

SERBIA AT A DEADLOCK WITH EU NEGOTIATIONS

- ☒ It is exactly (one) year since the EU froze negotiations for the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) with Serbia. Due to insufficient cooperation with the Hague Tribunal, last year the EU stopped the negotiations with Serbia. Serbia, along with BiH, is among the last states in region that have not signed the SAA. Serbia also failed to initial the visa facilitation agreement with the EU last month due to problematic readmission clauses. EU integration efforts are not likely to be re-launched until a new government is created. However, several months after the elections in January, political parties in Serbia have not yet managed to create a viable government coalition. [*B92 2.5*]

CROATIA A STEP CLOSER TO THE EU

- ☒ EU Enlargement Commissioner, Mr. Olli Rehn said that Croatia could join the EU by the end of this decade, by which time the EU is likely to have adopted a suitable frame for further enlargement. Mr. Rehn also stated that Croatia needs to speed up reforms, especially in the economic sphere, as well as in the judiciary and the fight against corruption. Croatia has opened six of the thirty-three chapters of membership

negotiations with the European Commission, and is the country closest to EU membership. Last week the European Parliament adopted a resolution supporting Croatia's membership in the EU. [*Jutarnji 30.4*]

POLITICAL CRISIS IN TURKEY

- ☒ Turkey faces a developing political crisis as the Constitutional Court annulled the presidential vote of the Turkish Parliament last week. Mr. Abdullah Gul, the only candidate from the ruling Justice and Freedom Party, did not receive enough votes in Parliament to achieve the required two-thirds majority, after secularist parties refused to support him due to his alleged Islamist agenda. Many fear that if Mr. Gul's becomes president the secular nature of the Turkish state will be threatened. EU and US political officials warned against Army intervention and expressed hope that an acceptable solution to the growing political crisis will soon be found. [*BBC 2.5; 3.5; Today's Zaman 2.5; Seeurope.Net 29.4*]

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN ALBANIA

- ☒ Albanian government and opposition parties can not reach an agreement regarding the new president of Albania. The ruling Democratic Party of Albania and current Prime Minister, Mr. Sali

Berisha, support Mr. Bamir Topi's candidacy for next president, however the opposition disagrees. The opposition also calls for early general elections if the president is not elected from one of the opposition parties' members. The head of the EU delegation in Albania, Mr. Helmut Lochan, expressed concern over the possibility of early elections which could threaten the political stability of Albania. According to Mr. Lochan keeping the political stability is crucial for the success of the European integration efforts of Albania. [*Makfax 3.5*]

EU-US SUMMIT ON KOSOVO

- ☒ The status of Kosovo was among the topics discussed on the annual EU – US summit held in Washington DC, on May 1. The participants in the summit, among which US President, Mr. George W. Bush, EU Commission President, Mr. Jose Manuel Barroso and German Chancellor, Ms. Angela Merkel, called for swift resolution of the Kosovo issue. According to the summit participant the final resolution of the status of Kosovo will improve the stability of the region. The status of the internationally-administered province remains unresolved as the Kosovo Plan of the Special UN Envoy, Mr. Martti Ahtisaari, is not yet accepted by the UN Security Council. [*RFE/RL 3.5; B92 2.5*]