

## **SERBIA**

### **DACIC: KOSOVO AND METOHIJA, EU ARE SERBIA'S PRIORITIES FOR 2019**

BELGRADE, 14 January 2019 (Beta) - Serbian Foreign Minister Ivica Dacic said in Belgrade, on Jan. 14, that Serbia's two major priorities for 2019 were to look after its interests in Kosovo and Metohija, and to join the European Union (EU). "We are not giving up our commitment to dialogue and compromise, leading to a comprehensive, durable and stable solution. Serbia remains committed to the principles of international law," Dacic said at a reception hosted by his ministry. Minister Dacic thanked the states that had withdrawn their earlier decision to recognize Kosovo's independence, and those that voted against the territory's move to join Interpol, saying that Serbian diplomacy in that domain was not threatening the talks between Belgrade and Pristina. "Serbia is in favor of an agreement with Pristina, but we will react strongly to any unilateral act that has not been agreed on, just like you would," the Serbian foreign minister said to diplomats attending the reception. Dacic also said that Serbia would maintain a neutral military status, contributing to efforts designed to counter security challenges, taking part in EU and U.N. peacekeeping missions and the Partnership for Peace program. "The NATO mission in Kosovo, KFOR, is very important for the Serbian community in Kosovo and Metohija. Unfortunately the security situation in the province requires an unchanged KFOR presence, and we are glad to see that many NATO members have recognized the problem," Dacic said. The Serbian president was positive about last year's overall diplomatic activity, a large number of top-level and bilateral meetings, underlining the importance of President Vucic's visits to Beijing and Zagreb, as well as his own meetings with top U.S. officials.

### **CADEZ INKS DUAL EDUCATION, DIGITIZATION MEMOS IN VIENNA**

BELGRADE, 14 January 2019 (Beta) - Head of the Serbian Chamber of Commerce, Marko Cadez, acting on behalf of the Chamber Investment Forum of the West Balkan Six, Austrian Foreign Minister Karin Kneissl and Austrian Chamber of Commerce head Harald Mahrer on Jan. 14 signed a memorandum of understanding on the project of introducing dual education in the West Balkans and digitization of the economies in the region in Vienna. The multi-year project, to be executed with financial support from the Austrian Development Agency and the expert assistance of the Austrian Chamber of Commerce, will begin by the middle of the year and is planned to last until 2024, the Serbian Chamber of Commerce said on its website. "This memorandum is different from others because it specifies in detail multi-year support to the West Balkan economies. We want to spread the model of dual education being implemented by Serbia, Austria, the Chamber, government and Ministry of Education, to the entire region. A shared economic market requires a trained workforce," Cadez stressed after signing the memorandum in the Chamber of Commerce of Austria. Cadez explained that the document contained concrete measures and joint activities, including adopting a legal framework in countries where there are no regulations on dual education, and engaging companies and analyzing the needed profiles. Through this project, chambers of commerce in the region will be empowered to provide greater support and efficient and high-quality services important to inclusion of staff in the process of dual education according to private sector needs, but also to the development and accreditation of new educational profiles for jobs generated by modern digital business. The plans include the creation of a virtual regional academy for training staff.

Cadez stressed that the other aspect of the memorandum was economy digitization, recalling that the Serbian Chamber of Commerce had created a Digital Transformation Center modeled on an example from the Austrian Chamber, to certify advisors in the digital transformation of small and medium enterprises. Kneissl stressed that South East Europe was part of Europe proper and that "this Europe" would not exist had there been no exchange of ideas and economy with this region. She underscored that Austria's chairing of the EU particularly focused on bringing the EU region closer to Serbia and Montenegro and had the success of opening further chapters in accession talks. Kneissl stressed that the Chamber Investment Forum was important to advancing cooperation in the region, which is why the memorandum was very important, as dual education and digitization were crucial to the economy. Mahrer emphasized that the strategic goal of the memorandum was further incentives for investment, further digitization of the economy and dealing with the lack of trained workforce. Present at the signing were the heads of all six chambers of the members of the Chamber Investment Forum. After the ceremony, they spoke with the heads of Austrian companies that are present in the West Balkans or interested in doing business and investing in the region.