

Conference organised in framework of the
Austrian Presidency of the Council of the European Union

The European Union and the Western Balkans: Moving apart or together?

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

Sarajevo, Friday, 28 September 2018, Dom Armije (address Zelenih Berteki 2)

After years out of the radar, the Western Balkans now seem to be back on the agenda of the EU. The new Enlargement Strategy, issued in February 2018 and the EU-Western Balkans Summit convened in Sofia in May 2018, fifteen years after the Thessaloniki Declaration, both tentatively illustrate the new impetus given by the EU to its enlargement policy. The new dynamic that may be emerging builds on four years of Berlin process. After Berlin, Vienna, Paris and Trieste, a new Western Balkans Summit took place in this framework in London, in July 2018. What has been the overall contribution of the Berlin process so far and what support can it deliver in the future? Is the new impetus indicative of more credible enlargement perspectives for the countries of the region?

Accession, for some countries of the region, may be in sight. But it is hardly in reach, at least in the years to come. The EU's reform agenda and forthcoming elections of the European Parliament, multiannual *financial* framework negotiations, Brexit and other internal and external affairs will continue to capture the attention and mobilise the energy of the member states and EU institutions in the near future. These competing priorities will not make enlargement a smoother, more predictable process; instead, they will make it more dependent on EU politics. How to keep enlargement on the EU's agenda, not only in Brussels, but also in EU capitals? How to better prepare EU Member States for enlargement? Which broader geopolitical factors will have an impact on the EU's enlargement policy?

In the region, progress remains hesitant at best, especially with regards to democracy, rule of law, good governance, economic development and good neighbourly relations. Weaknesses in these areas persist in spite of the prevailing commitment to EU accession declared by most political parties in the region. And they do not disappear even after accession -as shown in neighbouring EU Member States. Do these weaknesses stem from a lack of commitment to EU accession, or do they also emerge as by-product of the EU's transformation recipe vigorously promoted through its enlargement policy? How to make the accession process a more fundamental vector of change? How to increase joint-ownership over the process?

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This conference, which will take place in the framework of the Austrian Presidency of the Council of the EU, will address these questions and many others. It will be co-organised by the Foreign Policy Initiative BH (FPI BH, Sarajevo), Austro-French Centre for Rapprochement in Europe (CFA/ÖFZ, Vienna), Centre international de formation européenne (CIFE, Nice/Berlin), with the support of and in cooperation with the Open Regional Fund for SEE – Promotion of EU Integration (German Cooperation / GIZ), Institut français des relations internationales (IFRI, Paris), Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI, Rome), German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP, Brussels) and the European Commission (Erasmus+-Programme). (Erasmus+-Programme).

This conference will be part of the “Western Balkans Reflection Forum” initiative, a framework project launched in 2015 by a network of European think tanks in support of the Berlin Process. The initiative promotes discussions with experts in an inclusive, interactive format on strategic, policy-oriented issues relevant to the European Union and the Western Balkans.

The conference will be held in **Dom Armije**. The conference will be in English and languages of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Simultaneous interpretation will be available.

Programme

9h00 Registration

9h10 Welcome

- Tobias FLESSENKEMPER, Senior Fellow & Balkans Project Director, Centre international de formation européenne (CIFE), Nice / Berlin
- Lejla RAMIĆ-MESIHOVIĆ, Director, Foreign Policy Initiative BH, Sarajevo

9h15 Keynotes

- Martin PAMMER, Ambassador of Austria in Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Guillaume ROUSSON, Ambassador of France in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo
- Edin DILBEROVIĆ, Director of the Directorate for European Integration, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo

9h45 From London to Poznan: What can the Berlin process still do for EU enlargement?

- Adnan HUSKIĆ, lecturer at the Sarajevo School of Science and Technology
- Christiane HOHMANN, Ambassador of Germany in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo
- Marta SZPALA, Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW), Warsaw
- Matthew FIELD, British Ambassador in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Moderator: Tobias Flessenkemper

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10h45 Coffee and networking break

11h15 *The Politics of EU accession and regional cooperation – why do we need to think about it?*

- Simonida KACARSKA, Director, European Policy Institute, Skopje
- Adis MERDŽANOVIĆ, South East European Studies at Oxford (SEESOX), University of Oxford
- Pierre MIREL, SciencesPo, Paris
- Osman TOPČAGIĆ, Sarajevo

Moderator: Lejla Ramić-Mesihović

12h15 *Concluding remark*

- Khaldoun SINNO, Deputy Head of the EU Delegation, Sarajevo

12h45 *End of the programme*

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