

EU TO INTRODUCE 'BLUE CARDS' FOR NON-EU WORKERS

- ☒ EU Home Affairs Commissioner, France Frattini, stated that the EU is planning to introduce work permits for non-EU citizens. The new document would facilitate the inflow of highly-skilled labour in the EU while also prevent the 'brain-drain' effect on the developing states, by allowing workers to go back to their countries and return to the EU through very simplified administrative procedures. The 'blue card', as this work-permit is popularly called, is proposed as a solution to EU's rising problem of labour shortage in view of its ageing population. The 'blue card' will be discussed at the EU in September. [EU Observer, Jutarnji 14/08/07]

THE REGION AGAINST PARTITION OF KOSOVO

- ☒ Most governments in the region declared no support for partition of Kosovo, as one of the options for the future status of the province. The President of Kosovo, Fatmir Sejdiu, stated that Kosovo may abandon the negotiations if partition

is discussed, insisting on the inviolability of Kosovo territorial integrity. Macedonian and Albanian officials were concerned that eventual partition of Kosovo may cause further problems and redrawing of borders in the region. Even Serbian and Russian leaders rejected partition, claiming supervised independence a better option than partition. Meanwhile, the current EU presidency – Portugal, expressed optimism about the outcome of negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina, while the European Commission, according its spokesperson, supports Marti Ahtisaari's plan as the best basis for compromise. [Makfax 14/08/07; Balkan Times 15/08/07]

EUFOR TO HOLD MILITARY EXERCISE IN BOSNIA

- ☒ EUFOR will hold a major military exercise in Bosnia and Herzegovina between August 12 and August 15. A total of 800 soldiers, 300 of which from reserve forces, will participate in this largest relocation of EUFOR forces this year. A unit of the Bosnian Armed Forces will also take part in the exercise where EUFOR forces from Germany, France, Italy and the UK will perform different scenarios to test the activation procedure of EUFOR. Also, next week

NATO Director of Security Department will hand a certificate to the Bosnian Minister of Defence to mark the start of official exchange of confidential information between NATO and Bosnia, as part of the agreement Bosnia concluded with NATO earlier this year. [Avaz, Balkan Times 15/08/07]

GUL TO RUN FOR PRESIDENT OF TURKEY

- ☒ The ruling AKP Party, which won a sweeping victory on the recent general elections in Turkey, announced that it would re-nominate Abdullah Gul as its presidential candidate. Members of the secularist opposition protested against this choice claiming Gul had an Islamist agenda and invoking his Islamist past in the banned Welfare Party and his wife wearing a scarf. In a recent statement, Mr. Gul mentioned that he would respect secularism and promote the democratic, secular and social nature of the Turkish state. The first voting round in parliament will be held on August 20, and three more rounds could follow if the parliament fails to elect a president. AKP has enough MPs to elect its candidate if it secures the required quorum in parliament. [Balkan Times 14/0/07; BBC, Utrinski Vesnik 15/08/07]