



Weekly Media Report

9 – 16 December

International Affairs

European Parliament approves resolution on Albania's EU progress report – *Balkan Web (Albania), 16 December 2013*

On Thursday 12 December the European Parliament approved the resolution of its Committee on Foreign Affairs on Albania's EU progress report. It also called for constructive dialogue between all the political actors in Albania and stressed that the preparations for EU integration must have broad political and public support. Nikola Vuljanić, the Croatian rapporteur for Albania, is quoted as saying: "We are sending a unanimous message to the Council: Albania deserves to be given candidate status. It has advanced on the reform agenda, namely with legal reforms, and has also reached a new level of political maturity through the orderly and peaceful transfer of power following the June elections." However, there were debates among the MEPs and Netherlands voted against. Dutch Foreign Minister Frans Timmermans said that Albania should be granted the candidate status later on, but not now. He argued that the decision remains entirely political. The question is, he added, whether the European Union was willing to make this political decision and grant Albania the candidacy based on its progress. According to Timmerman, more time was needed to make a true evaluation of the progress achieved by Albania.

<http://www.balkanweb.com/kosova/2686/hashim-thaci-hap-faqen-e-tij-zyrtare-ne-facebook-163632.html>

Albanian ministers intensify efforts to convince sceptical countries – *Balkan Web (Albania), 16 December 2013*

According to the media, the Albanian government is intensifying its efforts to convince the governments of those countries sceptical about granting the candidate status to Albania. Minister of Foreign Affairs Ditmir Bushati, had a conversation over the phone with the British Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, William Hague, to discuss about a positive vote in the EU Council in December this year. Minister of Integration Klajda Gjoshaj, on the other hand, is currently in Denmark and met yesterday, 15 December, with the Danish Minister for European Affairs Nick Hækkerup.

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

Italian Prime Minister promises lobbying in favour of Albania's candidacy – *Top Channel TV (Albania), 16 December 2013*

Prime Minister Edi Rama, on an official visit in Italy, met with the Italian Prime Minister Enrico Letta. During the joint press conference, Letta said Italy did not doubt Albania's progress. He added that they are currently working to convince all sceptical countries to vote in favour of granting the candidate status to Albania. Letta said they discussed about the relations between the two countries, the Trans-Atlantic Pipeline project, police and economic co-operation, and other regional-related issues, particularly Kosovo and Serbia. Prime Minister Edi Rama met also with the Puglia Governor Nichi Vendola. They discussed about economic co-operation, in particular in the energy sector and the

Italian investments in Albania. Rama then attended Alterenergy Conference, which according to Puglia's Director of Office for the Mediterranean, Silvia Godelli, is a major project for co-operation between Albania and the region of Puglia in terms of renewable energy resources. Later in the afternoon, Rama met with *Confindustria* representatives in Rome and informed them about the low taxes in Albania guaranteeing protection for the Italian investments.

<http://www.atdhe.al/top-channel.html>

Macedonia agrees for Albania to get candidate status – Top Channel TV (Albania), 16 December 2013

The Speaker of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia's parliament, Assembly Trajko Veljanoski, met with the Albanian counterpart Ilir Meta during his official visit in Albania. In the joint press conference held after the meeting, Meta described Veljanoski's visit as a new impulse to bring forward the excellent relations between the two countries. Meta said Albania supported the full implementation of the Ohrid Agreement adding that the government is committed to meet the needs of the Macedonian minority in Albania. Speaker Veljanoski, on the other hand, said that his visit reconfirmed the good relations that exist between the two countries and the willingness from both parties to take co-operation further ahead in all fields of common interest. Speaker Veljanoski was also invited to address the Albanian Assembly during Thursday's plenary sitting. He said that Albania would be granted the candidate status, adding that it was a deserved reward. He said that cultural, political, and social co-operation should be further intensified. They agreed that the countries in the region should work on building a climate of reciprocal trust, which could be achieved by the strengthening of economic, trade and cultural exchange, and major regional infrastructural projects.

<http://www.atdhe.al/top-channel.html>

Albanian Foreign Minister visits Luxembourg – Balkan Web (Albania), 14 December 2013

In an interview in Luxembourg for *A1 Report* TV, Foreign Affairs Minister Ditmir Bushati expressed conviction that Albania would be granted candidate accession status to the EU and that this would be the merit of the all Albanian government. He stated that the Netherlands have still not reached a decision on this issue. Minister Bushati said: "We will have the opportunity to see the decision each member country takes on Albania, but for the moment we are greatly encouraged by the support Germany and France have given." He added that Belgium and Luxembourg are "pro", the Netherlands are still undecided, there has been extensive discussion on the subject and appreciation of Albania's achievements has been voiced. He said that June 2013 general elections in Albania were very positively valued and that Albania's European future is indisputable. "The Ruling Majority was voted in by one million Albanian citizens to improve the economy, the quality of life, to have a functioning democracy. We are conducting the reforms to re-build our country," the Minister said. Bushati also expressed gratitude to the European Parliament for the political will it showed to grant Albania candidate accession status.

<http://www.balkanweb.com/kosova/2686/hashim-thaci-hap-faqen-e-tij-zyrtare-ne-facebook-163632.html>

Visa regulation changed - After three years of negotiations with the Commission and the Parliament, the European Union Council changed the visa regulation

including the suspending and reciprocity mechanisms - Top Channel TV (Albania), 9 December 2013

According to this decision, EU Member States can ask the Commission the permit to block the entrance of citizens from another Member States for a short period due to exceptional circumstances. The mechanism will be used as last resort and not automatically implemented following the Member State's request. The situation will be assessed by the Commission, which will take in consideration the consequences for the foreign policies of the European Union.

<http://www.top-channel.tv/english/artikull.php?id=10572>

Albania signs co-operation agreement with EUROPOL – Gazeta Panorama (Albania), 11 December 2013

Albania and EUROPOL decided to enhance cooperation following an agreement signed in Hague by the Minister of the Interior Saimir Tahiri and EUROPOL Director Rob Wainwright. The agreement, which is expected to facilitate the fight against organized crime, provides for joint operations between Europol and the State Police. The agreement allows exchange of strategic and operational information, including personal data on known and suspected criminals.

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

President of Latvia planning to attend Olympics in Sochi, Russia – delfi.lv (LV), 13 December 2013

Although many country leaders have decided not to go to the Sochi Olympics, Latvian President Andris Bērziņš will follow Winter Olympics opening ceremony in early February 2014. Such leaders as US President, Barack Obama, President of Germany, Joachim Gauck, as well as President of Poland, Bronisław Komorowski, are not planning to attend the Sochi Olympics thereby protesting against human rights violations in Russia. Although Georgia decided to allow national athletes to participate in the competition, no statesman will attend Sochi.

http://www.delfi.lv/sports/news/winter_sports/others/latvijas-prezidents-berzins-atskiriba-no-citu-valstu-lideriem-dosies-uz-sociem.d?id=43895466

Syrian Christians fear Islamist rebels – Deutsche Welle (GE), 16 December 2013

Islamic extremists among anti-government rebels have been targeting Syrian Christians as 'infidels.' After a mortar attack left four children dead, one bishop laments, 'We are suffering a new genocide.'

<http://www.dw.de/syrian-christians-fear-islamist-rebels/a-17279974>

National Affairs

Romanian Culture Minister Barbu tenders resignation - Agerpres (Romania), 12 December 2013

Barbu, during a visit to southern Craiova on Sunday, had drawn a comparison between funding the National Programme for HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control and funding the cultural festivals. 'In my opinion, we are not in South Africa. There are not here millions of country fellowmen hit by this hideous scourge of our era. I personally fail to understand. I was utterly shaken when I realized how many Shakespeare Festivals or how substantial we could make the Shakespeare Festival event in Craiova if we did not

have that programme or if there were only half that programme', the minister had remarked.

<http://www1.agerpres.ro/english/2013/12/12/culture-minister-barbu-tenders-resignation-14-19-42>

North Korea's Kim Jong-un purges his uncle in spectacularly public fashion – *The Guardian (UK)*, 9 December 2013

The North Korean leader Kim Jong-un has overseen the ousting of his previously powerful uncle Jang Song-thaek for crimes including faction-building and “dissolute and depraved” behaviour involving drug use, womanising and gambling, North Korean media has announced.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/09/north-korea-kim-jong-un-purges-uncle>

Thai PM Yingluck dissolves parliament and calls election – *BBC (UK)*, 9 December 2013

Thai Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra has dissolved parliament and called an election, after sustained protests in the capital, Bangkok. The move followed the resignation of all opposition MPs from parliament on Sunday, 9 December, and came as protesters marched again on Government House.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-25252795>

New German Government: Merkel To Take Office for Third Time – *Der Spiegel (GE)*, 16 December 2013

After nearly three months of talks, Germany is poised to install a new government this week, with Angela Merkel leading the country in her third term as chancellor. On Saturday, Merkel's future junior coalition partner, the center-left Social Democratic Party concluded a vote among its members that resulted in an overwhelming majority supporting plans to govern together with the chancellor's conservatives.

<http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/new-government-takes-shape-in-berlin-a-939338.html>

Italy: general strike against the political elite and the lack of response to the crisis – *Corriere della Sera (IT)*, 9 December 2013

Protests have started in the all country against the political elite, which demonstrated to be unable to take efficient measures in order to tackle the economic crisis. People have gathered in many squares in the all peninsula. In the Veneto region the traffic viability has been interrupted by truck drivers, while in the Piemonte region there have been some public turmoil.

http://www.corriere.it/cronache/13_dicembre_09/sciopero-forconi-presidi-nord-sud-primi-blocchi-disagi-vicentino-veronese-224d578c-60b2-11e3-afd4-40bf4f69b5f9.shtml

Italy: new leadership for the Democratic Party – *Repubblica (IT)*, 9 December 2013

Matteo Renzi is the new leader of the Italian Democratic Party (PD). He has been appointed following the elections of last Sunday, 8 December, in which he gained almost 70% of the votes. This new leadership is seen from many as a concrete possibility for the PD to make a difference in the current political and economic crisis of Italy.

http://www.repubblica.it/speciali/politica/primarie-pd/edizione2013/2013/12/08/news/primarie_comitato_renzi_sindaco_a_70_cuperlo_a_1_8_e_civati_a_12_ai_seggi_quasi_3_milioni_di_elettori-73048177/?ref=HREA-1

Kiev protests: outrage as police descend on barricades with chainsaws – *The Guardian (UK)*, 11 December 2013

Unexpected scenes only a few hours after President Viktor Yanukovich pledged restraint to EU foreign policy chief. Thousands of riot police carried out a co-ordinated attack on barricades in Kiev during the dead of night on Wednesday, 11 December – a determined and unexpected crackdown on protesters who have occupied the centre of Ukraine's capital for the past fortnight.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/11/kiev-protests-police-barricades-chainsaws>

Ukraine Protests: Kiev Makes U-Turn on EU Association Deal – *Der Spiegel (GE)*, 13 December 2013

The government of embattled Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich has signaled that an association agreement with the EU may now be signed after all. The reversal follows weeks of street protests in Kiev and mounting Western pressure.

<http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/ukraine-protests-kiev-makes-u-turn-on-eu-association-deal-a-938933.html#spLeserKommentare>

India top court reinstates gay sex ban – *BBC (UK)*, 11 December 2013

India's top court has upheld a law which criminalises gay sex, in a ruling seen as a major blow to gay rights. The Supreme Court ruling reverses a landmark 2009 Delhi High Court order which had decriminalised homosexual acts. The court said it was up to parliament to legislate on the issue.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-25329065>

Ivica Dacic: Kosovars have trust to Serbian Government – *Balkan Web (Serbia)*, 9 December 2013

The result of the last local elections in Kosovo satisfies the Serbian Prime Minister, according to whom they showed the trust of people in the Serbian government. "The list supported by the Serbian government has achieved good results, and it has showed that citizens in Kosovo and Metohisa have deep trust in the Serbian government", Dacic said. He also stressed that in future's meeting in Brussels, the compilation of Municipal Status of Serbian Communes will be discussed.

<http://www.balkanweb.com/serbi/2797/da-i--kosovar-t-kan--besim-tek-qeveria-e-serbis--161829.html>

No more hypocrisy with minorities – *Balkan Web (Albania)*, 10 December 2013

On the International Day of Human Rights, Vice Chairman of Assembly, Former Chairman of Human Rights Party in Albania, Mr. Vangjel Dule asked not to have any longer a taboo about minorities in the country. According to him, they face huge challenges, and "Priority for us is the legislations in power to be implementable and to improve daily life of minorities. The role of politics and civil society is not to run after public opinion. Minorities have practical problems. State should guarantee the right of education in their language."

<http://www.balkanweb.com/shqiperi/2685/ndarja-administrative-dule-dialog-me-perfaqesuesit-e-minoriteteve-jo-hipokrizi-162734.html>

Vulini can't enter to Kosovo – *(Balkan Web)*, Kosovo, 13 December 2013

Aleksander Vulin, Minister without portfolio in Serbian Government in charge for Kosovo, will not be able to travel to Kosovo to the institutions in Pristina. It is the second time in a

week that Kosovo's authorities have refused his request to enter in Kosovo. His aim was to visit both Pasjan and Budrike villages, according to Koha.net.

<http://www.balkanweb.com/kosova/2686/brenda-javes-vulinit-i-refuzohet-dy-here-leja-per-ne-kosove-163044.html>

Germany: Learning lessons from Fukushima – Deutsche Welle (GE), 16 December 2013

Two years after the nuclear disaster in Fukushima, measures are being taken to protect the German population from accidents. But their implementation could take years, and some critics are concerned.

<http://www.dw.de/learning-lessons-from-fukushima/a-17286613>

Economy

Illegal gambling in Kosovo reaches annually 100 million EUR and serves to clean the dirty money of organized crime – Top Channel TV (Kosovo), 9 December 2013

Representatives of the Self-Determination Movement say that politicians have been favoring illegal gambling in exchange of funds. "The law needs to be changed. Gambling attracts poor citizens. It gives them a fake hope for a quick individual change. It puts the poor people in vicious circles, with the hope that they will win something. This makes politicians rich and impoverishes citizens, guaranteeing an unjust government", declared Parliament Member Liburn Aliu. Ylli Hoxha, director of the anti-corruption Committee at the Self-Determination Movement, says that if the ATK does not tackle this problem within 30 days, they will file a lawsuit.

<http://www.top-channel.tv/english/artikull.php?id=10575&ref=fp>

Kosovo, the poorest country in the Balkan region – Top Channel TV (Kosovo), 10 December 2013

2014 will find Kosovo once again as the poorest country in the Balkan region. According to the new report of the World Bank, 10.2% of the Kosovo citizens live in extreme poverty. The World Bank states that Kosovo keeps its dependence from remittances, while the financial sector is stable. While the banking deposits are solid, loans reduced. The prediction for Kosovo is that there will be a solid economic growth in 2014, but insufficient to create new jobs.

<http://www.top-channel.tv/english/artikull.php?id=10583&ref=fp>

Albania and Belgium signed the Social Agreement, through which both countries recognize the work experience of 35.000 Albanian migrants – Top Channel TV (Albania), 11 December 2013

"This is the first time that we sign an agreement of this kind with a European Union Member country. It will serve as an example for other agreements. With the help of the Ambassador, we will continue in Luxemburg and other countries, declared Erion Veliaj, Minister of Social Affairs.

<http://www.top-channel.tv/english/artikull.php?id=10588>