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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Minister: Kosovo to apply for EU candidate status by end of 2018 (*Zeri/EO*)**

Kosovo’s Minister for European Integration, Dhurata Hoxha, said Kosovo will apply for EU candidate status by the end of 2018 so that it actually gains the status by 2020. In an interview to ***Ekonomia Online*** news website, Hoxha said the plan may seem ambitious but can be achieved through political will, hard work and national consensus. Hoxha also said that in order to gain candidate status in 2020, Kosovo needs to make progress in the European Reform Agenda (ERA) and implementation of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA).

**Courts to be able to suspend and dismiss public officials (*Koha Ditore*)**

The paper reports on the front page that Kosovo courts could soon be endowed with additional powers to suspend or even dismiss public officials who face active indictments or have been convicted of criminal activity. The paper claims to have seen a concept document on proposed amendments to the Kosovo’s Criminal Code which stipulates that new punitive measures could be applied against officials involved in corruption or abuse of power. The proposed amendments will enter the public debate stage as of this week, the paper adds.

**Peterle: Political readiness needed to finish election reform (*Koha*)**

Alojz Peterle, head of the European Union’s Election Observation Mission (EU EOM), said in an interview to the paper that Kosovo needs a genuine election reform in order to achieve European democratic standards. Peterle said the October 22 local elections were the best Kosovo has organized so far but he also listed a series of shortcomings that are apparent in every election. “Despite the progress in the October 22 elections, there are several serious shortcomings that need to be addressed in order to reach European standards … The new ruling coalition was formed just recently and we believe that an election reform is among their priorities,” he said. Peterle suggested that Kosovo authorities should address inaccuracies in the voters list, lack of transparency when it comes to funds for the campaigns of political parties and the lack of clarity in voting procedures. Peterle also said that the EOM will publish its final reports with recommendations after the runoff elections.

**Vucic: Serbian List does not support creation of Kosovo army (*Zeri*)**

President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vucic, said in a joint press conference with the President of Republika Srpska, Milorad Dodik, that the Serbian List will not agree to the creation of a Kosovo army. “Some have raised doubts that this could be possible but the Serbian List will not support the creation of a Kosovo army under any circumstance,” Vucic said.

**Serbia to hold first meeting on internal dialogue on Kosovo today (*RTK*)**

Marko Djuric, head of the Serbian government’s office for Kosovo, said the working group that will provide support to the Pristina-Belgrade dialogue will hold its first meeting today. The broadcaster notes that this is the first meeting on Serbia’s internal dialogue on Kosovo. The working group is tasked to provide support to relevant mechanisms in the process of dialogue and to coordinate their activities.

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