that, according to CRTA's monitoring, the Serbian media mostly quote President Vučić's positive remarks when it comes to Russia, China and the U. S, while the quotes on EU are mostly negative. Ambassador HRUSTANOVIĆ responded to that point, that claiming that President Vučić knew how to be critical of the EU and that partners need to be able to criticise each other, the way EC Report criticises Serbia. The Ambassador concluded that all high-level officials continued to emphasise EU membership as Serbia's priority.

#### *5. Any other business*

No other issues were raised during the meeting.

#### *6. Date and place of the next meeting*

The Chair reminded that the meeting of EU-Serbia Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee had been originally scheduled for July 2020 in Strasbourg, but it had to be postponed due to both restrictions related to COVID-19 and the elections in Serbia. The next meeting will probably take place online after the Serbian Delegation to SAPC is up and running.

The meeting closed at 15.11.

**/LISTA DE ASISTENCIA/PREZEN NÍ LISTINA/DELTAGERLISTE/  
ANWESENHEITSLISTE/KOHALOLIJATE NIMEKIRI/ /RECORD OF ATTENDANCE/  
LISTE DE PRÉSENCE/POPIS NAZO NIH/ELENCO DI PRESENZA/APMEKL JUMU RE ISTRS/DALYVI S RAŠAS/  
JELLENLÉTI ÍV/RE ISTRU TA' ATTENDENZA/PRESENTIELIJST/LISTA OBECNO CI/LISTA DE PRESENÇAS/  
LIST DE PREZEN /PREZEN NÁ LISTINA/SEZNAM NAVZO IH/LÄSNÄOLOLISTA/NÄRVAROLISTA**

/Mesa/P edsednictvo/Formandskabet/Vorstand/Juhatus/ /Bureau/Predsjedništvo/Ufficio di presidenza/Prezidijs/ Biuras/Elnökség/Prezydium/Birou/Predsedníctvo/Predsedstvo/Puheenjohtajisto/Presidiet (*)	
Franc Bogovi (1st VC), Petros Kokkalis (2nd VC), Tanja Fajon (C)	
/Diputados/Poslanci/Medlemmer/Mitglieder/Parlamendiliikmed/ /Members/Députés/Zastupnici/Deputati/Deput ti/ Nariai/Képviselők/Membri/Leden/Posłowie/Deputados/Deputa i/Jäsenet/Ledamöter	
Andor Deli, Tsvetelina Penkova	
/Suplentes/Náhradníci/Stedfortrædere/Stellvertreter/Asendusliikmed/ /Substitutes/Suppléants/Zamjenici/ Supplenti/Aizst ģ ji/Pavaduojantysnariai/Póttagok/Sostituti/Plaatsvervangers/Zast pcy/Membros suplentes/Suplean i/Náhradníci/ Namestniki/Varajäsenet/Suppleanter	
Gwendoline Delbos-Corfield	

209 (7)	
Vladimír Bil ík, David McAllister, Viola Von Cramon-Taubadel	
216 (3)	
56 (8) ( /Punto del orden del día/Bod po adu jednání (OJ)/Punkt på dagsordenen/Tagesordnungspunkt/ Päevakorra punkt/ μ μ /Agenda item/Point OJ/To ka dnevno redá/Punto all'ordine del giorno/Darba k rt bas punkts/Darbotvark s punktā/Napirendi pont/Punt A enda/Agendapunt/Punkt porz dku dziennego/Ponto OD/Punct de pe ordinea de zi/Bod programu schôdze/To ka UL/Esityslistan kohta/Punkt på föredragningslistan)	
Ana Hrustanovi , Ambassador of the Republic of Serbia to the EU Christos Makridis, Deputy Head of Unit for Serbia in the European Commission Elsa Fenet, Head of Division 'Western Balkans' in the European External Action Service	3
Nataša Dragojlovi , President of the National Convention on the European Union in Serbia Rasa Nedeljkov, Program Director, Center for Research, Transparency and Accountability	4

/Observadores/Pozorovatelé/Observatører/Beobachter/Vaatlejad/ Osservatori/Nov rot ji/Steb tojai/Megfigyel k/Osservatori/Waarnemers/Obszerwatorzy/Observadores/Observatori/Pozorovatelja/ Opazovalci/Tarkkailijat/Observatörer	/Observers/Observateurs/Promatra i/ Osservatori/Nov rot ji/Steb tojai/Megfigyel k/Osservatori/Waarnemers/Obszerwatorzy/Observadores/Observatori/Pozorovatelja/ Opazovalci/Tarkkailijat/Observatörer

/Por invitación del presidente/Na pozvání p edsedy/Efter indbydelse fra formanden/Auf Einladung des Vorsitzenden/Esimehe kutsel/ predsjednika/Su invito del presidente/P c priekšs d t ja uzaicin juma/Pirmininkui pakvietus/Az elnök meghívására/ Fuq stedina ta -Chairman'/Op uitnodiging van de voorzitter/Na zaproszenie Przewodniczego/A convite do Presidente/La invita ia pre edintelui/ Na pozvanie predsedu/Na povabilo predsednika/Puheenjohtajan kutsusta/På ordförandens inbjudan

/Consejo/Rada/Rådet/Rat/Nōukogu/ μ Conselho/Consiliu/Svet/Neuvosto/Rådet (*)	/Council/Conseil/Vije e/Consiglio/Padome/Taryba/Tanács/Kunsill/Raad/ Kummissjoni/Commissie/Komisja/Comissão/Comisie/Komisja/Komissio/Kommissionen (*)
Farina Ahauser	
/Servicio Europeo de Acción Exterior/Evropská služba pro vn jší innost/ EU-Udenrigstjenesten/Europäischer Auswärtiger Dienst/Euroopa välissteenistus/ External Action service/Service européen pour l'action extérieure/Evropska služba za vanjsko djelovanje/Servizio europeo per l'azione esterna/Eiropas r j s darb bas dienests/Europos išor s veiksm tarnyba/Európai Kültügyi Szolgálat/Servizz Ewropew g all-Azzjoni Esterna/Europese dienst voor extern optreden/Europejska Służba Działania Zewn trznych/Serviço Europeu para a Acção Externa/ Serviciul european pentru ac iune extern /Európska služba pre vonkajšiu innos /Evropska služba za zunanje delovanje/Euroopan ulkosuhdehallinto/Europeiska avdelningen för yttre åtgärd (*)	
Pawel Lacki	
/Otras instituciones y organismos/Ostatní orgány a instituce/Andre institutioner og organer/Andere Organe und Einrichtungen/Muud institutsioonid ja organid/ μ institutions et organes/Druge institucije i tijela/Altre istituzioni e altri organi/Citas iest des un strukt ras/Kitos institucijos ir staigos/ Más intézmények és szervek/Istituzzjonijiet u korpi o ra/Andere instellingen en organen/Inne instytucje i organy/Outras instituições e outros órgãos/Alte instituții și organe/Iné inštitúcie a orgány/Muut toimielimet ja elimet/Andra institutioner och organ	
EU Delegation in Serbia	Sanda Babic, Sylvie Estriga
Mission of the Republic of Serbia to the EU	Milica Vujovic Royle

/Otros participantes/Ostatní účastníci/Endvidere deltog/Andere Teilnehmer/Muud osalejad/ /Other participants/Autres participants/Drugi sudionici/Altri partecipanti/Citi klasesošie/Kiti dalyviai/Más résztvevők/Partecipanti oħra/Andere aanwezigen/Inni uczestnicy/Outros participantes/Al i participan i/Inf i účastníci/Drugi udeleženci/Muut osallistujat/Övriga deltagare

/Secretaría de los Grupos políticos/Sekretariát politických skupin/Gruppernes sekretariat/Sekretariat der Fraktionen/Fraktsioonide sekretariaat/ μμ /Secretariats of political groups/Secrétariat des groupes politiques/Tajništva klubova zastupnika/Segreteria gruppi politici/Politisko grupu sekretariats/Frakcij sekretoriai/Képviselőcsoportok titkársága/Sekretarjat gruppi političi/Fraksijsekretariat/Sekretariat Grup Politycznych/Secretariado dos grupos políticos/Secretariate grupuri politice/Sekretariát politických skupin/Sekretariat političnih skupin/Poliittisten ryhmien sihteeristö/De politiska gruppernas sekretariat	
PPE	Delia Vlastakis, Stefan Stanković (intern)
S&D	Jörgen Sijl
Renew	Paul Ivan
ID	Angelo Cialfi
Vers/ALE	Juliane Schmidt
ECR	
GUE/NGL	Charalampos Koutoulas
NI	

/Gabinete del Presidente/Kancelária prešededy/Formandens Kabinet/Kabinett des Präsidenten/Presidenčí kanceláři/ /President's Office/Cabinet du Président/Ured predsednika/Gabinetto del Presidente/Priekšsēdētāja kabinets/Pirmininko kabinetas/Elnöki hivatal/Kabinett tal-President/Kabinet van de Voorzitter/Gabinet Przewodniczącego/Gabinete do Presidente/Cabinet Președinte/Kancelária predsedu/Urad predsednika/Puhemieshen kabinetti/Talmannens kansli	
Alina Gherbea	
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DG PRES DG IPOL DG EXPO DG EPRS DG COMM DG PERS DG INLO DG TRAD DG LINC DG FINS DG ITEC DG SAFE	Gorana Pop Georgieva, Raffaele Luise, Joanna Placzek
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Peter Lang, Tatiana Mrazikova, Andre De Munter, Anna Parfjonova, Eliska Gerthnerova Veleva Vesselina, Kristine Sproge, Aleksandar Ivkovic (intern)	
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Cristina Chiorean	

- \* (P) = /Presidente/P edseda/Formand/Vorsitzender/Esimees/ /Chairman/Président/Predsjednik/Priekš d t js/  
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- (F) = /Funcionario/Úředník/Tjenestemand/Beamter/Ametnik/ /Official/Fonctionnaire/Dužnosnik/  
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