



First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Ivica Dacic conferred today in Belgrade with the Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Austria, Mr. Sebastian Kurz.

At a press-conference that followed the meeting, the two officials stressed that Serbia and Austria maintained excellent bilateral relations and cooperation. Minister Dacic emphasized that more than 400 Austrian companies, employing around 20 000 people, had operations in Serbia, and noted the interest in the setting-up of new ones.

Austrian Foreign Minister reiterated that Austria supported Serbia on its European path and in its reforms, as well as in the process of opening new chapters in the framework of its negotiations with the EU.

Minister Dacic emphasized that if certain countries along the Balkan route were to close their borders to refugees, Serbia would be compelled to enforce such a decision at its border with Macedonia. The Minister highlighted that the migrants could not be stationed in Serbia.

Serbia's Foreign Minister pointed to the tremendous importance of sharing in a good way of information on future developments along the Balkan route, in order to coordinate decisions, likening this phenomenon to communicating vessels, or to the domino effect.

"What matters is that countries share information with each other concerning the migrants, so as to prevent any surprises, and for the sake of a predictable policy", the Serbian Foreign Minister maintained.

"We shall observe other countries' conduct. We shall keep abreast of the actions taken by Slovenia and Croatia", Minister Dacic stated, adding that the migrant crisis must not be allowed to become an insurmountable problem for the countries of the Western Balkans.

"What we need is a unified European response", Minister Dacic believes, pointing out that this was not exactly the case, for everyone was guided by their own interests in approaching the problem.

The Austrian Minister underlined that Austria could not receive migrants indefinitely. In his

words, the upper limit for admission of refugees to Austria in 2016 would be 37,500 people.

"If we draw clear lines to the admission along the Western Balkan route, a new situation will be created, and the aim is to stem the flow of migrants at the Greek- Macedonian border", Minister Kurz said.

"It is important that Serbia be involved in it from the very outset, Minister Kurz said, adding that a number of Austrian military and police personnel would be deployed to the Greek- Macedonian border.

"I do not believe that a massive number of refugees will now want to stay in Serbia, but rather that the refugees will be more reluctant to embark upon this journey when they realize that the open invitation policy has changed. It is vital to alter the approach", Minister Kurz said.