

Key Quotes

EU Enlargement Commission Johannes Hahn will visit the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia early next week in a bid to help government and opposition leaders reach a compromise on resolving the political crisis. **"The discussions between political leaders are at a critical juncture. The European Union expects all of them to behave responsibly and constructively,"** said European Commission spokeswoman Maja Kocijancic (novinite.com, BG, 9/7).

<http://www.novinite.com/articles/169783/EU+Calls+on+Macedonian+Leaders+to+Reach+Compromise>

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said that Germany would help Bosnia, the last country in the queue of Western Balkan hopefuls to join the EU, to speed up an accession bid long delayed by internal political bickering. **"In Bosnia we see problems which have to be overcome,"** Merkel said in Sarajevo, her last stop on a Balkan tour during which she also visited Albania and Serbia. **"The region can function if Bosnia is developing well"** (uk.reuters.com, UK, 9/7).

<http://uk.reuters.com/article/2015/07/09/uk-bosnia-germany-merkel-idUKKCN0PJ23920150709>

Summary

Greek crisis affects the Balkans

Balkan countries aspiring for European Union membership can reach their goals despite the crisis in Greece, Angela Merkel said July 8th as she began a two-day tour of the region. The German chancellor visited Albania and Serbia whose ambitions to join the EU have been complicated by the Greek financial turmoil. Merkel praised Serbian Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić, who is campaigning for Serbia's EU membership despite strong opposition from the pro-Russian nationalist bloc who criticise him for accepting austerity demands from creditors (rferl.org, CZ, 9/7). In his commentary in Die Welt (DE, 9/7) Jaques Schuster criticises the fact that the Greek crisis is distracting the German government from paying attention to other issues. While Mr Schuster commends Angela Merkel for visiting a number of Balkan states, he argues that she should not neglect Kosovo as this could lead to complications for Germany. He further argues that Kosovo and Albania should be declared safe countries of origin to further limit the number of refugees coming to Germany from this region. Countries hoping to join the European Union cannot produce political refugees, states Mr Schuster.

- rferl.org, CZ, 9/7, <http://www.rferl.org/content/serbia-merkel-praises-debt-habits-contrast-with-greece-bosnia/27117731.html>
- Die Welt, DE, 9/7, http://193.178.140.110/delivery/20150709/mi/item_256519061.pdf

Deadlock in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Zoran Zaev, the leader of the country's biggest opposition party SDSM, said negotiations for solving the country's deep political crisis have been unsuccessful and blamed Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski for the failure. Ivo Vajgl, the EU rapporteur for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, said that the gap between government and opposition had diminished to one sticking point, but an absolutely fundamental one – who governs the country in the run-up to the election. Zaev has kept insisting that Gruevski step down but there was no change in the position of Gruevski who says he will not resign. Meanwhile, an opinion poll conducted by IRI in June showed a strong lead for the ruling party VMRO-DPMNE and Gruevski (bne.eu, UK, 9/7).

- bne.eu, UK, 9/7, <http://www.bne.eu/content/story/macedonian-opposition-blames-prime-minister-failure-early-election-deal>

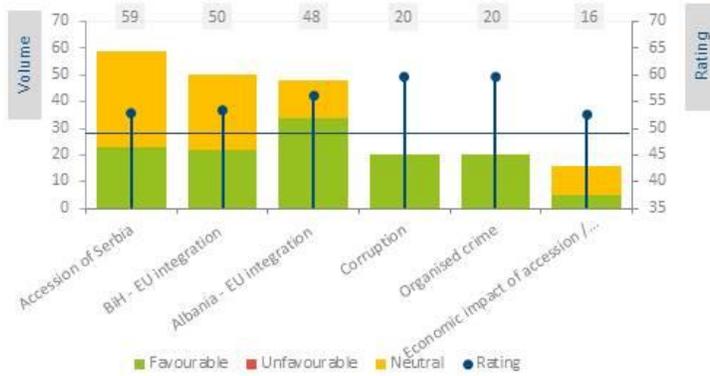
Albania's long path towards EU membership

The Wirtschaftsblatt (AT, 9/7) has travelled to Albania to report about this EU candidate country. Albania believes in EU membership as the only chance to modernise the country. But neither Albanian politicians nor officials in Brussels think that Albania will be actually able to celebrate its accession shortly because rule of law has not been firmly established and the local institutions operate far from Western standards and traditions. **"Albania had no time to build an institutional memory"** officials in the European Commission said. Nevertheless, Tirana is presenting itself as a city with European flair.

- Wirtschaftsblatt, AT, 9/7, http://193.178.140.110/delivery/20150709/mi/item_256540087.pdf

Charts

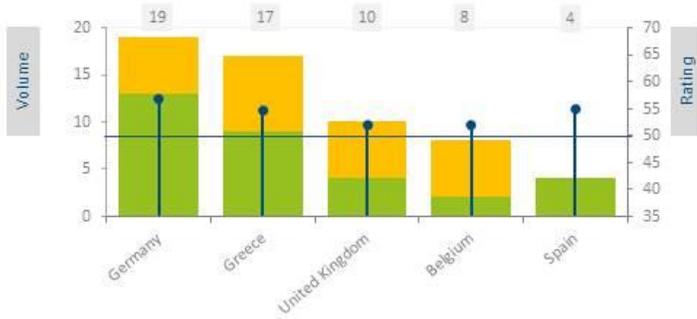
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ELARG: Stakeholders & Sources	Number of mentions
Angela Merkel - German Chancellor - QUOTED	56
Edi Rama - Albania PM	39
Aleksandar Vučić - PM Serbia	24
Bujar Nishani - President Albania	8
Tomislav Nikolić - Serbia President	6

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