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## **CROATIA PROMISES TO HELP SERBIA TO JOIN THE EU**

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Serbia and Croatia have contradictions on almost all principal issues, but their visions of the future are the same, Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic said on Feb 12, while visiting Zagreb and meeting his Croatian counterpart Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic. The latter confirmed that the sides were at variance on many issues. But in some fields our positions have already become closer or will become closer in future, she said.

During their joint press-conference Vucic thanked Grabar-Kitarovic for her invitation and expressed hope that their people would welcome the political efforts of their presidents.

We must improve our relations despite mutual reluctance to do it. As far as the past is concerned, we have lots of contradictions. But we have at least admitted that we have different positions and will try to understand each other, Vucic said.

One of the key topics was the demarcation of the border along Danube. According to Vucic, here Croatia refers to cadasters while Serbia refers to the law. We will try to solve this problem within two years. If we fail to do it, we will appeal to an international arbitration court, the Serbian president said.

The presidents also discussed the problem of people missing since the war in former Yugoslavia and the status of ethnic minorities – the Croats living in Serbia and the Serbs living in Croatia. We expect Croatia to let the Serbs living in its territory freely identify their ethnicity and preserve their names and I hope that after this meeting, their conditions will be improved, Vucic said.

He expressed his interest in the project to build a railroad from Belgrade to Zagreb as this road will connect Serbia with Western Europe.

Grabar-Kitarovic said that one must not let some peripheral politicians dictate policies. It is the prerogative of politicians elected by their peoples to dictate policies. Most of our people supported Mr Vucic's visit. We should discuss problems that are complicating our relations and should work for the benefit of our nations, the Croatian President said.

According to her, she did not discuss the past with Vucic. We have failed to find common grounds on some issues but we will continue to discuss them, Grabar-Kitarovic said.

She said that Croatia supports Serbia's commitment to join the EU and is ready to help it in the matter.

As EADaily reported earlier, Vucic was supposed to visit Croatia in late 2017 but Grabar-Kitarovic put it off because of certain disagreements between Croatia and Serbia.

The key problem in Croatian-Serbian relations is the sides different attitudes towards their past, particularly, certain events that took place during WWII (the Nazi Ustase movement in Croatia) and during the 1990s: Croatia regards the war in former Yugoslavia as its struggle for independence, while Serbia still remembers the Serbian massacres committed in the Croatian territory at those times.

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