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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**EC gives positive recommendation for visa liberalisation (*media*)**

The European Commission (EC) has concluded on Wednesday that Kosovo has fulfilled all the conditions for visa liberalization. The EU Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris Avramopoulos encouraged on Wednesday at a joint press conference with Kosovo’s President Hashim Thaci, the European Parliament and Council to consider the proposal of the European Commission. “I am happy to inform you that all Kosovo’s efforts and work towards liberalization of visas has been rewarded, therefore I can confirm today that Kosovo has fulfilled all the criteria of the of the guidelines for visa liberalization,” Avramopoulos said. He added that if in the past Kosovo was a kilometer away from visa liberalization, now it has only a hundred meters.

Kosovo’s President Hashim Thaci on the other hand said the decision of the European Commission is the best news for Kosovo in the last decade. He also said the visa liberalisation process was painstaking for Kosovo. “I have to say that the last kilometres were really very long, but I am happy we reached this important finish line together,” Thaci said.

**Kosovo leaders convinced visa liberalisation will be concluded this year (*Zeri*)**

Kosovo institutional leaders – President Hashim Thaci, Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj, Assembly Speaker Kadri Veseli and Deputy Prime Ministers Behgjet Pacolli, Fatmir Limaj, and Dardan Gashi – held a press conference at Pristina Airport yesterday on arrival from Brussels and said they believed the visa liberalisation process will be concluded by the end of this year. President Thaci said European Commission’s positive recommendation is a huge event for Kosovo although a delayed decision. “One thing is certain despite positions, we have all worked hard to be on the path to EU and NATO. Another thing that I wish to underline is that we have faith this process will be concluded during this year and that the citizens will move freely,” Thaci said. PM Haradinaj congratulated the people of Kosovo. “All the work that it was believed we could not do, we did,” he said.

**Avramopoulos: Visa-free travel brings rights and responsibilities (*Koha Ditore*)**

In an op-ed for the paper, the European Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, Dimitris Avramopoulos acknowledged Kosovo’s progress and concluded that visa liberalisation criteria have been met.  “After many years and months of efforts and great deal of work, Commission confirms that Kosovo has met all standards for visa liberalisation. We therefore encourage the Council and the European Parliament to move forward our proposal,” Avramopoulos wrote. He also said that visa-free travel to Europe carries not only rights but also responsibilities: “Everyone needs to make sure all standards remain fulfilled and there are no abuses or developments that would endanger this major achievement.”

**Hahn and Fajon congratulate Kosovo (*Epoka*)**

The European Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations Johannes Hahn has congratulated Kosovo for the European Commission’s positive recommendation on visa liberalization. “#Kosovo: experts confirm that Kosovo fulfils the last outstanding benchmark of the visa liberalisation roadmap. EU Commission recognises the hard work and commitment to reform. Now up to Member States and European Parliament to decide on visafree travel. I hope this happens quickly!” Hahn wrote on his Twitter account. Tanja Fajon, EU Rapporteur for visa liberalisation for Kosovo, called on Member States to do their job as soon as possible.

**Thaci and Vucic agree to intensify meetings (*dailies*)**

In the front-page coverage of yesterday’s meeting of President of Kosovo Hashim Thaci and President of Serbia Aleksandar Vucic under the facilitation of the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, ***Koha Ditore*** reports that the two sides are viewing compromise differently and while Thaci said only recognition of Kosovo as a sovereign and independent state implies final agreement with Serbia, Vucic said recognition of Kosovo would not constitute a compromise as, according to him, a solution needs to be reached whereby both sides lose something. The two presidents did however agree to reconvene in “few weeks’ time”. Thaci said after the meeting that although the briefest, this was the most difficult meeting he had since the dialogue began six years ago. He said Serbia still lives in the old mindset and that it should realise Kosovo is an independent country. “We need to work on reaching the agreement which will be a win for Kosovo and Serbia. We will see how things will go in the future,” Thaci said adding that he anticipates a difficult process ahead.

**Kosovo leaders meet EU HR Mogherini in Brussels (*dailies*)**

A delegation of Kosovo institutional leaders consisting of President Hashim Thaci, Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj, Assembly Speaker Kadri Veseli and Deputy Prime Ministers Behgjet Pacolli, Fatmir Limaj, and Dardan Gashi, met in Brussels yesterday the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini. The 30-minute meeting is said to have focused on Kosovo’s European agenda and dialogue with Serbia. In a Facebook post after the meeting, PM Haradinaj said the meeting proved Kosovo institutions speak in one voice concerning dialogue with Serbia. “Normalisation of relations between the two countries is a process which should end in mutual recognition and as such is very important for the whole Western Balkans,” he wrote. At the same time, the EU foreign policy spokesperson Maja Kocijancic said in a Twitter post that the meeting took place ahead of that between Thaci and Vucic as part of the EU-facilitated dialogue and that they also discussed prospects for visa liberalisation and progress on European integration.

**Vetevendosje contests Kosovo delegation in Brussels (*Kosova Sot*)**

Vetevendosje Movement considers that representatives of Kosovo institutions went to Brussels without being mandated by the Assembly. “Members of the government are perhaps preparing fireworks to celebrate liberalization, however their going to the dialogue with Vucic is neither consensual not legitimate or legal. Opposition parties have strongly objected this manner of dialoguing and negotiation and today, this is the position of majority of the population. The Parliament has not mandated this team, especially not Hashim Thaci, to negotiate,” is written in a reaction of this political party.

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