



Weekly Media Report

4 – 7 November

International Affairs

Additional EU funding in support of the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia – Albanian Daily News Agency (Kosovo), 31 October 2013

The European Commission will allocate additional funding under the EU's Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA) to support the implementation of the 'First agreement of principles' governing the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia. The IPA program will help to address the needs of Serbian municipalities throughout Kosovo, with a specific emphasis on the northern ones. Funding will focus on municipal infrastructure, public administration, rural and regional development, employment and environmental protection. The decision is to allocate initially €15m. Additional funding will be determined on the basis of an on-going needs' assessment. "The implementation of the Agreement of 19 April is vital for the normalization of the Kosovo-Serbia relations and for the EU prospects of both. The agreement confirmed that Kosovo and Serbia are committed to advance on their respective EU paths."

<http://noa.al/en-post/en/376238.html>

India launches rocket in hope of joining elite Mars explorer club – CNN (US), 5 November 2013

India has launched a rocket it hopes will allow it to join an elite group of space explorers to Mars. The country's space research organization (ISRO) launched its orbiter to the Red Planet on Tuesday - only NASA, the former Soviet Union and the Europeans have previously been successful in operating probes from Mars.

http://edition.cnn.com/2013/11/04/world/asia/india-mars-orbiter/index.html?hpt=hp_t1

“Drug tsunami” to EU has been stopped – db.lv (LV), 5 November 2013

After five years of operations, Lithuanian and Russian law enforcement authorities have announced that they have succeeded to intercept enormous drug transit channel to mainly Netherlands and Belgium from Russia through Lithuania. As the Russia's Federal Drug Control Service's director Viktor Ivanov explains, they have discovered a different types of raw synthetic drug cartels in Russia, mainly in Perm, which has existed since 2003 and covers many EU countries.

<http://www.db.lv/pasaule/apturets-narkotiku-cunami-uz-es-operacijas-notikusas-ari-latvija-404559>

Romanian and Azerbaijani news agencies sign cooperation agreements – Agerpres (RO), 4 November 2013

Romania's National News Agency AGERPRES and Azerbaijan's news agency TREND signed an agreement on cooperation and information exchange in Baku. According to the agreement, the two agencies will exchange information in the political, economic, social, cultural and humanitarian areas both from Romania and Azerbaijan as well as in other fields. The two sides also agreed to organize regular training courses in which the two news agencies' reporters should take part.

<http://www1.agerpres.ro/english/2013/11/03/agerpres-azerbaiian-s-trend-news-agency-sign-cooperation-agreement-14-35-27>

Albanian Ambassadors' number to be downsized – *Gazeta Shqiptare (Albania)*, - 4 November 2013

In a TV interview, Albanian Foreign Minister warned about a deep restructuring of the Albanian Foreign Service, saying that this would include the downsizing of the Albanian Ambassadors abroad. According to the Minister, the number of Albanian embassies abroad will be adapted to fit the current financial capacities of the state to fund and support these institutions, as well as the political and economic interests of the state.

<http://www.balkanweb.com/gazetav5/>

Greek President in visit to Albania - *Balkan Web (Albania)*, 4 November 2013

The President of the Hellenic Republic, Karolos Papoulias, visited Tirana, invited by his Albanian counterpart Bujar Nishani. He met with the Deputy Speaker of the Assembly and Human Rights Union Party (HRUP) Chair, and attended the Divine Liturgy at the Orthodox Cathedral in the capital, where he also met with the Archbishop Anastasios Giannullatos. In his remarks on these occasions, President Papoulias clarified that his country has never abandoned Albania, and it will continue to stand by Albania's side. He also urged for a new era in the Hellenic-Albanian relations. The two Presidents will attend and address the Albanian-Greek Forum on Economy and Energy which will be held in Tirana. The Chameria Association is expected to hold a protest rally in order to warn the Hellenic Head of State that the Cham question exists and that it is high time for it to be settled.

<http://www.balkanweb.com/indexok.php>

Albanian academics write to Greek Prime Minister – *Balkan Web (Albania)*, 4 November 2013

A group of Albanian academics and former Ambassadors have sent an open letter to the Greek Prime Minister Antonis Samaras, urging the latter and his cabinet not to hamper, but rather to support the granting of EU candidate status to Albania and its full accession to the EU. The letter follows the missive of 23 former Greek Ambassadors addressed to the Greek leader, in which they urge him to use the EU membership as leverage against the neighbouring Albania. "Rather than listening to the nationalistic rhetoric or the political demagoguery of a group of retired diplomats, we are expecting Athens to support Albania's EU integration without reservations, for this is the only reasonable option for Albania and Greece," the Albanian academics wrote, expressing their hope that the burdens of past history will not prove to be heavier than the hopes for a bright future in the relations between the two nations. The letter preceded the visit of the Hellenic President Karolos Papoulias to Albania.

<http://www.balkanweb.com/indexok.php>

The Holy See and the preparation for the Synod: a questionnaire has been sent to the Bishops' Conferences all over the world containing 38 topics – *Corriere della Sera (IT)*, 5 November 2013

In preparation of next year's Synod, the Holy See sent this week a questionnaire to the Bishops' Conferences all over the world containing the topics that will be discussed. Among the others, this document contains sensible issues such as contraception, civil marriage and homosexuality.

http://www.corriere.it/cronache/13_novembre_05/dai-gay-divorziati-questionario-santa-sede-vista-sinodo-68979026-4605-11e3-9b53-d1d90833aa3d.shtml

Albanian environmentalists oppose their government: transparency on import of Syrian chemical weapons – *Gazeta Shqiptare (Albania)*, 3 November 2013

The Alliance Against the Import of Garbage (AAIG), a civil society pressure group that successfully lobbied to impose a ban on importing waste into the country, reiterated yesterday its objections to the selection of Albania for disposing of the chemical weapons of the Syrian regime. In a press conference held on Sunday the AAIG representatives voiced their concern over the fact that the Albanian government, differently from the governments of the countries who have been rumoured by the international media as possible destinations for the Syrian chemical weapons, is yet to come up with a reaction to this news. "This fact adds to our suspicions that Albania may undertake this operation," said the AAIG representatives, adding that this was happening at a time when Albania was enforcing restrictions to similar operations, in view of its limited and insufficient resources for disposing of similar substances. "We have lingering doubts whether Albania has been able to dispose of the chemical weapons inherited by the totalitarian regime. In addition, the Assembly, under the civil society's pressure, approved a law banning the import of inoffensive waste, building upon the existing bans on the import of dangerous waste," added the AAIG representatives, stressing that the Albanian legal framework, in its present shape, does not allow for the import of lethal chemical weapons. In their view, the Albanian state is not yet capable of ensuring the successful outcome of such high risk technological processes.

<http://gazeta-shqip.com/journal/gazeta>

Russia ready to pay to destroy chemical weapons in Albania – *Gazeta Shqiptare, (Albania)*, 3 November 2013

The Russian newspaper *Kommersant* wrote over the weekend that the Russian authorities are ready to pay Albania \$2 million (ca. €1.5 million) to destroy the chemical weapons of Syria. According to the newspaper, Moscow is also willing to help the Albanian authorities with the transportation of the Syrian chemical stockpiles. The Government needs to make transparency on what are its intentions in regards to the Syrian chemical weapons, whether it will accept the United Nations offer for their disposal or not.

<http://gazeta-shqip.com/journal/gazeta>

Syria army retakes key rebel enclave near Damascus – *BBC (UK)*, 7 November 2013

Syrian troops have retaken a key rebel-held town south of Damascus, state media and activists say. State TV said the army had full control of Sbeineh and that "terrorists" had been driven out. UK-based activist group the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said Sbeineh was one of the most important rebel positions near Damascus. Meanwhile, inspectors say they have verified one of Syria's two remaining chemical weapons production sites.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-24849809>

National Affairs

Egypt on high alert as Mohammed Morsi arrives for trial – BBC (UK), 4 November 2013

Egypt's ousted former President Mohammed Morsi has arrived in court in Cairo where he is due to go on trial. He and 14 other Muslim Brotherhood figures face charges of inciting the killing of protesters in clashes outside the presidential palace. Security services are on high alert after supporters of the former president called for major protests.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-24799666>

Doctors aided US torture at military prisons, report says – BBC (UK), 4 November 2013

Doctors and nurses working under US military orders have been complicit in the abuse of terrorism suspects, a new independent US report says. The two-year study was carried out by the Institute of Medicine and the George Soros-funded Open Society Foundations. The study says medical professionals helped design, enable and participated in "torture and cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment" of detainees. The report was compiled by an independent panel of military, health, ethics and legal experts. Both the CIA and the Pentagon have rejected the report's findings.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-24801084>

Report in the UK calls for female genital mutilation to be treated as child abuse – The Guardian (UK), 4 November 2013

Thousands of girls in danger of genital mutilation are being failed by the health and justice systems, a coalition of health professionals has warned in a report that recommends aggressive steps to eradicate the practice in the UK. Female genital mutilation should be treated the same as any other kind of child abuse and evidence of it must be reported to the police, according to the report.

<http://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/nov/04/uk-mutilation-girls-report>

Political parties pay fines over gender quota violations – Gazeta Panorama (Albania), 6 November 2013

The Central Elections Commission (CEC) reacted on Tuesday, 5 November, to the allegations of the Albanian Coalition for the Promotion of Women and Youth in Politics, according to which the Socialist Party (SP), Democratic Party (DP), and the Socialist Movement for Integration (SMI) are yet to pay the fines issued by the supreme election body over their failure to enforce the gender quotas while drafting the candidates lists for the 23 June parliamentary elections. CEC explained that the three political parties, respectively the DP which was issued a 4 million ALL fine (ca. €29 thousand), the SP which was issued a 6 million ALL fine (ca. €43 thousand), and the SMI which was issued a 4 million ALL fine (ca. €29 thousand), have paid them in accordance with the law.

<http://www.panorama.com.al/>

Democrats win key New York City and Virginia polls – BBC (UK), 6 November 2013

Democrats have won key elections in New York City and the state of Virginia, in the first major round of polls since President Obama's re-election in 2012. With almost all votes counted, Bill de Blasio will succeed Mayor Michael Bloomberg to become the first Democrat leading New York City in two decades.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-24813179>

Economy

UK a great place to live and work, says OECD – *The Guardian (UK)*, 5 November 2013

The UK is one of best places to live and work, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, although income inequality has risen by more than in other countries since the global financial crisis struck in 2007.

<http://www.theguardian.com/business/2013/nov/05/uk-scores-highly-quality-of-life-oecd>

European Borders Tested as Money Is Moved to Shield Wealth – *The NY Times (US)*, 4 November 2013

At the borders of European countries in economic crisis, customs agents say they are seizing increasing amounts of undeclared cash exceeding the €10,000 that each traveler is allowed to carry. The cash, often in bundles of 500-euro notes, is moving with political currents as some Europeans seek to hide their wealth from rising taxes, high-profile tax investigations, and tightening rules at Swiss banks and other traditional havens.

http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/04/world/europe/european-borders-tested-as-money-is-moved-to-shield-wealth.html?hp&_r=0

China's service sector growth hits one-year high – *BBC (UK)*, 4 November 2013

China's service sector grew at its fastest pace in a year in October, the latest sign of a recovery in the world's second-largest economy. The non-manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) rose to 56.3 in October from 55.4 in September. The report comes just days after data showed that China's manufacturing PMI rose to an 18-month high October. China's service sector, which includes construction and aviation, accounts for nearly 43% of its overall economy. The PMI is a key gauge of the sector's health and a reading above 50 indicates expansion.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-24800045>

The European Union expects Italy's GDP to fall by 1.8% in 2013 – *Corriere della Sera (IT)*, 5 November 2013

The European Union expects Italy's GDP to decrease by 1.8%, a negative data compared to the forecast made in spring this year (-1.3%). For 2014, the forecast remains unvaried. The unemployment rate and the national debt continue to increase, whereas the national deficit remains at 3%.

http://www.corriere.it/economia/13_novembre_05/italia-ue-vede-nero-pil-giu-dell-18percento-2013-cbe955d6-45fd-11e3-9b53-d1d90833aa3d.shtml