

Conference

THE EUROPEAN UNION'S QUEST FOR STRATEGIC AUTONOMY IN THE WESTERN BALKANS: POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVES

ROME, 28 JUNE 2022
10.00-13.00

ISTITUTO AFFARI INTERNAZIONALI (IAI)

VIA DEI MONTECATINI, 17

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The future of Europe and of EU enlargement are high on the agenda. They will be discussed on 23-24 June 2022, first at the European Council then at the EU-Western Balkans high-level conference organised under the auspices of the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union. EU leaders will be called upon to take far-reaching decisions not just regarding the requests by Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia for candidate status, but also the pressure from the countries of the Western Balkans to unblock their sclerotic accession process. Most attention so far has focused on the need to give the three Eastern Partnership countries a credible accession perspective; and yet the credibility of that offer depends on the EU's treatment of the six Balkan countries, since they are already on the path from post-conflict reconstruction to membership. Meanwhile, some Western Balkan countries are advancing their own plans for economic integration with each other, raising questions of compatibility and synergies with the region's integration into the EU.

The conference is a joint initiative of the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) and the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP). It will discuss two issues of EU enlargement policy which have implications for the future of Europe as a whole: how enlargement policy relates to the EU's drive for strategic autonomy following Russia's invasion of Ukraine; and the geo-strategic implications of regional economic integration within the Western Balkans.

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PROGRAMME

10.00-10.15	WELCOME REMARKS FERDINANDO NELLI FEROCI , President, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) RODERICK PARKES , Research Director, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik (DGAP); Head, Alfred von Oppenheim Center for European Policy Studies GIULIANA DEL PAPA , Head, Unit for analysis, planning, statistics and historical documentation, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
10.15-11.30	SESSION I – EU accession policy and the EU strategic autonomy debate
<i>Chair and introduction</i>	ZORAN NECHEV , Associate Fellow, Alfred von Oppenheim Center for European Policy Studies, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik (DGAP)
<i>Inputs</i>	VALBONA ZENELI , Professor of national security studies, George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies
<i>Commentators</i>	RENATO QUARTARONE , Adriatic and Balkans Deputy Director, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation CHRISTIANE HULLMANN , Head of Division, Western Balkans, Federal Foreign Office, Germany
	<i>Debate</i>
11.30-11.45	<i>Coffee break</i>
11.45-13.00	SESSION II – Regional cooperation and economic integration of the Western Balkan countries
<i>Chair and introduction</i>	MATTEO BONOMI , Research Fellow, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)
<i>Inputs</i>	RICHARD GRIEVESON , Deputy Director, Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies (wiiw)
<i>Commentators</i>	ODETA BARBULLUSHI , Advisor to the Prime Minister & National Coordinator for Regional Economic Area, Albania PETER GRK , Director, Western Balkans, Foreign Ministry of Slovenia and Secretary-General, Bled Strategic Forum
	<i>Debate</i>
13.00-13.05	CONCLUDING REMARKS