

Serbia's Minister of Environmental Protection Goran Trivan said the Draft Negotiation Position for Chapter 27: Environment in the pre-accession negotiations with the European Union should be complete by the end of June 2018. The closing of that chapter will require huge investments because of the bad state of the environment in Serbia, he added. Members of the Serbian negotiation team warned that the main problem is the implementation of laws which have already been harmonized with the *Acquis Communautaire*. Trivan told a meeting of the Negotiation Group 27 in the Serbian parliament that agreement on the negotiating position will have to be reached with the European Commission over several months before the chapter is opened. Serbia will be ready to open Chapter 27 once the Draft Negotiation Position is finished but we should not hurry to open that chapter, he said.

Trivan said that the opening of Chapter 27, which he said is the most complicated, most expensive and most important in the EU accession process, includes an analysis, evaluation of the situation and the resolving of the most significant issues in terms of the environment and added that the current analysis of the situation showed that there is no area which is free of problems but that efforts are being invested to solve them.

The goal is for 10% of the territory of Serbia to be protected by the year 2020, the minister said adding that that is not enough because the EU plans to have 20% of its territory protected by that time.

Trivan said the estimate is that Serbia will have to invest some EUR 15 billion in the next 30 years to bring the state of the environment in Serbia in line with global standards.

"We don't have that money. I believe the European Commission is ready to help us and secure half of the money but we have to find the rest ourselves," the minister said and added that the money could come from foreign funds and public-private partnerships. Trivan said the duration of post-accession transitional period to improve certain areas has not been defined.

Measure of success will be implementation of laws

Serbian pre-accession negotiation team chief Tanja Mišćević warned that the negotiation process should be completed by the year 2023 if Serbia wants to become an EU member by 2025, which is the time frame set in the European Commission Strategy for the Western Balkans.

"That year will come very soon and the measure of our success will not be whether we adopt the laws, but whether we implement them," she told the Negotiation Group meeting. Serbia should be smarter in securing the money for Chapter 27 than in other chapters so that the adapting to European standards in environmental protection becomes an investment and

not an expense, she added.

Miščević said that Chapter 27 is the best way for the citizens of Serbia to see the importance of the European integration process.

Negotiation team member Anđelka Mihajlov said that the European Commission assessed that Serbia has “transposed EU legislature” in the field of environmental protection but added that the biggest problem is the implementation of those laws. She said the Green Fund which Serbia set up has to function to secure the needed investments for Chapter 27, adding that the problem is infrastructure which costs a lot to build.

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