

# NEW WIND IN EUROPE'S WESTERN BALKAN POLICY? *Shaping the Meantime to Accession by Regional Initiatives?*

**22-24 November 2024**

**Protestant Academy Loccum**

The development in the Western Balkan countries has been difficult in the past years: Despite of the "Zeitenwende", the EU enlargement process looks still stuck. At the same time, the countries are facing a multitude of challenges, ranging from economic development, political instability and democratic backsliding, emigration, and the meddling of external authoritarian actors, to the repercussion of climate change and environmental pollution. Against this backdrop the EU has started several processes and policy initiatives to tackle these issues and at the same time to support the countries of the region in the accession process for enlargement. These platforms and policies like the Berlin Process, the Economic and Investment Plan, the Green Agenda or the Growth Plan are stressed to be not an alternative, but rather a support for enlargement policy.

This event will take a look at the challenges the Western Balkans are currently facing and discuss in how far the EU's engagement in the region besides the enlargement process has the potential to both tackle the region's challenges as well as to support enlargement.

This conference follows the Chatham House Rule. It is a joint project of the Southeast Europe Association (SOG), the German Eastern Business Association and the Protestant Academy Loccum. The working language will be English.

## DAY I

**Friday, 22 November 2024**

13:30 Arrival and Check-in

14:45 **Words of Welcome**

**Anja QUIRING**, Regional Director South Eastern Europe, German Eastern Business Association, Berlin

**Christian HAGEMANN**, Executive Director, Southeast Europe Association, Munich

**Thomas MÜLLER-FÄRBER**, Protestant Academy Loccum

15:00 Cake & Coffee

\* invited

\*\* preliminary confirmation

15:30 **INTRO TALK 1 | What are the Most Crucial Trends Shaping the Western Balkans – Today and Tomorrow?**

What are key questions that need to be addressed when debating trends and developments in the Western Balkans? What are the main challenges for the current and future development of the Western Balkans? What opportunities for further progress and greater Europeanisation have been missed in the past? Are there future opportunities emerging that should be prevented from being missed again?

TBC

16:30 Coffee and Tea

16:45 **PANEL DISCUSSION | The European Union and the Western Balkans – Between Geopolitical Necessities, Bilateral Disputes and Democratic Backsliding**

After Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the European Union and especially the German government have highlighted the importance of speeding up the Western Balkan countries' EU accession process. Nevertheless, bilateral conflicts continue to hamper their way forward, limiting the EU's leverage and the meritocratic character of the process. In contrast, the region has rather seen a continuation of democratic backsliding, making it ever more unlikely to join the EU soon. The panel will discuss the current main stumbling blocks for accession and take a look at both the candidate countries' as well as the EU's "homework" that needs to be done to re-energize the accession process.

**Eric NELSON**, U.S. Ambassador in Residence, George C. Marshall Centre, Garmisch-Partenkirchen

**Viola von CRAMON**, Western Balkan-Expert and former Member of the European Parliament, Göttingen

**Niels von REDECKER**, Head of the Department on Western Balkans, German Federal Foreign Office, Berlin

**René TROCCAZ**, Special Envoy for the Western Balkans, French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Paris

Moderation: **Michael MARTENS**, Journalist, Southeast Europe Correspondent, FAZ (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung), Frankfurt a.M./Vienna

18:30 Dinner

19:30 **LITERATURE SALON | Inside-Outside-Relation – A Textual Deciphering Exercise**

\* invited

\*\* preliminary confirmation

Book presentation "Ankommen" by **Vedran DZIHIC**, Senior Research at the Austrian Institute for International Affairs (oiip), lecture at the University of Vienna and non-resident Senior Fellow at the Center for Transatlantic Relations, Vienna

Moderation: **Adelheid FEILCKE**, Director of Programmes for Europe, Deutsche Welle, Bonn

21:00 Informel Get Together

## DAY II

### Saturday, 23 November 2024

08:15 Invitation to the morning service

08:30 Breakfast

09:15 **CHALLENGES IN THE WB6 (PART 1) | Creating Economic Growth: A Perspective on Youth, Gender and Emigration**

The Western Balkans still have a long way to go before catching-up economically with the EU average. Nevertheless, the successful economic development of the region is important not only to improve the lives of citizens but also to be able to join the EU's common market and become member states. This panel looks at different threats to this goal resulting from aspects like emigration of qualified people or low labour market participation rates of women and young people.

**Christoph BEECK**, Board Member, ProCredit Bank, Frankfurt a. Main

**Umur GOKCE**, Economic Advisor, Southeast Europe Division, Global Relations Secretariat, OECD, Paris

**Nora HASANI**, Managing Director, German-Kosovar Business Association (OEGJK-KDWW), Pristina

**René SCHLEE**, Director of the FES Office for Regional Dialogue, Sarajevo\*

Moderation: **Anja QUIRING**, Regional Director South-Eastern Europe, German Eastern Business Association, Berlin

10:45 Coffee & Tea

11:00 **CHALLENGES IN THE WB6 (PART 2) | Climate Change and Sustainable Economic Development**

\* invited

\*\* preliminary confirmation

The Western Balkans are as a region extraordinarily exposed to the effects of the climate change. The region is suffering already now from high temperatures and natural disasters. While the countries of the region suffer from the direct repercussions of global warming, they also experience direct effects of the region's often outdated energy infrastructure and dirty industries in the form of polluted air and threats to citizens' health. The topics looked at in this panel are thus relevant from a perspective of climate change adaptation, environmental protection, public health as well as economic development.

**Verena ALLERT**, Senior Advisor, Energy Transition Collaboration Western Balkans, Germanwatch, Berlin

**Vladimir ĐURĐEVIC**, Professor at Institute of Meteorology, Faculty of Physics, Belgrade

**Aleksandra TOMANIC**, Executive Director, European Fund for the Balkans, Belgrade

Moderation: tbc

12:30 Lunch

14:00 **INTRO TALK 2 | Mapping of the EU Policy Landscape in the Western Balkans – What is new, what is specific, where are overlaps?**

The second keynote will give an overview of the most important EU policies for the Western Balkans of the past years apart from the enlargement process. It will shed a light on their development, existing overlaps (especially when it comes to budgets) and their state of implementation.

**Adnan CERIMAGIC**, Senior Analyst, European Stability Initiative, Berlin

15:00 Cake and Coffee

### **IDEA WORKSHOP | Regional Policy Initiatives – The Go-To for Shaping the Meantime Until EU Accession?**

Against the background of the difficulties in the EU accession process for the Western Balkan countries, this ideas workshop will scrutinize the policy initiatives of the EU and its Member States that are trying to have an impact in the region in different areas and with different approaches. Particular attention will be paid to the Berlin Process, the Economic and Investment Plan / the EU's Green Agenda, and the New Growth Plan. Using the thesis paper method and elements of pre-conference polling among participants, this interactive part of the conference aims to assess what impact these European policy initiatives towards the Western Balkans can have, what difficulties and obstacles arise, and where there are opportunities for improvement. The timing of this discussion is favorable. The new legislature of the European Parliament, which has just started, and the new EU Commission, which is taking office, offer opportunities to set a new course in Western Balkans policy.

\* invited

\*\* preliminary confirmation

### IDEA GROUP 1 The Berlin Process

**Klodjan SEFERAJ**, Programme Manager, Open Society Foundation Western Balkans, Tirana

**Florent MARCIACQ**, Deputy Secretary-General, Austro-French Centre for Rapprochement in Europe, Vienna/Paris

**Marika DJOLAI**, Researcher and Policy Analyst, BiEPAG (Balkans in Europe Policy Advisory Group), London

**Silvana MOJSOVSKA**, Professor at the Institute of Economics, Skopje University, Skopje

### IDEA GROUP 2 The Green Agenda and the Economic and Investment Plan

**Ivana Markovic BOSKOVIC**, Senior Expert on Green Agenda, Regional Cooperation Council, Sarajevo\*

**Agron DEMI**, Director, Balkan Green Foundation (BGF), Pristina

**Katja GIEBEL**, Senior Programme Officer East and Southeast Europe Division, Heinrich Böll Foundation, Berlin\*

**Friederike WENKEL**, Policy Officer, European Climate Policy, German Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Protection (BMWK), Berlin

### IDEA GROUP 3 The New Growth Plan

**Ardian HACKAJ**, Research Director and Coordinator of the Tirana Connectivity Forum, Cooperation and Development Institute (CDI), Tirana

**Milica UVALIC**, Visiting Fellow, Robert Schumann Centre for Advanced Studies, European University Institute (EUI), Florence

**Stefan RISTOVSKI**, Senior Researcher, European Policy Institute, Skopje

**Valbona ZENELI**, Senior Fellow at Europe Center and Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security, Atlantic Council of the United States. Visiting Scholar at the Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies, Harvard University

- 15:30 **PART 1 | Introduction into the Workshop** (in plenary mode)  
What's the Method and the Procedure? What is the Envisioned Outcome? Why were exactly these three regional policy Initiatives selected? How to split up the participants in three different breakout groups?
- 15:45 **PART 2 | Presentation of Thesis Papers & Comments**  
We will start the workshop phase with focused presentations of the theses papers (approx. 15 Minutes each). These will be commented on and discussed by the working group.

\* invited

\*\* preliminary confirmation

17:15 Coffee and Tea Break

17:30 **PART 3 | Collective Writing Phase**

Based on the discussion of the theses papers the groups will enter into collective writing exercise trying to pen innovative policy ideas related to the regional policy initiatives.

18:30 Dinner

19:30 Idea Workshop

## DAY III

**Sunday, 24 November 2024**

08:15 Invitation to the morning service

08:30 Breakfast

09:30 **PART 6 | Presentation and Discussion of the Idea Workshop Findings** (in plenary)

10:30 Coffee and Tea

10:45 **CONCLUDING PANEL | What's Next for the EU's Policy towards the Western Balkans?**

What is needed to make the EU more confident and upfront? What's the best mixture of positive incentives and negative conditionality? And how to arrive at a transformative geopolitical approach of enlargement without losing sights of the EU's values and core procedures?

**David McALLISTER**, Member of European Parliament (Christian Democrats), Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Brussels/Bad Bederkesa

**Marta STACHOWIAK**, Director, Department for European Union External Policy, Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Warsaw

**Anja WALLAU**, Director for EU Basic Policy Issues, German Foreign Office (E-B-1), Berlin\*

Moderation: **Adelheid WÖLFL**, South-Eastern Europe Correspondent, Der Standard, Sarajevo

12:30 Farewell Lunch

12:50 Bus Shuttle to Wunstorf train station

\* invited

\*\* preliminary confirmation

THIS CONFERENCE IS FUNDED BY:



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**Brot** mit Mitteln des  
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