



Slovensko predsedstvo EU 2008  
Slovenian Presidency of the EU 2008  
La Présidence slovène de l'UE 2008

## INTERVIEW

### WITH THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA AND THE PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL JANEZ JANŠA FOR PRESS AGENCY REUTERS

*Ljubljana, 17 June 2008*

The European Union might offer concessions to Ireland to persuade it to accept a reform treaty its voters rejected last week, the Prime Minister of Slovenia, which holds the European Union Presidency, said on Tuesday. Asked about opt-out possibilities like the ones given to Denmark and Britain, the only two European Union members not obliged to adopt the Euro currency, Janez Janša said: "It is possible in the future, although it is only one of the possibilities".

"It is almost certain nothing so concrete will happen at the European Council because this is not the time to come up with concrete proposals before we do a detailed analysis of why the referendum outcome was negative," he told Reuters in an interview.

European Union leaders will grapple at their summit on Thursday and Friday with the consequences of Ireland's stunning rejection of the reform treaty, which effectively crippled hopes that the bloc could soon overhaul its creaking institutions and bring them in line with its expansion from 15 to 27 member states. Janša refused to speculate on how the Union would deal with the setback, but suggested Irish authorities could have done more to explain to voters what was at stake.

"From Slovenia's own experience with referendums, very often motives get mixed up with many things which do not have a lot to do with the referendum issue. That makes the responsibility of those leading the campaign even bigger," he said.

#### **PROGRESS IN WEST BALKANS**

Janša said Slovenia, whose six-month presidency ends on June 30, had achieved progress in the West Balkans, with which it has strong historic and business links from the time when it was part of the Yugoslav federation.

"If we draw a line and compare the situation at the end of last year with the present, we can see big changes, changes towards more stable solutions, a shift towards Europe in Serbia," Janša said. He said Slovenia's aim was to have all Balkan states having an accord on closer ties with the European Union, "which we accomplished with Bosnia signing yesterday". He said the presidency had other tough Balkan issues to deal with, including Kosovo's declaration of independence from Serbia and early elections in Serbia and Macedonia.

A month after an inconclusive parliamentary election in Serbia, which split the country between the nationalist and pro-Western blocs, Janša said the lengthy coalition talks would end in a reformist government.

"Serbia will sooner or later manage to put together a pro-European government, because the shift at the last presidential and parliamentary election was so big that it is irreversible."

He said Serbia's only chance to erase the new border with Kosovo - which Belgrade does not recognize - was to work on meeting conditions for joining the European Union together with Kosovo. As part of that, it was vital to avoid conflicts during a handover of power in Kosovo from a United Nations to a European Union mission.

Kosovo's new constitution took effect on Monday but the handover of power to the European Union police mission has yet to start and Janša could not say when it should be completed. "Deadlines are not important. The key is stability."

*Marja Novak & Zoran Radosavljević*