
EU-Balkans: Zagreb Declaration. EU support to the region for democracy and development, local governments' commitment to peace and reforms

“The EU once again reaffirms its unequivocal support for the European perspective of the Western Balkans. The Western Balkans partners reiterated their commitment to the European perspective as their firm strategic choice. The credibility of this commitment depends also on clear public communication and the implementation of the necessary reforms”. This is one of the main points of the “Zagreb Declaration”, released at the end of the EU-Western Balkans Summit that took place via video conference yesterday. The Summit is the culmination of twenty years of dialogue between the EU countries and the Balkan region, with its 6 accession or candidate countries: Serbia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Kosovo. A European area where peace has not yet been fully restored after Yugoslavia’s collapse and the 1990s wars. As was clearly visible even yesterday, with several unresolved bilateral issues, namely between Serbia and Kosovo. The Zagreb Declaration, in 20 points, stresses the European perspective of the six countries and insists on two points: support from the EU to the region for democracy and development, and local governments’ commitment to peace and reforms. “The EU and the Western Balkans are together fighting the coronavirus and its effects”, the Declaration reads. Indeed, the EU has mobilised a package of over €3.3 billion for the Western Balkans. More generally, “the EU and the Western Balkans partners share the objective of a peaceful, strong, stable and united Europe, underpinned by our historical, cultural and geographical ties and by our mutual political, security and economic interests. The EU is determined to further intensify its engagement at all levels to support the region’s political, economic and social transformation and welcomes the pledge of the Western Balkans partners to uphold European values and principles and to carry out necessary reforms thoroughly and vigorously. Increased EU assistance will be linked to tangible progress in the rule of law and in socio-economic reforms, as well as on the Western Balkans partners’ adherence to EU values, rules and standards”.

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