

THE WESTERN BALKANS ON THE ROAD TOWARDS TO EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

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Abstract

The paper analyses Western Balkans' road toward the European integration. Today, the European Union is the most active international presence and creative acting in the Western Balkans. The aim of this paper is the impact of European membership prospects in the countries of the Western Balkans and the problems of the transition process in the Western Balkans as related to European Union accession. The European Union is the result of integration and enlargement of the evolving process that has contributed to the stability, development and prosperity throughout Europe. Western Balkan countries hoping to join the European Union in the medium term still have a number of obstacles to overcome, such as the economic crisis and corruption. On 1 July 2013, Croatia became the 28th European Union member state. Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania and Serbia are candidate countries. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Kosovo are potential candidate. These countries have an European perspective which is recognized by the European Council in Feira in 2000 and confirmed by the European Council in Thessaloniki in 2003. This European perspective is integrated into the Stabilization and Association process, which represents the European Union policy in relations with countries in the Western Balkans. In view of the Stabilization and Association process, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, Republic of Macedonia and Albania have undertaken considerable efforts to reform their institutions, economies and legal systems. The experience of the Western Balkan countries presents a significant interest for the other countries with European integration aspirations, especially considering the fact that the Western Balkans had achieved important results as visa liberalization and financial aid from European Union. The conclusion suggests the opportunities for further European Union approximation in the region, the steps that should be undertaken by the European Union in order to intensify the integration process of Western Balkan countries.

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