

NEW VISIONS FOR THE WESTERN BALKANS: EU ACCESSION AND REGIONAL SECURITY

3-4 APRIL 2023

SALA CONFERENZE INTERNAZIONALI

ITALIAN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

PIAZZALE DELLA FARNESINA, 1

ROME

Strategic Partner



Fondazione
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di San Paolo

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AGENDA

The EU-Western Balkans integration process is at a crossroads. The Russian invasion of Ukraine makes it imperative for the EU and the Western Balkans to reaffirm their strategic choice for a common European future and to work together to accelerate the enlargement process. The region's progresses towards fundamental reforms and in the processes of intra-regional and European integration today seem the only options to ensure peace, security and prosperity in this part of Europe. However, some problems in the Western Balkans are still outstanding and continue to weigh on the membership prospects of these countries. These obstacles are in particular linked to the still unresolved bilateral disputes, partial compliance with the Copenhagen accession criteria and still limited convergence towards EU's socio-economic and environmental standards.

Against this backdrop, the Western Balkans represent both a challenge and an opportunity for the Italian government. Over the years, Italy has consistently pursued a European agenda for the Western Balkan countries, which has been in line with its strategic national interest for political, economic, and security reasons. Nonetheless, Italy has not always fully exercised its political weight in the European context. While German Chancellor Olaf Scholz has clearly committed to the continuation of the enlargement process and the "Berlin Process", the French President Emmanuel Macron launched the European Political Community. In such a dynamic context, Italy has the potential to play an active role and strive for synthesis among various visions over the future of Europe and the Western Balkans.

*All this considered, the **Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)** and the **Osservatorio Balcani Caucaso Transeuropa (OBCT)**, with the support of the **Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation** and in the framework of the strategic partnership with **Compagnia di San Paolo Foundation**, will host a two-day meeting in Rome to discuss expectations and prospects for the medium-term future of the Balkan region. The meeting will include high-level representatives and policy makers and civil society representatives, both from the region and the EU. The aim is to promote an informal gathering to discuss mutual expectations and develop further concrete initiatives for cooperation between the countries of the region and with EU member countries.*

FIRST DAY - 3 APRIL

14.30-15.00 **REGISTRATION OF PARTICIPANTS**

15.00-15.05 **WELCOMING REMARKS**

Ferdinando Nelli Feroci, President, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)

15.05-15.30 **OPENING ADDRESS**

Antonio Tajani, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Italy

Tobias Billström, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sweden, holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Union

15.30-17.00 **PANEL I: PROMOTING EU-WESTERN BALKANS' INTEGRATION. WHAT FUTURE FOR THE REGION?**

The relations between the EU and the Western Balkans, as well as the prospects for EU accession of the countries in the region, depends on their respective visions of the future. Recently, a number of proposals have emerged in this regard, suggesting different ideas for the future of Europe. Some of such proposals envisage ad hoc measures to accelerate the EU accession of the Western Balkans and "phasing in" their integration process into specific sectors, in line with what foreseen by the European Commission's new enlargement methodology. Others, put forth new formats for these countries' staged EU accession and gradual membership. At the same time, the EU strategic debate has recently witnessed the French President's proposal for the establishment of a European Political Community. In this context, the panel will promote a discussion between relevant actors on the visions of Europe and the Western Balkans.

Chair

Luisa Chiodi, Director, Osservatorio Balcani Caucaso Transeuropa (OBCT)

Perspectives from Sarajevo, Pristina and Skopje

Elmedin Konaković, Minister of Foreign Affairs

Donika Gërvalla-Schwarz, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora

Bujar Osmani, Minister of Foreign Affairs

Panel

Vincenzo Celeste, Director General for Europe and International Trade Policy, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

Daniijela Gacevic, Deputy Director, CEFTA Secretariat

Steven Blockmans, Director of Research, Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS)

Milena Lazarevic, Programme Director, European Policy Centre (CEP)

Simonida Kacarska, Director, European Policy Institute (EPI)

16.40-17.00 Open Debate

17.00-17.30 *Coffee Break*

17.30-19.00 **PANEL II: SUPPORTING REGIONAL COOPERATION AND INTEGRATION AMONG THE WESTERN BALKAN COUNTRIES**

Initiatives to accelerate regional cooperation and integration among Western Balkans are essential to promote the reconciliation, stability, and growth of these countries. Most importantly, regional integration plans offer them the opportunity to engender local ownership and responsibility. In recent years, Western Balkan leaders agreed on two important projects for regional economic integration: the Multi-annual Action Plan on Regional Economic Area 2017– 2019 (REA); and Common Regional Market 2020–2024 (CRM). Such projects have received substantial support from the European Commission, especially through the recent Economic and Investment Plan (EIP). In parallel, new developments have emerged under the so-called “Open Balkans” (OB) initiative which similarly promotes economic and political cooperation in the Western Balkans, but include only Albania, North Macedonia and Serbia. Considering all of this, the panel will promote a discussion among regional actors on whether, and if so how, these plans may foster positive and sustainable transformations.

Chair

MATTEO BONOMI, Senior Fellow, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)

Perspectives from Tirana, Podgorica and Belgrade

OLTA XHAÇKA, Minister of European and Foreign Affairs

DRITAN ABAZOVIĆ, Prime Minister and Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs

IVICA DAČIĆ, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs

Panel

ROBERTO ANTONIONE, Secretary General, Central European Initiative (CEI)

AMER KAPETANOVIC, Head of Political Department, Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)

ALEKSANDRA TOMANIĆ, Executive Director, European Fund for the Balkans (EFB)

MARKO ČADEŽ, President, Managing Board of the Chamber of Commerce of the Western Balkans 6

DALIBORKA ULJAREVIĆ, Executive Director, Centre for Civic Education (CCE)

18.40-19.00 Open Debate

19.00 *Adjourn*

SECOND DAY - 4 APRIL

9.30-10.00 **Registration of Participants**

10.00-11.30 **PANEL III: PROMOTING A JOINT APPROACH TO COMMON SECURITY CHALLENGES IN THE WESTERN BALKANS**

Russia's war on Ukraine has exacerbated security threats throughout Europe, making it imperative for the EU and the Western Balkans to reaffirm their strategic commitment to adopt a joint approach to key security challenges. The latter not only consist of military security, but also of a wide number interrelated issues. Such issues span from energy security and environmental protection to the management of natural disasters, health issues and migration. In line with the EU Global Strategy and EU Strategic Compass, to effectively address such challenges in the coming years, it will be necessary to increase the integration of various security sectors, as well as the policy coordination across Europe.

Chair

NICOLETTA PIROZZI, Head of Programme - EU politics and institutions and Institutional Relations Manager, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)

Perspectives from Brussels

MARKO MAKOVEC, Deputy Managing Director of the European External Action Service

Panel Composition

CATHERINE FEARON, Deputy Director of the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre and Deputy Head, OSCE Secretariat

LAURA LUNGAROTTI, Sub-Regional Coordinator for the Western Balkans and Chief of IOM Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina

ALESSANDRO POLITI, Director, NATO Defence College Foundation

LOREDANA TEODORESCU, Head of the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network

ARDIAN HACKAJ, Research Director and Coordinator of Tirana Connectivity Forum

11.10-11.30 Open Debate

11.30-12.00 **CLOSING REMARKS**

PASQUALE TERRACCIANO, Director General for Public and Cultural Diplomacy, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

12.30 Light Lunch