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Forum Europeum 2022

The Western Balkans and the EU in 2022: what lies ahead?

Date

8 July 2022 (Friday), 09:30 – 14:15

Place and format

- **Hybrid/Holiday Inn Skopje**

Background

2022 has been a tumultuous year for Europe. With war raging at its borders, the European Union has experienced major challenges both internally and its neighbourhood. At the latest EU Council meeting in June 2022, a major shift in EU foreign policy occurred with the approved candidate status for Ukraine and Moldova, thus broadening the pool of candidates for EU accession after almost two decades.

In light of this dramatic shift, the already ongoing debates as to the EU enlargement process have been reinvigorated and have come to the fore. Many proposals have been circulated in recent months, including variants of the idea of a European Political Community and changes of the voting procedures in the Council in foreign policy and enlargement. There is significant pressure both from within and outside of the Union to introduce a more dynamic and gradual process of accession, including through enhanced political cooperation. At the same time the outcomes of the Conference on the Future of Europe are also on the table of the EU institutions in various format.

In these circumstances, however, the Western Balkans region is lingering. The lack of a decision for the start of the accession negotiations with North Macedonia and Albania and the Kosovo visa liberalisation has undermined the credibility of the Union and weakened the societal support for EU accession throughout the region. The regional integration among the six countries is also lagging while most of the movement and joint communication can be seen in the Open Balkans initiative.

With these complex developments in mind, there is a pressing need to ensure continuous dialogue and communication within and between the Western Balkans and the EU at various levels. The aim of the conference in Skopje will be to take stock of ongoing developments and to look into current proposals for reforming the mechanisms of the accession process as well as the broader European architecture.

Building bridges for a common future: Rule of law in view of EU accession





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PROGRAMME

09.30 – 10.00	Registration and welcome
10.00-10.15	<p>Welcoming remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Simonida Kacarska, Director, EPI - Representative of the EU delegation in Skopje (tbd) - Representative of the Secretariat of European Affairs/Ministry of Foreign Affairs (tbd)
10.15-12.00	<p>Panel 1: The Western Balkans and the EU in 2022: taking stock</p> <p>Discussants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Radmila Sekerinska, former deputy prime minister/minister of defense of North Macedonia (tbd) - Gjergji Vurmo, Institute for Democracy and Mediation, Tirana (in person) - Isabelle Ioannides, ELIAMEP, Athens (online) - Corina Stratulat, European Policy Centre, Brussels (online) - Ziga Faktor, Europeum Institute, Prague/Brussels (in person) <p>Questions and answers</p> <p>Moderator: Simonida Kacarska, EPI</p>
12.00 – 12.30	Break
12.30-14.00	<p>Panel 2: What lies ahead? Current proposals for reforming the EU accession process</p> <p>Discussants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Georg Woutsas, Ambassador of Austria in North Macedonia (in person) - Steven Blockmans, Centre for European Policy Studies, Brussels (online) - Antoaneta Dimitrova, University of Leiden (online) - Jelena Dzankic, European University Institute, Florence (in person) <p>Questions and answers</p> <p>Moderator: Ardita Abazi Imeri, EPI</p>
14.00-14.15	Final remarks

Working languages of the conference: Macedonian, Albanian and English.

The event will be open to media.

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