

Model of Determination and Unity

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Croatia's experience in EU accession process is very valuable for other countries of the region to which it can assist in speeding up their path

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Croatia's entry into the EU is good news for Croatia and also for every other country of the region. It is the message that the accession process continues.

I congratulate Croatia as this is something Governments had been working on for over ten years. Regardless of political affiliation, consensus on EU entry existed all that time in Croatia and this brought results in the end. It is the model of determination and unity which I hope others in the region will accept as well.

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Clear EU perspective brings stability to the region. It opens larger area for regional cooperation on concrete topics from economy, infrastructure and justice to education and cultural cooperation.

I hope Croatia will remain interested in further active participation in democratic processes in the region and will support EU accession of all other countries from Western Balkans.

Good illustration of this is the interest Croatian Government expressed as regards Montenegro's initiative on even more intensive cooperation in the region on infrastructural projects and EU accession.

I believe Croatia's participation would be very beneficial for the region for political and practical reasons. Croatia's experience in EU accession process is very valuable for other countries to which it can assist in speeding up their path.

EU membership will enable Croatia to be the voice of support to the interest of the region amongst EU 28. Croatia will thus, in addition to strengthening its EU position, also strengthen its position in the region to the benefit of both Croatia and the region.

For Competitive Market

On economic level, there is full awareness amongst the politicians that only interlinked economies in the region can be competitive in third markets.

At the same time, Croatia's entry into the EU changes relations in the region. Croatia is no longer a member of CEFTA, trade in the region will no longer rest on the model used between Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, but becomes as is, for example, presently the trade between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Austria.

On the other hand, we already have the situation that due to no longer being part of CEFTA and the privileges it offers, Croatian companies are opening businesses in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina what will create new jobs in these countries.

“Economic and financial crisis, along with the difficult heritage of 1990's, show the fragility of transitional democracy.”

Another important thing is that the EU border moves to the border of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is a novelty for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro.

It is not so much of a novelty for Serbia, because it already borders with Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania as EU members and is to some extent accustomed to the EU regime on its borders.

It is important to as soon as possible undertake all necessary measures on border crossings with Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina to mitigate this change, which will happen anyhow, as much as possible.

It is especially important for Bosnia and Herzegovina as this is very big, long border and people are used to travel freely and everything possible needs to be done for them not to see this as a personal burden.

Businesses also have to be helped to overcome some issues that will probably arise in the first couple of months or a year.

Economic and financial crisis, along with the difficult heritage of 1990's, show the fragility of transitional democracy.

The struggle to advance and lagging behind are continuously taking turns in our region. The average GDP in the region is just 38% of the EU average. It is a terrifying figure. It means that the gap between the region and EU is constantly deepening. The potential for frustrations, protests and instability is thus increasing. This is not in the interest of neither Europe nor region.

Employment Strategy

We at the RCC are here to assist countries as a kind of operational body given that our main task is improvement of cooperation in the region for the purpose of accelerated entry of all our participants into the EU.

In order to achieve this goal, the RCC prepared employment and economic growth Strategy for the region titled SEE 2020 the main target of which is increase in employment. Without it, there is no improvement of living conditions of citizens. Competitiveness and development, with naturally EU accession, is being brought back into the region's focus.

“Croatia will have the opportunity to contribute to achieving SEE 2020 targets.”

The main targets until 2020 are: employment growth by 12%, increase in mutual trade in the region by 230%, rise of GDP from the current 38% to 46% of the EU average.

The targets also include increase in total FDI inflow in the region by 120% and finally, additional 300.000 highly educated young people. With, of course, serious chances of employment.

In order to achieve this, manufacturing, trade, investments and education need to be improved and our local governments need to be much more efficient than are presently, and they need to be non-corrupted.

Although it will be a member of the EU and I believe will turn to meeting conditions under EU 2020, Croatia will have the opportunity to also contribute to achieving SEE 2020 targets since its support to overcoming economic crisis that affected us all could be to the benefit of both Croatia and all its neighbours.

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