

Serbia-EU relations, the way forward

On November 4, MEPs, Serbia's EU Ambassador and NGOs reviewed the Serbian post-electoral landscape, the future of Serbia's democracy, and the country's relations with the European Union.

No viable opposition

Opening the exchange of views on the post-electoral landscape in Serbia and on Serbia's relations with the EU, D-RS Chair [Tanja Fajon](#), 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.

The D-RS Chair said that the EP's SAPC Delegation would closely monitor implementation of the OSCE/ODIHR's [\(Open in new window\)](#) 29 recommendations to improve the conduct of elections. Ms Fajon also stressed that the EP remained committed to relaunching the Inter Party Dialogue (IPD), which should be broad, involving all pro-European political forces.

Reforms to speed up before snap elections

Ms Fajon urged the new government to speed up EU related reforms and to implement all agreements and commitments reached in recent years within the framework of the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue. The Chair pointed to the new government's limited mandate, as early elections were announced by April 2022. She also drew attention to a drastic rise in physical attacks on journalists this year and on NGOs and individuals critical of the government

After describing the worsening pandemic situation in the country, Serbian Ambassador H.E. Ms Ana Hrustanović, presented the 21 June elections results and the priorities of the "reform oriented" and "crisis-mitigating" government. "Serbia partially or fully accomplished 70% of the EP-facilitated IPD objectives", she underlined, stating that the country has opened 18 chapters out of 35, with 2 provisionally closed.

The Ambassador expressed herself "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.

NGOs voice criticism of the government, but "dialogue is possible"

The President of the National Convention on the European Union in Serbia (NCEU) Nataša Dragojlović, explained that NCEU is the only successful communication channel between the civil society and the government on all the aspects of EU integration. The Convention supports the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, as well as the dialogue between the government and opposition.

"Our experience is such that we responsibly claim that dialogue is possible if it is conducted according to certain rules, within institutions and with the help of the EU and its bodies," she said. Ms Dragojlović also expressed hope that consultations between the EP and the civil society in Serbia will become a regular practice in order for Serbia to bring closer European values and standards through joint efforts.

Mr Rasa Nedeljkov, Program Director, Centre for Research, Transparency and Accountability (CRTA) pointed to the numerous shortcomings of the 21 June elections, where he was heading his NGO's observation mission. He said that the media situation had been deteriorating in Serbia with a sharp increase in recent attacks on journalists and the ruling party occupying the majority of public space in the media. He also said that the government cherry picked technical improvements to the electoral framework, but no substantial changes had been done within the framework of the EP-facilitated IPD.

In reply to criticism voiced by NGOs, Ambassador Hrustanović answered: "Let's work on facts, not on perceptions".

MEPs call for a clear roadmap on Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue

MEPs' questions and comments ranged from congratulating the new Serbian government for involving national minorities and creating gender balance in the new government as well as warning the EU not to commit the same mistake as in the case of North-Macedonia in the absence of a clear roadmap on the possible outcomes of the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue.

The online meeting took place a week after Serbia's new government was sworn in and a day after President of Serbia Aleksandar Vučić discussed with NCEU and civil society representatives key aspects of Serbia's accession to the European Union. Participants included of Serbia's EU Ambassador Ana Hrustanović, the EC's deputy head of unit for Serbia, Christos Makridis, the head of the Western Balkans department at the EEAS, Elsa Fenet, and two NGO representatives.