

Roundtable and Debate

The Western Balkans and the European Union four years after the launch of the Berlin process:

Perspectives in sight, accession in reach?

*A roundtable in the framework of the Western Balkans Reflection Forum initiative
& run-up to the Austrian Presidency of the Council of the EU*

19 April 2018, 17h00-19h00

Austrian Embassy in Germany, Stauffenbergstraße 1, Berlin

After the presentation of the new enlargement strategy at the beginning of February, the European Commission will present the annual reports on the Western Balkans countries EU integration process on 17 April 2018. A month later, on 17 May 2018, a EU-Western Balkans summit will be hosted by the Bulgarian Presidency in Sofia and 10 July 2018 the fifth “Berlin process” summit is scheduled to be held in London. Against the background of the intensified activity it is useful to take stock: What are the regional cooperation perspectives of the region and how far is EU accession is actually in reach?

The 2017 Western Balkans Summit of Trieste was the fourth annual conference held in the framework of the **Berlin process**. It was attended by the heads of state or government, foreign ministers and the ministers of economy of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, Germany, Austria, France, Italy, the UK, Croatia, Slovenia, as well as by the EU High Representative Mogherini and Commissioner Hahn. The Italian hosts also invited the incoming Bulgarian EU Presidency to the meeting, under the auspices of which the forthcoming EU-Western Balkans Summit. After dropping off the radar screen for at least a decade, the Western Balkans seem to be back on the EU’s agenda.

The Berlin process has certainly contributed to this achievement. But its initial objective, beyond keeping the impetus of European integration, was to further “real additional progress” in the region. While the Summit of Trieste reconfirmed the EU’s commitment to support Western Balkan’s path into the EU, the implementation of previous commitments by both the EU and Western Balkans’ governments remains far from straightforward. The **Western Balkans Reflection Forum** held in Trieste in June 2017 has highlighted key issues regarding the implementation of these commitments as well as new challenges, rendering EU accession prospects hardly predictable, despite the second Juncker Declaration and the new enlargement strategy of February 2018.

This interactive roundtable, organised by the Austro-French Centre for Rapprochement in Europe, Centre international de formation européenne (CIFE) and German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP) in cooperation and with the support of the Austrian Embassy in Berlin, Austrian Institute for International Politics, Institut français des relations internationales (IFRI), Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) and Balkan in Europe Policy Advisory Group (BiEPAG) will exchange

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views on current developments in EU-Western Balkans relations: What opportunities does the Berlin process carry in its current approach and what perspectives can it be given after the London Summit of July 2018? How successful has it been in maintaining the impetus of a slowed-down accession process? What conclusions can we draw from the new EU enlargement strategy and what expectations can we hold from the EU-Western Balkans Summit, planned next May of Sofia? How does the Berlin process and its new elements intersect with the EU's enlargement strategy and political agenda? Are the accession perspectives of Western Balkans potential and actual candidate more in sight? Is 2025 a credible date? What hurdles can we expect and how to thwart them? What implications does the growing engagement of non-Western powers (Russia, China, Turkey) in the Western Balkans have on their European integration path?

Programme

16h30 *Registration, networking and coffee*

17h00 *Welcome and opening*

- Peter HUBER, Austrian Ambassador to Germany
- Wolfgang WOSOLSOBE, Secretary General, Austro-French Centre for Rapprochement in Europe (CFA/ÖFZ), Vienna

17h10 *Keynote: The Berlin process revisited four years after its launch*

- Christian HELLBACH, Germany's Special Envoy for South-Eastern Europe, Turkey and the EFTA States
- Sebastian WOOD, British Ambassador to Germany

17h35 *Discussion*

- Manuel SARRAZIN, Member of the German Parliament
- Judy DEMPSEY, Non-Resident Senior Fellow, Carnegie Europe, Brussels
- Ardian HACKAJ, Research Director, Cooperation and Development Institute
- Sabina LANGE, Senior Lecturer, European Institute of Public Administration (EIPA), Maastricht; Associate Professor at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana

Moderator: Tobias FLESSENKEMPER, Project Director, Centre international de formation européenne, Nice/Berlin

18h50 *Conclusion*

- Dušan RELJIĆ, Head of the Brussels Office, German Institute for International and Security Affairs

19h00 *End of the programme, followed by refreshments*

The meeting takes place under the Chatham House Rule. The language of the discussions will be in English. Registration is compulsory to participate: Aline.Palige@cife.eu

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