

Western Balkans Reflection Forum

The Western Balkans in the European Union

What role for the Berlin Process after Poznań and ahead of the Croatian Presidency of the Council?

16 October 2019

Europe House Zagreb, Jurišićeva Street 1/1

- 11h00-13h00: **Public discussion**
The Western Balkans in the European Union... (Un)ambiguous
commitment, (in)effective transformation?
- 13h00-14h00 Reception
- 14h00-18h00 **Working Sessions** (*upon invitation, Chatham House rules*)
After the Summit of Poznań: What role for the Berlin Process?
- 18h00-18h30 Farewell drink

Organised and supported by

Austro-French Centre for Rapprochement in Europe (CFA), Vienna
Centre international de formation européenne (CIFE), Nice/Berlin
Institute for development and international relations (IRMO), Zagreb
Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Office in Zagreb (FES)
Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Dialog Südosteuropa, Sarajevo (SOE)

French Institute for International Relations (Ifri), Paris
Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), Rome
Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW), Warsaw
Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP), Brussels
Cooperation and Development Institute (CDI), Tirana
Centre for European Perspective (CEP), Loka pri Mengšu
Polish Institute for International Affairs (PISM), Warsaw

Europe House Zagreb
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Croatia
Austrian Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia
Federal Foreign Office of Germany (tbc)
Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of France (tbc)

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Context and objectives

After years off the radar, the Western Balkans seem to have found their way 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 illustrate a frail impetus given by the EU to its enlargement policy. The new dynamic that may indeed be emerging builds on five years of Berlin process, an intergovernmental initiative launched in 2014 to achieve “additional real progress” in the Western Balkans’ reform processes, improve regional cooperation, stimulate connectivity, and thereby reinvigorate European integration. After Berlin, Vienna, Paris, Trieste and London, a new Western Balkans Summit will take place in this framework in Poznań, next July.

Accession, for some countries of the region, may be in sight. But it is barely in reach, at least in the years to come, and has become more and more unpredictable. The EU’s reform agenda prioritising the EU’s deepening over its widening, shifting political and institutional dynamics, ongoing debates about the future of Europe, MFF negotiations, Brexit and other internal affairs following the European elections of May 2019 will continue to capture the attention of the member states and EU institutions. In the meantime, illiberal non-Western powers will continue to gain ground in the region. How to maintain the Western Balkans’ accession perspectives on the agenda of the EU in this changing context? How to make the EU’s approach to enlargement more credible when Union itself seems uncertain about its future?

This will be all the more difficult since progress in the region remains hesitant at best, in terms of democracy, good governance, reconciliation, economic development or good neighbourly relations. The resolution of the name dispute between Greece and North Macedonia should not distract from the grim realities. Ethnopolitics remain dominant in most political arenas and citizens’ trust in the EU’s transformative power is not cast in stone. So, how to make the EU’s approach more effective? How to make a better use of existing frameworks and instruments?

Organised in the framework of the **Western Balkans Reflection Forum initiative**, this event will take place a few months after the EU Summit of Sibiu, the European elections of May 2019 and the Western Balkans Summit of Poznań of July 2019. It will also take place on the day following an important Council meeting, as well as in the run-up to the Croatian Presidency of the Council (1st half of 2020) and next EU-Western Balkan Summit.

The discussion will follow up on the most recent developments in EU-Western Balkans relations and discuss the European perspectives of the Western Balkans in the current European context, with a strong forward-looking focus on the role the Berlin Process.

- How to keep Western Balkans’ accession on the agenda of the EU?
- How to make the EU’s approach towards the Western Balkans both more effective (in terms of democratic transformation and reconciliation in particular) and more credible?
- How can the Berlin Process contribute to the enlargement policy of the EU? What is its distinctive feature and value-added?
- How does it relate to other intergovernmental initiatives (e.g. the Franco-German initiative of April/July 2019)?
- What has been achieved in Poznań? What can we expect from the next Western Balkans Summit? And what will be the future of the Berlin Process thereafter?

Discussion Format

The Public Discussion will foster an interactive exchange of views between high-ranking personalities from EU and Western Balkans' capitals, international experts and the public. The expert discussion will be open to participants upon invitation only and Chatham House rules will apply. Ca. 20 experts and researchers & a dozen of MFA representatives from the EU as well as the Western Balkans will be invited to participate in an interactive discussion moderated by the organisers (hollow square setting). There will be no ex cathedra presentations. The format will foster a discussion between think-tankers and official representatives and set the basis for the elaboration of a reflection paper on the future of the Berlin Process.

Programme (working language: English)

11h00-13h00 Public Discussion @ Europe House Zagreb

The Western Balkans in the European Union... (Un)ambiguous commitment, (in)effective transformation?

This public event will take place on the day following an important Council meeting. It will discuss the enlargement policy in light of the most recent developments in the EU (Brexit, European elections, new Commission, European Council decisions, EU reform agenda, Berlin Process, etc.), in the Western Balkans (Prespa Agreement, Serbia-Kosovo dialogue, etc.), as well as the international context (China's economic diplomacy, Russia's re-engagement, etc.). It will focus on the following question: how credible is the enlargement policy today? How to talk about enlargement and why does it remain important? The format will foster interactive discussions with the audience.

11h00 Welcome

Türkan Karakurt, Director, Friedrich-Ebert -Foundation Zagreb

Ognian Zlatev, Head of the Representation of the European Commission to Croatia (tbc)

11h15 Opening Keynote

Zdravka Bušić, State Secretary for Political Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Croatia

11h25 Keynote discussion

Nikola Dimitrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of North Macedonia (tbc)

Ekaterina Zaharieva, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria (tbc)

Moderation: Florent Marciacq, Deputy Secretary General, Austro-French Centre for Rapprochement in Europe; Senior Fellow, Centre international de formation européenne

11h55 Panel Discussion

Christophe Hillion, Research professor, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, Oslo; Professor, Universities of Leiden & Gothenburg

Krisela Hackaj, Director, Cooperation and Development Institute, Tirana

Valery Perry, Researcher, Democratization Policy Council

Vedran Dzihic, Senior Researcher, Austrian Institute for International Politics, Vienna

Moderation: Senada Selo-Sabic, Senior research associate, Institute for Development and International Relations

11h50 Concluding remarks

N.N. Representative of the German Federal Foreign Office, Berlin

13h00 End of the public event followed by a **Reception**

14h00-18h00 Working Sessions @ Europe House Zagreb (upon invitation only)
After the Summit of Poznań: What role for the Berlin Process?

Participants ca. 30 discussants:

- Ca. 20 experts and policy experts from several EU Member States and the Western Balkans (attention to be paid to gender-balance and geographical coverage) – see the list below;
- Ca. 10 representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from EU Member States; Representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from the Western Balkans, other officials and selected personalities

14h00 Opening

Felix Henkel, Head of the Office of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Dialogue Southeast Europe, Sarajevo

Karl Prummer, Deputy Director, Department for Southeast Europe and EU enlargement, Federal Ministry of Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs, Vienna

14h10 Keynote speech - the Berlin Process in the aftermath of the Poznań Summit

Beata Prądyńska, Deputy Director, European Policy Department, Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Warsaw (tbc)

14h30: An outside-in look at the Berlin Process

What can the Berlin Process do to keep enlargement on the EU agenda?

This discussion round will focus on the intersection between the Berlin Process and the enlargement policy against the backdrop of mounting challenges (strategic screening). It will discuss the actual and potential contributions of the Berlin Process to advancing the accession perspectives of the Western Balkans, e.g. with respect to regional cooperation and connectivity but also reconciliation, democratic transformation and external actors' growing engagement.

Moderation: Florent Marciacq, Deputy Secretary General, Austro-French Centre for Rapprochement in Europe; Senior Fellow, Centre international de formation européenne

15h55: Networking coffee break

16h25: An inside-out look at the Berlin Process:

What should the Berlin Process become after Poznań?

This discussion round will focus on the internal dynamics of the Berlin Process, its functioning and strategic development. It will discuss the approaches of the participating countries towards enlargement, their views on the future of the Berlin Process, the role of European institutions and explore its internal strengths and weaknesses.

Moderation: André De Munter, Policy Analyst Western Balkans & Turkey, European Parliament

17h50: Concluding remarks ahead of the 2020 Berlin Process Summit

N.N., Representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria

18h00-18h30: Farewell drink and end of the programme

(working language: English)

Confirmed participants - Working Sessions

Austria	Dzihic	Vedran	Senior Researcher
	Prummer	Karl	MFA Austria
Albania	Hackaj	Krisela	Cooperation and Development Institute
	N.N.	N.N.	MFA Albania
Belgium	Reljic	Dusan	SWP Brussels
Bosnia-Herzegovina	Cerimagic	Adnan	European Stability Initiative
	Sahovic	Almir	MFA Bosnia-Herzegovina
Bulgaria	N.N.	N.N.	MFA Bulgaria
	Kyuchukov	Lyubomir	Economics and International Relations Institute
Council of Europe	Flessenkemper	Tobias	Council of Europe office in Belgrade
Croatia	Jovic	Dejan	University of Zagreb
	Cepo	Dario	University of Zagreb
	Petricusic	Antonija	Faculty of Law
	Vidacak	Igor	Faculty of Political Science
	Selo-Sabic	Senada	Institute for Development and International Relations
	Karakurt	Türkan	FES Croatia
	N.N.	N.N.	MFA Croatia
EU institutions	De Munter	André	European Parliament
	Kowalski	Wojciech	European Commission (DG NEAR D)
France	Marciacq	Florent	Austro-French Centre for Rapprochement in Europe
Germany	Radunovic	Filip	Open Regional Funds for South-East Europe GIZ
	Végh	Zsuzsanna	European University Viadrina
	Perry	Valery	OSCE
	N.N.	N.N.	MFA Germany
Hungary	N.N.	N.N.	MFA Hungary
Italy	Poli	Eleonora	Istituto Affari Internazionali
	Bonomi	Matteo	Istituto Affari Internazionali
	N.N.	N.N.	MFA Italy
Kosovo	Shasha	Demush	European Policy Institute of Kosovo
	Sadiku	Valdet	MFA Kosovo
Montenegro	Muk	Stevo	Institute Alternative
	N.N.	N.N.	MFA Montenegro

North Macedonia	Petkovski	Ljupcho	Eurothink
	Jaceva	Beti	MFA North Macedonia
Norway	Hillion	Christophe	Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, Oslo; Universities of Leiden & Gothenburg
Poland	Szpala	Marta	OSW
	Muś	Jan	Institute of Central Europe
	Żornaczuk	Tomasz	PISM
	Prądyńska	Beata	MFA Poland
Regional institutions	Shytaj	Jorida	Regional Cooperation Council
	N.N.	N.N.	RYCO
Romania	Butnaru-Troncotă	Miruna	National University of Political Science and Public Administration (SNSPA)
	Barta	Antoaneta	MFA Romania
Slovenia	Boštjančič Pulko	Ivana	Centre for European Perspectives
	Kastelec	Amela	MFA Slovenia
	Grk	Peter	MFA Slovenia, Bled Security Forum
Serbia	Jankovic	Pavle	MFA Serbia
	Štiplija	Nemanja	European Western Balkans
	Lazarevic	Milena	European Policy Centre
United Kingdom	Bassuener	Kurt	Democratization Policy Council
	N.N.	N.N.	FCO