



Summary

France said on Tuesday it was ready to unblock EU membership talks with Turkey on the subject of help for EU regions, marking an improvement in relations between the two countries. French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius, after meeting his Turkish counterpart Ahmet Davutođlu at a conference on Libya in Paris, said *"I confirmed to him that we were ready ... to begin discussions on chapter 22"*. Accession talks have all but ground to a halt due to an intractable dispute over Cyprus, the divided island state that Turkey does not recognise, and opposition from core EU members France and Germany. *"We hope this will give new momentum to the European Union's relationship with Turkey,"* French foreign ministry spokesman Philippe Lalliot said. *"France now expects Turkey to contribute concretely to this new process"* (uk.reuters.com, UK, 12/2). The French foreign ministry said that France wanted to impart *"a new spirit"* to relations between Ankara and the EU. *"This is certainly a change of attitude from the former government,"* said one official in Paris, although he added it was *"too early"* to say whether France would swing fully behind Turkish EU membership, which Mr Sarkozy explicitly opposed (Financial-Times, UK, 13/2).

- uk.reuters.com, UK, 12/2, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2013/02/12/uk-turkey-eu-france-idUKBRE91B18W20130212>
- Financial-Times, UK, 13/2, (no link available)

A 1.4-million-euro EU-funded project carried out with Italy's direct involvement has made Serbia's fiscal and customs system more modern and more efficient, with a positive impact on the state budget and on its citizens, Serbian officials reported. The 18-month project, which is part of a wider project to develop Serbia's customs agency, involved anti-smuggling and anti-fraud seminars and courses held by Italian customs experts in order to bring Serbian customs legislation up to EU standards. As an accession candidate country, Serbia is awaiting a date for opening of negotiations with Brussels (ansamed.ansa.it, IT, 12/2). However despite progress in this area the Serbian ambassador to Russia, Slavenko Terrić, stated that *"Serbia is prepared to give to the Albanians in Kosovo the highest level of self-government, but the country will never recognise Kosovo's independence. Our European Partners don't realise and understand the destruction of the Serbian cultural patrimony on the territory of Kosovo"* (focus-fen.net, BG, 13/2).

- ansamed.ansa.it, IT, 12/2, http://ansamed.ansa.it/ansamed/it/notizie/rubriche/economia/2013/02/12/Italia-Serbia-positivi-risultati-progetto-assistenza-dogane_8235542.html
- focus-fen.net, BG, 13/2, <http://www.focus-fen.net/?id=n299327>

Concerning Kosovo itself, the European Commission presented its first report on the progress achieved by Kosovo in fulfilling the requirements of the visa liberalisation roadmap. The Commission made a set of recommendations for the Kosovo authorities in areas where more decisive action is needed to obtain visa-free travel for its citizens. The report also assesses the potential security and migratory impact of visa liberalisation. Kosovo's current capacity to fight organised crime and corruption remains limited, with a potentially severe impact on the EU's internal security. The visa refusal rate for applicants from Kosovo varies across the Schengen area, while the number of Kosovo citizens refused entry to the EU doubled recently. The number of citizens found to be illegally staying or seeking asylum in the EU has fallen (eubusiness.com, UK, 12/2).

- eubusiness.com, UK, 12/2, <http://www.eubusiness.com/europe/kosovo/visa-progress-13>

Citizen online published details of a poll in Iceland where 63.3% are reported to reject EU membership. (Citizen Online, Greece, 14/2)

- Citizen Online, GR, 14/2, <http://www.politisnews.eu/cgi-bin/hweb?-A=228735&-V=articles>

Key Quotes

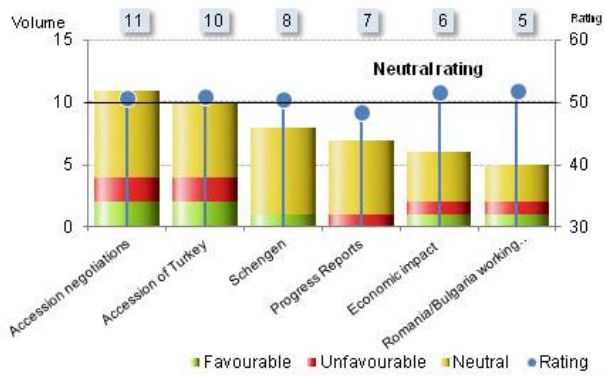
EU gifts £100m to Turkey. Brussels bureaucrats have handed more than £100 million to Turkey to build a high-speed rail link – in case the country joins the EU (Express.co.uk, UK, 14/2) <http://www.express.co.uk/news/world/377559/EU-gifts-100m-to-Turkey>

Accession negotiations between Serbia and the European Union depend on Germany, according to the former country's president, Boris Tadić. "Everything will happen in February because during the month it shall be known if the Chancellor Angela Merkel will send an initiative to the Bundestag to approve the beginning of negotiations to Serbia" (Citizen Online, Greece, 14/2).

<http://www.politisnews.eu/cgi-bin/hweb?-A=228723&-V=articles>

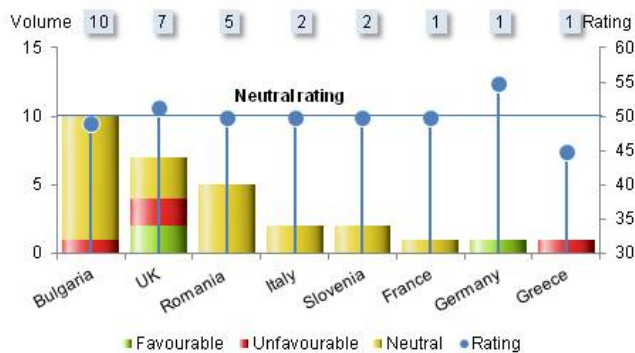
Charts

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ELARG: **Highlights**
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Volume	29 items
Rating	50
Favourable %	10.3%
Unfavourable %	13.8%
Neutral %	75.9%

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ELARG: **Key Stakeholders & Sources**
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ELARG: Stakeholders & Sources	Number of mentions
François Hollande (President, France)	7
Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (Prime Minister, Turkey)	5
Titus Corlăţean (Foreign Minister, Romania)	5
Laurent Fabius (Foreign Minister, France)	5
Ahmet Davutoğlu (Foreign Minister, Turkey)	4
Philippe Lalliot (Spokesperson Foreign Ministry, France)	4

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