



INCLUDE THE WESTERN BALKAN COUNTRIES IN THE EU AS FULL MEMBERS - INCLUDE CLOSED-DOOR POLICY DIALOGUE

FROM NEGOTIATIONS TO ACCESSION: DELIVERING EU MEMBERSHIP FOR ALBANIA AND MONTENEGRO

Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)
Via dei Montecatini, 17
Rome

30 January 2026
10.30 - 12.30



Working language: English

The European Union's enlargement policy is entering a moment of truth. Albania and Montenegro are advancing rapidly through the accession process and have set a clear and explicit ambition: to close all negotiating chapters and move toward the signature of their accession treaties in the coming years. This objective is no longer aspirational, but increasingly realistic, placing both countries — and the EU itself — before a decisive political test. Delivering on this ambition is essential to restore trust in enlargement as a credible and strategic policy. As negotiations approach their final stretch, the key challenge is to sustain political momentum and prevent technical or bilateral obstacles from slowing the process. Completing accession will require determined political leadership, institutional readiness, and sustained backing from pro-enlargement member states, as well as a clear political signal from the EU that enlargement remains a strategic priority. Failure at this stage would not only delay accession, but risk seriously weakening the EU's leverage and credibility in the Western Balkans. To take stock of this decisive phase and discuss how the closure of negotiations and accession can be effectively delivered, the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) and the Open Society Foundations – Western Balkans (OSF-WB) will host a closed-door policy dialogue in Rome on 30 January 2026, marking the launch of the InCLUDE initiative. The event will be held under the Chatham House Rule.



AGENDA

10:00-10:30	Welcome coffee
10:30-10:45	Welcome and Introduction MICHELE VALENSISE President, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)
	MIODRAG MILOSAVLJEVIĆ Deputy Director, Open Society Foundations Western Balkans (OSF WB)
	NATHALIE TOCCI Director, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)
10:45-12:30	Key Note Speeches ADEA PIRDENI Minister of State for Public Administration and Anticorruption, Albanian Government Council of Ministers
	PREDRAG ZENOVIC Montenegro's Chief Negotiator for EU accession
	Input and Discussion ALL PARTICIPANTS
	<i>Chair</i> MATTEO BONOMI Senior Fellow, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)
12:30	End of the meeting