

Interview on Police reform in BiH for *Dnevni avaz*

The Council of the EU has expressed its disappointment over the lack of progress in reform, and Police reform in particular. What kind of message does this send to Bosnian politicians?

The EU's position on police restructuring remains unchanged: the October 2005 Agreement on Police Restructuring must be fully adhered to and the police reform implementation plan adopted, in accordance with the three EU principles.

The EU was present when the Agreement was concluded. We remember the commitments given by each of the political leaders at the time. Their agreement was subsequently confirmed by the state and entity parliaments. It was based on these commitments that the EU agreed to open SAA negotiations with BiH.

Calls for renewed political talks, revisiting the October 2005 Political Agreement and undermining the Council of Ministers' legally constituted Decision on Police Restructuring from December 2005, are inconsistent with the commitments made during the police reform talks. The Police Reform Directorate is a fully legitimate expert body. The EU expects BiH politicians to support it accordingly.

It is against this background, that the Council expressed concern, on September 15, over the lack of progress in implementation of the Agreement and the lack of support for the Policing Directorate's work.

The message to BiH politicians is simple and clear: EU agreed to open SAA negotiations with BiH because it was assured that BiH political authorities had accepted the EU's principles for police reform, and had agreed a process - set out in the October 2005 Agreement - through which the parties in BiH could resolve all issues related to this reform. The EU expects that this is still the case.

The Directorate will miss its deadline for completing the technical proposal on 30 September. Can the Directorate continue working after this date?

Failure to meet the deadline would be regrettable, but what really matters is establishing a solid professional basis for the police reform to proceed and that the Directorate, as a professional body, provides this basis. The sooner the better. The Directorate Chairman has announced that their report will be complete by 30 November. The European Union sees no problem with this and I am confident that the members of the Directorate will be able to prepare a solid proposal.

The CoM has failed to accept the Directorate's six-month report and the revised work plan. It seems the Directorate doesn't have the support of the CoM. Your comment?

It is clear that the Directorate should have full political support of all authorities in BiH, and, above all, of the Council of Ministers. I believe that the Council of Ministers supports the Directorate and that this support should be stated clearly. Again, let me underline that the Directorate has full support from Brussels in its work.

Can we expect negotiations on the first of three EU principles on police reform, which places exclusive budgetary and legislative competence at the state level?

As I mentioned above, calls for renewed political talks, revisiting the October 2005 Political Agreement and undermining the Council of Ministers' legally constituted Decision on Police Restructuring from December 2005, are inconsistent with the commitments made during the police reform talks

The first principle – that all legislative and budgetary competencies for all police matters must be vested at the state level – is straightforward and leaves no room for interpretation.

Following the completion of the Directorate's work, Entity and State governments and parliaments will have an opportunity to further discuss the proposal. According to last year's Political Agreement, these bodies will then need to adopt a plan for police reform, based on the proposal and in line with the three EU principles.

Can you explain the three principles: do they mean that Police regions need to cross the IEBL?

The third principle is about the creation of “functional local police areas” that must be determined on the basis of technical criteria. I understand that the Directorate will soon turn to this issue and I do not want to prejudge the discussion of the police experts.

The European Union is interested in having BiH as a capable partner in the fight against crime. That means that we want BiH to find solutions that will provide BiH with a police service that is efficient, professional and free of political interference so as to be effective in the fight against major and organised crime, and able to ensure an efficient level of public security for all citizens.
