



At tonight's formal dinner organized on the occasion of Croatia's entry into the EU, Croatian President Ivo Josipovic said in a toast to foreign delegations that Croatia would continue to support the European integration of the Western Balkans as a whole.

"My message to you is that we will support your European perspective with all our force. Croatia's interest for us to live all together in a zone of peace and progress will remain one of our uppermost political objectives," Josipovic toasted the statesmen from the Western Balkans, including the President and Prime Minister of Serbia Tomislav Nikolic and Ivica Dacic and the Serbian Foreign Minister Ivan Mrkic.

Croatia's accession to the EU, according to Josipovic, was confirmation of Croatian citizens' conviction that they belong to the European democratic and cultural circle and the European set of values.

"The moment of Croatia's accession to the European Union is a time of many doubts and questioning. In Croatia too, there are similar dilemmas. However, at the end of one stage in Croatia's history and at the beginning of a new, European age for us, there is a prevailing conviction in Croatia that the project of the European Union is a project of the future. We look to Europe as a new opportunity to achieve new democratic, political cultural and any other progress." Josipovic said.

Prime Minister Zoran Milanovic, in addressing the guests, called for resistance to spreading fear of 'others', of those who are different and fostering Europe based on pure heart, not fear, cooperation and not suspicion, acceptance and not closing in a ghetto and understanding without accusing in advance, getting to know, without persisting in prejudice.

"I raise this glass in the name of our common future and our shared courage, in the face of numerous challenges of our time, to keep a deep awareness of the irreplaceability of fundamental values, like solidarity and education," Milanovic said.

While foreign officials and members of the Croatian Government and Parliament are having dinner in Gornji Grad, which is the seat of the Croatian administration, citizens are gathering in the city center at the central celebration ceremony of joining the EU.

In the late evening hours, some 170 guests from abroad, including the presidents of all the countries in the region will move to the VIP area at Ban Jelacica Square where they will watch the cultural and artistic programme and the addresses of local officials and representatives of the EU.