



Austrian Delegation

Italian Delegation

To:

The Minister of Foreign Affairs
Austria

The Minister of Foreign Affairs
France

The Minister of Foreign Affairs
Germany

The Minister of Foreign Affairs
Italy

Vienna/Rome, *21/06/2017*

Re: Trieste Western Balkans Summit

Dear Minister,

we are writing to you with a view to the forthcoming Trieste Summit of 12 July, where the Foreign Ministers of the four countries of the Berlin Process will focus on the Western Balkans.

We are writing to you on behalf of the Austrian and Italian parliamentary delegations to the Central European Initiative, to submit to you and your colleagues some considerations on the future of South-Eastern Europe in the broader European context.

The two delegations have agreed to submit the following:

- a more authoritative EU policy for the Western Balkans is needed, it being desirable that Europe show its support of those communities, as they implement reforms that are instrumental for EU accession. While it is imperative that accession timing and standards are complied with, it is equally important that EU policies, including convincing financial action measures, help these countries develop in such a way to strengthen democracy, stabilization and growth. This policy is necessary also in order to offset the oft excessive role of Russia, China and Turkey;
- when Europe and its member States negotiate with their Balkan counterparts, it should be usefully underlined that membership of the EU family implies that, in order for European institutions to function credibly, firm anchoring in the Western world is a prerequisite;



- more careful consideration should be given to the establishment of a special trade area, as proposed by the newly elected President of the Republic of Serbia. One may note that such area is very likely to be too small to function properly and – it should be underlined – there is a risk that South-Eastern Europe could be drawn into controversies that may lead the area further away from a path which – although difficult – eventually leads to accession. A Balkan free trade area may be an unwelcome distraction in the reform effort required by the EU and could be delusional as an alternative to EU accession. Relations with Russia should not be underplayed here. It is hardly conceivable that a Balkan free trade area could exist without extending the special economic (and political) relations between Serbia and Russia to all its members. This is a prospect that should not be neglected. It is clear instead that, the accession of Serbia and other South-East countries in the EU will mean the opposite, namely that the trade rules regulating EU-Russia relations must be complied with;

- a discussion should be started, with all due caution, to enable Bosnia and Hercegovina to evolve in such areas as government-building, economic and social development. The Dayton Agreements were the outcome of efforts of the international community. The Agreement produced the complex architecture of Bosnia and Hercegovina and its stabilisation, but now also acts as a brake on the development of the country, also in the field of reforms. A discussion should be started on the communities and institutions of this Bosnia and Hercegovina and the international community: first and foremost the European Union and the USA. The aim is to go beyond Dayton without renouncing the positive aspects of that agreement and with a view to enabling the institutions and the society of Bosnia and Hercegovina to develop. It is a challenging but necessary effort. Inertia produces dangerous regression.

The Austrian and Italian delegations hope that you will find these considerations useful.

Sincerely,

Susanne Kurz

Head of the CEI Parliamentary Delegation

Austria

Lodovico Sonogo

Head of the CEI Parliamentary Delegation

Italy