

## Roundtable and Debate

### Montenegro, the Western Balkans and the European Union: Accession within reach?

*Western Balkans Reflection Forum Series – the Berlin Process and EU Enlargement Strategy*

**23 March 2018**

**Hotel CentreVille, Podgorica, Montenegro**

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 will be held, in Sofia on 17 May 2018. After years of out of the radar, the Western Balkans seem to be back on the agenda of the EU.

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 fraught with question marks. 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 less predictable, notwithstanding the new enlargement strategy of February 2018.

Following up on the publication of the **new EU enlargement strategy**, this roundtable will exchange views on current developments in EU-Western Balkans relations in general and EU-Montenegro relations in particular.

Co-organised by the Austro-French Centre for Rapprochement in Europe (CFA/ÖFZ, Vienna), Centre international de formation européenne (Cife, Nice/Berlin), Centre for Civic Education (CGO/CCE, Podgorica) with the support of the Open Regional Funds (German Cooperation / GIZ), Balkans in Europe Policy Advisory Group (BiEPAG) and Institut français des relations internationales (IFRI, Paris), it will discuss questions such as: *What opportunities and what risks does the Berlin process carry in its current approach? How successful has it been in maintaining the impetus of a slowed-down accession process? What are the key areas for implementation, which the Berlin process should focus on, and how to best use the new modes of cooperation this intergovernmental initiative has introduced? How does the Berlin process in its current approach intersect with the EU’s enlargement strategy and political agenda? What are the implications of the UK hosting the next Berlin Process summit in London in 2018? Which perspectives can the Western Balkans in general and Montenegro in particular now envisage with respect to their EU accession? Is 2025 a credible date for the country’s accession? What are hurdles to expect on this way to EU accession, and how to thwart them?*

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## Programme

### 9h30 Welcome and opening

- Daliborka ULJAREVIC, Executive Director, Centre for Civic Education, Podgorica
- Adrijan VUKSANOVIĆ, President, Committee for European Integration, Parliament of Montenegro

### 9h45 How much of the Berlin process is in new EU Enlargement Strategy?

- Christine TOUDIC, Ambassador of France to Montenegro
- Rainer SULZBERGER, Counselor of Embassy, Austrian Embassy in Montenegro

*Moderator:* Florent MARCIACQ, Deputy Secretary General and Research Fellow, Austro-French Centre for Rapprochement in Europe (CFA/ÖFZ), Vienna

### 10h30 Montenegro: Frontrunner or trailblazer for the Western Balkans on their way to the EU?

- Vedran DZIHIC, Senior Researcher, Austrian Institute for International Affairs (OIIP), Vienne
- Ardian HACKAJ, ShtetiWeb Director, Cooperation & Development Institute (CDI), Tirana
- Simonida KACARSKA, Director of the European Policy Institute (EPI), Skopje
- Stevo MUK, President of the Governing Board, Institute Alternative

*Moderator:* Tobias FLESSENKEMPER, Project Director, Centre international de formation européenne (CIFE), Nice

### 12h00 Conclusion

- Aivo ORAV, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Montenegro
- Aleksandar DRLJEVIĆ, Director General of the General Directorate for EU and Regional Policy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro

### 12h20 End of the programme, followed by refreshments

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