

New Serbian government due soon

Less than 2 months after early parliamentary elections took place, Serbia is now closer to forming a new ruling coalition. It was preceded firstly by a joint agreement between the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) and the coalition For European Serbia (ZES) led by the Democratic Party (DS) and its leader and incumbent president of Serbia, Boris Tadić.

The agreement was followed by the election of Ms Slavica Đukić-Dejanović of the SPS to the position of speaker of the Serbian parliament, while Mr Mirko Cvetković from the DS was given a initial mandate to form the new government and then become Serbia's prime minister.

According to current updates, the government is due to have 26 members making it the biggest one in the post-Milosevic era. Boris Tadic and the leader of the SPS Mr Ivica Dačić claim that European integration, economic development and social welfare will made up the priorities of the new government. Not surprisingly, full cooperation with The Hague and coming to terms with the past were mentioned as mere hopeful additional priorities by civil society, for example by Ivan Vejvoda, head of the Balkan Trust for Democracy.

SPS, which was established in 1991 by the former authoritarian president Slobodan Milosevic, seems to be experiencing somewhat of a political comeback. In addition to having its members in the government, or holding the post of parliamentary speaker, the Socialists have the full support of the DS in their wish to become members of the Socialist International (SI) and so have applied for formal membership during the SI summit, currently underway in Athens. The only delegate which left the summit in protest was Zlatko Lagumdžija, head of the Social-Democratic Party of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Sources: B92, BalkanInsight

Failure of the Lisbon hampered European future of the Balkans

According to French president Nicolas Sarkozy, the 'no' vote of the Irish referendum on the Lisbon Treaty hampers further enlargement and integration of the Western Balkans into the EU.

This opinion of the French presidency was stated clearly. As Sarkozy noted, the enlargement process has to be stopped until institutional structural reform of the EU is solved.

When asked directly if this means temporarily blocking membership access to Croatia, he said "Yes". Sarkozy stressed that the Western Balkans belongs in the EU, but the EU has to be internally reformed before any further enlargement process can continue.

The French ambassador to Serbia, Mr Jean Francois Terral stated however, that Serbia will be France's main priority in the Balkans and hinted that Serbia could be given candidate status by the end of 2008.

Sources: B92, BalkanInsight, Tanjug