

Summary

Although the European Commission gave Croatia a clean bill of health in its final check before the Balkan state joins the EU in July, it said it would keep watch over corruption and crime according to the Cyprus-Mail (27/3). Štefan Füle said that Croatia had worked hard and stuck to the reforms and that the country is ready to assume its place within the EU, but *Suddeutsche-Zeitung* (DE, 27/3) reports that citizens' organisations and economic experts assess Croatia's readiness more critically. They claim that civil rights in Croatia have not yet reached European standards, the economy has been in recession for a long time now and that Croatia's competitiveness is far behind other South-East European countries, but the paper adds this does not seem to be relevant to the EU. In a further article the *Suddeutsche-Zeitung* suggests that Croatia is neither financially nor politically ready and goes on to say that the accession of Republic of Croatia into the EU is premature and dangerous.

- Cyprus-Mail, CY, 27/3, http://194.250.231.110/delivery/20130327/mi/item_152372984.pdf
- *Suddeutsche-Zeitung*, DE, 27/3, http://194.250.231.110/delivery/20130327/mi/item_152354860.pdf
- *Suddeutsche-Zeitung*, DE, 27/3, http://194.250.231.110/delivery/20130327/mi/item_152354883.pdf

The Austrian Vice Chancellor and Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger welcomed the European Commission's positive monitoring report of Croatia and said there were no more obstacles to European Union accession, adding that the Croatian success story was encouragement to other countries of the Western Balkans showing that "*reform work, hard work, and political determination will be worth it*" (bmeia.gv.at, AT, 26/3). German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle also welcomed the decision, saying he was confident that the German Bundestag would approve Croatia's accession and "*take due notice of the positive findings by the Commission*" adding that "*it is also important that the Croatian government has made it clear that it will not relax its reform efforts even after joining*" (dw.de, DE, 27/3). German parliamentarian, Andreas Schockenhoff said the monitoring process by the EU Commission to Croatia was the severest ever carried out on an EU candidate (finanznachrichten.de, DE, 26/3). Also the European Commissioner for Enlargement Štefan Füle said during a visit to Zagreb it had been a pleasure for him to cooperate with Croatia. He had not noticed any manifestation of enlargement weariness and even spoke of a "*strengthening of the European Union*" (Standard, AT, 27/3).

- bmeia.gv.at, AT, 26/3, <http://www.bmeia.gv.at/aussenministerium/presnews/presseaussendungen/2013/spindelegger-kroatien-ist-weqbereiter-fuer-den-gesamten-balkan.html>
- dw.de, DE, 27/3, <http://www.dw.de/croatia-cleared-to-join-the-eu-in-july/a-16701052>
- finanznachrichten.de, DE, 26/3, <http://www.finanznachrichten.de/nachrichten-2013-03/26355912-schockenhoff-kroatien-ist-reif-fuer-die-eu-mitgliedschaft-007.htm>
- Standard, AT, 27/3, http://194.250.231.110/delivery/20130327/mi/item_152373887.pdf

In other negotiations imerisia.gr (27/3) noted that new provocative statements regarding Cyprus were coming from Turkey, which proposes that Nicosia adopt the Turkish lira. Commenting on the accession of Cyprus to the European Union in 2004, Egemen Bağış said it was not based on mutually beneficial treaties. "*The European Union knew from the outset the cost of integrating only the Greek Cypriots. The acceptance of the Greek Cypriot Administration under these conditions proved to be more of a no-win situation despite a mutually beneficial formula. Eventually, both sides came out losers.*"

- imerisia.gr, EL, 27/3, <http://www.imerisia.gr/article.asp?catid=26517&subid=2&pubid=113015791>

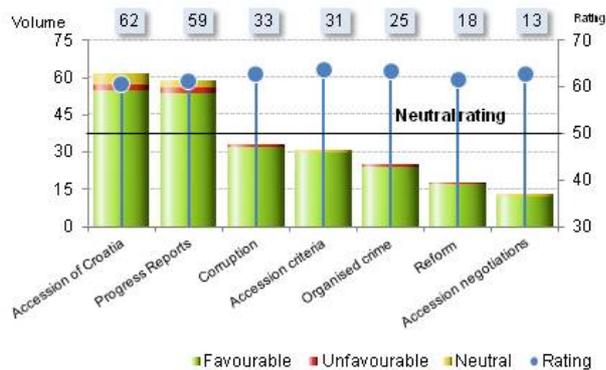
Key Quotes

Bernd Borchardt, the head of EULEX Kosovo: "We still have a lot to do" (dw.de, Germany, 27/3)
<http://www.dw.de/bernd-borchardt-we-still-have-a-lot-to-do/a-16701142>

Kosovo hopeful on deal with Serbia to end ethnic partition. "This is a dialogue about the normalisation of relations between two countries as separate and independent countries," Kosovo Foreign Minister Enver Hoxhaj told Reuters in an interview in Paris. "*I think we will have a breakthrough by April 2. We are working on that, but I think the reason why we didn't have a breakthrough is in Belgrade and not Pristina.*" (Yahoo!, UK, 27/3) <http://uk.news.yahoo.com/kosovo-hopeful-deal-serbia-end-ethnic-partition-170822263.html#NHcddUO>

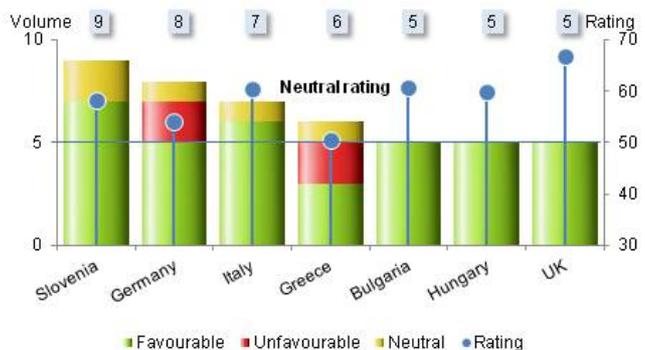
Charts

ELARG: **Leading Daily Issues**
by volume, favourability & rating



©echo

ELARG: **Leading Daily Countries**
by volume, favourability & rating



©echo

ELARG: **Highlights**
by volume, favourability & rating

Volume	66 items
Rating	60.1
Favourable %	84.8%
Unfavourable %	6.1%
Neutral %	9.1%

©echo

ELARG: **Key Stakeholders & Sources**
by volume, favourability & rating

ELARG: Stakeholders & Sources	Number of mentions
Štefan Füle (Enlargement Commissioner, EC)	49
Zoran Milanović (Prime Minister, Croatia)	14
Vesna Pusić (Foreign Minister, Croatia)	5
Andreas Schockenhoff (Member of the Bundestag, Germany)	3
Egemen Bağış (Minister for European Affairs, Turkey)	2
Guido Westerwelle (Foreign Minister, Germany)	2

Disclaimer: The access to this press report is restricted to European Commission staff. It should not be forwarded or circulated.