

# Helsinki bulletin



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Photo: Tanjug

## SERBIA MUST DECIDE

The recent events in Kosovo dramatically changed the atmosphere and the attitude of the Western community towards the Western Balkans and, in particular, Serbia. The West's prompt response to the terrorist act in the village of Banjska exposed Serbia's duplicitous policy and the failure of the Western policy of tolerating and pandering to Serbia. In a certain way, this event had a sobering effect on the EU, the US and NATO.

Although official and complete reports on this event are not yet accessible, judging by the intense ongoing diplomatic activities, it is clear that this was Serbia's serious attempt to take advantage of a fluid international context and threaten both regional and European security. It was an attempt to forcefully create the conditions for the annexation of northern Kosovo.

As security has priority, especially bearing in mind that Russia stood behind the attempts to destabilize the Balkans on several occasions (and it is still present), the West's prompt response could be expected, since this event was the red line and warning that Belgrade's manipulations and lies cannot be tolerated any more.

After the thwarted operation in Kosovo, official Belgrade is making efforts to distance itself and shift the responsibility to Kosovo Serbs, claiming that they have the right to rebel due to the continuous discrimination against them. Milan Radoičić, who admitted to being the organizer of this operation, was apprehended and then released, and there are no indications that he will be tried in due course. The West publicly tolerated that narrative, but did not give up the demand that those responsible be brought to justice.

The terrorist act in "Radoičić's organization" intensified the discussions on EU enlargement, especially to the Western Balkans, which has evidently become the most vulnerable spot when it comes to Europe's new security framework in the making. In her annual address on 13 September, Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission (EC), said that the EU with 30+ members is "strategic interest".<sup>1</sup> She also said that enlargement is an investment in the EU's security and prosperity, and that it will be a "progress catalyst". And Charles Michel, President of the European Council, announced back in August that the EU should be ready to receive new members "by 2030".<sup>2</sup>

Enlargement was discussed at all conferences and meetings held after 24 September (the murder of a Kosovo policeman in

Banjska), but its dynamics is still not clear. However, as President Macron hinted, the set goal – 2030 – cannot be achieved without the necessary changes in the EU itself.

## BELGRADE DENIES ITS RESPONSIBILITY

The attack of an armed Serbian group in the village of Banjska as well as the previous protests in northern Kosovo in May suspended the dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia, and thus the integration of the Serb community into Kosovo society. The conflict in Banjska damaged the position of Serbia and, in particular, President Vučić, who is now trying to control damage and regain the initiative and control – both at home and abroad.

The scale of that operation was disclosed on a daily basis. During the month-long investigations and raids, a large collection of weapons – ranging from mortars to explosives – was seized. Such an operation could not be prepared and carried out without the support of certain circles in Belgrade. The arsenal found in the Monastery of Banjska was mostly manufactured in Serbian factories. The former American Colonel Gian Gentile said that the attackers were "equipped as infantry soldiers".<sup>3</sup> The situation vis-à-vis Serbia was all the worse because, after the attack on Banjska, it increased its military presence on the border with Kosovo. This move was condemned by the European Union and the United States, which characterized it as "a very destabilizing action of the Serbian Army".<sup>4</sup>

1 <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/evropska-unija-grenada-lideri-prosirenje/32621362.html>

2 Ibid.

3 <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/kosovo-banjska-/32652032.html>

4 Ibid.

According to retired US General Wesley Clark, the attack in northern Kosovo poses a real problem for the stability of the Balkans and the European Union and NATO should be worried. He especially pointed out that it is disturbing that after the incident it turned out that a large quantity of weapons was kept in a Serbian monastery. There were also such cases in the Balkans during the 1990s, when certain monasteries were the strongholds of Serbian nationalism. He hopes that the KFOR will insist that all this is verified, because there is no place for something like that at the moment when it is attempted to secure an agreement on granting autonomy to Kosovo citizens of Serb nationality.<sup>5</sup>

After the incident, the Serbian Army increased its presence on the border with Kosovo, which was condemned by the State Department and Brussels. The White House National Security Spokesman, John Kirby, called for the withdrawal of the Serbian forces in order to reduce tension.<sup>6</sup> In response to the Banjska incident, NATO approved sending additional KFOR troops.

Belgrade denied that it raised the combat readiness of the Serbian Army, which Vučić persistently repeated to his Western collocutors. As he stated during his talk with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, “he denied that because he did not sign that and that it is not true”.<sup>7</sup> However, the visit of US Ambassador Christopher Hill and the head of the EU delegation, Ambassador Emanuel Gioffre, to the Serbian Army barracks,

which was organized ten or so days after the conflict, was a kind of pressure on the army to withdraw.<sup>8</sup>

President Vučić denied Serbia’s involvement in the conflict in Banjska and said that he himself would conduct an investigation. He also claimed that the conflict in Banjska was carried out by a group of “desperate local Serbs” and accused Kurti of “terrorizing” Serbs in northern Kosovo.<sup>9</sup>

The atmosphere and the events that preceded the Banjska attack should also be taken into account. Like the announcement of the incident, the graffiti inscriptions “When the army returns to Kosovo” flooded not only Belgrade, but also the interior of Serbia. In addition, the speech of President Aleksandar Vučić at the UN General Assembly, his tone and message that Serbia will remain strongly independent and neutral and thus protect its interests, and that it will not give up Kosovo or its friendship with Russia<sup>10</sup> – once again causes a dilemma about the direction taken by Serbia.

Official Belgrade did not distance itself from the paramilitary group. On the contrary, it was legalized by the very fact that the killed members of this group were declared heroes and that the day of mourning was declared. Considering the fact that the EU and the US characterized the attack as an act of terrorism, the question is how the Belgrade-Prishtina dialogue will be continued if Belgrade does not deliver Radoičić or bring him to justice.

5 <https://n1info.rs/vesti/vesli-klark-za-voa-napad-na-severu-kosova-treba-da-zabrine-eu-i-nato/>

6 <https://www.sd.rs/vesti/kosovo/bela-kuca-pozvala-na-povlacenje-srpske-vojske-vasington-trazi-od-nasih-snaga-da-napuste-2023-09-29>

7 <https://www.sd.rs/vesti/kosovo/negirao-sam-neistine-vucic-otkrio-detalle-razgovora-sa-blinkenom-postavio-je-amerikancu-vazno-2023-09-29>

8 <https://chat.openai.com/c/18d33dc6-999d-4c82-97d3-a2f203ab00b9>

9 Ibid.

10 <https://www.novosti.rs/vesti/politika/1283190/vucic-izneo-istinu-pred-celim-svetom-hrbar-govor-predsednika-srbije-generalnoj-skupstini-video>

It is indicative that Aleksandar Vulin, Director of the Security Intelligence Agency (BIA), resigned his position at the moment when Serbia was under great pressure due to the Banjska conflict. His appointment as Director (in the autumn of 2022) was already met with outrage from the West due to his pro-Russian orientation and, after he was sanctioned by the US Treasury Department (July 2023), it stopped cooperating with the BIA. However, until now, Vučić has not shown any intent to remove him saying that Vulin is not sanctioned “because of crime and corruption, but because of Russia” on which Serbia still has not imposed sanctions due to its war in Ukraine.<sup>11</sup>

Giving the reason for sanctioning Vulin on 11 July, Brian E. Nelson, Under-Secretary of the US Treasury Department, said that Aleksandar Vulin was responsible for the allegedly corruptive and destabilizing acts which also enabled Russia’s malignant activities in the region.<sup>12</sup>

Aleksandar Vulin’s resignation is still not a proof that Serbia is distancing itself from Russia’s influence. Daniel Server points out that his resignation does not imply Serbia’s departure from its policy of supporting Russia. It is rather an effort to avoid additional sanctions. He adds that Vulin is not the only problem in Serbia or its intelligence services. President Vučić did not show any regret for the events on 24 September (in northern Kosovo).<sup>13</sup>

Apart from being increasingly tied to China and Russia, Serbia is again met with criticism from the West because, as pointed out

by Radio Free Europe, Serbian companies export Western goods covered by EU sanctions (because they can be used in the military industry) to Russia. “Kominvex” is one of the dozens of companies registered in Serbia, which have exported such goods to Russia since the beginning of the war in Ukraine (February 2022).<sup>14</sup>

However, as stated in the EU decision on the 11th package of sanctions against Russia, adopted in June 2023, a country that does not respect the EU decisions on sanctions can even be punished by banning its import of advanced Western technology.<sup>15</sup>

Maximilian Hess from the International Institute for Strategic Studies in Philadelphia says that the export of that technology to Russia is banned because it is used for the production of Russian weapons that attack innocent Ukrainian citizens. Participation in it means a direct support to Russia’s aggression. Serbia has the responsibility to ensure that its companies comply with the international sanctions, adopt the relevant regulations and prevent such things”.<sup>16</sup>

11 <https://www.bbc.com/serbian/lat/srbija-66173264>

12 <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/sad-vulin-sankcije/32501949.html>

13 <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/srbija-vulin-vucic-rusija-server/32670271.html>

14 <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/srbija-rusija-sankcije-poslovanje/32674619.html>

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.



## EU AND US REACTIONS

The West has tightened its requirements, especially due to the possibility that an attack, like that in Banjska, is repeated, and the awareness of the possible consequences for the region. This is reflected in every new statement relating to the Western Balkans.

The messages sent to Belgrade have become sharper and more precise. The atmosphere has changed and there are increasingly more requests for concrete action, which are confined to the request for Belgrade to strongly and equivocally condemn the recent armed conflict and promise that it will not happen again, and that both sides engage much more seriously in the implementation of the Ohrid Agreement.

Immediately after the armed attack in Banjska the EU Political and Security Committee held a meeting to discuss the new situation in Kosovo. According to some diplomatic sources, many countries expressed the view that the measures against Serbia should be taken if its involvement in the attacks or its role in sending weapons to Kosovo, which was found during a police action, is proven.<sup>17</sup>

On 16 October, Tirana hosted the Berlin Process Summit<sup>18</sup>, the first such summit held outside the EU. The process was revitalized after it was shown that the Western Balkans alone has no internal potential to lead the

process that will prepare the Western Balkan countries for EU membership. This was also shown by the Open Balkans Initiative (Serbia, North Macedonia, Albania), which was launched by President Vučić, but was not supported by all Western Balkan countries considering it as an attempt of Serbian domination.

This year's summit in Tirana was held immediately after the events in northern Kosovo, which also influenced the EU's clearer commitment to pursuing the enlargement policy.

German Chancellor Scholtz repeated the call for the soonest possible admission of the Western Balkan countries to the EU and pointed out: "It is quite clear that 20 years after the accession of these countries was promised, it must also happen soon."<sup>19</sup> And the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, said that this summit sent a strong message about the EU's commitment to its enlargement and that it is necessary to increase access to the internal market, but this calls for reforms so as to make EU investment funds available.<sup>20</sup> She also pointed out that the €30 billion economic investment plan laid a solid foundation and that the Western Balkan countries should found off their common regional market.<sup>21</sup>

In the summit conclusions, it was pointed to the importance of regional cooperation in the Western Balkans in the face of geopolitical uncertainty on the European soil. The document stressed the need to enhance

17 <https://n1info.rs/vesti/mere-eu-protiv-srbije-zbog-banjske/>

18 The Berlin Process is a platform for cooperation among the Western Balkan countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo, North Macedonia and Serbia). This initiative was launched by the former German Chancellor Angela Merkel in 2014 and it aims to spur the economic development of six Western Balkan countries and their rapprochement to the European Union.

19 <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/samit-berlinskog-procesa-tirana/32639097.html>

20 Ibid.

21 <https://www.aa.com.tr/ba/politika/scholz-u-tirani-berlinski-proces-najbolji-instrument-za-ubrzanje-integracija-zapadnog-balkana-u-eu/3021925>

connectivity in transport, trade, energy and digital domains among six Western Balkan countries and between the region and the EU. The need to bridge socio-economic disparities between the Western Balkans and the EU was also emphasized. This implies the need for tighter mutual cooperation.<sup>22</sup>

It is a disturbing fact that President Vučić did not go to the summit in Tirana. Instead, he opted to attend the jubilee celebration of the “Belt and Road” project in Beijing. This also raised the question of whether Vučić really wants to join the European Union. German analyst Johanna Deimel asks the question whether Vučić is a real partner in view of the fact that he did not go to Tirana where the future of the Western Balkans was discussed.<sup>23</sup>

On 19 October, the European Parliament adopted a very harsh resolution relating to the attack on the Kosovo police. The document calls on Kosovo and Serbia to de-escalate the situation, establish all facts about the events in Banjska and return to their dialogue. However, the resolution demands, among other things, that the European Commission and the European Council take measures against Serbia if it is proved that it was directly involved in the events. In the debate over the resolution, many parliamentarians demanded the imposition of sanctions.

In the message sent by the “Big Five” – Miroslav Lajčák, (EU), Gabriel Escobar (USA), Emmanuel Bonne (France), Jens Plötner (Germany) and Francesco Tallo (Italy) – to Belgrade (21 October), it was stated that

- 22 <https://autonomija.info/fon-der-lajen-eu-otvara-vrata-jedinstvenog-trzista-zapadnom-balkanu-ali-uz-reforme/>  
23 <https://www.danas.rs/vesti/politika/demostat/velika-petorka-donosi-konkretno-zahteve-i-rokove-o-cemu-ce-razgovarati-sa-vucicem-i-kurtijem/>

there would be no European future for Serbia and Kosovo without the normalization of their relations and implementation of the agreement.<sup>24</sup> Lajčák said to the media that Serbia and Kosovo entered into new talks in February and March of this year and that both sides are expected to start fulfilling their obligations arising from the new and old agreements.”<sup>25</sup>

That the “meeting was difficult” was also confirmed by President Vučić, who holds that “we will find the way out of the crisis in the coming period.”<sup>26</sup>

Viola von Cramon, a member of the European Parliament Greens, made it clear after the Banjska conflict that if someone is not interested in EU membership, he can continue playing without the European Union, but then he does not need any money. And that they know that he depends on that money. This is why she thinks that they should play this card and use this instrument much more.<sup>27</sup>

In an open letter, German Chancellor Olaf Scholtz, French President Emmanuel Macron and Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni requested that Kosovo start the procedure for establishing the Community of Serb Majority Municipalities and that Serbia de facto implement the recognition of Kosovo. It is also stated that, in order to speed up progress, Kosovo is called upon to start the procedure for establishing the Community of Serb Majority Municipalities, as described in the draft statute, while Serbia is

24 <https://www.glasamerike.net/a/srbija-kosovo-normalizacija-vu%C4%8Di%C4%87-petorka-kurtidijalog/7320732.html>

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.

27 <https://n1info.rs/vesti/viola-fon-kramon-vucic-diskredituje-eu-a-uzima-novac/>

called upon to implement the de facto recognition of Kosovo. Formalities should not stand in the way of progress on this issue”.<sup>28</sup>

On 24 October, the United Nations Security Council considered the new six-month report on the work of the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) by the UN Secretary General, António Guterres. The report did not include the attack in northern Kosovo. The messages of the members of the UN Security Council did not differ much from the previous ones. Belgrade and Pristina are called upon to return to dialogue and the need to establish the Community of Serb Majority Municipalities was emphasized. As some Western countries pointed out, it is time to end the UNMIK mission, because the reality is different in comparison to that in 1999. Russia holds that the UNMIK is still necessary, primarily because the UN is a forum where it has more weight.

In a series of visits by high-ranking EU officials, there was one by Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, who repeated the messages that had already been heard – the West will no longer tolerate the incidents such as the one in Banjska and that it expects the de facto recognition of Kosovo, namely the implementation of the Ohrid Agreement. Kosovo also has to fulfil its obligations such as, inter alia, the establishment of the Community of Serb Majority Principalities according to the plan offered by the Commission.<sup>29</sup>

The annual report of the European Commission (8 October), the most important document for every country aspiring to become a EU member, again criticizes Serbia’s progress

in the key chapters, 23 and 24, which refer to the rule of law. The normalization of relations with Kosovo is required by both sides on the path Eu accession. However, in the absence of progress, both sides risk losing important opportunities. The report specifically refers to the case of Banjska, which is considered “the gravest escalation in recent years”. It is also requested to investigate the violence perpetrated against KFOR troops during the protests at the end of May. It is also emphasized that Serbia did not impose sanctions on Russia, align its foreign policy with the EU’s policy and counter foreign information manipulation and interference.<sup>30</sup>

The report also emphasizes that Serbia should inform the EU about the activities of the Serbian-Russian Humanitarian Centre in Niš and its integration into the emergency management system. Serbia should also ensure that this humanitarian centre does not duplicate the role of the European Commission’s Emergency Response Coordination Centre.<sup>31</sup>

In the meantime, the European Commission also presented the *Growth Plan* (8 October), which should be considered a special incentive for all Western Balkan countries. Namely, it is about the €6.3 billion package, which includes €2 billion grants and €4 billion loans based on international financial conditions, and aims to reduce the gap between the countries in the region and the EU. European Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Várhelyi said that the region is asked to “treat each other the way they will treat us”.<sup>32</sup> Serbia and Kosovo will not be able to use the “Growth Plan” funds if they do not

28 <https://www.klix.ba/vijesti/regija/scholz-macron-i-meloni-kosovo-treba-da-oformi-zso-a-srbija-da-de-facto-prizna-kosovo/231027178>

29 , <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/von-der-layen-beograd-posjeta-/32662229.html>

30 <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/evropska-komisija-srbija-izvestaj/32673608.html>

31 <https://n1info.rs/vesti/evropska-komisija-trazi-od-srbije-objasnjenje-o-ruskom-humanitarnom-centru-u-nisu/>

32 “Dogovor Srbije i Kosova, pa milijarde od EU”, *Danas*, 9.November 2023.

make progress in the dialogue on the normalization of their relations.

The West is evidently in a hurry to solve the Kosovo problem before the European and US elections next year.

## RUSSIA'S REACTIONS

In giving support to Serbia, Russia is guided by its geopolitical reasons when it comes to Kosovo. It defends Resolution 1244 more than Serbia because, in this phase of world order transformation, it aims to use the Kosovo precedent in its own surroundings. Russia is directing its efforts towards the so-called Kosovo precedent and the politicization of the disputed international norms (especially territorial integrity and sovereignty and the right to self-determination). In order to defend its aggression against Ukraine, Russia is focusing on the reinterpretation of history, humanitarian and ethnic factors, as well as the reinterpretation of Western actions in the Balkans.

Russia's interest also explains its efforts to take every opportunity to obstruct the efforts of the EU, the US and NATO to round off Kosovo's independence and thus eliminate the point of constant tension that can easily turn into a conflict, as shown by the case of Banjska. Russia's influence on a significant part of the Serbian elites (in Serbia, the Republic of Srpska and Montenegro) and, above else, the Serbian Orthodox Church (SPC) undermines the efforts of the Western Balkan countries to establish a permanent link with Euro-Atlantic integration. That is why it is in its interest that the status of a frozen conflict in Kosovo and the dysfunctionality of the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina are maintained.

As for the events in Banjska, Russia not only sided with Belgrade, but also interpreted them in the same way, laying the blame on Kosovo Prime Minister Albin Kurti. Russia's position was explained by the Minister for Innovation and Technological Development, Nenad Popović: "Russia will never accept Kosovo as an independent state or its admission to EU membership. However, it will support any compromise over Kosovo which suits Serbia and is reached within the framework of Resolution 1244 and the Serbian Constitution."<sup>33</sup>

Immediately after the events in Banjska, President Vučić met with Russian Ambassador Botsan-Kharchenko to inform him that the brutal ethnic cleansing of Serbs is being carried out in Kosovo, organized by Albin Kurti with the support of part of the international community.<sup>34</sup>

The Russian Ambassador said that "the West encourages Pristina and that it is absolutely clear that the dialogue i(in Brussels) serves as a cover for what is really happening in Kosovo. The dialogue absolutely do not produce any results and the same applies to the contacts with the representatives of the leading Western countries." He also stated that the members of the KFOR mission, led by NATO, "not only failed to fulfil their assignment, but assisted the police forces in violence against civilians".<sup>35</sup>

33 <https://www.blic.rs/vesti/politika/popovic-u-manastiru-banjska-rusija-nikada-nece-prihvatiti-da-kosovo-bude-nezavisna/3t74b5n>

34 <https://www.aa.com.tr/ba/balkan/vu%C4%8Di%C4%87-sa-ambasadorom-ruske-federacije-u-srbiji-aleksandrom-bocan-har%C4%8Denkom/3000354>

35 <https://www.danas.rs/vesti/politika/ruski-ambasador-bocan-harcenko-un-banjska-tragedija/>



This was followed by the statement of the Russian Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman, Maria Zakharova, that “the worsening of the situation in Kosovo and Metohija, which led to the bloodshed in the village of Banjska, is the consequence of the policy pursued by the ‘Prime Minister’ of the self-proclaimed republic, which aims to inflame the conflict and cleanse Serbs from the province”.<sup>36</sup>

The Deputy of the Russian Foreign Minister, Alexander Grushko, stated that “Russia does not see any prospects for a long-term stabilization of the situation in Kosovo because America and the European Union are constantly inflaming it”.<sup>37</sup>

Commenting on US Ambassador Christopher Hill’s statements relating to the case of Banjska, the Russian portal *Sputnik* has concluded that they boil down to the conclusion that Pristina is obliged to establish the Community of Serb Majority Municipalities and that Serbia must allow the membership of the fake state of Kosovo in international organizations.<sup>38</sup>

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36 <https://24sedam.rs/politika/vesti/246325/marija-zaharova-i-rusija-kritikovali-aljbina-kurtija/vest>

37 <https://www.kosovo-online.com/vesti/politika/moskva-bez-izgleda-za-dugorocnu-stabilizaciju-na-kosovu-28-9-2023>

38 <https://lat.sputnikportal.rs/20231004/konacna-ucena-amerike-hil-je-dugo-cutao-pa-otkrio-sta-se-krije-iza-dima-krvavih-sukoba-u-banjskoj-1162011537.html>

Moscow, namely Russia’s Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) has also reacted to the US sanctions against Aleksandar Vulin, Director of the Security Intelligence Agency (BIA), accusing the United States for a new act of aggression against Serbia.<sup>39</sup> On the occasion of his resignation, the Russian media have reported that Vulin has decided to step down in order to protect Serbia from more pressure from Washington and Brussels and that this is another form of pressure on Serbia and President Vučić for not imposing sanctions against the Russian Federation.<sup>40</sup>

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39 <https://sputnikportal.rs/20230724/rusija-sankcija-protiv-vulina---novi-akt-americke-agresije-protiv-srbije-1158984498.html>

40 <https://informer.rs/vesti/politika/843715/mnogobrojni-ruski-mediji-izvestavaju-o-ostavci-direktora-bia-aleksandra-vulina-podneo-ostavku-kako-bi-sprecio-dalje-pritiske-zapada-na-srbiju>

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The EU's moderated ten-year dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo has failed to achieve the expected results. Serbia has not shown the willingness to recognize Kosovo's new reality and participate constructively in the dialogue, taking primarily into account the interests of the Serb community in Kosovo. Through the Serbian List (a political organization of Kosovo Serbs under Belgrade's patronage) Serbia has not only controlled Kosovo Serbs, but has also challenged Kosovo's sovereignty and undermined the consolidation of Kosovo's statehood.

The division of Kosovo is the only option advocated by Belgrade which, despite the Brussels and Ohrid Agreements, was demonstrated by the incursion into northern Kosovo. Serbia (with Russia's support) prefers a frozen conflict that can be activated at any "convenient moment", as was shown in the case of Banjska.

The incursion into northern Kosovo has shown the fragility of the region and Serbia's destructive potential to destabilize the region and Europe.

The strategy of supporting the biggest "players" in the Western Balkans (Albania and, in particular, Serbia) as the pillars of stability has not achieved results. The expectation that Serbia will say *no* to Russia is not on the horizon. The policy of "instant solution" and economic development is not sufficient, because the role of religion and identity and belief policy is neglected.

Bearing in mind that Serbia has not given up the division of the borders and that it still has not clearly shown (or will not show) its readiness to join the EU (despite the official rhetoric), the Helsinki Committee holds that it is necessary to change the policy towards Serbia.

This implies the following:

- It is necessary to abandon the policy of pandering to Serbia, because no results have so far been achieved. As the most important Western Balkan country, Serbia must take on the responsibility for regional stability; in the opposite, the European Union must impose consequences.
- The US and the EU must exert a greater diplomatic and political pressure on the current government, in particular.
- It is necessary to create the *Roadmap* for EU enlargement as soon as possible in order to remobilize the region for Euro-Atlantic integration.
- The European Commission must be more actively engaged in the institutional structures in order to support reforms and make progress, in particular, in Charters 23 and 24.
- It is necessary to have a more active attitude towards the society which, after the tragic events in May, woke up and its pro-European orientation is being slowly articulated. But the EU's support is necessary.
- The current government, namely President Vučić must be faced with the choice – either to implement the Ohrid Agreement or Serbia will be denied access to European funds.
- The new media law is another step towards dictatorship.
- The EU must demand the establishment of media freedom in order to give space for the articulation of the public that will differently formulate the national interests.
- It is necessary to limit the SPC's activities in Kosovo in order to prevent the further entrenching of the Serb community into the religious identity of the Serbian Orthodox Church. The Serb community must be encouraged to turn to authentic leaders who will be able to promote the interests and values that will ensure their full integration into Kosovo's society as equal citizens.