



**COUNCIL OF
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First Accession Conference with Serbia

Negotiations with Serbia on its accession to the European Union were opened today at the first meeting of the Accession Conference at Ministerial level.

This follows a decision by the General Affairs Council on 25 June 2013 to open negotiations, as reaffirmed by the General Affairs Council on 17 December 2013 and endorsed by the European Council on 19/20 December 2013.

The EU delegation was headed by Greece's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Evangelos Venizelos. The Serbian delegation was led by Prime Minister Ivica Dačić, accompanied by Deputy Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić, Minister for Foreign Affairs Ivan Mrkić, and Minister for EU integration Branko Ružić. The European Commission was represented by Štefan Füle, Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy.

Mr Sebastian Kurz, Federal Minister for European and International Affairs of Austria, Mr Titus Corlăţean, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Romania, Mr Michael Roth, Minister of State, Federal Foreign Office of Germany, Mr Thierry Repentin, Minister for European Affairs of France, Ms Enikő Győri, State Secretary for EU Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Hungary, and Ms Vesna Pusić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of Croatia also participated in the Accession Conference.

P R E S S

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Serbia is already a close partner of the EU in the Stabilisation and Association Process for the Western Balkans. As noted by the Council in its conclusions of 25 June and 17 December 2013, which were endorsed by the European Council of 27/28 June and of 19/20 December 2013 respectively, Serbia has achieved the necessary degree of compliance with the membership criteria, and notably the key priority of taking steps towards a visible and sustainable improvement of relations with Kosovo^{*}. Serbia sufficiently fulfils the political criteria and conditions of the Stabilisation and Association Process, and has taken important steps towards establishing a functioning market economy. Serbia should be in a position to take on the obligations of membership in the medium term in nearly all *acquis* fields.

At the meeting, the EU presented its Negotiating Framework, which was agreed by the Council on 17 December. The Negotiating Framework takes account of the experience of past enlargements and on-going accession negotiations, as well as the evolving *acquis*, and duly reflects Serbia's own merits and specific characteristics. The negotiations are aimed at Serbia integrally adopting the EU *acquis* and ensuring its full implementation and enforcement. It takes particular account of the new approach and the experience acquired in relation to the negotiating chapters on Judiciary and Fundamental Rights and to Justice, Freedom and Security, as well as of Serbia's continued engagement and steps towards a visible and sustainable improvement of relations with Kosovo. This process shall ensure that both can continue on their respective European paths, while avoiding that either can block the other in these efforts. It should gradually lead to the comprehensive normalisation of relations between Serbia and Kosovo.

The EU General Position on the accession negotiations with Serbia, including the Negotiating Framework, can be found in the following document [AD 1/14](#).

^{*} This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.