
BOSNIA STALLS ON ANSWERING EU QUESTIONNAIRE

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Denis Zvizdic, chairman of the Bosnia's Council of Ministers, has said that Bosnia has prepared 95 per cent of the answers for the EU questionnaire □ but the remaining 5 per cent will be an obstacle to meeting the deadline of December 31.

Bosnia received the Questionnaire of the European Commission, needed to prepare its opinion on Bosnia's application for EU membership, last December.

There is no reason for optimism since ... Bosnia faces a lack of political will and capacities to resolve this question any time soon, Inela Hadzimesic, from the Initiative for Monitoring the European Union Integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina, an NGO, told BIRN

This initiative is an informal coalition of civil society organisations that contributes to monitoring reforms and overviews the application of EU policies, laws and standards.

The questionnaire for Bosnia and Herzegovina consists of 33 chapters and 3,242 questions, and 1,300 representatives from Bosnia are included in the process of answering them through the agreed Coordination Mechanism.

The 3,242 questions are intended to give Brussels detailed insight into political, social, economy and administrative conditions in Bosnia, so that the European Commission can make a considered decision on its request for candidate country status.

Europe's Commissioner for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement, Johannes Hahn, has described it as maturity exam for Bosnia.

The major problem appears to be about 50 questions on the political criteria when it comes to Bosnia approaching EU, but this has not been officially confirmed, Hadzimesic explained.

We knew from the start that questions about the strategy for transitional justice, what ways are used for processing war crimes, and questions connected with the quality of life of citizens, will be used for politicization, Hadzimesic said.

Bosnia's Directorate for the European Integration did not answer BIRNs emailed queries about such issues by the time of publication.

Most Bosnians want to join the EU. Some 69 per cent of citizens would vote to join the EU in a referendum, which is 7 per cent less than in 2016, according to research conducted on 1,200 citizens in April by the Directorate for European Integration.

In Republika Srpska, Bosnia's Serb-dominated entity, 56.4 per cent would vote to join the EU, while in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which Bosniaks and Croats dominate, 76.2 per cent support EU membership.

Republika Srpska has refused to recognise the data from the national census published in 2016 on the number of people in Bosnia, which was one of the problems with the questionnaire.

Along with that, Republika Srpska did not want to take part in the working groups, claiming that they were not defined within the Coordination Mechanism, which is also seen as one reason why the questionnaire is not ready.

When it comes to other countries of the region, Serbia answered the European questionnaire in 45 working days, Croatia in three months, and Montenegro, Albania and Macedonia in four months.

Bosnia formally applied for EU membership in February 2016, but its deep internal political and ethnic divisions are seen as major barriers to membership of the European club.

<https://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/bosnia-s-newest-delay-on-answering-questionnaire-12-19-2017>

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