



On 14 December 2015, the Second Serbia-EU Intergovernmental Accession Conference was held in Brussels, opening the first two out of 35 negotiating chapters in total. It opened Chapter 32 on financial control, and Chapter 35 on the normalisation of relations between Belgrade and Pristina. The Republic of Serbia's Delegation led by Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic consisted of First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ivica Dacic, Minister without Portfolio in charge of European integration Jadranka Joksimovic, Minister of Finance Dusan Vujovic, and Head of the Team for Negotiations with the EU Tanja Miscevic. In the presence of representatives from the Member States, the European Union was represented at the Second Intergovernmental Conference by Foreign Minister of Luxembourg, which holds the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, Jean Asselborn, and Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations Johannes Hahn, who emphasised that the opening of EU accession chapters could make the Republic of Serbia more stable, bring it closer to the EU, and more attractive for foreign investors.

The Second Serbia-EU Intergovernmental Accession Conference was opened by the Luxembourg Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jean Asselborn. The speakers at the Conference included Austrian, Greek and Hungarian Foreign Ministers, French Minister of State for European Affairs, and Czech Deputy Foreign Minister, in addition to Minister Asselborn, Commissioner Hahn and Serbian Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic, who stressed that Serbia's goal was membership of the European Union but that an even greater goal for it was alignment with the European values in order to improve the overall quality of life in Serbia.

Serbia's PM Aleksandar Vucic and Head of Diplomacy Ivica Dacic stated immediately before the opening of the first chapters that the Serbian side was absolutely ready and willing to complete the negotiations by the end of 2019. The European Commission's officials agreed already at the screening stage that the Serbian authorities were well-prepared and that their public administration was capable of coping with the burden of long and demanding negotiations. The opening of the first chapters in EU accession negotiations represents not only acknowledgement for the achievements of the Serbian Government, but also indicates that Serbia's European path is irreversible and that it aspires to a society based on European values.

According to European officials, the Intergovernmental Conference was not solely a technical

matter of opening the first chapters, but also a new stage in the European integration process with Serbia, whose reforms, progress in the dialogue with Pristina, and the contribution towards better regional relations were key for the step now taken.

Next chapters that Serbia might open in the first half of 2016 are Chapter 23 on judiciary and fundamental rights, and Chapter 24 on justice, freedom and security.