



Key Quotes

David Cameron will pledge Britain's full support for continued EU expansion today - but with tougher rules on migrants' financial benefits and rights when taking advantage of the free movement membership. Member states have agreed to start the EU accession process with Serbia next month and are discussing possible moves to grant Albania "**candidate status**" now - the first step on the long path to full EU membership - or wait until next June. Mr Cameron wants tougher membership conditions for the latest hopefuls and favours postponing talks with Albania for six months to enable the country to start initial reforms to make the country more compatible with its possible future union partners (Yahoo!, UK, 20/12).

<http://uk.news.yahoo.com/cameron-bigger-eu-must-tougher-033627544.html#k1PrQQB>

President Nicos Anastasiades took the opportunity yesterday in Brussels to brief EU leaders about the latest developments on the Cyprus talks and managed to have a dig at Turkey during discussions on EU-NATO relations. Anastasiades, who spoke immediately after Merkel, took the opportunity to elaborate on the issue of Cyprus-Turkey relations and in particular Turkey's refusal to work with Cyprus on any level. The President also outlined the latest developments on Cyprus as well as ongoing efforts to secure a joint declaration from the two communities that would pave the way to peace talks. Anastasiades reiterated his "**strong desire**" for a solution (Cyprus Mail, CY, 20/12).

<http://cyprus-mail.com/2013/12/20/president-briefs-eu-leaders/>

Summary

Serbia: negotiations for accession with the EU will begin in January

The EU accession process will be widely welcomed by investors, as it will encourage judicial and economic reform and greater integration with European markets – as well as welcome funding. But the experience of neighbours Croatia, Bulgaria and Romania, all now EU members, suggests that Serbia will not join before 2020 at the very earliest, and only after a process fraught with administrative, economic and political challenges. Some reforms will be difficult, involving taking on entrenched interest groups, and measures that may not prove popular with the electorate. And despite recent progress, the issue of Kosovo is likely to become more difficult as the EU will probably not allow Serbia to join without recognising independence, something that successive Serbian governments have said that they will never do, and which would prove unpopular with voters. The government has also been accused of authoritarianism and using a popular anti-corruption drive to further a political agenda. The conservative-led government may now attempt to cash in on its popularity and the confirmation of EU negotiations with an early election in spring. Deputy Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić, the main power-broker who has been active in courting investment and trade ties around the world, may look to strengthen the hand of his Progressive Party (SNS), and possibly find coalition partners more conducive to public sector reform than the Socialists of Prime Minister Ivica Dačić. An election could stall anticipated fiscal-tightening flagged up by Vučić and push back talks with the IMF on a standby arrangement that could strengthen the government's will for budget consolidation. But while Serbia's fiscal figures are not pretty, they are not disastrous – the 2014 budget foresees a deficit of 4.6 per cent of GDP and debt tops 60 per cent of GDP, but the country can meet its financing needs, according to analysts from RBS (blogs.ft.com, UK, 18/12).

- blogs.ft.com, UK, 18/12, <http://blogs.ft.com/beyond-brics/2013/12/18/serbia-eu-membership-the-hard-work-starts-here/#axzz2ntVALXf9>

Albanian views on name dispute

Ethnic Albanian citizens in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia are calling on foreign leaders to help the country sort out the name dispute with Greece and start accession negotiations with the EU, but the bloc is showing increased disappointment with the lack of progress in Skopje on democratic standards. "*The current situation has become a challenge for our country; expectations have become different in different ethnic groups. A more intensive EU process would hold the country united for a common future,*" Fatmir Besimi, an ethnic Albanian and member of DUI, the government coalition partner of the ruling VMRO DPMNE party warned. Despite numerous initiatives to keep the country on the reform track, the situation has deteriorated. Freedom of expression levels are at a historic low, while nationalist rhetoric blossoms (euractiv.fr, FR, 19/12).

- euractiv.fr, FR, 19/12, <http://www.euractiv.fr/node/532468>

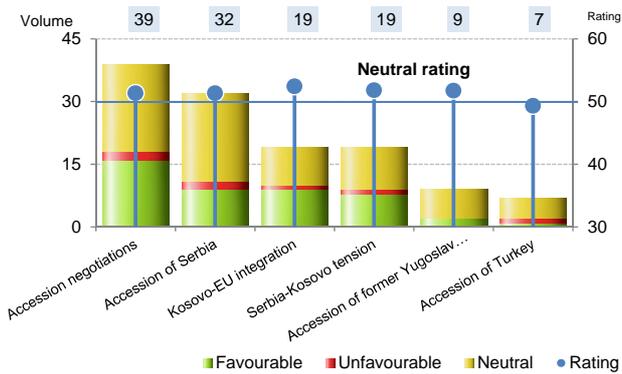
Montenegro opens the most important chapters

Montenegro opened five chapters in the negotiations with the EU yesterday in Brussels – justice and fundamental rights and freedom, justice and security, the latter two having been proven to be the most problematic in negotiations. It also opened the chapter on public procurement, company law and business and industry. The opening of the chapters was announced on Twitter by European Commissioner for Enlargement Štefan Füle (Vecer, SI, 19/12).

- Vecer, SI, 19/12, http://193.178.140.110/delivery/20131219/mi/item_180648804.pdf

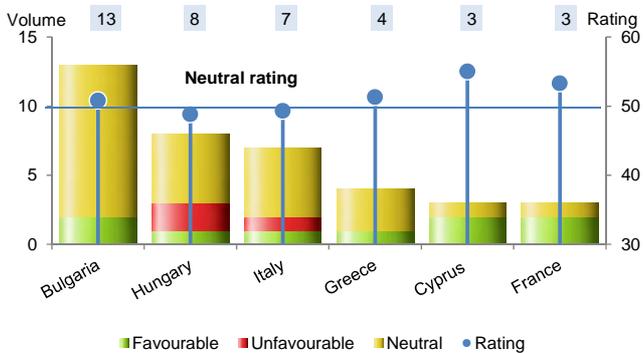
Charts

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ELARG: Highlights
by volume, favourability & rating

Volume	49 items
Rating	50.9
Favourable %	24.5%
Unfavourable %	6.1%
Neutral %	69.4%

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

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ELARG: Stakeholders & Sources	Number of mentions
Štefan Füle (Enlargement Commissioner, EC)	15
Ivica Dačić (Prime Minister, Serbia)	10
Linas Linkevičius (FM Lithuania)	5
Emma Bonino (Foreign Minister, Italy)	4
Viktor Orban (Prime Minister, Hungary)	4
Baroness Catherine Ashton (High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, EU)	3

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