

Stabilisation and Association Agreement between Serbia and EU signed

After a long effort, the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) was finally signed on Tuesday, 29th April between Serbia and the European Union. The historic document was signed by Deputy Prime Minister Božidar Đelić (Democratic Party), on behalf of Serbia, at a meeting in Luxembourg following the General Affairs and External Relations Council. EU's Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn and the EU chair Slovenia's Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel were also present. The signing was attended by Serbian President Boris Tadić (Democratic Party), and Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremić (Democratic Party). According to President Tadić, Serbia would like to become an official candidate for integration to EU by the end of this year following his wish to see the SAA ratified.

The document was signed in the same wording as it was initialised in November 2007. The implementation of SAA will depend on the Council of Minister's appraisal of whether Serbia has achieved full cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in Hague. The problems in this area, specifically Serbia's inability to apprehend suspected war criminals such as Ratko Mladić and ex political leader Radovan Karadžić, have postponed the process of converging between Serbia and EU.

The 29th April is significant for both sides. For the EU, Javier Solana made it clear that Serbia is an enormously important partner due to its great economic, cultural and intellectual potential and is a powerful engine for the progress of the entire region. The EU views Serbia's cooperation to be very significant and profitable for stability in the region.

More information about the signing of the SAA can be found on the websites www.b92.net and <http://news.bbc.co.uk/>.

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