



Enlargement in perspective: how do candidate and potential candidate countries perceive accession in the light of the current crisis?

Brussels, 6 March 2013, European Parliament

15.00 Welcome

Maria Eleni Koppa, MEP, Rapporteur on Enlargement

Opening remarks

Štefan Füle, Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy

Jan Marinus Wiersma, Netherlands Institute of International Relations - Clingendael

Othon Anastasakis, Director of the South East European Studies at Oxford University

15.40-16.40 Panel I

Accession from the candidate/potential candidate state perspective

Moderator: **Maria Eleni Koppa**

At the turn of the millennium, a clear European perspective was offered to the Western Balkans countries and recognised by the EU as a way of aiding necessary reform processes and stabilising the region. At the same time, Turkey received the status of candidate country and in 2005 accession negotiations started. A different degree of progress has been achieved in single countries: Croatia is expected to join the Union in a few months, Montenegro has started negotiating EU membership, and Serbia is now a candidate country. In most of the cases, however, the pace of reform lagged behind expectations, largely owing to the legacy of conflicts from the 1990s, whilst negative results in the 2005 Dutch and French referendums signalled increasing unease with the EU integration process amongst Europeans. From that point onwards the accession process began experiencing shifts in ambitions, toughening of accession criteria and a generally less enthusiastic approach to aspiring members. The financial and economic crisis served as a reason for further doubts.

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Conference – Enlargement in Perspective | 6 March 2013

For more analysis: [EU Enlargement Anno 2012](#) published by the Foundation for European Progressive Studies and the European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity (November 2012).

Against this backdrop, this panel would like to highlight the following questions:

- *How the EU enlargement accession process is currently perceived amongst citizens in the Western Balkans and Turkey?*
- *What is the impact of the EU's economic and political crisis on the aspirant countries? How has it influenced people's aspiration to join the EU? Has the EU maybe lost its attractiveness?*
- *To what extent do the increased influences of other actors (such as Russia or China) have an impact on the integration process in the (potential) candidate countries?*
- *Is a different kind of relationship with the EU, other than full accession, a desirable alternative for Turkey? Would this be beneficial to both parties?*
- *What lessons can be learned from that for the future EU enlargement process, on the EU side as well as on the aspirant countries' side?*
- *What does civil society expect from policy makers in the EU and in their own country in order to speed up the process?*

Inputs by:

Maja Bobic, Secretary General of European Movement (Serbia)

Krenar Gashi, Executive Director, Institute for Development Policy (Kosovo)

Milos Solaya, Director Center for International relations and Professor for Political Sciences at University of Banja Luka (BiH)

Daliborka Uljarevic, executive director, Centre for Civic Education (Montenegro)

Karolina Leakovic, Novo Drustvo (Croatia)

Burhan Senatalar, Professor in Economics at the Bilgi University (Turkey)

16.40- 17.40 Panel II

The Social dimension of Enlargement: the role of civil society and Trade Union networks

Moderator: **Conny Reuter** (Secretary General, SOLIDAR)

The European enlargement process sets forth strong reform requirements for the countries in the Western Balkans, in order to align with the EU social acquis. These are challenging demands, even more so nowadays with the financial and economic crisis worsening the already difficult social and economic conditions. Collectively addressing labour and socio-economic rights in the Western Balkans countries is an important pre-condition for continued social consolidation and social convergence on the path to EU integration, and civil society

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and trade unions have to work together to tackle the increasing informal sector representing more than 30% of the total economies, high unemployment rates rising above 20%, lacking political endurance to reinforce the implementation of reforms and weak capacities to enforce legislation and control mechanisms.

For more analysis: [Making the System Work](#) developed by SOLIDAR (Belgium), Olof Palme International Center (Sweden), AGENDA Institute (Albania), Center for Democracy Foundation (Serbia), CLARD (Kosovo¹) and the Progress Institute for Social Democracy (FYROMacedonia) (January 2012).

Against this backdrop, this panel would like to highlight the following questions:

- *What are key priority aspects within the Western Balkans and Turkey related to the EU social acquis that would demand immediate attention within the accession negotiations?*
- *How could civil society and trade unions develop common initiatives to promote social cohesion, active inclusion, decent work and quality employment and what specific issues should be highlighted?*

Grigor Gradev, Executive Secretary, International Trade Union Confederation and researcher of the European Trade Union Institute

Cveto Stantič, Member of the European Economic and Social Committee Group I, President of the Western Balkans Contact Group

Bruno Sergi, Professor of International Economics (University of Messina), SEE Trade Union economists' Network

Dragan Tevdovski, Assistant Professor at Faculty of Economics, University "Sts. Cyril and Methodius" (FYROM)

Gjergji Filipi, Research Director AGENDA Institute (Albania)

Roland Feicht, Director, Regional Project for Labour Relations and Social Dialogue in South East Europe, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung

17.40-18.30

Discussion, questions & answers

With the presence of **Hannes Swoboda**, President of the Socialists and Democrats Group in the European Parliament

Closing Remarks by **Maria Eleni Koppa**

Working language: English

¹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSC 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence