

---

## **BERLIN SUMMIT FAILS TO RESTART STALLED KOSOVO-SERBIA TALKS**

- 30.04.2019

---

Balkan Insight (30 April 2019)

Mondays Berlin Summit on the Western Balkans ended without a hoped-for breakthrough in restarting EU-mediated talks between Kosovo and Serbia, making it unlikely that a mutually binding agreement to normalise relations will be reached this year.

Although Germany and France said they will be getting involved in efforts alongside the European Commission in its attempts to push Serbia and Kosovo into continuing their currently-stalled negotiations, the next meeting on the issue will only be held at the start of July.

Belgrade and Pristina are locked in an ongoing dispute over Kosovos decision last November to impose 100 per cent tariffs on Serbian goods in retaliation for Serbian lobbying against Kosovos membership of Interpol.

Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic said after the meeting that revoking the tariffs was Serbias only request, while Kosovo officials insisted that Belgrade should grant full recognition of its former provinces independence.

In essence \* we will have a new meeting in Paris on July 1 or 2, when we will try to find a solution for the continuation of the dialogue, Vucic told Serbian media.

Kosovo President Hashim Thaci, who has previously called for the revoking of the tariffs, which have drawn criticism from the US and the EU, fully endorsed the imposition of the financial penalties after Mondays meeting in Berlin.

If Serbia continues with its aggressive actions, we will only take additional measures and will answer reciprocally, Thaci said after speaking with the EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini.

He also called for the US to be included in the EU-mediated dialogue, saying that a final agreement with Serbia is far off.

There are no negotiations, dialogue or agreement without the participation of the US. The EU is too weak and not united to move things forward in the Western Balkans, he insisted.

Bojan Klacar from the Serbian Centre for Free Elections and Democracy, CeSid, says that the meeting in Berlin failed to live up to expectations, but that France and Germanys decision to join the talks is a major change in the format of the negotiations.

Germany is recognised as being the least inclined of European countries to [the idea of] changing Kosovos status, while France was the most explicit in saying that EU integration isnt likely to

happen soon, Klacar told BIRN.

He argued that Germany is in a position to apply a carrot and stick approach towards Belgrade because of German carmaker Volkswagens mooted investment in Serbia.

All this means more pressure on Vucic, not just because of Kosovo \* but also on other issues, such as the state of democracy in Serbia, Klacar said.

He added that despite this year being previously announced as key to reaching a mutually binding agreement on the normalisation of relations between Serbia and Kosovo, this has proven to be unrealistic.

While Kosovo-Serbia relations dominated the summit, other regional issues were discussed, including North Macedonia's EU aspirations.

Skopje had hoped to get a clearer signal from France, which has been more sceptical about imminent EU enlargement in the Balkans, about a long-awaited decision in June that North Macedonia hopes will give it a date for the opening of its EU accession talks.

No such signal came, however, although German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron, who organised the Berlin Summit, had said that the summit was not focused on EU enlargement.

Merkel and Macron did praise North Macedonia for striking last year's historic name agreement with Greece, which resulted in Athens removing its obstacles to Skopje's progress towards EU and NATO membership.

Merkel said that Skopje had taken courageous steps by changing the country's name to resolve the long-running dispute.

Their pat on the back was welcomed by North Macedonian Prime Minister Zoran Zaev.

I thank our friends from Germany and France for recognising and pinpointing the feats we undertook as an extraordinary contribution to Balkan and European stability, Zaev wrote on Twitter after the meeting on Monday.

The Berlin Process, an EU-backed initiative to boost regional cooperation among Western Balkan countries and aid their European integration efforts, was launched at a summit in the German capital in 2014, and there have been major summits involving EU and Balkan leaders each year since then.

<https://balkaninsight.com/2019/04/30/berlin-summit-fails-to-restart-stalled-kosovo-serbia-talks/>

---

Kaynak/Source: