

Brussels, 8 May 2007

Zagreb Summit for more regional cooperation in South-East Europe

On 11 May 2007 Commission President José Manuel Barroso, and Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn will attend the meeting of the Heads of State and Government of the South-East European countries in Zagreb, at the 10th summit of the South-East Europe Cooperation Process (SEECP)¹. The Summit, which will also be attended by the German Chancellor Angela Merkel, holder of the current EU Presidency, and the President of the European Parliament Hans-Gert Pöttering, will take stock of regional cooperation in South-East Europe and discuss further ways of strengthening it.

Ahead of the Zagreb Summit, President José Manuel Barroso said: "I am very much looking forward to the Zagreb Summit. I welcome this occasion to put the spotlight on regional cooperation, which is at the heart of the EU's policy for the Western Balkans. Regional cooperation is fundamental to ensure lasting political stability, security and economic prosperity in a region whose future lies within the EU."

The Zagreb Summit is expected to endorse a number of decisions by which the Stability Pact will give its place to a more regionally-owned cooperation structure where the SEECP will play a central role. A new Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) will be established with a Secretariat based in the region and a Secretary General from the region. The European Commission will provide financial support for the work of the RCC.

On the eve of the SEECP summit, the Stability Pact Regional table will meet, also in Zagreb, to take its own decisions on the transition to the new regional framework. Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn, who will attend that meeting as well, commented these new developments:

"Enhanced local ownership in regional cooperation in South-East Europe reflects the maturity of a region that is moving away from the tragedies of the 90s, that increasingly pursues cooperation among its countries, and follows a European course."

¹ Participating States to the SEECP: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Romania, Serbia, and Turkey. Montenegro is expected to become the 11th participating State at the Zagreb Summit.

At the Summit EU leaders will reiterate the European perspective of the Western Balkans, and will recall progress made along the road towards the EU by the Western Balkan countries. They will stress the need for maintaining the pace of reform, and their commitment to promote measures that bring the citizens of the region closer to the EU, notably through facilitating travel and increasing the number of scholarships to students from the region. (For more info on what has been achieved since the Thessaloniki Summit in 2003 and the Salzburg Declaration in 2006, see [MEMO/07/169](#))

Following the Summit, Commissioner Rehn will attend a youth conference at the University of Zagreb bringing together some 100 students from the region as well as from EU Member States. The theme of the discussion will be "Coming to terms with the past on the road to European integration". The meeting will provide an occasion for the Commissioner to announce an increase in the number of scholarships available to students from the region.

For more information:

[MEMO/07/169](#)

[Salzburg Declaration](#)

[CEFTA IP](#)

[IP visa facilitation and readmission agreements](#)

[Stability Pact](#)

[Croatian Chairmanship office SEECF](#)