

Key Quotes

EU and Turkey agreement on deporting migrants and visas. Turkey's Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan called the new deal with the EU a **"milestone"**. Mr Erdoğan said Turkey was no longer a country that people **"escape from, but one that people return to"**. **"We are not a country that is a burden [to the EU] but one that takes away its burdens,"** he said. **"The visa requirements should have been removed long ago. The fact that they haven't been removed yet has only harmed the European Union"** (BBC Online, UK, 16/12).

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-25398872>

Speaking in Brussels recently, Albania's European Integration Minister Klajda Gjoshaj described EU membership as **"a people's priority more than a government priority."** The reforms needed for accession will also bring better living standards, she argued. **"The EU is a driving force for transforming our society. Albania is trying so hard. A few years ago, Europe was a dream. Now there's no going back"** (Euobserver.com, BE, 16/12).

<http://euobserver.com/opinion/122466>

Summary

Turkey and EU open way for talks on visas

Turkey and the EU sign a long sought agreement that the two sides say should clear the way for the lifting of visa restrictions and the repatriation of illegal migrants. For Turkey, the signing of the deal in Ankara is another sign of ties improving. These include the recent resumption of EU membership negotiations and a visit to Brussels next month by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Turkey's Prime Minister. But many Turkish officials still consider Brussels insincere in its offer of EU membership, while European officials privately voice doubts about Mr Erdoğan's appetite for EU inspired reforms. Last week, EU officials also voiced concern about press freedom in Turkey. But one said Brussels had little option but to see the **"glass half full"**. Within the past week, Turkish authorities indicted 255 people over this summer's mass protests, asking for sentences of up to five years for doctors who treated demonstrators. A **"democratisation package"** hailed by the EU finally arrived at the Turkish parliament - but with provisions including prison for obstructing public services, a ban on protests after sunset and a definition of hate crimes that excludes sexuality and ethnicity. **"There is a certain schizophrenia within the government but, on balance, Turkey is going in the EU direction,"** said Cengiz Aktar at the Istanbul Policy Centre think-tank (Financial-Times, UK, 16/12). **"The gateway to Europe without a visa will now be open"** said Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, promising that Turkey would fulfil its obligations. The EU wants Turkey, a crossroads between Europe and Asia, to take back thousands of illegal migrants who have crossed its borders into Greece, the EU's eastern frontier. The deal had stalled in 2012, with Turkey refusing to sign as the EU would not commit to starting negotiations on the visa-free travel regime applied to other candidate countries (eubusiness.com, UK, 16/12).

- Financial-Times, UK, 16/12, [link not available]
- eubusiness.com, UK, 16/12, <http://www.eubusiness.com/news-eu/turkey-immigration.s85/>

Serbia Kosovo meeting - **"We have not reached an agreement"** confirmed Hashim Thaçi

Pristina and Belgrade did not reach an agreement on the judicial system on Saturday, so work groups will work on the issue to resolve the problem by Tuesday. On Tuesday EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs Catherine Ashton will present a report on the progress on Kosovo and Belgrade to the Foreign Affairs Council, after which it will be clear when Serbia will start its EU accession negotiations (HR1, HR, 16/12). The failure to gain an agreement probably eliminates Serbia's chance to open accession negotiations with the EU this month and likely means Belgrade and Pristina will have to resolve the issue before Serbian-EU talks can start (rferl.org, CZ, 13/12).

- HR1, HR, 16/12, [link not available]
- rferl.org, CZ, 13/12, <http://www.rferl.org/content/serbia-kosovo-eu-judiciary/25200287.html>

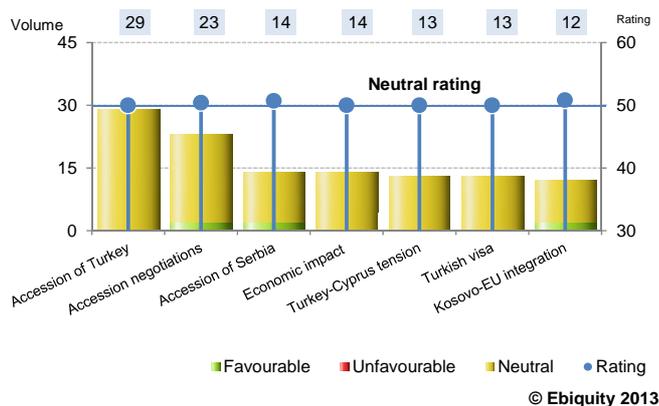
Support for Albania

As the Netherlands seeks other countries that are willing to say no to Albania's candidacy status for EU membership, the foreign ministers of eight European countries are gathered and have drafted a letter in support of the Balkan country — and they request full support from all EU Council members to approve Albania's candidacy. In the letter they express their strong support for a positive decision to invite Albania to become a candidate member of the EU, as the EU Commission has recommended (balkans.com, UK, 16/12).

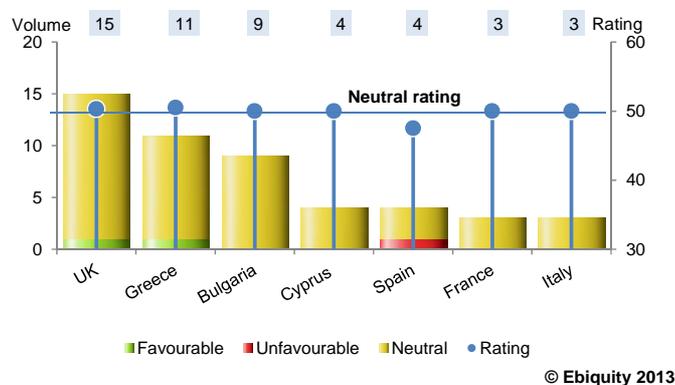
- balkans.com, UK, 16/12, <http://www.balkans.com/open-news.php?uniquenumber=186194>

Charts

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ELARG: Leading Daily Countries by volume, favourability & rating



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Volume	54 items
Rating	50.2
Favourable %	7.4%
Unfavourable %	1.9%
Neutral %	90.7%

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

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ELARG: Stakeholders & Sources	Number of mentions
Ahmet Davutoğlu (Foreign Minister, Turkey)	14
Baroness Catherine Ashton (High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, EU)	7
Evangelos Venizelos (Foreign Minister, Greece)	7
Hashim Thaçi (Prime Minister, Kosovo)	6
Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (Prime Minister, Turkey)	5
Štefan Füle (Enlargement Commissioner, EC)	5
Ivica Dačić (Prime Minister, Serbia)	5

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