

Key Quotes

EU sets date for Serbia membership talks. The European Union will begin long-awaited membership talks with Serbia on January 21, the bloc's Enlargement Commissioner Stefan Füle announced following a meeting in Brussels on Tuesday. **"The EU ministers for European Affairs had "acknowledged [Serbia's] reform and normalization efforts,"** Füle wrote on Twitter. **"First intergovernmental conference planned for 21 January."** **"This is an historic event for Serbia, a day that many generations of citizens and numerous governments have awaited,"** Prime Minister Ivica Dačić said on the national RTS TV network. **"I am proud that this government reached it,"** he added ([dw.de](http://www.dw.de), DE, 18/12). <http://www.dw.de/eu-sets-date-for-serbia-membership-talks/a-17304630>

Nicos Christodoulides director of the diplomatic office of the President, who was speaking at an event titled *'Turkey: An uncertain step towards Europe'* blamed Ankara for the lack of progress in its own accession. Christodoulides said Turkey's accession would be in Cyprus' best interest, arguing that a solution of the Cyprus problem would be a part of the process. **"We support Turkey joining the EU for the simple reason that we can't change geography,"** he said. **"Turkey will continue to be a neighbour country and I think everyone agrees that having an EU member-state next door, one who respects democratic values and human rights, is preferable to a non EU state. It is for that reason that we support Turkish accession negotiations,"** Christodoulides said (Cyprus Mail, CY, 17/12). <http://cyprus-mail.com/2013/12/17/turkey-its-own-worst-enemy-when-it-comes-to-eu-accession/>

Summary

EU and Turkey sign Refugee Convention

The Turkish Government had signed off on the agreement in 2012, but suspended its official signing pending a commitment from the EU to eliminate visas for Turkish citizens. This agreement, saluted as "historic" by the head of the Turkish diplomacy Ahmet Davutoğlu, was signed in the presence of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan by the Turkish Home Affairs Minister, Muammer Guler, and EU Home Affairs Commissioner Cecilia Malmström (Curentul, RO, 17/12). *"This is very Significant,"* said Ms Malmström in an interview with reporter Samir Abu Eid on SVT she said *"It's a way of getting closer to each other, making it easier to travel, building trust and this has been a little shaky recently in our relations"* (SVT1-Rapport, SE, 16/12). In an opinion piece in Deutschlandfunk (DE, 17/12), Thomas Bormann comments that many people in Turkey feel blackmailed, as visa freedom with the EU comes at the price of taking on many thousands of refugees. He is sympathetic to Turkish complaints about the difficulties of visiting Europe; while similar states in the region have been allowed a visa agreement. On the positive side, Turkey will be forced into a clear line of taking on refugees, along EU guidelines. Yet Mr Bormann argues that for refugees, the agreement signifies a possible beginning to being passed back along a chain of countries only to return to their home, where torture and death awaits them.

- Curentul, RO, 17/12, http://193.178.140.110/delivery/20131217/mi/item_180349483.pdf
- SVT1-Rapport, SE, 16/12, [link not available]
- Deutschlandfunk, DE, 17/1, <http://193.178.140.110/delivery/20131216/mi/2501-513749-001.mp3>

Albanians want to be in the EU

In Albania 87% of the population want membership of the EU and are ready to make huge efforts to obtain it. This week, EU leaders will decide whether to grant the country candidate status following the European Commission's positive recommendation in October. Why, then, is it widely predicted that Albania will get the EU cold shoulder again? After two rejections in 2010 and 2011, the commission first offered Albania its tentative approval in 2012, but hedged around with conditions. The brief euphoria that Albanians enjoyed, coinciding with a century of nationhood, quickly subsided into resignation. To support this, in a letter, the foreign ministers of Italy and Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Hungary, Ireland and Slovenia pointed to Albania's fight against organized crime and corruption, its free and fair elections, and a positive recommendation from the European Commission. Granting candidate status *"would not only encourage Albania to continue working hard and keep up the rhythm of reform, it would also send a strong signal to other current and potential candidates that hard work will be rewarded"*, the letter said (ansamed.info, IT, 16/12).

- ansamed.info, IT, 16/12, http://www.ansamed.info/ansamed/en/news/sections/politics/2013/12/16/EU-Italy-7-EU-States-call-Albanian-EU-candidacy_9788305.html

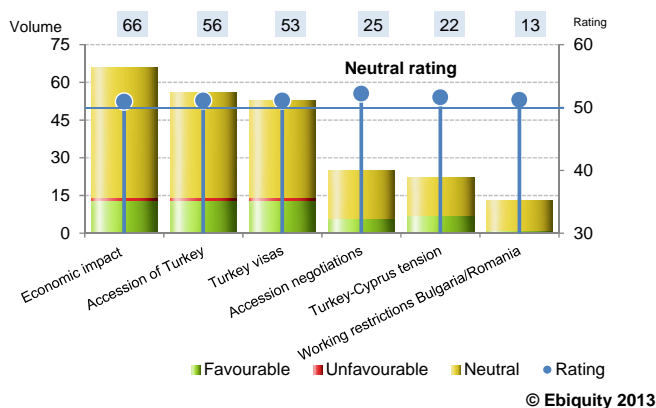
Crucial week for EU negotiations with Serbia

Serbian Premier Ivica Dačić said he expected Brussels to take a positive decision on the timing to start talks but accused Pristina of putting on the breaks regarding judicial issues. Branko Ružic, the minister in charge of European integration, said he expects the intergovernmental conference to start on January 21 (ansamed.info, IT, 16/12).

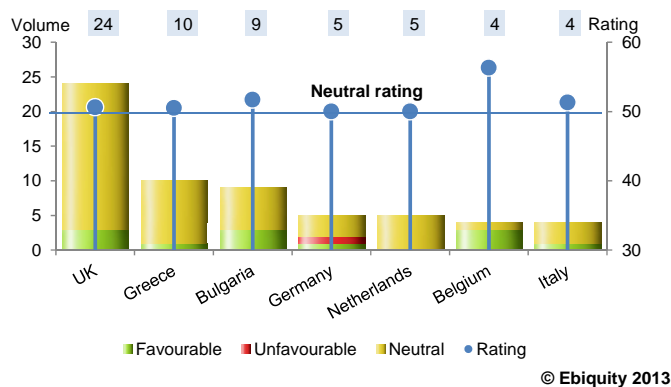
- ansamed.info, IT, 16/12, http://www.ansamed.info/ansamed/en/news/sections/politics/2013/12/16/Serbia-EU-key-week-starts-Belgrade-talks_9786366.html

Charts

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Volume	73 items
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Favourable %	21.9%
Unfavourable %	1.4%
Neutral %	76.7%

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

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ELARG: Stakeholders & Sources	Number of mentions
Cecilia Malmström (Home Affairs Commissioner, EC)	31
Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (Prime Minister, Turkey)	26
Ahmet Davutoğlu (Foreign Minister, Turkey)	23
David Cameron (Prime Minister, UK)	12
László Andor (Commissioner Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, EC)	12
Theresa May (Home Secretary, UK)	11
Baroness Catherine Ashton (High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, EU)	5

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