

Conference

PREPARING FOR ENLARGEMENT: THE EU AND WESTERN BALKANS' CONTRIBUTIONS

ROME, 29 MAY 2024
10.00-16.30

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION-ALDO MORO ROOM
PIAZZALE DELLA FARNESINA

The EU and the Western Balkans are in the process of preparing for new EU enlargements. To this end, the EU has just adopted a New Growth Plan for the Western Balkans, that is supposed to increase their participation in the European Single Market. This intermediate step towards EU membership should open new opportunities of economic cooperation for both public and private actors, sustain Western Balkans' internal reforms, as well as accelerate their path towards full integration in the EU. At the same time, the Western Balkans are expected to start contributing more substantially to the economic and geopolitical security of the EU, to deal with increasingly complex regional and global environments. Nonetheless, progresses of the EU enlargement will also remain conditional to the success of EU internal reforms, to make its policies, budget and institutions fit for an enlarged Union.

In this context, the conference serves as an opportunity to discuss several aspects of current EU-Western Balkans cooperation. It aims to increase the understanding of Western Balkans' role and contributions to the EU's wider regional integration system. In particular, the conference will focus on three main sets of issues. The first panel will look at how the Western Balkan countries could benefit more from increased participation in the European Single Market, in light of the measures foreseen in the New Growth Plan for the Western Balkans, proposed by the European Commission. A second panel will examine how the Western Balkans contribute to EU economic and geopolitical security, taking into account the blueprint launched by the Spanish EU Council presidency for achieving an "open strategic autonomy." Finally, the last panel will provide an opportunity for discussion among participants from both the EU and the Western Balkans about their visions for the EU's future, its institutions and policies.

The conference is organized by Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) and the Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso Transeuropa (OBCT), with the support, assistance, and sponsorship of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and under the strategic partnership of the Compagnia di San Paolo Foundation.

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PROGRAMME

9.30-10.00	Registration of participants
10.00-10.15	WELCOME REMARKS RICCARDO GUARIGLIA , Secretary General, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation FERDINANDO NELLI FEROCI , President, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)
10.15-11.45	SESSION I – Accelerating Western Balkans’ integration and reforms: The relevance of the European Single Market <i>The discussion will take stock of the state of play of Western Balkans’ current access to the European Single Market, and examine whether and how this could be upgraded in light of the new approach and measures foreseen by the New Growth Plan for the Western Balkans. The panel will consider how the Western Balkan countries could benefit from an increased participation in the European Single Market and the impact of related reforms on their path towards EU membership. Such a discussion is even more relevant given the release of Enrico Letta’s Report on the Future of the Single Market.</i>
Keynote	NICOLA PONTARA , Country Manager for Serbia, Europe and Central Asia, The World Bank
Speakers	DRAGANA ĐURICA , Secretary General, European Movement in Serbia RICHARD GRIEVESON , Deputy Director, Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies (wiiw) KRISELA HACKAJ , Executive Director, Cooperation and Development Institute (CDI) SZABOLCS HORVÁTH , Member of Cabinet of Commissioner Olivér Várhelyi - Neighbourhood and Enlargement, European Commission ZDRAVKO ILIC , Senior Expert on Services, Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) Secretariat
Moderator	MATTEO BONOMI , Senior fellow, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)
11.45-12.15	<i>Coffee break</i>
12.15-13.45	SESSION II – Enhancing European economic and geopolitical security: Western Balkans’ contribution to EU ‘open’ strategic autonomy <i>The panel aims to examine how the Western Balkans are contributing to EU economic and geopolitical security, as well as to discuss how such a role could be increased in various specific sectors, including energy, critical raw materials, and mechanisms for screening FDI. It will take into account the blueprint launched by the Spanish EU Council presidency for achieving an "open strategic autonomy" by increasing the EU's resilience and competitiveness by 2030.</i>
Keynote	MATTEO COLANGELI , Director, Regional Head of Western Balkans, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)
Speakers	IOANNIS ARMAKOLAS , Associate Professor, University of Macedonia, and Senior Research Fellow & Head of the South-East Europe Programme, Hellenic Foundation for European & Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP)

LISA HOMEL, Associate Director, Europe Center, Atlantic Council

ALEKSANDAR SPASOV, Associate Professor of theoretical legal sciences, “Ss. Cyril and Methodius” University, and former Advisor to the President of the Republic of North Macedonia for Foreign Policy, Domestic Policy and Constitutional Issues

VALBONA ZENELI, Visiting Fellow, European University Institute (EUI), and Senior Fellow, Atlantic Council

Moderator **ANDREA CASCONI**, Adriatic and Balkans Director, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

13.45-14.45 *Buffet lunch*

14.45-16.15 **SESSION III – Preparing EU internal reforms: Shared visions on the EU's future**

The panel will provide an opportunity for discussion among participants from both the EU and Western Balkans about their visions for EU's future, its institutions, budget and policies. It will consider the ambitious goal recently set by the European Council of preparing a roadmap for EU's internal reforms, as well as the wider opportunities and challenges related to the upcoming European Parliament elections and the beginning of a new institutional cycle within the EU.

Keynote **NICOLA VEROLA**, Director General for Europe and International Trade Policy, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

Speakers **CHRISTOPHE HILLION**, Professor, University of Oslo, and Research Professor, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI)
SÉBASTIEN MAILLARD, Special Advisor, Enlargement, Jacques Delors Institute
SRDJAN MAJSTOROVIĆ, Chairman of the Governing Board, European Policy Centre (CEP)
ENGJELLUSHE MORINA, Senior Policy Fellow, European Council on Foreign Relations
NICOLETTA PIROZZI, Head of Programme on European Union and Institutional Relations Manager, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)

Moderator **LUISA CHIODI**, Director, Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso Transeuropa (OBCT)

16.15-16.30 **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

ALESSANDRO DE PEDYS, Director General for Public and Cultural Diplomacy, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation