

**Youth Workshop & Public Discussion organised in the framework of the
Western Balkans Reflection Forum initiative**

The Western Balkans Discuss the Future of Europe!

**Widening versus Deepening:
a dilemma for the European Union and the Western Balkans?**

24-25 September 2019, Tirana, Hotel Rogner

Organised and supported by

Austro-French Centre for Rapprochement in Europe (CFA), Vienna
Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Dialog Südosteuropa (FES-SOE), Sarajevo
EU Policy Hub, Tirana

Centre international de formation européenne (CIFE), Nice/Berlin
French Institute for International Relations (Ifri), Paris
Centre for European Perspective (CEP), Ljubljana
Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW), Warsaw
Institute for development and international relations (IRMO), Zagreb
Cooperation and Development Institute (CDI), Tirana

Coordination

Florent Marciacq, florent.marciacq@oefz.at
Denis Piplaş, denis.piplas@fes-soe.org
Mariola Qesaraku, mariola.qesaraku@fes-tirana.org
Besnik Baka, info@eupolicyhub.eu

Context and objectives

In the past ten years, the European Union (EU) has *peu ou prou* faced a long list of serious challenges, both internal and external: the international and European debt crisis, the outbreak of war in its neighbourhoods, the erosion of its transformative power, the refugee and migration crisis, the rise of Euroscepticism, the British vote to exit the EU, the election of Donald Trump, the rise of China's economic diplomacy, the return of Russia on the European stage, etc...

Understandingly, the need to swiftly react to a changing environment, to improvise contingency plans and mitigate tensions among the member states has strained the advancement of a more robust strategic vision. While a new reflection on the future of Europe has been initiated with the publication of the EU's White Paper on the Future of Europe in March 2017, followed by President Macron's speeches in Athens, La Sorbonne, Strasbourg and Aix-la-Chapelle, much remains to be done to rediscover the reasons underlying the European integration process in the first place, rejuvenate the European project and make it again a higher source of inspiration for the citizens of Europe.

In cooperation with and with the support of

There could not be better timing for this reflection to be intensified. The future budget of the EU (MFF 2021-2027) is being finalised; European elections have taken place in 2019; top positions have been redistributed in EU institutions; the Sibiu Summit has followed upon the 2017 White Paper on the Future of Europe; a new Strategic Agenda has been outlined for 2019-2024; and further challenges, both internal and external, will continue to remain high on the agenda of the EU (Brexit, Euroscepticism, external powers' (re)engagement in the EU's closest neighbourhoods, etc.).

The Western Balkans should participate in, and contribute to, this reflection on the future of Europe. This reflection, after all, is about the Union they strive for joining. But beyond the need to think their future in the same light as the future of the EU, their participation in this reflection is important to build a shared sense of belonging across the region and beyond; to increase the joint ownership of the European integration project and give Western Balkans citizens the opportunity to mobilise and engage in discussions that transcend ethnonational lines. This inclusion in discussions that are broader than the those dominating WB national politics and EU enlargement policy frameworks is key to anchor the community of purpose linking the EU and the WB. It should also be made explicit as such within the EU as well. That will be the aim of the Tirana event, organised on 24-25 September 2019 in the framework of the **Western Balkans Reflection Forum initiative**, in support of the Berlin Process and as part of the “the Western Balkans Discuss Europe” series.

Discussion framework of the Tirana event

After a decade of dormancy, the “widening vs. deepening” debate appears to have regained ground in EU politics. Unlike internal reforms, which have continuously stayed high on the agenda in the past decade (the stillborn EU Constitutional Treaty, institutional reforms, EMU reform plans, CSDP & PESCO, energy policy, migration policy, etc.), enlargement gradually disappeared from the EU radar in the 2010s, despite the EU accession of Croatia in 2013. The marginalisation of the EU's logic of “widening” relative to its internal reform agenda was signalled without ambiguity in the EU enlargement strategy of February 2018, positing that “the Union must be stronger and more solid, before it can be bigger” and it has been made explicit repeatedly by President Macron and others ever since. The enlargement fatigue, the erosion of the EU's transformative power as well as mounting internal challenges in the EU and Brexit have fuelled this debate with renewed momentum. But its implications for the Western Balkans are ambiguous.

How should the Western Balkans react to the shift in the EU's focus on deepening rather than widening? How will a deeper integration of the EU affect the enlargement policy and Western Balkans' prospects of legal, political and economic convergence? Will a stronger, more solid European Union be more inclined, ultimately, to enlargement? Will it become stricter, more risk-averse, more confident of its international responsibility? Can the deepening of the EU boost the transformation of the Western Balkans? Can the EU's invoked reform agenda give a new impetus to the Western Balkans' own transformation? In which policy fields can the Western Balkans benefit from a more integrated EU? How should the Western Balkans engage with the different views held by EU Member States in the widening vs. deepening debate. What use can the Western Balkans do of differentiated integration plans? What contribution can their accession process make to the deepening of the EU?

24 September 2019: “World Café” Workshop

with young & engaged participants and upon invitation only

16h45: Networking Drink and Registration @ Hotel Rogner, Tirana

17h00: Introduction

Stine Klapper, Head of the Office of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Tirana

Dorian Jano, Director of the EU Policy Hub, Tirana

17h15: Group discussions (2 rounds, 45 minutes each, 2 x 10 participants), facilitated by:

Eleni Sourani, Ambassador of Greece in Albania (tbc)

Florent Marciacq, Deputy Secretary General, Austro-French Centre for Rapprochement in

Europe, Vienna; Senior Fellow, Centre international de formation européenne

Meliha Muherina, Project Manager, Center for European Perspective, Ljubljana

Jasmin Hasic, Assistant Professor, International University of Sarajevo

18h45: **Concluding remarks** by the Rapporteur

Stela Suloti, Researcher, EU Policy Hub, Tirana

19h00: End of the workshop

25 September 2019: Public discussion: Widening versus Deepening: a dilemma for the European Union and the Western Balkans?

10h15 Registration @ Hotel Rogner, Tirana

10h30 Opening

Stine Klapper, Head of the Office of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Tirana

Dorian Jano, Director of the EU Policy Hub, Tirana

10h40 Keynote speech

Luigi Soreca, Head of the Delegation of the European Union in Tirana

10h50 Panel Discussion

Christina Vasak, Ambassador of France to Albania

Meliha Muherina, Project Manager, Center for European Perspective, Ljubljana

Peter Zingraf, Ambassador of Germany to Albania

Adnan Cerimagic, Analyst, European Stability Initiative, Sarajevo

Karol Bachura, Ambassador of Poland to Albania

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

12h20 Concluding remarks by the Rapporteur of the World Café Workshop

Arnisa Tepelja, Researcher, EU Policy Hub, Tirana

12h30 End of the discussion followed by refreshments and a light buffet

The Public Discussion will be held in English, Albanian and French with simultaneous translation