

Bosnia and Herzegovina will submit its application for EU membership in the New Year, bringing up its planned submission date from January 2017. EurActiv Germany reports. The Balkan state has decided to accelerate its plans to join the EU by a full year, according to government sources. Dragan Čović, chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina and representative of the Croat population, spoke on Thursday (17 September) of an historic decision.

Sarajevo has somewhat sprung this announcement on the bloc, given that the 2017 date was still mooted back in the summer and any accession negotiations are expected to be very problematic. The country's divided nature and lack of cooperation between the three Serb, Croat and Bosniak groups are seen as huge stumbling blocks.

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The 4 million-strong nation is also stagnating, with significant problems with the labour market and youth unemployment, which currently stands at 70%. Large international companies such as Daimler and RWE have withdrawn investment recently on account of corruption.

If the EU were to accept the application, then accession negotiations could be initiated. Observers do not see much chance of the country joining until 2025, though. German Chancellor Angela Merkel has raised the issue of Bosnia and Herzegovina joining in recent months and has shown a certain enthusiasm towards the prospect.