

### **Kosovo celebrates its first year since declaration of independence**

Many Albanians took to the streets with flags to celebrate the first anniversary of Kosovo's independence on Tuesday evening (February 17). The streets of Pristina were blocked by thousands of Albanians who were carrying the red and black Albanian flag and Kosovo's new blue-gold flag also the flags of Kosovo's Western allies, the Stars-and-Stripes and Union Jack.

The 90 percent Albanian majority knows the joy is not shared in Kosovo's Serb areas. The Serbian minority in Kosovo rejects the separation and looks to Serbia as it is the capital for healthcare, education and administrative support.

While Albanians were celebrating, Serbia's President Boris Tadic said that Kosovo had never been a state, and Serbia would see them as a southern province. Serbia's President underlined that Serbia would never recognize Kosovo's independence, during a Serbian Army Exercise in Novi Sad. Besides all this, Tadic said, February 17 was a day when an illegal act had been made, when Pristina illegally had declared Kosovo to be a so-called state.

Kosovo's independence has been recognized by 54 mainly western states. 22 EU member states out of 27 recognized Kosovo as independent state and 5 of them did not, those are: Slovakia, Spain, Cyprus, Romania and Greece.

Gisella Kalenbach, MEP and former head of UN mission in Kosovo states that EU has to have a common policy towards Kosovo and she also stated that the patient is needed while Kosovo is building its new political strengths' which will be able to build democracy and good governance in Kosovo.

Romanian MEP Adrian Severin stated that situation in Kosovo is uncertain and unclear which represents the instability for foreign investments.

According to Charles Tannock, British MEP, the Kosovo independence was very bad idea especially that two of the biggest countries and members of UN (Russia and China) did not recognized this Serbian province as the independent state.

*Sources: BalkanInsight, BBC News*

### **Slovenia-Croatia Border Line**

Slovenia, the first former Yugoslav nation to join the European Union in 2004, has started to block the talks with Croatia because of the 18-years-old dispute about a small bay in the Adriatic Sea.

When Piran is seen from a boat it has a magnificent sight- a Venetian-style city built of limestone and marble, lapped by the blue waters of the Adriatic. This small bay of just 20 square km is making big diplomatic waves. The row centers on access to international waters, which Slovenia treasures because its coastline is just 46km long. On the other hand, Croatia's huge Adriatic coast stretches for 1,700 km.

However, Croatia claims that the border should be drawn down the middle of the bay of Piran, which Slovenia fears would deny its ships direct passage to the sea.

When both nations were part of Yugoslavia, borders didn't really matter. But since they declared independence in 1991, events about this case have flared up in the bay, with fishing boats

seized and nets damaged. "It's a big problem," said Milenko Bulezan, a fisherman for 20 years. "If we know where the border is, we would go to that line, but we don't know now."

**The Veto Power of Slovenia:** Slovenia holds a powerful position in the EU. Like any European Union member state, it can veto Croatia's requests. Last December, it did exactly that, blocking a large bulk of its neighbour's accession talks. The reason, according to Slovenian Foreign Minister Samuel Zbogar, was that Croatia had provided maps and documents during the EU negotiations that would have pre-judged a solution to the border dispute. But now, time is running out for Croatia. Unless the impasse is broken in the next few weeks, it is unlikely for Croatia to complete EU membership talks by the end of the year.

Besides that, both countries have different approach to finding a solution. Slovenia prefers EU mediation. Whereas, Croatia says the border dispute is a legal issue, not a political one and should be handled by the International Court of Justice in The Hague.

*Sources: BBC News, Bay of Piran by Oana Lungescu*