The Western Balkans and the EU

European Union heads of state and government reiterated support for the European perspective of the Western Balkans at their meeting on 9 March, and underlined that the situation in the region was fragile due to internal and external challenges. Despite relatively good economic growth prospects, the Western Balkans' reform progress has been slow, rule of law weak, and corruption persistent. Many Western and local politicians are also concerned about the increasingly prominent role of external players in the region, mainly Russia, but also China, Turkey and the Gulf states.

From the Western Balkans, only Croatia has so far joined the EU, in 2013. Accession talks continue with Montenegro and Serbia. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Albania are official candidates, with Albania hoping to formally open negotiations soon. Bosnia and Herzegovina formally applied for EU membership in 2016, but along with Kosovo, it has a potential candidate status at present.

This note offers links to a series of recent studies from major international think tanks and research institutes on problems faced by the Western Balkans. More reports on the EU enlargement process can be found in a previous edition of 'What think tanks are thinking'.

Balkans: Boosting connections on the road to the EU
Friends of Europe, March 2017

The demise of EU enlargement policy
Hellenic Foundation for European Foreign Policy, March 2017

Between survival and development: Think tanks in the Western Balkans
On Think Tanks, February 2017

The Western Balkans on their way to the EU: Status quo regardless of refugees
Europeum, February 2017

Noch mehr Distanz zum Westen. Warum sich Ankara nach Moskau orientiert
Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, January 2017

Examining the role of constitutional courts in Post-Yugoslav transitions: Conceptual framework and methodological issues
Analitika, January 2017

The Maltese Presidency of the Council of the EU: Unbreakable ties with the candidate countries
European Policy Centre (Belgrade), January 2017

Turkey’s role in the Western Balkans
Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, December 2016
Advocacy strategy for the EU integration of the Western Balkans
Slovak Foreign Policy Association, January 2017

The EU’s enlargement strategy: Is it working?
Centre for European Policy Studies, December 2016

The Western Balkans migratory route: Perspectives and persisting challenges
European Policy Centre, December 2016

Back to basics: Re-affirming the rule of law in the Western Balkans
Institut Alternativa, December 2016

Hidden economy in Southeast Europe: Building regional momentum to mitigate its negative effects
Centre for the Study of Democracy, December 2016

Fighting corruption in the Western Balkans and Turkey: Priorities for reform
Transparency International, November 2016

Policymaking in the Western Balkans: Creating demand for evidence beyond EU conditionality
Centre of Excellence on Policymaking Systems in the Western Balkans, November 2016

Economic governance in the Balkans: Towards a more sustainable path of economic development?
European Policy Centre, November 2016

EU enlargement after Brexit: Temporary turmoil or the final nail in the coffin of enlargement?
EUROPEUM, November 2016

The future of the EU and the Western Balkans: A view from Serbia
Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, European Movement in Serbia, November 2016

Europe reaches its Balkan crossroads
Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, October 2016

Why is the EU enlargement stuck?
Confrontations Europe, October 2016

EU enlargement in the Western Balkans in a time of uncertainty
Balkans in Europe Policy Advisory Group, September 2016

Shadow power: Assessment of corruption and hidden economy in Southeast Europe
Southeast European Leadership for Development and Integrity, September 2016

Why Croatia matters to the Western Balkans
Carnegie Europe, September 2016

Effects of the pre-accession assistance (IPA) on strengthening of administrative capacities in the Western Balkans: A meta-audit of the European Court of Auditors
European Policy Centre (Belgrade), September 2016
Neuer Islamismus und islamische Radikalisierung am Balkan: Aktuelle Entwicklungen und Gefahrenpotentiale
Österreichische Institut für Internationale Politik, June 2016

Elusive development in the Balkans: Research findings
Österreichische Institut für Internationale Politik, June 2016

Improving competitiveness in the Balkan region: Opportunities and limits
Österreichische Institut für Internationale Politik, June 2016

A narrative explanation of breakpoints and convergence patterns in Yugoslavia and its successor states 1952-2015
Österreichische Institut für Internationale Politik, June 2016

Studies on individual countries

Macedonia at the crossroads: Is peaceful transfer of power possible in authoritarianism?
The Balkans in Europe Policy Advisory Group, March 2017

Economic cooperation between Albania and Serbia
Albanian Institute for International Studies, January 2017

How effective is the EU as a mediator? The case of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
College of Europe, January 2017

Elections in FYROM: The end of the two-year political crisis or more of the same?
Hellenic Foundation for European Foreign Policy, December 2016

Dynamics of radicalization and violent extremism in Kosovo
United States Institute of Peace, December 2016

Montenegro: Elections aftermath and the European Commission’s 2016 country progress reports
Open Society European Policy Institute, November 2016

Challenges of local government units in the fight against corruption: An assessment of the anti-corruption system in 20 municipalities of Albania
Institute for Democracy and Mediation, October 2016

The shadow worker: Hidden economy and undeclared labor in Macedonia, Albania and Kosovo
Centre for Research and Policy Making, Institute for Democracy and Mediation, Democracy for Development, October 2016

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