

**Roundtable organised in framework of the
Austrian Presidency of the Council of the European Union**

The European Union, Albania and the Western Balkans: Making enlargement a more credible process

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

7 November 2018, 1600-18h00

European University of Tirana, Bulevardi Gjergj Fishta Nd. 70, Tirana

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?

The stakes are high for the countries of the region and Albania in particular. In June, the European Council recognised that the country had made steady progress in key areas of governance and suggested that accession negotiations could start next year. What can Albanian citizens expect from this step forwards? How much intertwined are their European perspectives with the political, social and economic situation of their neighbours?

This roundtable, 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 open an interactive discussion between key experts from the EU and WB6 on the one side and students, researchers and citizens of Albania on the other side. The roundtable 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.

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16h00 *Welcome and Keynotes*

- Adrian CIVICI, President of the European University of Tirana
- Florent MARCIACQ, Deputy Secretary General and Research Fellow, Austro-French Centre for Rapprochement in Europe (CFA/ÖFZ), Vienna
- Johann SATTLER, Ambassador of Austria to the Republic of Albania (tbc)
- Sokol DEDJA, Director of the European Union Department, Ministry for European and Foreign Affairs, Tirana

16h30 *Debate*

- Đuro BLANUŠA, Secretary General of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO), Tirana
- Matteo BONOMI, Researcher, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), Rome
- Susanne SCHÜTZ, Ambassador of Germany to the Republic of Albania (tbc)
- Marta SZPALA, Senior Fellow, Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW), Warsaw
- Christina VASAK, Ambassador of France to the Republic of Albania (tbc)

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

17h50 *Concluding remarks*

- Miruna TRONCOTĂ, Lecturer and Researcher, National School of Political Science and Public Administration, Bucharest

18h00 *End of the event followed by refreshments*

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