

EU INTEGRATION AND TRANSFORMATION OF WESTERN BALKANS



Lecturer: Dr. JUBJANA VILA
Years: 2022-2025

WB-EUPath Module

- Implemented within the framework of the Master and Bachelor programs in “Political Science and International Relations” at the Department for Political Science and International Relations – 3 YEARS
- Aim: to create and spread new knowledge, tools, and resources related to the EU integration path of Western Balkans, as a region in the present enlargement agenda of the EU.
- Goal: to identify regional patterns and state-specific dynamics in WB countries’ EU integration path.

Teaching

1. “Political Integration and the European Union” course – MSc/PM PIR;
2. “EU Integration and Transformation of Western Balkans” course – MSc/PM PIR
3. “History of European Integration” course – BA PIR

MOOC “A comparative perspective on EU Integration of Western Balkans”

Activities

1. International Conference on European Studies “EU Integration of Western Balkans: Dynamics and Challenges”
2. Six Graduate Seminars
3. Two Graduate Workshops
4. Three Public Panels on “EU Integration of Western Balkans Challenges and Perspectives”
5. Three Awareness Seminars
6. Study Visit to EU institutions in Brussels, Belgium

Materials

1. Journal Issue “EU Integration of Western Balkans: Patterns and Issues” – Journal of European Social Research
2. Practical Guide on “Western Balkans Path to EU”

Course Overview

- 3h/7.5 ECTS
- 14 weeks + 2 weeks final exams
- Lecturer: Dr. Jubjana Vila
- Timetable: Wednesday 18:00-20:50
- Office hours: Tuesday, 10:00-12:00
or by appointment
- Course materials: Google classroom
- Email: jvila@epoka.edu.al

- Sources:
 - Uvalić, M. (2023). Integrating the Western Balkans into the EU : overcoming mutual misperceptions. Palgrave Macmillan.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-32205-1>
 - Džankić, J., Keil, S., & Kmezić, M. (Eds.). (2018). The Europeanisation of the Western Balkans: A failure of EU conditionality?. Springer.
 - Elbasani, A. (2013). European integration and transformation in the Western Balkans: Europeanization or business as usual?. Routledge.
 - Weekly assigned articles

Course Overview

- The course explores the EU integration processes of Western Balkan countries in a comparative approach.
- It explains the enlargement policy of the EU; the integration process, issues and dynamics specific for each WB country (Albania, Serbia, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Montenegro); and common regional dynamics and issues.

Course Objectives

- To combine theoretical and empirical knowledge to offer a comparative approach to the Western Balkan countries' EU integration paths.
- To equip students with a deeper and critical understanding of regional patterns and state-specific dynamics in WB countries' EU integration path by looking at each country's history of integration, challenges, and prospective for EU membership.
- To promote active learning and participation among graduate students by encouraging them to think critically and analytically, and to better understand regional politics and EU enlargement.

Course Learning Outcomes

1. To demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the EU integration process of WB countries;
2. To demonstrate the ability to employ a comparative and critical approach in case analysis.
3. To demonstrate an ability to a deeper and critical understanding of the common regional patterns and issues dominating the WB countries' EU integration process;
4. To demonstrate an ability to a deeper and critical understanding of the state-specific patterns and issues dominating the WB countries' EU integration process;
5. To demonstrate an ability to present an argument in both oral and written forms;
6. To demonstrate an ability to combine theoretical and empirical knowledge on regional and EU politics.



Week	Topics
1	Western Balkans and the EU: An introduction
2	Enlargement Strategy, EU Conditionality and the Accession Mechanisms
3	Albania: EU integration, issues and dynamics
4	Serbia: EU integration, issues and dynamics
5	The Republic of North Macedonia: EU integration, issues and dynamics
6	Bosnia and Herzegovina: EU integration, issues and dynamics
7	Kosovo: EU integration, issues and dynamics
8	Midterm Exam
9	Montenegro: EU integration, issues and dynamics
10	Regional dynamics and EU integration
11	Historical, political and economic challenges
12	State-building, democratization and EU integration
13	Domestic obstacles and diverging reforms
14	EU Integration and transformation of Western Balkans: A Conclusion

Week	Topics
1	Western Balkans and the EU: An introduction
2	Enlargement Strategy, EU Conditionality and the Accession Mechanisms
3	Albania: EU integration, issues and dynamics
4	Serbia: EU integration, issues and dynamics
5	The Republic of North Macedonia: EU integration, issues and dynamics
6	Bosnia and Herzegovina: EU integration, issues and dynamics
7	Kosovo: EU integration, issues and dynamics

1. Lecture
2. Presentation – Issues and Dynamics for each country – **20%**
3. Discussion – **15%**
- 3.1: Country based discussions
- 3.2: Article Discussions

8	Midterm Exam
9	Montenegro: EU integration, issues and dynamics
10	Regional dynamics and EU integration
11	Historical, political and economic challenges
12	State-building, democratization and EU integration
13	Domestic obstacles and diverging reforms
14	EU Integration and transformation of Western Balkans: A Conclusion

4. Case Study– Each student will lead discussion on assigned article – **20%**
5. Comparative Analytical Paper – **40%**

Evaluation Criteria

➤ **Case Study (20%)**

- Each student will present the assigned article/book chapter and lead discussion on it.
- 30 minutes presentation + 30 minutes discussion for each article (minimum 3 discussion questions to be prepared by the presenters)
- All students are responsible to read the articles/book chapters and participate in discussion

➤ **Presentations (15%)**

- Explaining the main issues and dynamics for each WB country based primarily on last 5 years EU Progress Reports and other supportive sources.

Evaluation Criteria

➤ **Comparative Analytical Paper (40%)**

Conduct Research on one of the following options and present it.

- Option 1: Compare the EU integration path of two WB countries on different dimensions.
- Option 2: Choose one common issue/dynamic and compare all WB countries progress/regress on that issue.
- Option 3: Identify one regional and one country specific issue/dynamic and analyze its impact on EU integration process.

➤ **Discussion (20%)**

- Participation in discussions during case study and presentations.



Co-funded by
the European Union

Course Materials

Why WB's EU Integration?

Why WB's EU Integration?

- The European Union's role in the region and in the world is changing rapidly.
- New challenges - test to decision-making structures and institutions of the EU.
- Domestic debates among sceptics and EU supporters
- EU's project of integration remains a role model for peace and stability in the region and beyond.
- The integration processes reflect a key pillar of EU studies.
- The European Integration Movement is characterized in two parallel processes of “deepening” and “widening”.

Why WB's EU Integration?

- The enlargement/widening perspective is targeting the Western Balkan countries (Serbia, Kosovo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Albania and North Macedonia).
- EU integration has emerged as a shared key priority of EU institutions and Western Balkans (WB) states.
- The pace of integration of Western Balkans countries toward the EU has proceeded through different cycles of acceleration and slow down.
- Progress has been hindered by dynamics and developments within the WB countries, regional dynamics and enlargement skepticism among EU member states.
- In such a context, enquiries regarding the EU-WB relationship and new perspectives on EU integration of WB countries have emerged.

Why WB's EU Integration?

- President Ursula von der Leyen in the EU-Western Balkans Summit 2021: “**Western Balkan countries belong in the EU**”.
- Joint Brdo Declaration (2021) and Tirana Declaration (2022) - the EU reconfirmed its commitment to the enlargement process.



The Tirana declaration reaffirms the EU's **unequivocal support for the EU perspective** of the Western Balkans.

The EU reconfirms its full and unequivocal commitment to the European Union membership perspective of the Western Balkans and calls for the acceleration of the accession process, based upon credible reforms by partners, fair and rigorous conditionality and the principle of own merits.

— Tirana declaration

WB-EUPath: A Different Approach?

- The EU-WB relationship is mainly studied from the perspective of the EU enlargement policy.
- European membership perspective to the countries of the WB is the most important platform put in place by the EU to tackle the issues affecting the region.
- The EU has a broad range of planned or ongoing initiatives for Western Balkans with the regional approach at the top of such initiatives that emphasizes regional cooperation among WB countries as a condition to move forward with the integration process.
- Theoretically appearing as a sound approach, there are differences among WB countries in terms of identity, culture, or political and economic development; they cannot always be treated as a whole (Leuffen; Rittberger; Schimmelfennig, 2013: 26-28).

WB-EUPath: A Different Approach?

- WB states at different moments have entered contractual agreements with the Union in order to consolidate their European perspective (Leuffen; Rittberger; Schimmelfennig, 2013: 2-6).
- The WB countries are in different trajectories of the accession process not only due to the Unions' internal dynamics and approach to the region, but also because of the region's common dynamics and each country's own progress and challenges.
- While Montenegro, Serbia, Albania and North Macedonia are negotiating their accessions,
- Bosnia and Herzegovina is candidate state with expectations to start accession talks,
- Kosovo is signatory to the EU's Stabilization and Association Agreement and considered as potential candidate state.

Enlargement Strategy, EU Conditionality and the Accession Mechanisms



EU Enlargement Policy

- The EU's enlargement policy deals with the countries currently aspiring to become members of the European Union.
- Enlargement as a policy: addressing the strategies, mechanisms and goals set by the Union to integrate and accommodate new member states.
- A number of cross-cutting policy issues are of concern to most countries aspiring to join the EU, including: Rule of Law, Freedom of expression and media, Civil Society, Regional cooperation, Common Regional Market, Economic governance, SME Performance Review
- Enlargement Policy nature - intergovernmental and unanimity is required for countries to reach an agreement.
- The Enlargement policy is unique because not only it sets criteria for accessions but it is also a process through which candidate countries push for development. In the perspective of the process, it also has the pre-accession period in which it builds strategies and initiative on how to facilitate the Europeanization process.

Accession to EU

Accession of new member states to the European Union (EU) is governed by Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union. A state that wishes to apply for membership of the Union must satisfy two conditions:

1. it must be a European state;
 2. it must respect the common values of the Member States and undertake to promote them. These are human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities (Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union).
- Accession is not automatic, since it depends on the adequate preparation of the applicant country concerned and on the EU's capacity to integrate the new member.
 - There is thus a pre-accession period of varying length, during which the candidate country adapts its institutions, standards and infrastructure to enable it to meet its obligations as a member state.
 - The accession process involves compliance with the accession criteria including adoption and implementation of the *acquis*.

Accession Criteria (Copenhagen Criteria)

1. Political criteria

- The applicant country must have achieved stability of its institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities.

2. Economic criteria

- It must have a functioning market economy, as well as the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the EU.

3. Criteria of the adoption of the acquis

- It must have the ability to take on the obligations related to of membership, including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union.

Accession Process

- Article 49 of the EU treaties also sets out the internal EU procedure for a new member to join.
- The Commission negotiates on behalf of the EU and the member states and the European Parliament must then approve.
- National parliaments also have to give the green light before new members can join.



February 2020
#EUenlargement

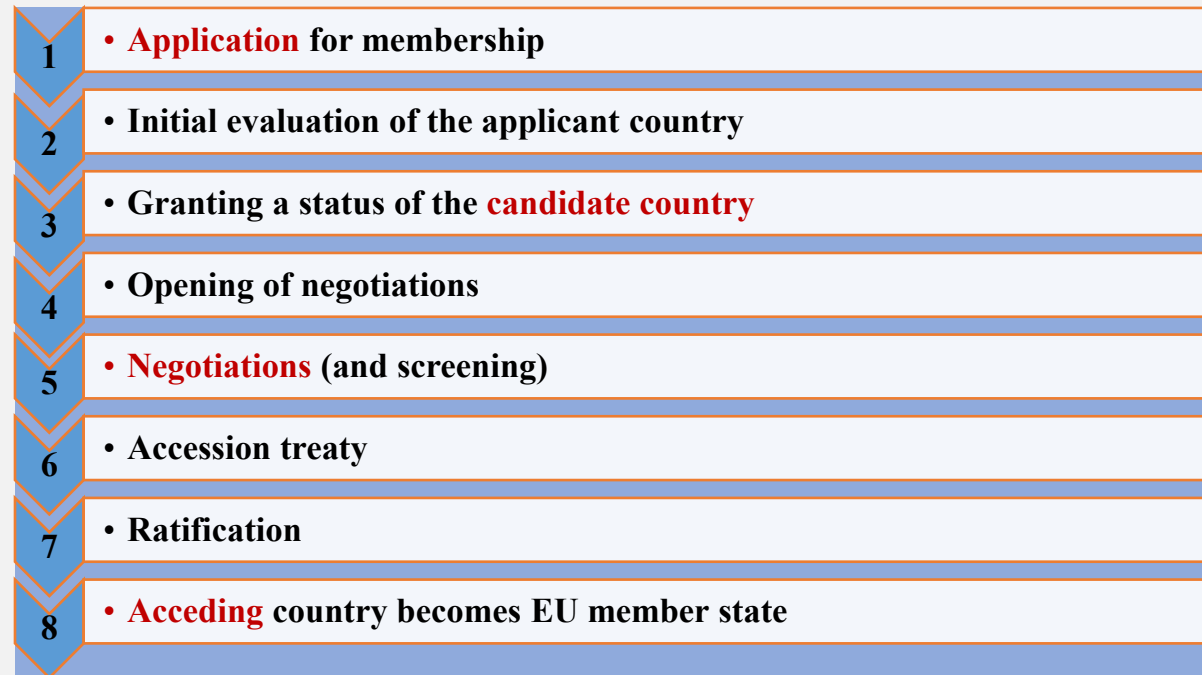
A credible enlargement policy is a geostrategic investment in **peace, stability, security and prosperity** in the whole of Europe. It is based on fair and rigorous conditionality and the principle of own merits. It requires complex reforms and results in many policies such as the rule of law, the economy, the fight against corruption and organised crime. Reconciliation, good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation are of utmost importance.

Main steps to EU accession

- 1 Country submits an application to the Council.
- 2 Commission submits an Opinion on the application.
- 3 EU Member States decide unanimously to grant the applicant candidate status.
- 4 After conditions are met, the accession negotiations are opened with the agreement of all Member States.
- 5 Commission proposes a negotiating framework as a basis for the talks.
- 6 During negotiations, the country prepares to implement EU laws and standards. All EU Member States must agree that the country met all requirements.
- 7 Once negotiations on all areas are finalised, Commission gives its Opinion on the readiness of the country to become a Member State.
- 8 Based on this Opinion, EU Member States decide unanimously to close the process. The European Parliament must also give its consent.
- 9 All EU Member States and the candidate country sign & ratify the Accession Treaty. Only then the country becomes an EU Member State.

Print ISBN 978-92-76-15670-3 doi:10.2876/908713
PDF ISBN 978-92-76-15672-7 doi:10.2876/69416
EZ-05-20-069-EN-C
EZ-05-20-069-EN-N

Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations





EU accession process

February 2020
#EUenlargement

A credible enlargement policy is a geostrategic investment in **peace, stability, security and prosperity** in the whole of Europe. It is based on fair and rigorous conditionality and the principle of own merits. It requires complex reforms and results in many policies such as the rule of law, the economy, the fight against corruption and organised crime. Reconciliation, good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation are of utmost importance.

Main steps to EU accession

- 1 Country submits an application to the Council.
- 2 Commission submits an Opinion on the application.
- 3 EU Member States decide unanimously to grant the applicant candidate status.
- 4 After conditions are met, the accession negotiations are opened with the agreement of all Member States.
- 5 Commission proposes a negotiating framework as a basis for the talks.
- 6 During negotiations, the country prepares to implement EU laws and standards. All EU Member States must agree that the country met all requirements.
- 7 Once negotiations on all areas are finalised, Commission gives its Opinion on the readiness of the country to become a Member State.
- 8 Based on this Opinion, EU Member States decide unanimously to close the process. The European Parliament must also give its consent.
- 9 All EU Member States and the candidate country sign & ratify the Accession Treaty. Only then the country becomes an EU Member State.

Print ISBN 978-92-76-15670-3 doi:10.2876/909713
PDF ISBN 978-92-76-15672-7 doi:10.2876/91616 EZ-03-20-069-EN-C
EZ-03-20-069-EN-N

Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations

Accession Process

- To move to any of the subsequent stages in the process requires Commission and unanimous Council approval, as well as sign-off from EU leaders, with the European Parliament and national parliaments also having to approve the final accession treaty.
- Any European country that considers it complies with the accession criteria may apply to be an EU member.
- The Commission is then asked by the EU General Affairs Council (GAC) to assess whether or not they meet the criteria.
- If a country does meet the criteria, the Commission recommends to the GAC granting official candidate status.
- If the GAC approves unanimously, and the European Council subsequently endorses this conclusion, then the country officially becomes a candidate for EU membership.
- Following candidate status, the Commission then draws up a negotiating framework, or mandate, for the EU side and the candidate country does the same.
- Negotiations cannot begin until the mandate is unanimously agreed by EU member states.
- In total, there are 35 chapters of EU law that need to be negotiated.

Accession Negotiations

Negotiations take place between ministers and ambassadors of the EU governments and the candidate country in what is called an intergovernmental conference. Negotiations under each chapter are based on the following elements:

1. Screening

- the Commission in cooperation with candidate country carries out a detailed examination of each policy field (chapter- how well the country is prepared.
- Screening report is prepared and its conclusion is a recommendation of the Commission to either open negotiations directly or to require that certain conditions – **opening benchmarks** - should first be met.

2. Negotiating positions –

- For most chapters the EU will set closing benchmarks in this position which need to be met by the Candidate Country before negotiations in the policy field concerned can be closed.

Clusters of negotiating chapters

Following the introduction of the revised methodology for the accession negotiations in February 2020, negotiating chapters are now divided in six thematic clusters:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| 1 Fundamentals | 4 Green agenda & sustainable connectivity |
| 2 Internal market | 5 Resources, agriculture & cohesion |
| 3 Competitiveness & inclusive growth | 6 External relations |



Negotiations on each cluster **open as a whole** – after the country fulfils the opening benchmarks. Each chapter will be dealt with individually with respect to its provisional closure. Negotiations on the **fundamentals open first and close last**; progress under the fundamentals' cluster will determine the overall pace of negotiations. If there is sufficient progress on reform priorities, this should lead to closer integration with the European Union, through accelerated integration and increased investments and funding.

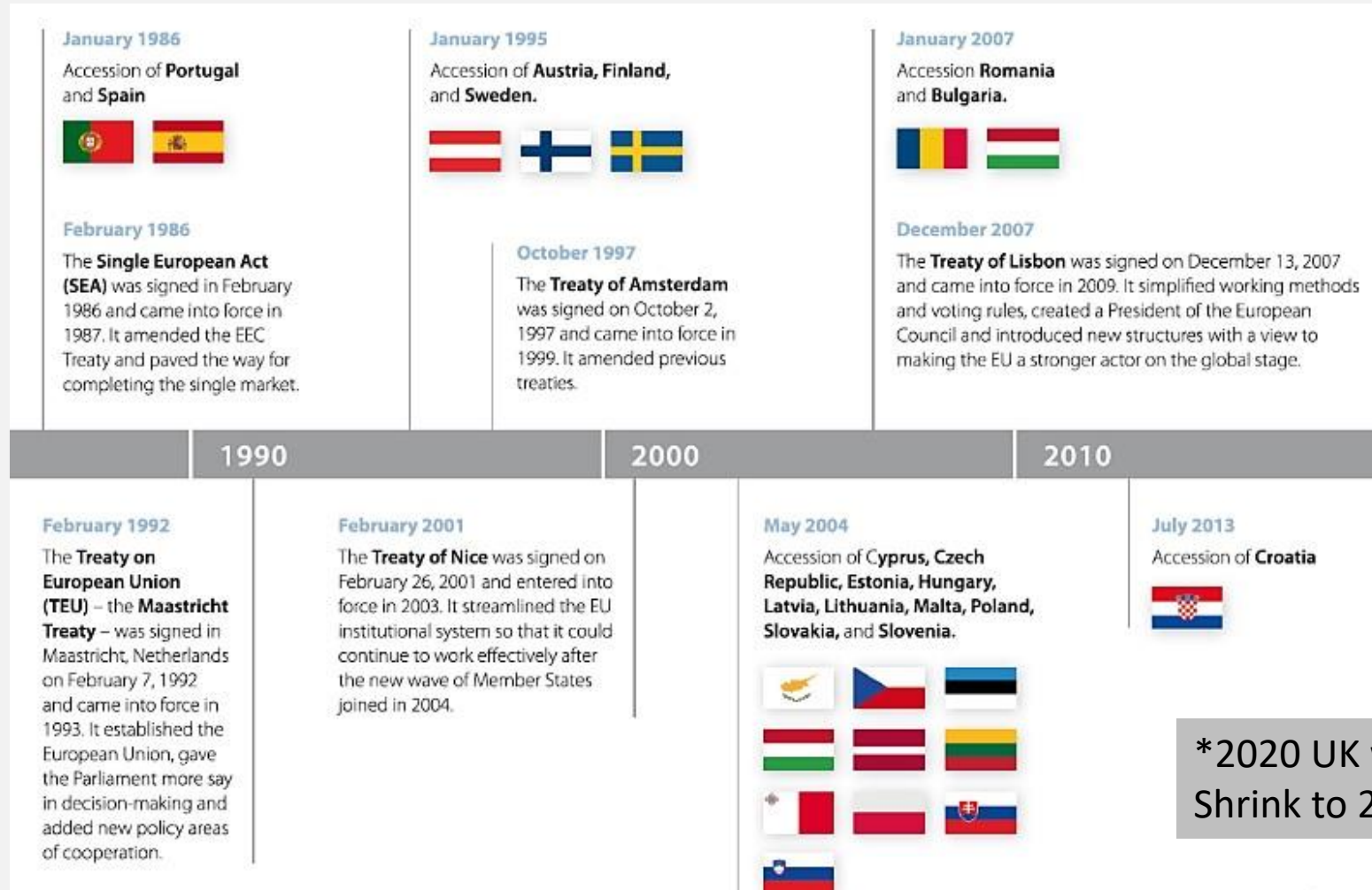
Concluding Negotiations

- Once negotiations are complete, the Commission recommends candidate countries for membership.
- The accession treaty—which translates the agreements reached into treaty form—must be approved by a majority in the **European Parliament and** unanimously in the Council (UNANIMITY).
- It is not final and binding until it:
 1. wins the **support** of the EU Council, the Commission, and the European Parliament
 2. is **signed** by the candidate country and representatives of all existing EU countries
 3. is **ratified** by the candidate country and every individual EU country, according to their constitutional rules (parliamentary vote, referendum, etc.).
- Once the treaty is signed, however, the candidate becomes an **acceding country** - to become a full EU member on the date laid down in the treaty, providing the treaty has been ratified.

Timeline



Timeline



*2020 UK withdrawal from EU – Brexit
Shrink to 27 EU Member states

Accession Timeline

1952 Belgium, France,
West Germany, Italy,
Luxembourg, Netherlands
(founding members)

1973 Denmark, Ireland, UK*

1981 Greece

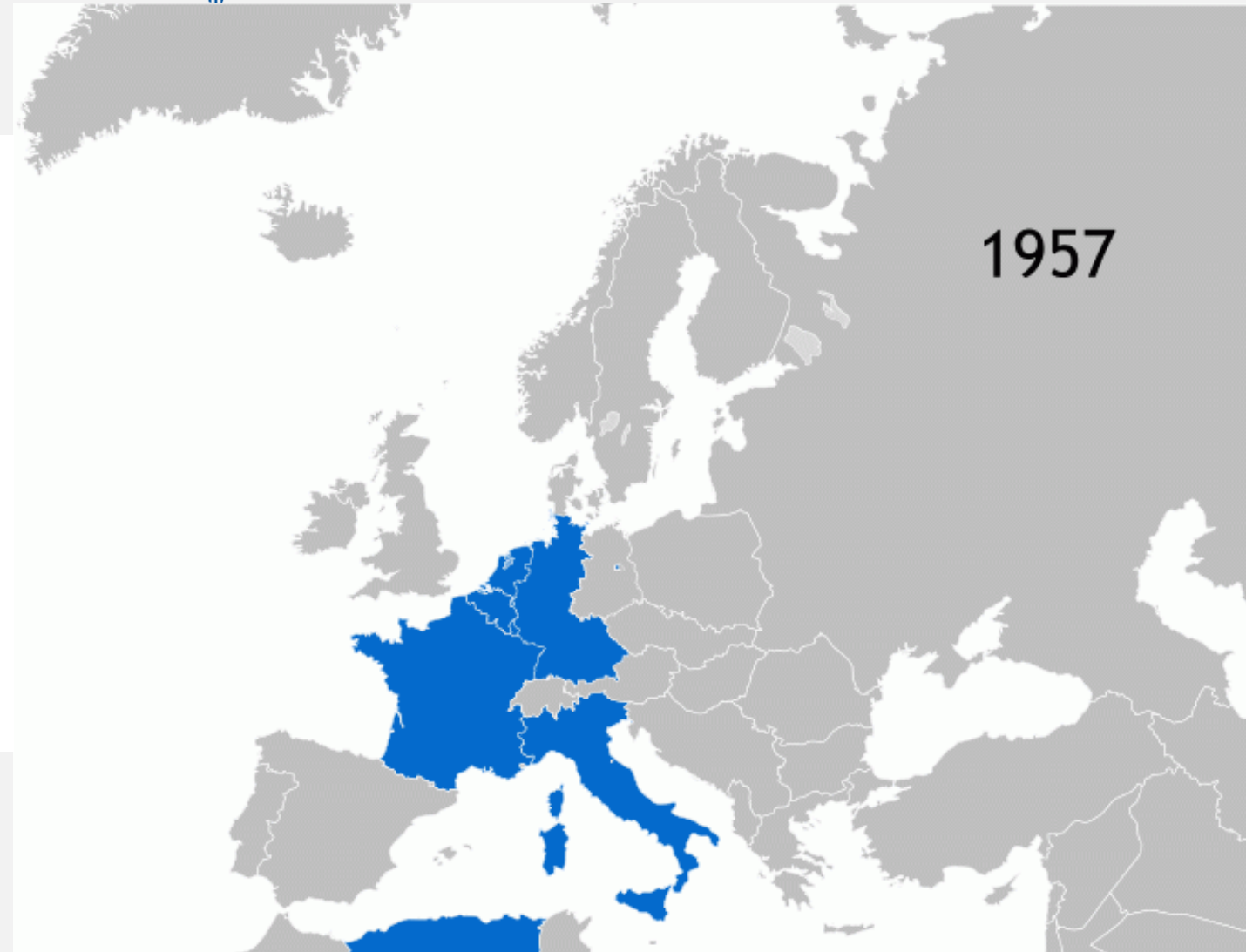
1986 Portugal, Spain

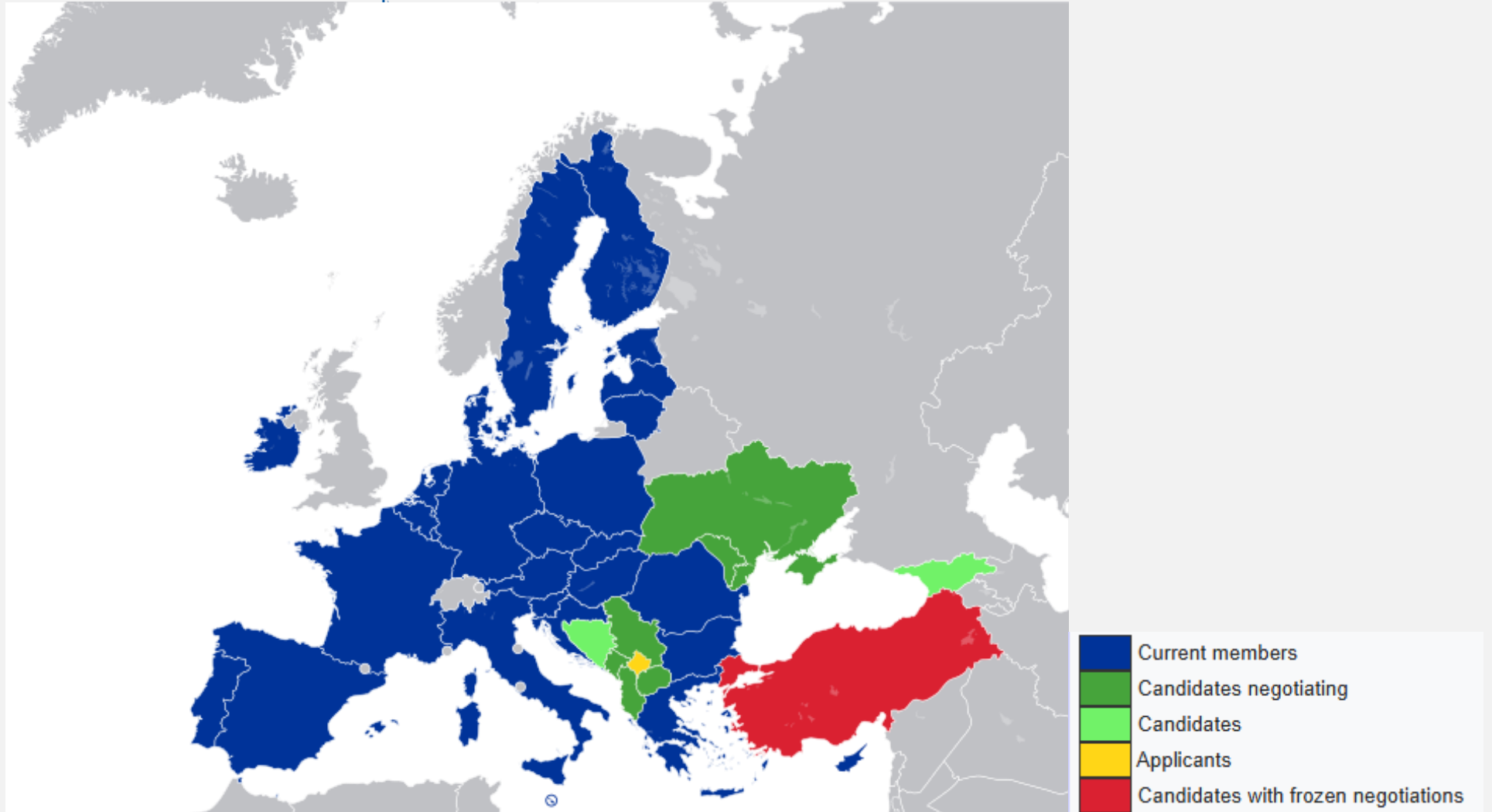
1995 Austria, Finland, Sweden

2004 Cyprus, Czech Republic,
Estonia, Hungary, Latvia,
Lithuania, Malta, Poland,
Slovakia, Slovenia

2007 Bulgaria, Romania

2013 Croatia





Future Enlargement of the EU

- Western Balkans, Association Trio, and Turkey
- Two concepts after the Eastern enlargement: ‘absorption capacity’ ‘enlargement fatigue’
- At a 2003 summit in Thessaloniki, Greece, the EU articulated a clearer membership perspective for Western Balkan countries, asserting that “the future of the Balkans is within the European Union.”
- The EU enlargement policy is a geo-strategic investment in Europe’s peace, security, stability and prosperity.
- The EU will continue its strong political, technical, and financial support to all six Western Balkan partners, to help them advance key political, institutional, social and economic reforms that are necessary to progress on their path toward the EU.
- Russia’s aggression against Ukraine underlines the need to accelerate the accession process of the Western Balkans (but not only).

Arguments about Enlargement

For

- Facilitate peace, stability and prosperity in Europe
- Enhance the security of all its peoples.
- Encourage economic growth (such as FDI) and job creation in both old and new member states.
- Enlargement will strengthen the Unions role in world affairs in foreign and security policy, trade policy, and the other fields of global governance.
- Improve the quality of life for citizens throughout Europe as the new members adopt EU policies to protect the environment and address crime, drugs and illegal immigration.
- By requiring the eastern states to adopt extensive reforms in their judicial and police systems, the enlargement process makes it easier for the EU to combat terrorism and organize crime and control the flow of immigration from outside Europe.

Against

- Delay in enlarging the EU market will lead to lower economic growth
- Failure for applicants to join EU would undermine incentives for political and administrative reform, discourage foreign investment and stall economic growth.
- Increase the risk of political instability in Europe (spectre of ex-Yugoslavia)

Pre-accession strategy for Western Balkans

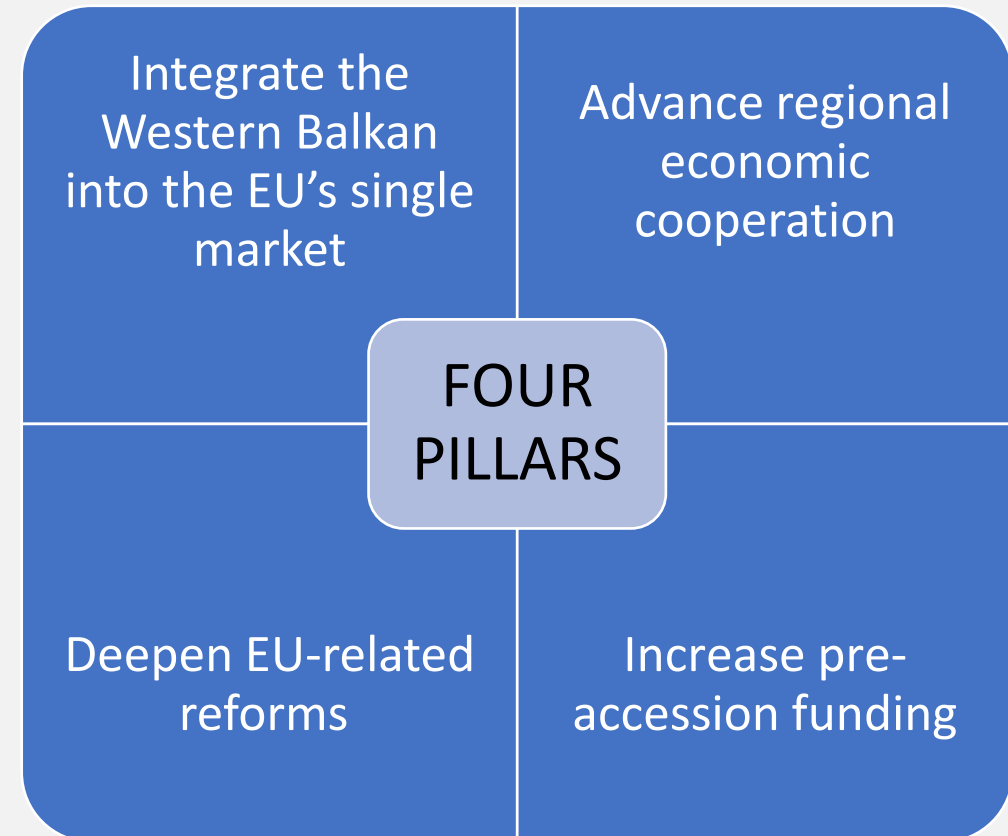
- In order to assist countries in implementing the reforms necessary for EU membership, the EU has developed a pre-accession strategy.
- The pre-accession strategy offers a ‘structured dialogue’ between EU institutions and enlargement countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Kosovo*, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey). These countries all have an EU perspective and need to fulfil the Copenhagen criteria.
- Bilateral agreements form the basis for our relations. For the western Balkans, the main framework for relations is the Stabilization and Association process, and each country has a Stabilization and Association Agreement in place (except for Kosovo). Turkey has an association agreement with the EU.
- The pre-accession strategy also includes the accession negotiations process once certain conditions are met, as well as substantial pre-accession assistance support.

Pre-accession Assistance

- Pre-accession financial assistance - key element of the EU's pre-accession strategy - helps candidate countries and potential candidates for European Union (EU) membership to satisfy the accession conditions (the Copenhagen criteria).
- The Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) is the means by which the EU supports reforms financially and technically in candidate and potential candidate countries - the strengthening of the rule of law, human rights and democratic institutions as well as the reform of public administration.
- The current IPA III programming cycle (2021-2027) – with a provisionally agreed financial envelope of €14.162 billion - focuses on sustainable infrastructure, climate and energy sector investments.
- Assistance under IPA III is based on the draft programming framework, the strategic document of the European Commission for the use of EU funds assisting the IPA III beneficiaries.
- Beneficiaries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey.

Growth Plan for the Western Balkans

- On 8 November 2023, the Commission adopted the Growth Plan for the Western Balkans.
- Aims to accelerate the socio-economic convergence of the region with the EU and pave the way to EU membership.
- The Plan is supported by an increase of financial assistance (€6 billion) through the new Reform and Growth Facility which entered into force on 25 May 2024.
- The Facility will complement the current financial assistance under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III).
- Accelerate the speed of the enlargement process and the growth of their economies.



Stabilization and Association Process

- Western Balkans has been in the agenda of the European Union since the late 90s.
- In order to pave the way for future accession, the European Union initiated the Stabilization Association Process in 1999.
- SAP - special framework which has 3 aims:
 1. **stabilizing** the countries politically and encouraging their swift **transition to a market economy**,
 2. promoting regional cooperation,
 3. eventual **membership of the EU**;
- the process helps the countries build their capacity to adopt and implement EU law, as well as European and international standards.
- It is based on an ever-closer partnership (trade concessions, economic and financial assistance, assistance for reconstruction, development and stabilisation).

SAP and WB

- 1999 – EU readiness to draw countries of WB closer to full integration – offering a prospect of EU membership based on Amsterdam Treaty and Copenhagen Criteria fulfillment.
- This new comprehensive policy – in addition to regional cooperation – comprise a new contractual basis for relations: SAAs, economic and trade relations, economic and financial assistance, assistance on democratization and civil society, humanitarian aid, cooperation in JHA issues and development of political dialogue.
- Coincided with a broad reassessment of EU’s approach to enlargement – introduction of ‘candidate status’ (CEE countries, Malta, Cyprus, Turkey)
- Impetus for such developments – presentation of enlargement as EU’s most effective foreign policy tool and most effective mechanism for promoting stability and security in Europe.
- SAP – when launched draw heavily on tools and mechanisms EU had developed in relations to CEE countries.

WB and EU

- 1990s WB – region of conflicts and delayed transitions.
- 2000s-changes in reputation – EU expanded the concept of enlargement to WB
- By that time – Enlargement – success story – inspiring reforms, consolidating democracy – eastern candidate countries.
- EU shifted approach to the region + increase in domestic demands for integration
- Expectation – enlargement strategy discipline democracy and enhance post communist reforms.
- Enlargement – centered on principle of conditionality + monitoring by EU (Progress Reports)
- Rewards - financial assistance (advance trade rel. with WB, IPA) and membership – conditional on WB meeting demands set by EU.
- Basis of EU demands- set in Copenhagen criteria, supplemented by conditions on regional cooperation, return of refugees and cooperation with ICTY.
- Strict conditionality at all stages of negotiations.

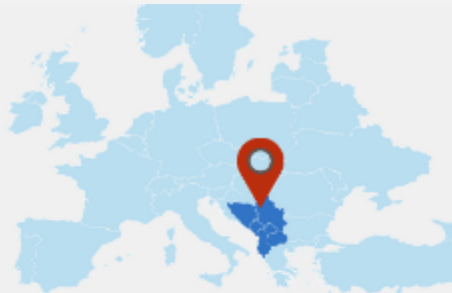
EU Enlargement towards Western Balkans

- The EU has sought to reaffirm this commitment to the Western Balkans on various occasions.
- At a 2003 summit in Thessaloniki, Greece, the EU articulated a clearer membership perspective for Western Balkan countries, asserting that “the future of the Balkans is within the European Union.”
- Thessaloniki Agenda for Western Balkans : 5 key elements (enriched SAP):
 - Measures to consolidate peace, promote stability and democratic development
 - Further integration with EU through enriched SAP
 - Increased cooperation in fighting organized crime on JHA matters
 - Promotion of economic development
 - Increased support for reconciliation and enhanced regional cooperation.

EU Enlargement towards Western Balkans

- In its 2018 enlargement strategy, for example, the EU described enlargement into the Western Balkans as “a geostrategic investment in a stable, strong, and united Europe” and introduced six flagship initiatives to tackle specific concerns in the Western Balkans, particularly the need for fundamental reforms and “good neighborly relations.”
- More recent developments in enlargement policy include the March 2020 revisions to the enlargement methodology.
- In addition to the Copenhagen criteria, two specific conditions were added for the Western Balkan countries: 'regional cooperation' and 'good neighbourly relations', as a basis for resolving many bilateral problems.
- The new methodology includes four principles – credibility, predictability, dynamism, and a stronger political steer – and six thematic 'policy clusters' – (1) fundamentals, including rule of law, (2) internal market, (3) competitiveness and inclusive growth, (4) green agenda and sustainable connectivity, (5) resources, agriculture, and cohesion, and (6) external relations
- June 2022 EU Western Balkans Leader Meeting (Brussels), December 2022 Tirana Summit, December 2023 and December 2024 Brussels Summits – Meetings of EU and WB leaders - to reaffirm the **EU membership** perspective of the Western Balkans.
- October 2024, Commission approved the Reform Agendas of Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia following the EU Member States' positive opinion – commitment to socio-economic and fundamental reforms they will undertake to spur growth and convergence with the EU under the Growth Plan during the period of 2024 - 2027.

Current Status of Western Balkans



Candidate country since 2022.
EC decides to open accession negotiations on March 2024.

Candidate country since 2010.
Accession negotiations with EU in progress since 2012. As of July 2022, all 33 screened chapters have been opened, 3 are provisionally closed.

Candidate country since 2014.
Received unconditional recommendation to open accession negotiations in 2018. Accession negotiations launched in July 2022.



Candidate country since 2012.
Accession negotiations with EU in progress since 2013. 18 chapters were opened, 2 are provisionally closed.

Potential candidate. No formal EU membership application submitted. The only country not granted visa liberalisation. Visa liberalisation dialogue launched in 2012. Second confirmation from the Commission that all benchmarks were fulfilled received in 2018. EP's decision still pending.

Candidate country since 2005.
Received repeated recommendations to open accession negotiations since 2009. Accession negotiations were launched in July 2022.

Source: [European Commission](#), July 2022

Integration Prospective

- Process of EU enlargement –credited for having supported post communist reforms in the Eastern countries – CEE
- Uneven reforms?
- Top-down conditionality vs. contextualized domestic influence
- Challenging factors in domestic context?

Integration Prospective

- Process of EU enlargement –credited for having supported post communist reforms in the Eastern countries – CEE
- Uneven reforms?
- Top-down conditionality vs. contextualized domestic influence
- Challenging factors in domestic context?
 - Strength of EU domestic allies (reformist elite)
 - Hindering historical legacies
 - Ethnic heterogeneity
 - Informal networks
 - Stateness problems (state building, consolidated national unit, weak governmental capacities)
- Relations between structural obstacles and effective Europeanization – not deterministic- not linear.

Integration Prospective

- Two concepts after the Eastern enlargement: ‘absorption capacity’ ‘enlargement fatigue’
- Integration – characterized by ambiguity or certainty? – is there any explicit premise of membership for WB countries?

Integration Prospective

- Two concepts after the Eastern enlargement: ‘absorption capacity’ ‘enlargement fatigue’
- Integration – characterized by ambiguity or certainty? – is there any explicit premise of membership for WB countries?
- Ambiguity – has not prevented countries to move forward.
- Demand on candidates and accession negotiations – greater than before.
- Demands – not only as legislative alignment with EU Acquis but also satisfactory track record in implementation of key elements – showing existence of adequate administrative and judicial capacity.
- Drivers of enlargement from EU perspective?

Integration Prospective

- Two concepts after the Eastern enlargement: ‘absorption capacity’ ‘enlargement fatigue’
- Integration – characterized by ambiguity or certainty? – is there any explicit premise of membership for WB countries?
- Ambiguity – has not prevented countries to move forward.
- Demand on candidates and accession negotiations – greater than before.
- Demands – not only as legislative alignment with EU Acquis but also satisfactory track record in implementation of key elements – showing existence of adequate administrative and judicial capacity.
- Drivers of enlargement from EU perspective?
 - Member states preferences, supranational actions, integration capacity, public opinion and narrative.
- SAP + membership conditionality – enough?

Integration Prospective

- Two concepts after the Eastern enlargement: ‘absorption capacity’ ‘enlargement fatigue’
- Integration – characterized by ambiguity or certainty? – is there any explicit premise of membership for WB countries?
- Ambiguity – has not prevented countries to move forward.
- Demand on candidates and accession negotiations – greater than before.
- Demands – not only as legislative alignment with EU Acquis but also satisfactory track record in implementation of key elements – showing existence of adequate administrative and judicial capacity.
- Drivers of enlargement from EU perspective?
 - Member states preferences, supranational actions, integration capacity, public opinion and narrative.
- SAP + membership conditionality – enough?
 - No – they provide a suitable framework but cannot lead on its own to WB accession to EU
 - EU Perspective + developments in WB countries.

Sources:

- Elbasani, A. (2013), p.1-34
- Cini, M. & Borragan, N.P. (2009). European Union Politics. Oxford: Oxford University Press p. 418-434
- Schimmelfennig, F. & Sedelmeier, U. (2005). The Politics of European Union Enlargement: Theoretical approaches. London: Routledge p.3-25
- <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/enlargement/#:~:text=The%20Western%20Balkans-,What%20is%20EU%20enlargement%3F,may%20apply%20for%20EU%20membership.>
- https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/enhanced-eu-engagement-western-balkans_en
- <https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/RS21344.html>
- https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/policy-highlights_en

ALBANIA

EU Integration, Issues and Dynamics



Albanian and EU flags, pixabay.com (cc)

EU Integration Process and Timeline

Establishment of diplomatic relations between Albania and the European Economic Community.

June 1991

May 1992

Entry into force of the Trade and Co-operation Agreement

Nov. 1992

1995

The EU adopts a Regional Approach to the countries of South-Eastern Europe - fulfilment of political and economic conditions was of paramount importance.

Feb. 1996

1997

Signature of the Trade and Co-operation Agreement between Albania and the European Economic Community

First failed attempt for Association Agreement with EU - pre-mature step – far from EU parameters.

'democratic deficit' - prevented the consolidation of Albania-EU strategic relationship

- Closer relations
- Albania was involved on the Generalized Scheme of Preferences
- Eligibility for funding under PHARE Programme

EU Integration Process and Timeline

- **May 1999** – Stabilization and Association Process launched - Albania became part of this initiative
 - Aim: closer relations between the EU and Albania - commitments with regard to political, economic, trade, and human rights reforms fulfilment, as well as promotion of regional cooperation.
 - Supporting the domestic reforms and the close regional cooperation – to help countries in improving their perspective for an EU membership
- **1999** – Albania benefits from Autonomous Trade Preferences with the EU.
- **November 1999** – EC report on the feasibility study for opening negotiations with Albania for the signing of the SAA: Albania did not meet the conditions for such an agreement.
- **June 2000** – The Feira European Council: “potential candidates” status.
- **November 2000** –SAP for Albania (together with other WB countries) launched – connecting country progress with EU accession possibility (Zagreb Summit)
- EU created High-Level Leading Group: Albania – EU - to estimate Albania’s capacities in undertaking the tasks for a SAA with the EU.
- **2001** – EC: many tasks to be completed but negotiations were considered as best way for preserving the temper of political changes and economic reforms

EU Integration Process and Timeline

The European Council invites the Commission to present draft negotiating directives for the negotiation of the SAA with Albania.

June 2001

2001

First year of the implementation of the CARDS Programme

Adoption of the negotiating directives for the negotiation of the SAA with Albania.

Oct. 2002

31 Jan. 2003

President of EU Commission, Mr. Romano Prodi officially launches the negotiations for the SAA between EU and Albania.

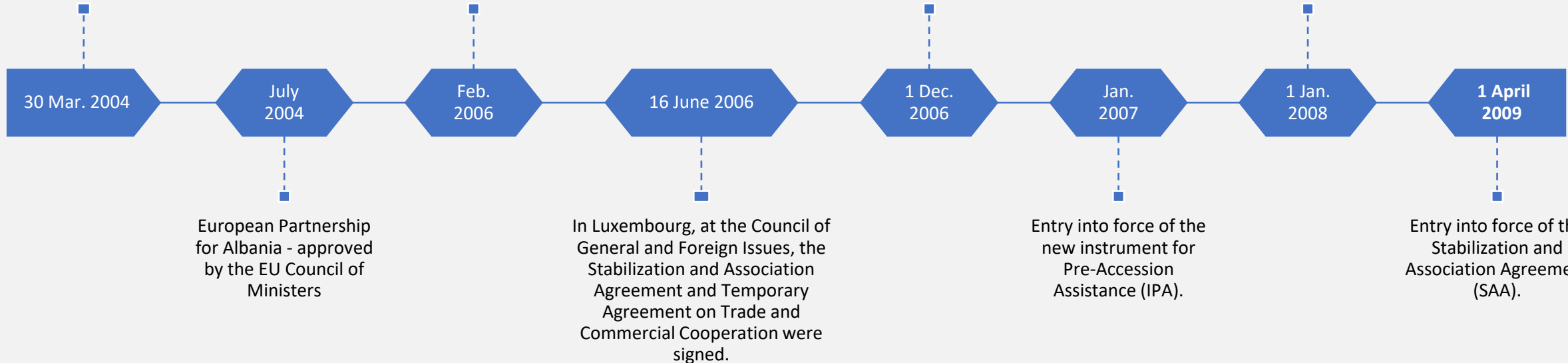
The Thessaloniki Summit confirms the EU perspective of the Western Balkan countries

June 2003

Albania - political stability and the progress of reforms allowed for starting the negotiations with Albania for a SAA. Consolidation of the good political climate and a sustainable policy for reforms - a pre-condition for further progress towards the EU. The focus should be on effective application of reforms

EU Integration Process and Timeline

The European Commission presented the European Partnership for Albania - short and midterm priorities of the country towards the European integration



SAP and Albania

- Entered in force – 1 April 2009, after ratification by all EU member states
- To bring Albania closer to EU by creating mechanisms allowing cooperation on common interests of parties; to establish the political and economic stability of the candidate state
- Albania needed to comply with the criteria determined by the European Council of Copenhagen in June 1993: ensure democracy, rule of law, application of the human and minority rights, provide a market economy able to face the competition pressure of the European common market and be able to respond the obligations resulting from its own democratic and integrating processes.
- According to SAA, (Article 1), the EU would:
 - i. support Albania's efforts in strengthening the democracy and the rule of law;
 - ii. contribute on political, economic and institutional stability in Albania and regional stability;
 - iii. ensure a suitable structure for the political dialogue allowing the development of close political relations between parties;
 - iv. support Albania's efforts on developing the economic and international cooperation, also through approaching both its legislation and Community's;
 - v. support Albania's efforts to complete the transition in a functional market economy, provide economic relations and develop gradually a free trade area between the Community and Albania;
 - vi. (vi) stimulate regional cooperation in all areas affected by the Agreement.

SAP and Albania

The General Framework of SAA

Four Pillars:

1. Political dialogue and the regional cooperation: attitudes on international issues, safety and stability in Europe, regional cooperation, development of good neighborhood relations

2. Trade dispositions related to progressive exchange liberalization until establishing a free trade area among parties: free trade area, invalidate custom duties on imports towards Albania for the goods originated from the Community and vice versa, administrative cooperation to fight against irregularities and custom fraud, removing barriers on transport for goods and services.

3. Community freedom: free movement of employees working legally in the territory of a member country, the right of economic and professional activity for each citizen, in every member country, free movement of capital.

4. Cooperation on priority areas, especially in justice and internal issues: attention to strengthening the rule of law and institutions on all levels, administration in general and laws on managing the justice system, independence of the judicial system; economic cooperation and social cooperation.

Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA)

- **IPA's five components:** 1. Transition Assistance and Institution Building (TAIB), 2. Cross-border Cooperation (CBC), 3. Regional Development, 4. Human Resource Development and 5. Rural Development.
- **IPA 1 (2007-2013) – Albania:** TAIB component aimed at financing capacity-building and institution-building + CBC component between Albania and other IPA beneficiary countries to diversify and improve the regional/local economy in a socially and environmentally sustainable way.
- **IPA II (2014-2020) – Albania (€639.5 million)**
 - Articles 1 and 2 of the IPA II Regulation: (a) reforms in preparation for Union membership and related institution- and capacity building; (b) socio-economic and regional development; (c) employment, social policies, education, promotion of gender equality, and human resources development; (d) agriculture and rural development; (e) regional and territorial cooperation.
- **IPA III (2021-2027) – Albania**
 - Five thematic windows and provides an indicative allocation per area of support: Window 1: Rule of law, fundamental rights and democracy; Window 2: Good governance, EU acquis alignment, good neighbourly relations and strategic communication; Window 3: Green agenda and sustainable connectivity; Window 4: Competitiveness and inclusive growth; Window 5: Territorial and cross border cooperation.

Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA)

- Between 2021-2024 the EU has allocated over €500million of financial and technical assistance to Albania under IPA III. Assistance is provided in the form of non-repayable grants.
- This includes:
 - €80 million Energy Support Package, which supported vulnerable families and SMEs in Albania in dealing with energy prices.
 - Over €30 million support for improving the protection of the environment and developing inclusive and gender responsive circular economy and sustainable green growth in Albania.
 - €115 million support for rehabilitation and reconstruction of schools and cultural sites following the devastating 2019 earthquake.
- The EU's EIP for the Western Balkans identifies 10 flagship investments in sustainable transport, clean energy, environment and climate, digital future, human capital and the private sector, to support a green and digital transition and bring the region closer to the EU's single market. Since 2020 - €1.4 billion in investments (€600million in EU grants).
- As part of this Growth Plan, Albania was invited to prepare a Reform Agenda focusing on reforms to unlock national and regional growth potential and related to the fundamentals of the enlargement process, including the rule of law, democracy, the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms.
- The Commission approved the Reform Agenda of Albania in October 2024- €922.1 million in non-repayable grants and favourable loans subject to progress on Reform Agenda implementation.

EU Integration Process and Timeline

The Albanian government submits its application for the EU Membership.

28 Apr. 2009

May 2010

Endorsement by the Council of the decision to grant visa liberalisation to Albanian citizens

Nov. 2010

The EC adopts a proposal to enable citizens of Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina to travel to Schengen countries without needing a short-term visa.

Visa Liberalization

- On 1 January 2008, Visa Facilitation Agreements entered into force with five Western Balkan countries – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia - first concrete step towards visa exemption for their citizens.
- A visa liberalisation dialogue was opened in 2008 and roadmaps for visa liberalisation were established.
- November 2010 - Endorsement by the Council of the decision to grant visa liberalisation to Albanian citizens.
- The decisions on visa free access to the Schengen area are based on the progress made by the countries concerned in implementing major reforms in areas such as the strengthening of the rule of law, combating organised crime, corruption and illegal migration and improving their administrative capacity in border control and security of documents.
- Citizens of Albania possessing biometric passports will be able to travel to and throughout the Schengen area without a visa.
- The visa free regime concerns stays of up to 90 days.

EU Integration Process and Timeline

The EC delivers its Opinion on Albania's Application for EU Membership, neither granting candidate status, nor proposing to open negotiations

12 key priorities to be addressed by Albania (proper functioning of Parliament, strengthening the rule of law, accomplishment of the public administration reforms, fighting corruption and against organized crime, strengthening property rights, reinforcing the protection of human rights and improving the treatment of the detainee)

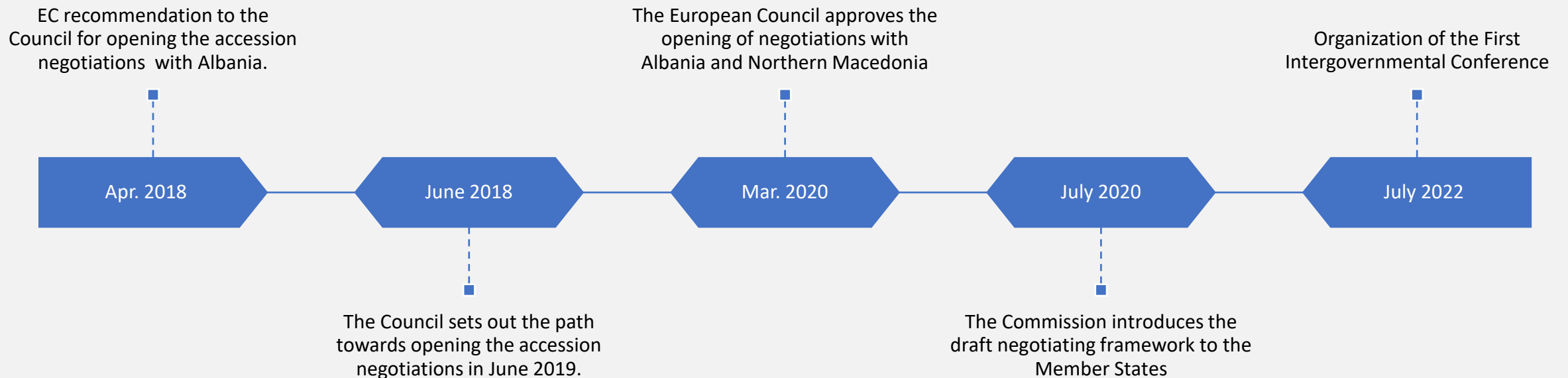
The Commission, based in the progress achieved, recommends granting of candidate status to Albania (country should continue to take action in the fight against corruption)



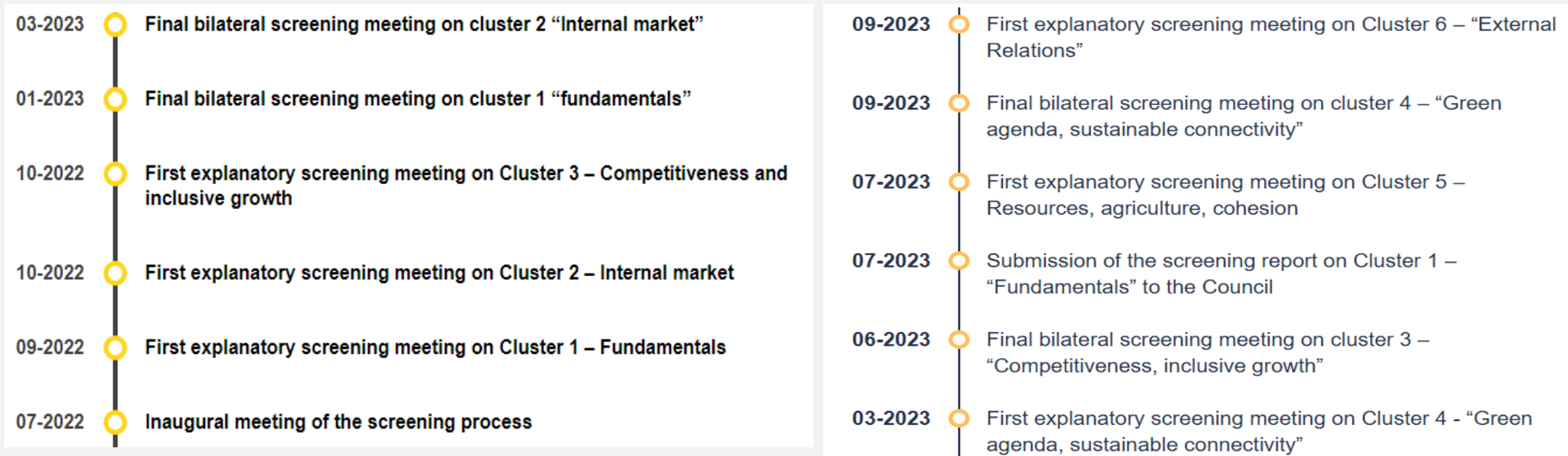
Candidate Status

- Granted on June 2014 - Being recognized as an EU candidate country has investments and implications for Albania.
- It is an important political signal for Albania and its citizens, showing that the country is moving to the next phase of integration.
- From an economic perspective, candidate status will encourage foreign investments and, as a result, lead to job creation.
- The candidate status raises the relationship between Albania and the EU to a higher level: Albania will now receive invitations to Council meetings open to candidate countries.
- Its access and cooperation with EU agencies will be easier – for example its participation in the Fundamental Rights Agency as an observer.
- Joint Committees between Albania and the Committee of Regions as well as the Economic and Social Committee might also be set up.
- As a candidate country, Albania will continue to profit from EU funds under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) in order to carry out comprehensive reforms and strategic investments, and will benefit from the participation in EU programmes.
- Requires: intensification of its efforts to ensure a sustained, comprehensive and inclusive implementation of the key priorities, notably the reform of the public administration and the judiciary, the fight against organized crime and corruption, the protection of human rights and anti-discrimination policies including in the area of minorities and their equal treatment, and implementation of property rights.

EU Integration Process and Timeline



Negotiation Process



October 2024 - The EU opened negotiations on Cluster 1-Fundamentals with Albania (decoupling from North Macedonia)

December 2024 - The EU opened negotiations on Cluster 6 - External Relations with Albania including chapter 30 on external relations and chapter 31 on foreign, security and defence policy

EU Integration Issues

- The fulfillment of the three criteria: political, economic and EU standards through the *acquis communautaire* represents one of the main long-term challenges for Albania.
- The integration agenda during the transition years has been characterized by a mixture of achievements as well as limitations and failures - Characterized by slow pace of integration.
- In terms of economic and political development hindered by the lack of basic preconditions
 - weak institutions and governance, political instability and polarisation, high emigration rates, weak rule of law, corruption allegations, underdeveloped infrastructure, high dependency on foreign aid etc.
- The 5 key priorities: corruption, organized crime, judiciary, administrative reform, and human rights
- Other issues: role of domestic elites, historical legacies, weak stateness (corruption and organized crime)

EU Integration Challenges

- Different starting point from CEE - At the end of the 1980s, Albania was the only country in Europe that had no political or economic ties with the European Community (EC) - Diplomatic relations were established in June 1991
- 1995 an assessment on the possibility to open negotiations - new *sui generis* agreement with Albania similar to CEE countries – LOST Opportunity – 1996 contested elections and 1997 collapse of the pyramid schemes.
- Added EU accession criteria.
- Up until 2000 - the reports generally indicated difficulties in consolidating its democracy and the rule of law.
- Political crises in Albania – prolonging phases - The long period of time spent on the negotiating table for the finalization of the SAA is linked to the quality and speed of the reforms as well as to the lack of political seriousness for carrying out necessary reforms during this process.

EU Integration Challenges

1. Overcoming the political instability in relations between ruling parties and opposition, the creation of trust between parties in order not to aggravate into disability;
2. Empowering the public administration by increasing its negotiating capacities and the ability to implement the laws Albania adopts;
3. The functioning of powers as sanctioned by the constitution;
4. Defining a clear economic model by considering the principle of sustainable development, thus minimizing the informal economy that is mainly supported by remittances from migration and which stimulates apathy, lack of competition; sometimes also acting as a cover to corruption and forms of economic crimes.

EU Integration Challenges

- Albania's steep road to the EU is first and foremost linked to the democratic state-consolidation process - weaknesses of the democratic system and the extreme polarization of political life in the country
- Despite high donations for capacity building of the public administration, “public administration syndrome” in Albania is associated with “Albanian election syndrome”.
- Political rotation - civil servants are part of the so-called “spoils system” that damages the quality of the administration.
- Capacities of the public administration remain weak – need to be strengthened through the continuous qualifications and a well-defined career and wage system.
- Civil society sector and the media should serve as a “watch dog”, especially to monitor the implementation of national strategies and European integration commitments.
- This requires a good knowledge on the European integration process, as well as the inclusion of experts in public debates on these issues.
- Therefore, it is needed for consulting with civil society organizations and other actors in society to play a role on reforms related to legal and administration.

EU Integration Prospective

- Albania's capacities and eventual readiness to join the European Union?

EU Integration Prospective

- Albania's capacities and eventual readiness to join the European Union?
- Political ruling elite's will crucial – primary actors to work on complying with EU standards
- Formal vs behavioral compliance?
- Obstacles for Albania's EU integration process: political developments in country: political instability, political polarization, fragile democracy; lack of democratic culture; corruption and organized crime.
- Justice reform, as the most important political reform in Albania during the last 29 years, should be apolitical, impartial, independent, transparent and credible.

EU Integration Prospective

- Due to the start of the EU accession talks, the hope of the Albanians that the country is heading towards the EU path has increased.
- According to the survey conducted by “Barometer in Euronews Albania” in December 2022 (www.euronews.al):
 - 35.9% of Albanians believe that the country might join in five years, which is a rather promising figure compared to 2021 when only 16.4% of Albanians believed this.
 - Those who think that Albania will join the EU in 10 years also slightly increased, from 29.3% in 2021 to 32.2% in 2022.
 - Those who thought that Albania will need more than 15 years to join the EU, from 14.1% in 2021 has decreased to 9.5% in 2022
 - Those who think that the doors of the EU will never be opened for Albania: from 23.6% in 2021 dropped to 3.5% in 2022 (20.1% less),
 - Overall, 53.3% of Albanians think that Albania is closer to EU membership.
 - 95% of Albanians support membership in the EU - very encouraging and should be exploited accordingly while it lasts.
- How do you explain the support?

EU Integration Prospective

- Due to the start of the EU accession talks, the hope of the Albanians that the country is heading towards the EU path has increased.
- According to the survey conducted by “Barometer in Euronews Albania” in December 2022 (www.euronews.al):
 - 35.9% of Albanians believe that the country might join in five years, which is a rather promising figure compared to 2021 when only 16.4% of Albanians believed this.
 - Those who think that Albania will join the EU in 10 years also slightly increased, from 29.3% in 2021 to 32.2% in 2022.
 - Those who thought that Albania will need more than 15 years to join the EU, from 14.1% in 2021 has decreased to 9.5% in 2022
 - Those who think that the doors of the EU will never be opened for Albania: from 23.6% in 2021 dropped to 3.5% in 2022 (20.1% less),
 - Overall, 53.3% of Albanians think that Albania is closer to EU membership.
 - 95% of Albanians support membership in the EU - very encouraging and should be exploited accordingly while it lasts.
- How do you explain the support?
 - **Real, lack of information on benefits and drawbacks on EU integration process, political propaganda?**

Some recommendations

- The justice reform in Albania needs to proceed in a faster pace, with more concrete results in the aspect of the establishment and functioning of the new institutions particularly those on the top of the system: the Constitutional Court and the High Court.
- Albanian politicians should take good stock of the EU recommendations and reflect on wider concerns from other member states as well.
- Albanian political class is in serious need of introspection in order to solve the political crisis
- Improving its image in the foreign environment.
- Reform agenda - implementation

Sources

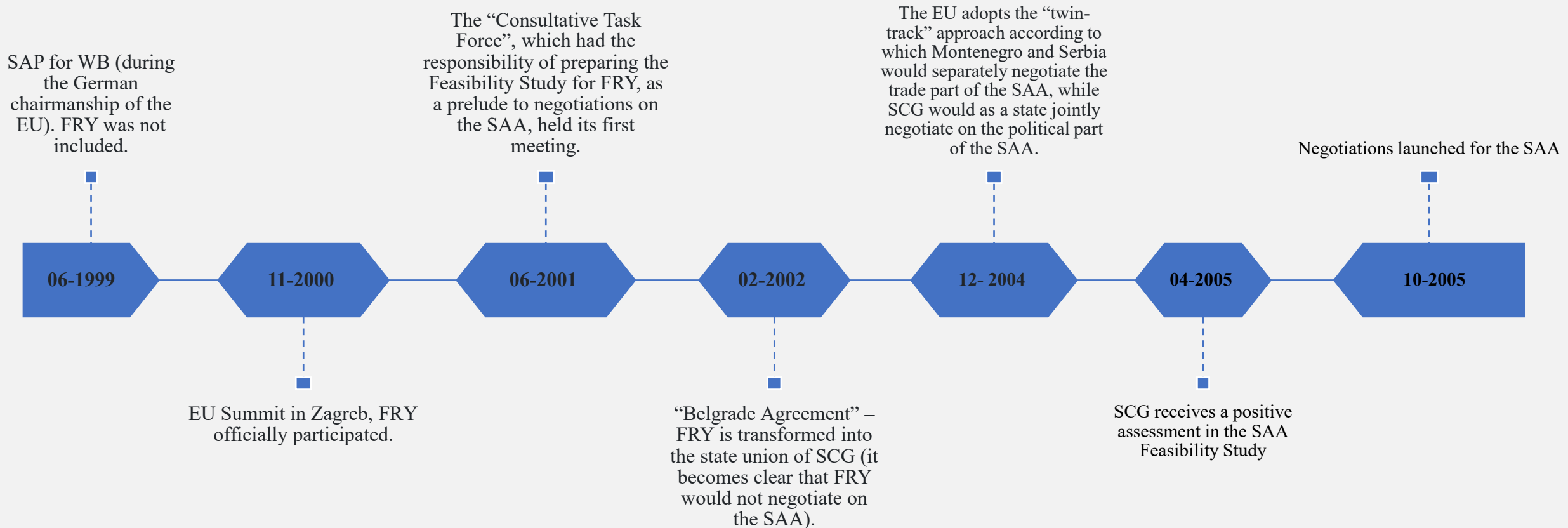
- Elbasani, A. (2013), p.85-99
- Uvalić, M. (2023). Chapter 13, 293-313
- MEPJ, Relations between Albania and the EU, <https://integrimi-ne-be.punetegashtme.gov.al/en/anetaresimi-ne-be/historiku/>
- European Commission, European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), Enlargement, Albania https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/albania_en
- European Commission, European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), Enlargement, Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA), Albania https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/overview-instrument-pre-accession-assistance/albania-financial-assistance-under-ipa_en
- Council of the EU, Council Conclusions on Albania, General Affairs Council Meeting Luxembourg, 24 June 2014 <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/21900/143354.pdf>
- Council of the EU, Visa Liberalization for Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brussels, 8 November 2010 https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/jha/117555.pdf
- Nexhipi, D. A., & Erjon Nexhipi. (2019). Albania's European Perspective and the Albanian Politics. *European Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*, 4(3), 37–48. <https://doi.org/10.26417/798kkv34t>
- Çela, L. (2018). Albanias challenging Path to EU Integration in the 21st Century. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 1(1), 6–12. <https://doi.org/10.26417/ejss.v1i1.p7-13>
- European Integration of the Western Balkans: Making a Realistic Perspective out of a Shifting Target <https://aiis-albania.org/sites/default/files/EUROPEAN%20INTEGRATION%20OF%20THE%20WESTERN%20BALKANS.pdf>
- Shehaj, E. (2015). Challenges of Albania towards the European Integration. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 6(4), 571. <https://www.richtmann.org/journal/index.php/mjss/article/view/7116>
- <https://euronews.al/en/how-are-things-going-in-our-country-albanians-respond-to-the-barometer/>

SERBIA

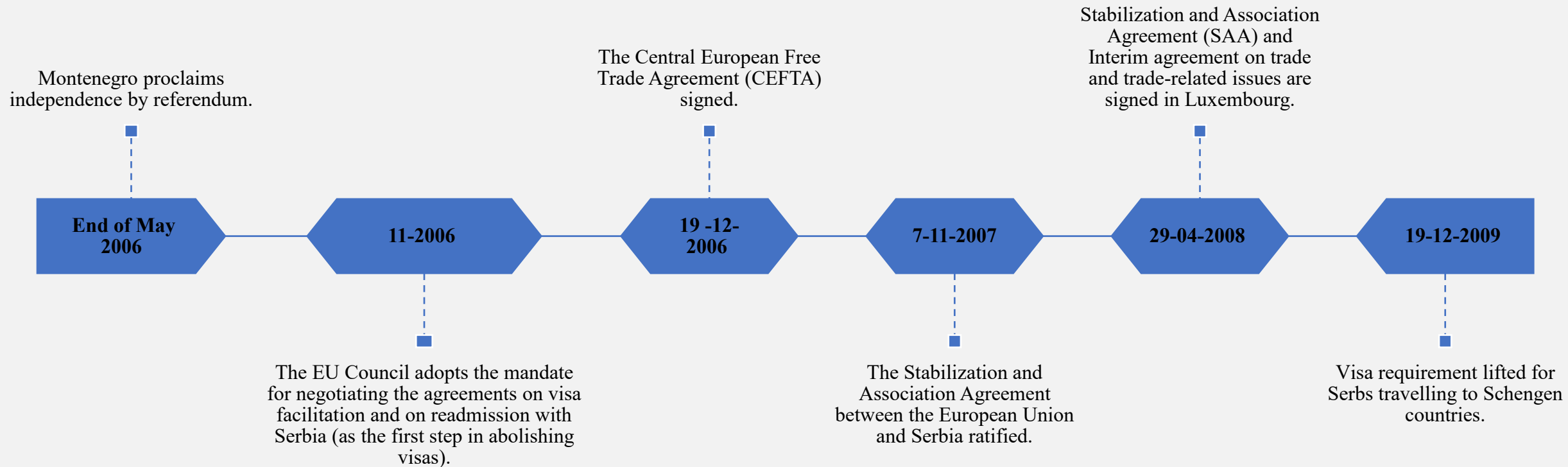
EU Integration, Issues and Dynamics



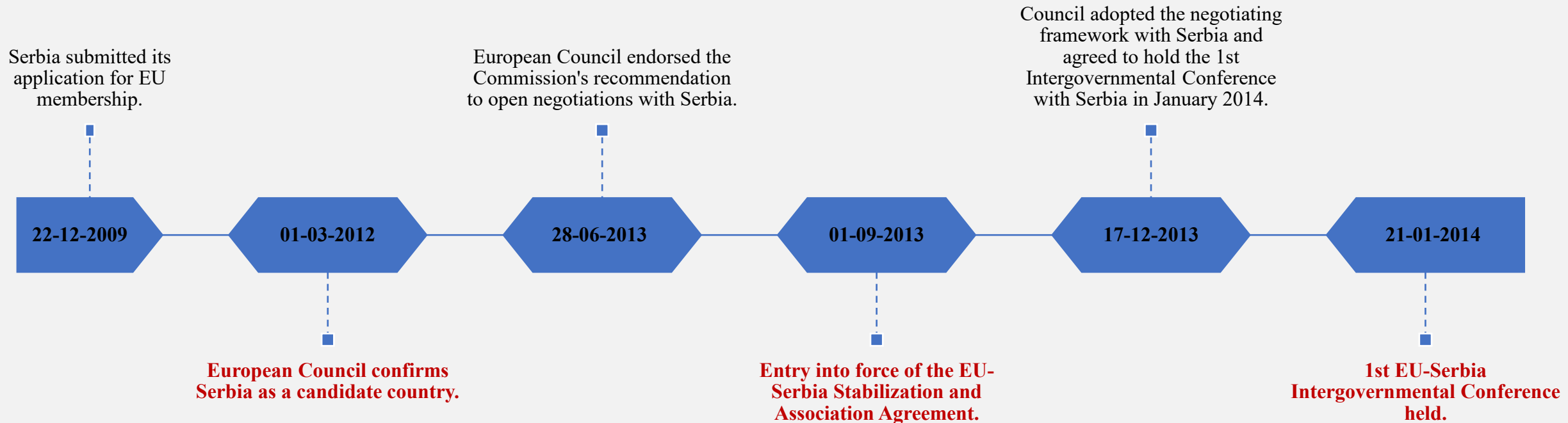
EU Integration Process and Timeline



EU Integration Process and Timeline



EU Integration Process and Timeline



SAP and Serbia

The decision has applied since 22 July 2013 and the SAA agreement since 1 September 2013.

The aims of the agreement are to:

- support the efforts of Serbia to strengthen democracy and the rule of law;
- contribute to political, economic and institutional stability in Serbia, as well as to the stabilization of the region;
- provide an appropriate framework for political dialogue, allowing the development of close political relations between the EU and Serbia;
- support the efforts of Serbia to develop its economic and international cooperation, including through aligning its laws more closely with those of the EU;
- support the efforts of Serbia to complete the transition into a functioning market economy;
- promote harmonious economic relations and gradually develop a free trade area between the EU and Serbia;
- foster regional cooperation in all the fields covered by this agreement.

SAA and Serbia

General principles

- respect democratic principles and human rights, principles of international law — including full cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia — the rule of law and the principles of market economy;
- cooperate and contribute to countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their means of delivery, including by:
- fulfil international obligations;
- promote international and regional peace and stability and develop good neighbourly relations with the other countries of the region, including Serbia's commitment to continue fostering cooperation;
- fight against terrorism.

Political dialogue

Regional Cooperation

Free movement of goods

Movement of workers, establishment, supply of services and movement of capital

Alignment of the laws of the country to those of the EU

Justice, Freedom and Security

Cooperation Policies

Financial Cooperation

Supervision

Benefits of SAA for Serbia?

- The SAA - one of the necessary steps towards the abolition of visas for Serbian citizens because every country that wishes to be on the “White Schengen List” must have such an agreement ratified.
- Greater product safety and consumer protection - to avoid serious consequences for the health of the population.
- Lower product prices and substantially more choices due to trade liberalisation with the EU. Serbia and Serbian producers have been given access to a market of 490 million. This has resulted in a constant increase in exports from Serbia and a reduction in the trade deficit in trade with the EU.
- Giving a clear signal to investors about the stability of the situation in the country – alignment of national legislation with EU law, conditions for investment and business are becoming recognisable and predictable to foreign investors.
- The signing of the SAA - a necessary step towards acquiring the status of candidate for membership, thus creating conditions for opening the remaining 3 components of the IPA pre-accession fund (rural development, regional development and human resources development), as well as opportunities for the use of significantly larger EU funds.
- SAA is a legal basis for the improvement of cooperation between Serbia and the EU in a number of areas: economic and commercial policy, statistics, banking, insurance and financial services, auditing and financial control, promotion and protection of investments, industrial cooperation, small and medium-sized enterprises, tourism, agriculture and agro-industrial sector, fishery, customs, taxation, social cooperation, education and training, cultural cooperation, collaboration in the audiovisual field, information society, electronic communications networks and services, information and communications, transport, energy, nuclear safety, environment, research and technological development, regional and local development and public administration.

Pre-Accession Assistance

- The Republic of Serbia - beneficiary of this instrument since 2007 on the basis of the Framework Agreement on assistance that the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia ratified in 2007.
- IPA (2007-2013): of a total of EUR 11.5 billion, about EUR 1.4 billion was allocated for the Republic of Serbia. This assistance was provided to Serbia as a potential candidate for EU accession through the first two out of five IPA Components: **1. Transition and Institution Building; 2. Cross-Border Cooperation, 3. Regional Development, 4. Human Resource Development and 5. Rural Development.**
- IPA II (2014-2020), of a total of EUR 11.7 billion, approximately EUR 1.5 billion have been allocated for the Republic of Serbia.
 - implementation of the necessary reforms that are a prerequisite for accession to the EU and for economic and social development.
 - Support is mostly reflected in the provision of training and professional development services, in the procurement of necessary equipment, infrastructure building, etc.
 - focus of support on the sectors of public administration reform, rule of law, environmental protection, employment, education, entrepreneurship, science and research, transport, energy, agriculture, etc.
- IPA III (2021-2027), of a total of EUR 14.162 billion, approximately EUR 1.4 billion have been allocated for the Republic of Serbia.
 - The new instrument will enhance the lead from the EU, as its programming is based on thematic priorities rather than country envelopes.
 - focusing on rule of law and respect of fundamental values, strengthening democratic institutions and public administration reform, promoting economic governance and reforms towards competitiveness.

Accession Negotiations Process

14-12-2015 Opening of Chapters 32 "financial control" and 35 "other issues - Item 1: Normalisation of relations between Serbia and Kosovo*".

18-07-2016 Opening of Chapters 23 "Judiciary and fundamental rights" and 24 "Justice, freedom and security".

13-12-2016 Opening of Chapters 5, Public procurement, and 25, Science and Research.

27-02-2017 Opening of Chapters 20, Enterprise and industrial policy, and 26, Education and culture.

20-06-2017 Opening of Chapters 7, Intellectual property law, and 29, Customs Union.

11-12-2017 Opening of Chapters 6, Company law, and 30, External relations.

25-06-2018 Opening of Chapters 13, Fisheries and 33, Financial and Budgetary Provisions

10-12-2018 Opening of Chapters 17, Economic and Monetary Policy and 18, Statistics

27 -06- 2019 Opening of Chapters 9, Financial Services

10 -12-2019 Opening of Chapters 4, Free Movement of Capital

Accession Negotiations Process

- **14-12-2015** Revised methodology
- **June 2021-** The first political Intergovernmental Conference under the revised enlargement methodology is held to provide political steer to the accession process
- **December 2021-** Opening of cluster 4 on Green agenda and sustainable connectivity
 - Opening of cluster 4 on Green agenda and sustainable connectivity (comprising of 4 negotiating chapters: chapter 14 - Transport policy, chapter 15 - Energy, chapter 21 - Trans-European networks, and chapter 27 - Environment and climate change)
- **By December 2021-** 22 out of 35 chapters have been opened (including all chapters under cluster 1 on the fundamentals of the process and cluster 4 on Green agenda and sustainable connectivity), two of which are provisionally closed.

Accession Negotiations Process

- Since 2020 the EU has mobilized €6.2 billion in investments (€1.4 billion in EU grants) for Serbia - EIP.
- The Commission approved the Reform Agenda of Serbia in October 2024. €1.586 billion in non-repayable grants and favourable loans will be available to Serbia when it meets the conditions it has committed to in its own Reform Agenda
- A specific pre-condition applies to Serbia and Kosovo who must engage constructively in the normalisation of their relations. The EU is Serbia's.
- The EU is the largest provider of financial assistance to Serbia
 - €30 million to strengthen the independence, efficiency and competence of the judiciary, improving the access to justice and the quality of the services to citizens and raising the level of trust in the judicial system.
 - €43.5 million for public administration and public financial management to foster a merit-based, transparent, accountable public services and strengthen Serbia's budget execution and public internal financial control.
 - •€165 million Energy Support Package which supported vulnerable families and SMEs in Serbia in dealing with rising energy prices.

EU Integration Issues and Challenges

- Normalization of Relations with Kosovo
- Euroscepticism
- Post Ukrainian War context – Geopolitical game?
- Leadership/Authoritarianism - democratic backsliding?
- Stability prior to democratic transformation - conditionality has been insufficiently successful outside the high-political domain.
- Serbia needs to show its overall preparedness in meeting both the Copenhagen criteria and overcoming the political challenges.
- *“Following Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine, Serbia aligned with some EU positions in international forums (including in the UN General Assembly). Serbia has continued to cooperate with the EU on sanctions circumvention and providing financial and humanitarian support to Ukraine. However, it still does not align with any restrictive measures against the Russian Federation and has not aligned with most of the High Representative statements on this matter. It has maintained high-level relations with the Russian Federation and intensified its relations with China, raising questions about Serbia’s strategic direction. Under the EU-Serbia negotiating framework, Serbia is expected to progressively align its policies towards third countries with the policies and positions adopted by the EU, including restrictive measure.” (European Commission Report on Serbia, 2024: 3)*
- Last report (2024) - no, limited or some progress; Only environment and climate change (Ch.27) – good progress.

EU Integration Issues and Challenges

- Student Presentation
- Discussion

Sources

- European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), Enlargement – Serbia https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/serbia_en
- European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), Enlargement, Instrument for Pre-accession-Serbia Assistance (IPA) https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/overview-instrument-pre-accession-assistance/serbia-financial-assistance-under-ipa_en
- EU in Serbia, Accession Negotiations <https://europa.rs/accession-negotiations/?lang=en>
- Ministry of European Integration of the Republic of Serbia, Serbia and EU History <https://www.mei.gov.rs/eng/serbia-and-eu/history/>
- Ministry of European Integration of the Republic of Serbia, Serbia and EU Stabilization and Association Agreement <https://www.mei.gov.rs/eng/serbia-and-eu/stabilisation-and-association-agreement/>
- EUR-Lex, Stabilisation and Association Agreement with Serbia <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/stabilisation-and-association-agreement-with-serbia.html>
- Petrović, Miloš. (2019) “EU integration process of Serbia: a vicious circle of high politics?” The Review of International Affairs, LXX(1175): 23-48.
- Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (2022) – Serbia’s Progress in EU Integration 2020-2022 Constitutional Changes the Only Step Forward <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/belgrad/19212-20220525.pdf>
- Jana Juzová, Nikola Burazer, Oszkár Roginer (2022) Serbia’s EU Accession Path: European Integration Without Democratization?, Policy Paper <https://europeum.org/data/articles/serbia-s-eu-accession-path-european-integration-without-democratization.pdf>

NORTH MACEDONIA

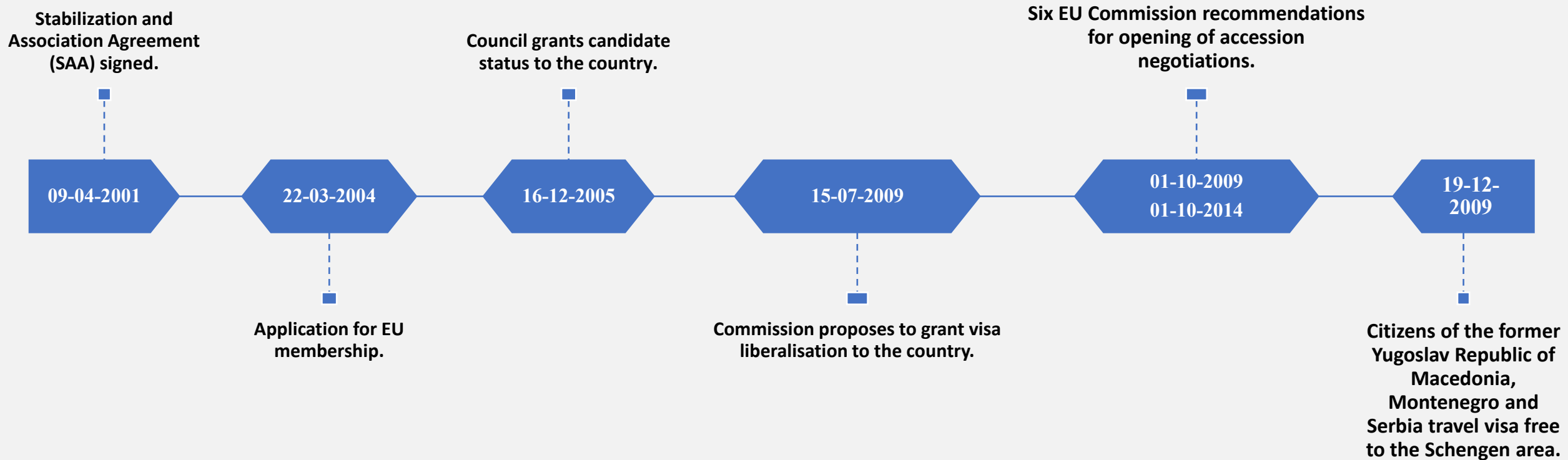
EU Integration, Issues and Dynamics



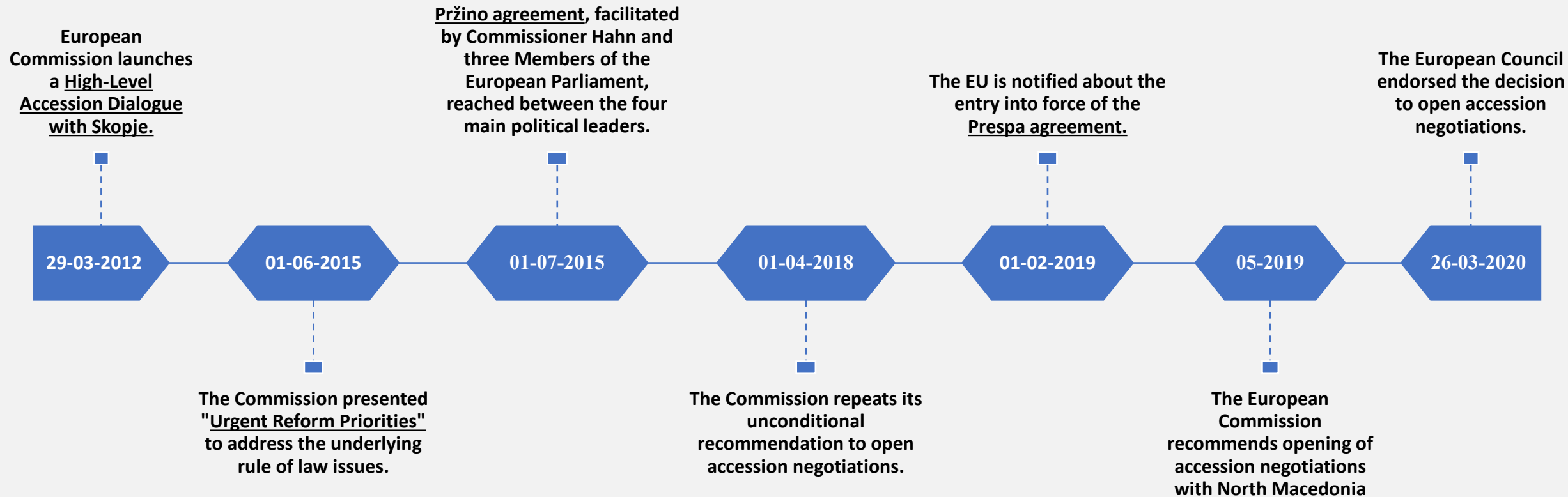
Background Information - Milestones

- North Macedonia - identified as a potential candidate for EU membership during the Thessaloniki European Council summit in 2003.
- Stabilization and Association Agreement, the first in the region- in force since 2004.
- It applied for EU membership in March 2004 and the Council decided in December 2005 to grant the country candidate status.
- Since October 2009, the Commission has continuously recommended to open accession negotiations with North Macedonia
- Commission repeated its unconditional recommendation to open accession negotiations in April 2018.
- In light of the significant progress achieved and the conditions set unanimously by the Council in June 2018 having been met, in May 2019 the Commission reiterated its recommendation to open accession negotiations with North Macedonia.
- In March 2020, the members of the European Council endorsed the General Affairs Council's decision to open accession negotiations with North Macedonia.
- In July 2020 the draft negotiating framework was presented to the Member States.
- In July 2022, the Intergovernmental Conference on accession negotiations was held with North Macedonia. The Commission started the screening process.

EU Integration Process and Timeline



EU Integration Process and Timeline



SAA and North Macedonia

- The SAP seeks to stabilize the region with the prospect of future EU membership for candidate countries and potential candidates from the region.
- Decision 2004/239/EC marks the European Union's (EU's) conclusion of the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) with North Macedonia.
- The country was the first in the Western Balkans to sign a [Stabilization](#) and Association Agreement (SAA) with the EU, which entered into force in April 2004. The SAA aims to liberalise trade for 95% of exports to the EU.
- The aims of the agreement are to:
 - ✓ support the efforts of North Macedonia to strengthen democracy and the rule of law;
 - ✓ contribute to political, economic and institutional stability in North Macedonia, as well as to the stabilization of the region;
 - ✓ provide an appropriate framework for political dialogue, allowing the development of close political relations between the EU and North Macedonia;
 - ✓ support the efforts of North Macedonia to develop its economic and international cooperation, including through aligning its laws more closely to those of the EU;
 - ✓ support the efforts of North Macedonia to complete the transition into a functioning market economy;
 - ✓ promote harmonious economic relations and gradually develop a free trade area between the EU and the North Macedonia;
 - ✓ foster regional cooperation in all the fields covered by this agreement.

SAA and North Macedonia

General principles

Political dialogue

Regional Cooperation

Free movement of goods

Movement of workers, establishment, supply of services and movement of capital

Alignment of the laws of the country to those of the EU

Justice, Freedom and Security

Cooperation Policies

Financial Cooperation

Supervision

Accession Partnership

- The current Partnership supersedes the Partnership of 2006 and updates it by identifying new priorities. European Partnerships are flexible instruments designed to reflect the progress made by the countries concerned and to highlight the efforts still required in other areas as identified by the Commission's evaluations.
- Implementation of the Partnership is monitored within the framework of the SAP- Progress Reports.
- The short- and medium-term priorities are classified as follows:
 - the key priorities are short-term priorities. They focus on the application of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA), the establishment of a constructive political dialogue, the implementation of the police law, the demonstration that sustainable progress has been made in implementing judicial reforms and anti-corruption legislation, the civil service, including the prevention of political interference in the recruitment and the career of officials, the creation of jobs and the consolidation of the rule of law in order to improve the business climate;
 - the requirements relating to the political criteria cover democracy and the rule of law (implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, the electoral process, the public authorities, the administration, the judicial system, the fight against corruption); respect for human rights and the protection of minorities (through compliance with international and European standards, such as those of the Council of Europe; the creation of law-enforcement bodies and judicial and prison administrations; the fight against discrimination; the protection of human, women's and children's rights; the equitable representation of communities and access to education for minorities); regional questions and international obligations (cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY); regional cooperation and dialogue, including the implementation of the Central European Free Trade Agreement; good neighbourly relations, and in particular finding a negotiated and mutually acceptable solution for the country's name; implementation of cooperation agreements with neighbouring countries, notably on cross-border cooperation, the fight against organised crime, trafficking and smuggling, the management of external borders, readmission and the environment);
 - the requirements relating to the economic criteria for strengthening legal certainty for economic operators (the registration of land and real estate) and the functioning of the market economy; the improvement of public services (creation and modernisation of infrastructures); the viability of the electricity market; the quality of public spending and of education; labour market performance and the reduction of unemployment; the integration of the informal economy into the formal economy and the modernisation of national infrastructures for improving the economy's competitiveness, particularly with regard to energy and transport;
 - the ability to assume the obligations of membership concerning the adoption and implementation of the Community acquis regarding a certain number of EU policies classified under headings.

Accession Negotiations Process

- Once accession negotiations have been opened, the negotiations take place at an **intergovernmental conference** (also called an 'accession conferences') between ministers and ambassadors of EU member states and the candidate country.
- On 19 July 2022, the EU held its first intergovernmental conference with North Macedonia.
- Inaugural Meeting of the Screening Process
- In December 2023, the country completed the screening process.
- https://multimedia.europarl.europa.eu/da/video/accession-negotiations-north-macedonia-albania_I179645
- https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/north-macedonia_en

Pre-Accession Assistance

- The Republic of North Macedonia - beneficiary of this instrument since 2007
- The Accession Partnership serves as a reference instrument for determining the different areas where funds are allocated (according to identified priorities). The decisions which establish the various financial instruments and programming documents provide the actual legal framework for the financial assistance.
- IPA (2007-2013): of a total of EUR 11.5 billion, approximately 401.1 million
 - Allocated to the first two out of five IPA Components: 1. Transition and Institution Building; 2. Cross-Border Cooperation, 3. Regional Development, 4. Human Resource Development and 5. Rural
 - Development. Institution Building; One part of the assistance (Component I- Transition Assistance and Institution Building) focuses on implementing the main priorities of the European partnership. In particular it involves investment and measures aiming at institution building, as well as transition and stabilization measures still necessary in the Western Balkans. It is delivered through annual national and multi-beneficiary programmes.
 - The other part of the assistance (Component II- Cross Border Cooperation) supports cross-border cooperation activities between the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and EU member states as well as with a potential candidate country, i.e. Albania. It also helps the country to participate in the European Territorial Co-operation trans-national programme 'South-East Europe'.
- IPA II (2014-2020), of a total of EUR 11.7 billion, approximately EUR 609 million
 - The priority sectors for funding in this period are: Democracy & governance, Rule of law & fundamental rights, Environment & climate action, Transport, Competitiveness & innovation, Social development, Agriculture & rural development, Regional and territorial cooperation.
- IPA III (2021-2027), of a total of EUR 14.162 billion
 - Thematic rather than country based
 - Themes: rule of law and respect of fundamental values, strengthening democratic institutions and public administration reform,
 - promoting economic governance and reforms towards competitiveness.

Pre-Accession Assistance - TAIEX

Technical Assistance and Information Exchange (TAIEX)

- The EU also offers support through the TAIEX, which helps partner countries become acquainted with, apply and enforce EU laws.
- TAIEX funds short-term technical assistance, advice and training.
- TAIEX assistance is open to:
 - Civil servants.
 - Judiciary and law enforcement authorities.
 - Parliaments/legislative bodies and their staff.
 - Professional/commercial associations, workers and employers' groups.
 - Translators and revisers of legislative texts.
 - In addition, the TAIEX Local Administration Facility (LAF) supports seminars on key EU policies which have an impact at a local level for both elected members and permanent officials of local and regional authorities.

EU Integration Path Dynamics

- Economic partnership - The EU is North Macedonia's main trading partner, accounting for 77.5% of the country's exports and 51% of its imports. Germany is the biggest trading partner of the country, followed by Great Britain, Serbia, China and Greece.
- The process of EU integration - imposition of bilateral conditions - bilateral agreements with Greece and Bulgaria
- Minorities – status
- Backsliding on reforms related to EU membership, especially in the area of rule of law, democracy, fundamental rights
- The judiciary is a particular area of concern, with negative assessments highlighting the lack of independence and integrity, as well as susceptibility to political influence. Corruption remains a pervasive issue, exacerbated by legislative changes that have reduced penalties for related crimes.
- The political environment is deeply polarized, leading to legislative gridlocks and weakening of democratic institutions.
- EU has offered a potential resolution to the deadlock caused by Bulgaria's veto through a constitutional reform that would pave the way to the opening of the country's first negotiating cluster with the EU
- Comfortable to broaden its strategic alliances, including with illiberal figures
- Need to shift to genuine economic and normative convergence with the EU.
- constitutional amendments - recognize additional minorities

Sources

- European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), Enlargement – North Macedonia https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/north-macedonia_en
- European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), Enlargement, Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA)- North Macedonia https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/overview-instrument-pre-accession-assistance/north-macedonia-financial-assistance-under-ipa_en
- European Council, EU Enlargement – North Macedonia <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/enlargement/republic-north-macedonia/#application>
- EUR-Lex, Stabilisation and Association Agreement with North Macedonia <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/stabilisation-and-association-agreement-with-north-macedonia.html>
- Publication Office of the EU, Accession Partnership with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia http://publications.europa.eu/resource/cellar/89249492-33bc-4f5b-8192-f0e05f8b3acf.0002.02/DOC_2
- Delegation of the European Union to North Macedonia https://www.eas.europa.eu/north-macedonia/european-union-and-north-macedonia_en?s=229
- European Commission, Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Urgent Reform Priorities for the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia(2015) https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2016-12/20150619_urgent_reform_priorities.pdf
- European Commission, MEMO/12/187 Skopje, 15 March 2012 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/memo_12_187
- European Commission, Commission Staff Working Document, North Macedonia 2022 Report <https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-10/North%20Macedonia%20Report%202022.pdf>
- <https://www.blue-europe.eu/analysis-en/short-analysis/the-struggle-of-north-macedonia-for-eu-accession-gazing-at-the-2024-elections/>
- <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/report/north-macedonia-a-reform-agenda-on-the-path-to-eu-integration/>

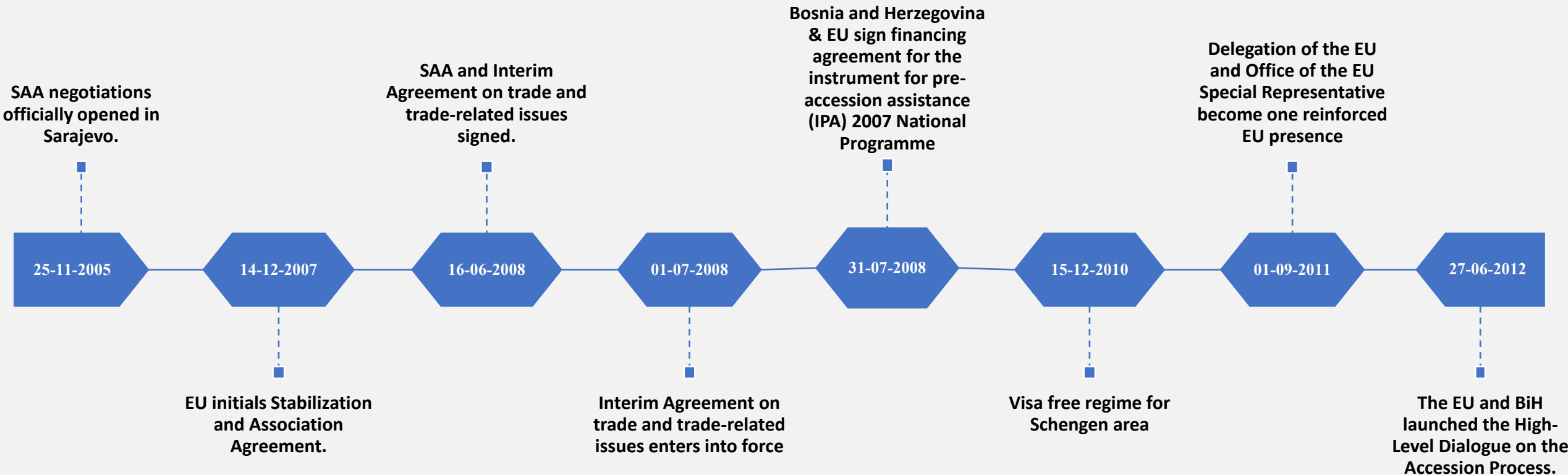
Bosnia and Herzegovina EU Integration, Issues and Dynamics



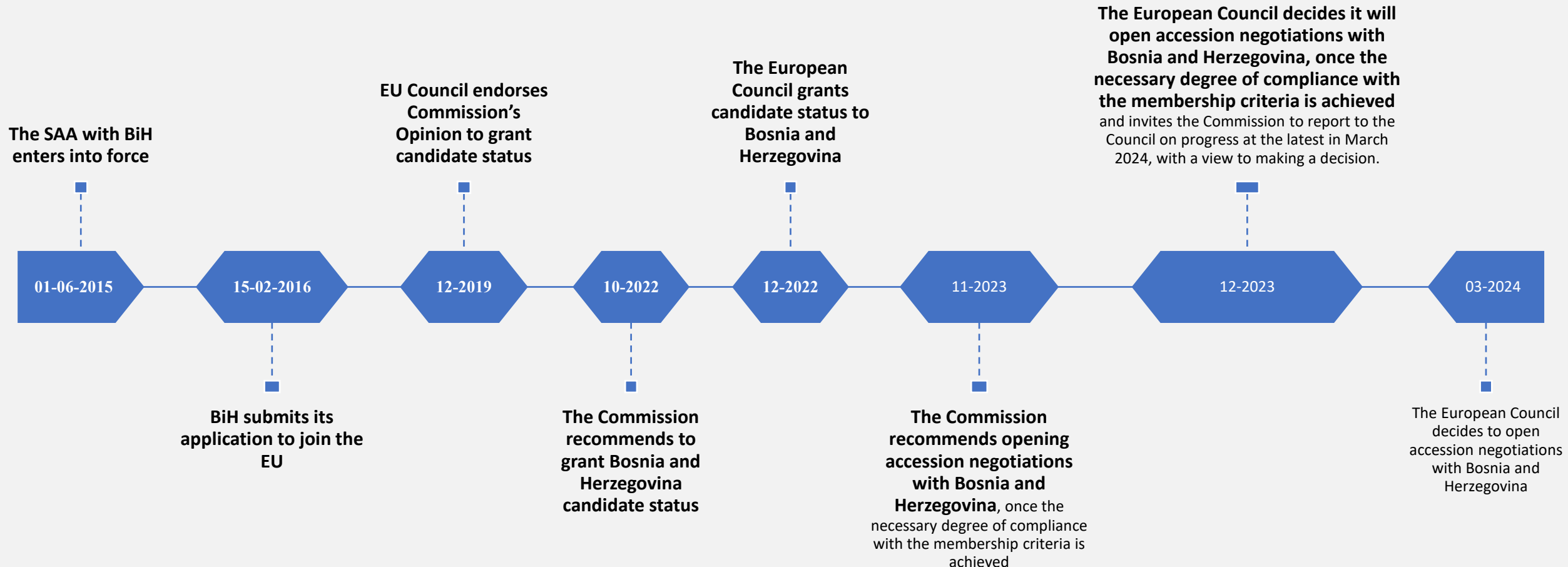
Background Information - Milestones

- Bosnia and Herzegovina - potential candidate for EU membership in Thessaloniki European Council summit in June 2003.
- Number of agreements between the EU and Bosnia and Herzegovina have entered into force - visa facilitation and readmission agreements (2008), Interim Agreement on Trade and Trade-related issues (2008, SAA(2015))
- Bosnia and Herzegovina applied for EU membership in February 2016.
- The Commission's opinion EU membership - May 2019 - 14 key priorities for the country
- The EU Council endorsed the Opinion and key priorities in December 2019 – candidate status
- Deep reforms in the areas of democracy/functionality, the rule of law, fundamental rights and public administration reform.
- The EU continues to deploy considerable resources in Bosnia and Herzegovina within the framework of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).
- The current EU Special Representative (EUSR) - Luigi Soreca - also Head of the Delegation of the European Union.
- The EUFOR/Althea mission continues to be present in Bosnia and Herzegovina with around 600 troops with an executive mandate to maintain a stable and secure environment in the country.
- 2024- EU Council decision to open accession negotiations with BiH

EU Integration Process and Timeline



EU Integration Process and Timeline



Political Relations

- SAA - signed on 16 June 2008 in Luxembourg along with an Interim Agreement
- The SAA is a tool that provides the formal mechanisms and timelines of reforms that will bring BiH closer to EU standards.
- Since the signing of the SAA, BiH institutions have been obliged to ensure that its existing laws and future legislation are gradually made compatible with the EU law.
- BiH institutions are also obliged to ensure that all existing and future legislation is fully implemented.
- Established bodies in BiH: Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee, Stabilisation and Association Council, Stabilisation and Association Committee (may establish sub-committees too).
- In the early stages of the SAA's implementation, the legal approximation needs to focus on fundamental elements of the Internal Market acquis as well as on other trade related Issues.
- The legal approximation process has to be carried out on the basis of a programme that needs to be agreed between the European Commission and BiH- clearly defines the responsibilities and obligations of each level of government in relation to this process

Political Relations

- The main elements of the SAA focus on the ‘four freedoms’ and measures to implement and enforce the EU standards and norms in all areas:
 - Promoting integration of BiH into the community of democratic nations;
 - Respect for principles of international law and rule of law;
 - Respect for democratic principles, human rights and freedom of media
 - Developing a market economy;
 - Fostering regional cooperation;
 - Promoting the free movement of goods;
 - Boosting economic growth and competitiveness;
 - Creating efficient institutions; Reducing crime and corruption;
 - Improving the quality of life of citizens;
 - Promoting better education and creation of jobs;
 - Improving the region’s energy and transport infrastructure.

Political Relations

- Following the endorsement of the Written Commitment by Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2015, and in line with the Council conclusions of 15 December 2014, the necessary conditions were met for the SAA to enter into force on 1 June 2015.
- After Bosnia and Herzegovina submitted its application for EU membership on 15 February 2016, the EU Council invited the European Commission to deliver its Opinion on the country's EU membership application.
- The European Commission published its Opinion on the country's EU membership application and Analytical Report - May 2019.
 - the Commission assessed BiH's application on the basis of the country's capacity to meet the criteria set by the European Council in Copenhagen in 1993, as well as in Madrid in 1995- country's administrative capacity and the conditions of the SAP.
 - welcomed by the Council, the opinion identified 14 key priorities that BiH needs to meet in order to be recommended for the opening of accession negotiations with the EU.
- Key priorities - the areas of democracy/functionality (5 key priorities); rule of law (3); fundamental rights (5); and public administration reform (1).
- On 15 October 2019 the Council of Ministers of BiH on its extraordinary session adopted an Action Plan for the Implementation of Priorities from the European Commission Analytical Report
 - 729 planned measures for implementation of 115 priorities set by the European Commission Analytical Report.
- From 2020- annual reports on BiH focused on the implementation of these key priorities.
- 2022-2024 – candidate status and decision to open negotiations
- Commission to prepare the negotiating framework the moment all relevant steps set out in the Commission's recommendation of October 2022 are taken

Economic Relations and Technical Support

- The EU is Bosnia and Herzegovina's biggest trading partner.
- In 2020, 60.6% of the country's imports originated from the EU, while 72.3% of its exports went to the EU.
- About two-thirds of the country's stock in FDI originates in EU countries.
- Bosnia and Herzegovina participated in an economic dialogue with the EU.
- Every year the country submits to the European Commission a medium-term Economic Reform Programme (ERP), setting out plans to strengthen macro-fiscal stability and tackle structural obstacles to growth. Based on the ERP, BiH meets annually with the Commission, EU Member States and all other enlargement countries at the Economic and Financial Dialogue, aimed at preparing the country for its future participation in EU economic policy coordination.
- Following the expiration of the 2015-2018 'Reform Agenda', a new set of socio-economic reforms needs to be implemented by the governments at all levels in the country, in full alignment with the policy guidance set out in the joint conclusions of the Economic and Financial Dialogue.
- The EU remains committed to supporting this process through grants, loans and technical assistance.
- As part of this Growth Plan, Bosnia and Herzegovina was invited to prepare a Reform Agenda focusing on reforms to unlock national and regional growth potential and related to the fundamentals of the enlargement process, including the rule of law, democracy, the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Economic Relations and Technical Support

- Socio-economic reforms are key for BiH's progress towards a functioning market economy – an important prerequisite for the country's ultimate membership in the EU.
- The ERP 2.0 defines three areas and 12 structural reforms out of which each candidate country needs to select up to two structural reforms in each of the three areas.
- The EU is to provide technical support to BiH in the next two years in order to conduct the diagnostics of structural obstacles, define the needed reforms as well as measures and activities necessary to achieve them.

The three reforms (12 Structural reforms):

1. Competitiveness (a. Business environment, and reduction of the informal economy, b. Reform of State-owned enterprises, c. Economic integration reforms, d. Agriculture, industry and services, e. Research, development and innovation)
2. Sustainability and resilience (a. Green transition/digital transformation, b. Energy market reforms, c. Transport market reforms)
3. Human Capital and Social Policies (a. education and skills, b. Employment and labour market, c. Social protection and inclusion, d. Health care).

Financial Assistance

- The EU provides significant financial assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- From 1996 to 2007, Bosnia and Herzegovina benefitted from EU financial assistance under the Phare, OBNOVA and CARDS programmes.
- Since 2007, Bosnia and Herzegovina benefit from EU assistance mainly under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA), which the EU Delegation to BiH is responsible for implementing via direct management.
- Adoption of robust sector strategies remains key for BiH's preparation and eligibility for funding for the IPA III strategic framework.
- Bosnia and Herzegovina has progressively extended its participation in EU programmes, partly co-financed through IPA funds.
- BiH currently takes part in COSME, Creative Europe, Customs 2020, Europe for Citizens, Erasmus+, Fiscalis 2020, Horizon 2020, and the Third Programme for the Union's action in the field of health. Bosnia and Herzegovina also takes part in the INTERREG programme.
- At the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, the EU committed €7 million for addressing immediate public health system needs across BiH and €73.5 million towards socioeconomic recovery projects. In early May 2021, EU assistance worth an additional €13.7 million for the procurement of COVID-19 vaccines has been mobilised.
- The Accession Partnership serves as a reference instrument for determining the different areas where funds are allocated (according to identified priorities). The decisions which establish the various financial instruments and programming documents provide the actual legal framework for the financial assistance.

Financial Assistance

- IPA (2007-2013): Allocated to the first two out of five IPA Components: 1. Transition and Institution Building; 2. Cross-Border Cooperation, 3. Regional Development, 4. Human Resource Development and 5. Rural
- Bilateral IPA II Indicative funding allocations in the period 2014-2020 amount to €552.1 million (including funds for the Civil Society Facility (€ 9.1 million), Regional Housing Programme (€ 10 million) and special measures following 2014 floods (€ 51 million)).
 - The priority sectors for funding in this period are: Democracy & governance, Rule of law & fundamental rights, Environment & climate action, Transport, Competitiveness & innovation, Social development, Agriculture & rural development, Regional and territorial cooperation (Albania and Kosovo).
- IPA III (2021-2027)
 - Thematic rather than country based
 - Themes: rule of law and respect of fundamental values, strengthening democratic institutions and public administration reform,
 - promoting economic governance and reforms towards competitiveness.

Peace and Security

- The European Union continues to support the implementation of the General Framework Agreement for Peace signed at Dayton/Paris in 1995.
- The EU launched the military Operation, EUFOR Althea, in December 2004.
 - The main objectives of Operation Althea include providing capacity-building and training to the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, supporting BiH efforts to maintain the safe and secure environment in BiH;
 - providing deterrence and continued compliance with the responsibility to fulfill the role specified in Annexes 1A and 2 of the Dayton/Paris Agreement, as a legal successor to SFOR.
- From January 2003 until June 2012, the European Union Police Mission (EUPM) in BiH supported the country's rule of law institutions in the fight against organized crime and corruption and provided advice on new police laws, as the first-ever CSDP mission launched by the EU.
- In 2012, the EU Delegation/EUSR in BiH took over providing strategic support to law enforcement in BiH.
- Without prejudice to the military chain of command, the EU Special Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina offers political guidance to the EUFOR Commander on military issues with a local political dimension.

Rule of Law

- Policy dialogue between BiH and the EU on the rule of law has taken place since 2011 in the context of the Structured Dialogue on Justice, and since December 2016 in the framework of the SAA Sub-committee on Justice, Freedom and Security.
- Three of the 14 key priorities outlined in the European Commission Opinion of May 2019 specifically target reforms in the rule of law area.
- The Structured Dialogue on Justice has been assisting Bosnia and Herzegovina to consolidate an independent, effective, efficient and professional judicial system.
- The reform of the criminal jurisdiction of the state-level judiciary remains pending, while the Draft Law on BiH Courts, which shall regulate this issue has not yet been finalized in line with the *acquis*.
- In December 2019, the Expert Report on Rule of Law Issues in BiH ('Priebe Report') was issued as the outcome of an EU initiative to enhance the monitoring of the rule of law.
- Findings pointed to a series of deeply concerning rule of law deficiencies in BiH, which the EU urged all relevant authorities in BiH to start addressing urgently. As underlined by the report, citizens' demands for justice must be heard and seriously addressed.

EU Integration Issues and Challenges

- Student Presentation
- Discussion

Sources

- European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), Enlargement – Bosnia and Herzegovina https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/bosnia-and-herzegovina_en
- European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), Enlargement, Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA)- Bosnia and Herzegovina https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/overview-instrument-pre-accession-assistance/bosnia-and-herzegovina-financial-assistance-under-ipa_en
- EUR-Lex, Stabilisation and Association Agreement with Bosnia and Herzegovina <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/stabilisation-and-association-agreement-with-bosnia-and-herzegovina.html>
- European Commission, Commission Staff Working Document, Bosnia and Herzegovina 2022 Report <https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-10/Bosnia%20and%20Herzegovina%20Report%202022.pdf>
- Delegation of the European Union to Bosnia and Herzegovina https://www.eeas.europa.eu/bosnia-and-herzegovina/european-union-and-bosnia-and-herzegovina_en?s=219
- Delegation of the European Union to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Stabilization and Association Process https://europa.ba/?page_id=490
- Denis Bećirović (2023), On the European path, European integration, IPS Journal, https://www.ips-journal.eu/topics/european-integration/on-the-european-path-6438/?utm_campaign=en_1063_20230112&utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter

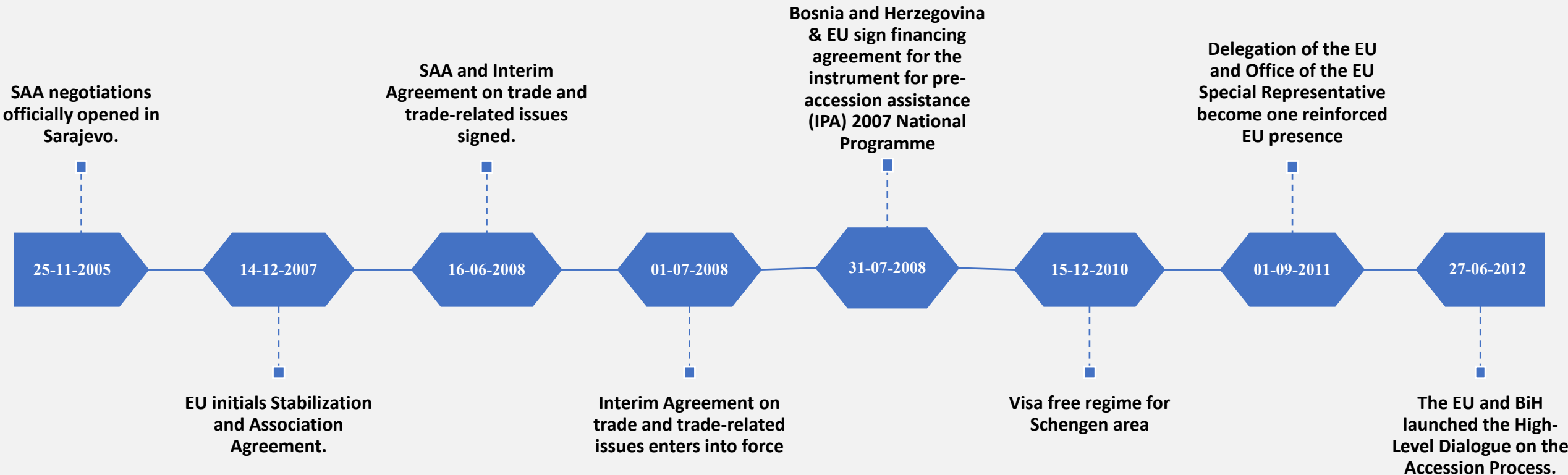
Bosnia and Herzegovina EU Integration, Issues and Dynamics



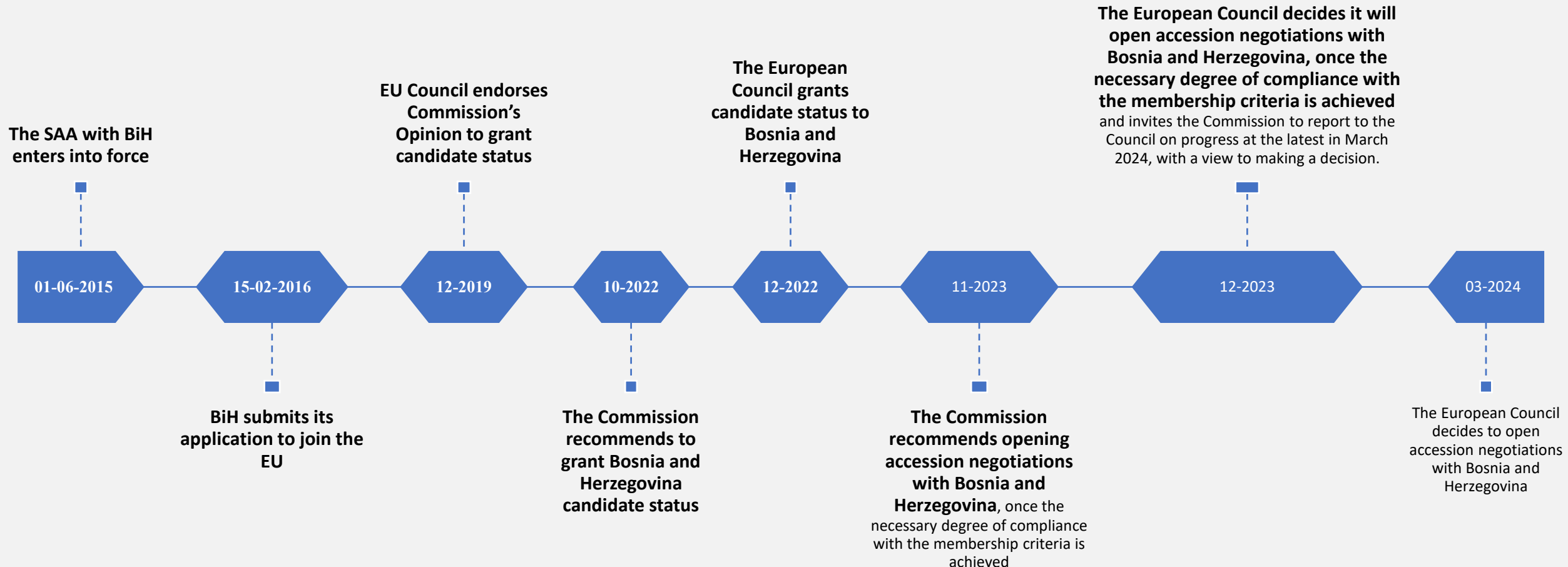
Background Information - Milestones

- Bosnia and Herzegovina - potential candidate for EU membership in Thessaloniki European Council summit in June 2003.
- Number of agreements between the EU and Bosnia and Herzegovina have entered into force - visa facilitation and readmission agreements (2008), Interim Agreement on Trade and Trade-related issues (2008, SAA(2015))
- Bosnia and Herzegovina applied for EU membership in February 2016.
- The Commission's opinion EU membership - May 2019 - 14 key priorities for the country
- The EU Council endorsed the Opinion and key priorities in December 2019 – candidate status
- Deep reforms in the areas of democracy/functionality, the rule of law, fundamental rights and public administration reform.
- The EU continues to deploy considerable resources in Bosnia and Herzegovina within the framework of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).
- The current EU Special Representative (EUSR) - Luigi Soreca - also Head of the Delegation of the European Union.
- The EUFOR/Althea mission continues to be present in Bosnia and Herzegovina with around 600 troops with an executive mandate to maintain a stable and secure environment in the country.
- 2024- EU Council decision to open accession negotiations with BiH

EU Integration Process and Timeline



EU Integration Process and Timeline



Political Relations

- SAA - signed on 16 June 2008 in Luxembourg along with an Interim Agreement
- The SAA is a tool that provides the formal mechanisms and timelines of reforms that will bring BiH closer to EU standards.
- Since the signing of the SAA, BiH institutions have been obliged to ensure that its existing laws and future legislation are gradually made compatible with the EU law.
- BiH institutions are also obliged to ensure that all existing and future legislation is fully implemented.
- Established bodies in BiH: Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee, Stabilisation and Association Council, Stabilisation and Association Committee (may establish sub-committees too).
- In the early stages of the SAA's implementation, the legal approximation needs to focus on fundamental elements of the Internal Market acquis as well as on other trade related Issues.
- The legal approximation process has to be carried out on the basis of a programme that needs to be agreed between the European Commission and BiH- clearly defines the responsibilities and obligations of each level of government in relation to this process

Political Relations

- The main elements of the SAA focus on the ‘four freedoms’ and measures to implement and enforce the EU standards and norms in all areas:
 - Promoting integration of BiH into the community of democratic nations;
 - Respect for principles of international law and rule of law;
 - Respect for democratic principles, human rights and freedom of media
 - Developing a market economy;
 - Fostering regional cooperation;
 - Promoting the free movement of goods;
 - Boosting economic growth and competitiveness;
 - Creating efficient institutions; Reducing crime and corruption;
 - Improving the quality of life of citizens;
 - Promoting better education and creation of jobs;
 - Improving the region’s energy and transport infrastructure.

Political Relations

- Following the endorsement of the Written Commitment by Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2015, and in line with the Council conclusions of 15 December 2014, the necessary conditions were met for the SAA to enter into force on 1 June 2015.
- After Bosnia and Herzegovina submitted its application for EU membership on 15 February 2016, the EU Council invited the European Commission to deliver its Opinion on the country's EU membership application.
- The European Commission published its Opinion on the country's EU membership application and Analytical Report - May 2019.
 - the Commission assessed BiH's application on the basis of the country's capacity to meet the criteria set by the European Council in Copenhagen in 1993, as well as in Madrid in 1995- country's administrative capacity and the conditions of the SAP.
 - welcomed by the Council, the opinion identified 14 key priorities that BiH needs to meet in order to be recommended for the opening of accession negotiations with the EU.
- Key priorities - the areas of democracy/functionality (5 key priorities); rule of law (3); fundamental rights (5); and public administration reform (1).
- On 15 October 2019 the Council of Ministers of BiH on its extraordinary session adopted an Action Plan for the Implementation of Priorities from the European Commission Analytical Report
 - 729 planned measures for implementation of 115 priorities set by the European Commission Analytical Report.
- From 2020- annual reports on BiH focused on the implementation of these key priorities.
- 2022-2024 – candidate status and decision to open negotiations
- Commission to prepare the negotiating framework the moment all relevant steps set out in the Commission's recommendation of October 2022 are taken

Economic Relations and Technical Support

- The EU is Bosnia and Herzegovina's biggest trading partner.
- In 2020, 60.6% of the country's imports originated from the EU, while 72.3% of its exports went to the EU.
- About two-thirds of the country's stock in FDI originates in EU countries.
- Bosnia and Herzegovina participated in an economic dialogue with the EU.
- Every year the country submits to the European Commission a medium-term Economic Reform Programme (ERP), setting out plans to strengthen macro-fiscal stability and tackle structural obstacles to growth. Based on the ERP, BiH meets annually with the Commission, EU Member States and all other enlargement countries at the Economic and Financial Dialogue, aimed at preparing the country for its future participation in EU economic policy coordination.
- Following the expiration of the 2015-2018 'Reform Agenda', a new set of socio-economic reforms needs to be implemented by the governments at all levels in the country, in full alignment with the policy guidance set out in the joint conclusions of the Economic and Financial Dialogue.
- The EU remains committed to supporting this process through grants, loans and technical assistance.
- As part of this Growth Plan, Bosnia and Herzegovina was invited to prepare a Reform Agenda focusing on reforms to unlock national and regional growth potential and related to the fundamentals of the enlargement process, including the rule of law, democracy, the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Economic Relations and Technical Support

- Socio-economic reforms are key for BiH's progress towards a functioning market economy – an important prerequisite for the country's ultimate membership in the EU.
- The ERP 2.0 defines three areas and 12 structural reforms out of which each candidate country needs to select up to two structural reforms in each of the three areas.
- The EU is to provide technical support to BiH in the next two years in order to conduct the diagnostics of structural obstacles, define the needed reforms as well as measures and activities necessary to achieve them.

The three reforms (12 Structural reforms):

1. Competitiveness (a. Business environment, and reduction of the informal economy, b. Reform of State-owned enterprises, c. Economic integration reforms, d. Agriculture, industry and services, e. Research, development and innovation)
2. Sustainability and resilience (a. Green transition/digital transformation, b. Energy market reforms, c. Transport market reforms)
3. Human Capital and Social Policies (a. education and skills, b. Employment and labour market, c. Social protection and inclusion, d. Health care).

Financial Assistance

- The EU provides significant financial assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- From 1996 to 2007, Bosnia and Herzegovina benefitted from EU financial assistance under the Phare, OBNOVA and CARDS programmes.
- Since 2007, Bosnia and Herzegovina benefit from EU assistance mainly under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA), which the EU Delegation to BiH is responsible for implementing via direct management.
- Adoption of robust sector strategies remains key for BiH's preparation and eligibility for funding for the IPA III strategic framework.
- Bosnia and Herzegovina has progressively extended its participation in EU programmes, partly co-financed through IPA funds.
- BiH currently takes part in COSME, Creative Europe, Customs 2020, Europe for Citizens, Erasmus+, Fiscalis 2020, Horizon 2020, and the Third Programme for the Union's action in the field of health. Bosnia and Herzegovina also takes part in the INTERREG programme.
- At the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, the EU committed €7 million for addressing immediate public health system needs across BiH and €73.5 million towards socioeconomic recovery projects. In early May 2021, EU assistance worth an additional €13.7 million for the procurement of COVID-19 vaccines has been mobilised.
- The Accession Partnership serves as a reference instrument for determining the different areas where funds are allocated (according to identified priorities). The decisions which establish the various financial instruments and programming documents provide the actual legal framework for the financial assistance.

Financial Assistance

- IPA (2007-2013): Allocated to the first two out of five IPA Components: 1. Transition and Institution Building; 2. Cross-Border Cooperation, 3. Regional Development, 4. Human Resource Development and 5. Rural
- Bilateral IPA II Indicative funding allocations in the period 2014-2020 amount to €552.1 million (including funds for the Civil Society Facility (€ 9.1 million), Regional Housing Programme (€ 10 million) and special measures following 2014 floods (€ 51 million)).
 - The priority sectors for funding in this period are: Democracy & governance, Rule of law & fundamental rights, Environment & climate action, Transport, Competitiveness & innovation, Social development, Agriculture & rural development, Regional and territorial cooperation (Albania and Kosovo).
- IPA III (2021-2027)
 - Thematic rather than country based
 - Themes: rule of law and respect of fundamental values, strengthening democratic institutions and public administration reform,
 - promoting economic governance and reforms towards competitiveness.

Peace and Security

- The European Union continues to support the implementation of the General Framework Agreement for Peace signed at Dayton/Paris in 1995.
- The EU launched the military Operation, EUFOR Althea, in December 2004.
 - The main objectives of Operation Althea include providing capacity-building and training to the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, supporting BiH efforts to maintain the safe and secure environment in BiH;
 - providing deterrence and continued compliance with the responsibility to fulfill the role specified in Annexes 1A and 2 of the Dayton/Paris Agreement, as a legal successor to SFOR.
- From January 2003 until June 2012, the European Union Police Mission (EUPM) in BiH supported the country's rule of law institutions in the fight against organized crime and corruption and provided advice on new police laws, as the first-ever CSDP mission launched by the EU.
- In 2012, the EU Delegation/EUSR in BiH took over providing strategic support to law enforcement in BiH.
- Without prejudice to the military chain of command, the EU Special Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina offers political guidance to the EUFOR Commander on military issues with a local political dimension.

Rule of Law

- Policy dialogue between BiH and the EU on the rule of law has taken place since 2011 in the context of the Structured Dialogue on Justice, and since December 2016 in the framework of the SAA Sub-committee on Justice, Freedom and Security.
- Three of the 14 key priorities outlined in the European Commission Opinion of May 2019 specifically target reforms in the rule of law area.
- The Structured Dialogue on Justice has been assisting Bosnia and Herzegovina to consolidate an independent, effective, efficient and professional judicial system.
- The reform of the criminal jurisdiction of the state-level judiciary remains pending, while the Draft Law on BiH Courts, which shall regulate this issue has not yet been finalized in line with the acquis.
- In December 2019, the Expert Report on Rule of Law Issues in BiH ('Priebe Report') was issued as the outcome of an EU initiative to enhance the monitoring of the rule of law.
- Findings pointed to a series of deeply concerning rule of law deficiencies in BiH, which the EU urged all relevant authorities in BiH to start addressing urgently. As underlined by the report, citizens' demands for justice must be heard and seriously addressed.

EU Integration Issues and Challenges

- Student Presentation
- Discussion

Sources

- European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), Enlargement – Bosnia and Herzegovina https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/bosnia-and-herzegovina_en
- European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), Enlargement, Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA)- Bosnia and Herzegovina https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/overview-instrument-pre-accession-assistance/bosnia-and-herzegovina-financial-assistance-under-ipa_en
- EUR-Lex, Stabilisation and Association Agreement with Bosnia and Herzegovina <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/stabilisation-and-association-agreement-with-bosnia-and-herzegovina.html>
- European Commission, Commission Staff Working Document, Bosnia and Herzegovina 2022 Report <https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-10/Bosnia%20and%20Herzegovina%20Report%202022.pdf>
- Delegation of the European Union to Bosnia and Herzegovina https://www.eeas.europa.eu/bosnia-and-herzegovina/european-union-and-bosnia-and-herzegovina_en?s=219
- Delegation of the European Union to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Stabilization and Association Process https://europa.ba/?page_id=490
- Denis Bećirović (2023), On the European path, European integration, IPS Journal, https://www.ips-journal.eu/topics/european-integration/on-the-european-path-6438/?utm_campaign=en_1063_20230112&utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter

Kosovo*

EU Integration, Issues and Dynamics



*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence

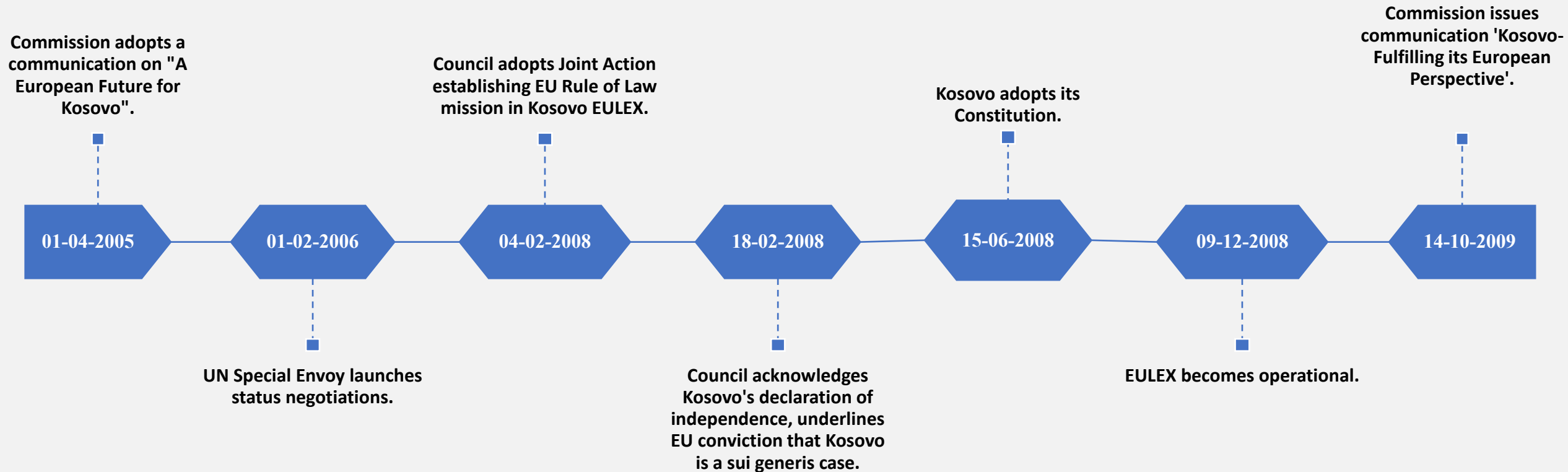
Background Information - Milestones

- Membership status – Potential Candidate
- In 2008 the EU repeated its willingness to assist the economic and political development of Kosovo through a clear European perspective.
- The EU helps contribute to stability in Kosovo through the **EU Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX)** and Special representative in Kosovo.

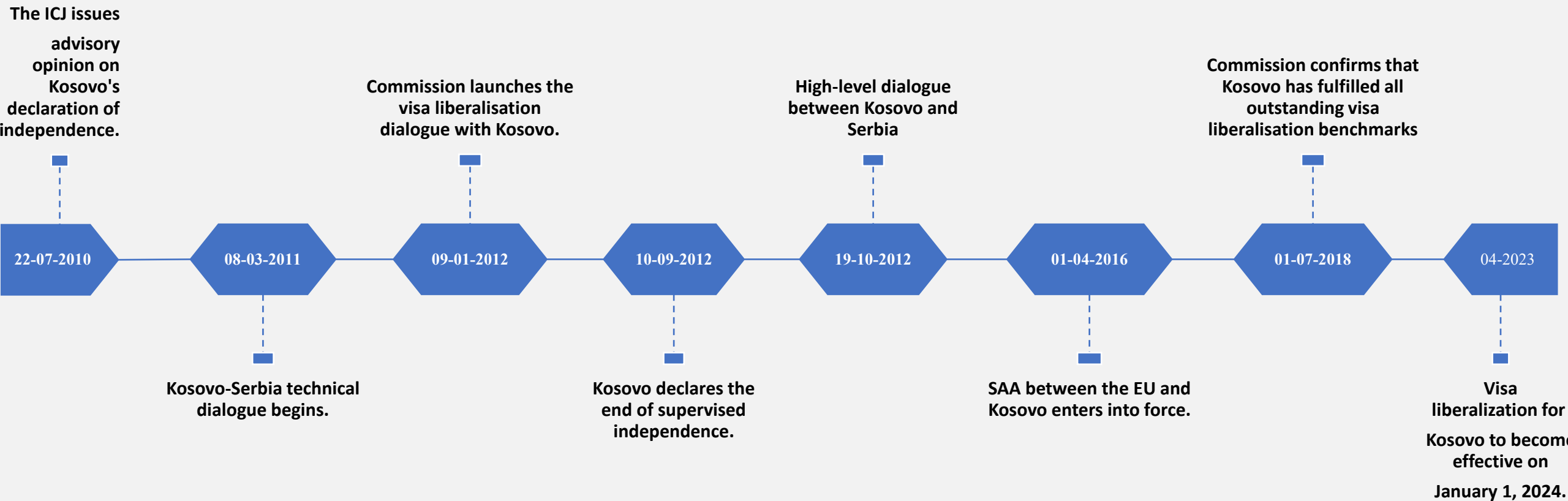


- Launched in 2008 as the largest civilian mission under CSDP
- Overall mission is to support relevant rule of law institutions in Kosovo.
- Current mandate: until 14 June 2025
- Undertakes monitoring activities and has limited executive functions.
- support the Specialist Chambers and Specialist Prosecutor's Office in line with relevant Kosovo legislation.
- Within the framework of UN Security Council Resolution 1244
- Monitoring and operational pillars

EU Integration Process and Timeline



EU Integration Process and Timeline



Political Relations

- EU – leading role in the international effort to build a new future for Kosovo since 1999.
- Kosovo has a clear European perspective as part of the wider Western Balkans region.
- The EU Office in Kosovo - pivotal role in implementing the EU agenda and the promotion of European norms- ensures permanent political and technical dialogue between Kosovo and the EU institutions.
- Through its Special Representative (EUSR) + European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX)
- Stabilization and Association Process

Stabilization and Association Process

- promotes stabilisation and the transition to a market economy, regional cooperation and preparation for EU accession.
- EU - regular meetings with the Kosovar authorities as part of the Stabilisation and Association Process Dialogue (SAPD).
- With the entry into force of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) between the EU and Kosovo on 1 April 2016, the dialogue framework takes place within the SAA framework
- SAA - constitutes the first contractual relationship between the EU and Kosovo. It is a comprehensive agreement that provides a framework for political dialogue and covers cooperation in a wide variety of sectors, including justice and home affairs, trade, education, employment, energy, environment and a range of other policy areas.
- The EU and the Kosovar authorities discuss a wide range of policy issues and agreeing on follow-up actions in meeting conclusions-yearly plenary meetings
- Prior to each Stabilization and Association Process Dialogue, the EU discusses the same issues with local civil society – permanent dialogue since 2008.
- The European Union Office to Kosovo engages in a regular dialogue with civil society organizations during the Progress Report drafting process.

Economic Relations

- EU–member states and its institutions like European Commission – played and continues to play a prominent role in the reconstruction and development of Kosovo.
- The EU is by far the single largest donor providing assistance to Kosovo and the Western Balkan region.
- In the framework of IPA I, IPA II and other EU instruments, from 2007 to 2020, the EU has invested in Kosovo more than €1.5 billion in reconstruction, public administration reform, rule of law, sustainable economic reform, education, agriculture, social development, civil society and media and many other key areas in Kosovo.
- EU’s assistance initially focused on emergency relief actions and reconstruction - now concentrates on promoting Kosovo’s institutions, sustainable economic development and Kosovo’s European future.
- The European Union Office in Kosovo works alongside thirteen EU member states’ embassies in Kosovo, many of which manage substantial financial assistance programmes of their own.
- Four more Member States have representative offices.
- Numerous non-governmental organisations from EU countries are active in Kosovo.
- In the context of the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP, see above) that is seeking to bring Kosovo in line with European norms, the EU has several mechanisms to promote economic development on top of our financial assistance, such as trade concessions, and treaties (Stabilisation and Association Agreements).

Technical and Financial Assistance

- The European Union's political and financial commitment to Kosovo is two-fold.
 1. provides assistance to meet Kosovo's institution-building needs and socio-economic development
 2. provides a substantial contribution to the international presence in Kosovo.
- The EU's financial and technical assistance builds up the capacities of the institutions throughout the accession process, resulting in progressive, positive developments in Kosovo and the region.
- In the past, the EU has provided support to Kosovo under a variety of financial instruments, including Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation (CARDS), macro-financial assistance (MFA) and humanitarian aid.
 - IPA I and II For Kosovo - € 1.2 billion
- IPA III is set to deliver another € 14.5 billion for these countries - € 1.3 billion for Kosovo
 - presents a solid policy-driven approach, with the strategic and dynamic deployment of assistance, putting the 'fundamentals' at its core: the rule of law and respect of fundamental values; strengthening democratic institutions and public administration reform; promoting economic governance and reforms towards competitiveness.
 - increase steer from the Union, with programming based on thematic priorities rather than country envelopes- rewarding performance and progress towards key priorities and an increased flexibility to respond to the evolving needs of the partners in their path towards accession.

Technical and Financial Assistance

- Kosovo also benefits from various instruments: TAIEX, European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) and the Foreign Policy Instrument (FPI), and several EU programmes including Erasmus+, COSME, Europe for Citizens, Creative Europe, Fiscalis, Customs, and during IPA III Horizon Europe.
- Development fund
 - For the municipalities in the north of Kosovo - established as a result of the EU facilitated Dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia.
- COVID
 - EU has granted the government EUR 7.03 million
- Support to Civil Society
 - to improve consultations with civil society representatives and work towards other measures to bolster civil society.

European Union Special Representative



Ambassador Aivo Orav

Role

- offers advice and support to the Government of Kosovo in the political process;
- provides overall coordination for the EU presences in Kosovo
- contributes to the development and consolidation of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in Kosovo.

Political and Policy Coordination

- provides Kosovo authorities with EU's advice and support in political processes and in monitoring and fostering Kosovo's progress on EU-related political and economic priorities
- supports the EU-facilitated Dialogue in coordination with the EUSR for the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue and other Western Balkans regional issues.

Implementation and Monitoring Council

- The EUSR co-chairs the meetings of the Implementation and Monitoring Council together with the Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure.
- Members also include the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, OSCE and the Serbian Orthodox Church.
- This is the only existing mechanism in the area of religious and cultural heritage whereby the Serbian Orthodox Church meets with the Kosovo authorities in order to resolve cases stemming from the armed conflict and the 2004 riots.
- The Council works in accordance with the Law on Special Protective Zones.

European Union Special Representative

- **Political Section**
- **Development Fund** - for the four northern municipalities (Leposavić/Leposaviq, Mitrovica North, Zubin Potok and Zvečan/Zveçan) - established as a result of the EU-facilitated Dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina.
- **Rule of Law, Human Rights and Legal Matters** - day-to-day contribution to the development of the rule of law sector and the advancement of human rights and gender equality in Kosovo.
- **Legislative Review Mechanism** - aimed to ensure coordination and consolidation of the expertise of the EU family on Kosovo's legislation.
- **Mutual Legal Cooperation in Criminal and Civil Matters** - facilitates mutual legal assistance and supports judicial cooperation between Kosovo and its external counterparts as well as countries that do not recognise Kosovo.
- **Human Rights** - development and consolidation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in line with the EU and international standards- technical advice and policy support.
- **Gender Equality** - promoting gender equality as a crucial value to ensure political stability and achieve economic development in Kosovo in accordance with the EU and international standards (advancement of women's rights).
- **Communication Section** - to bring the EUSR work closer to the Kosovo people through traditional and digital media, organisation of events and various other types of communication.
- **Finance and Administration Section** - ensuring effective operational functioning of the office of the EUSR.
- **Security** - directs and manages the security and safety of the EUSR staff members + monitors and assesses the security situation in Kosovo and provides security analysis and advice to the EUSR and the senior management on all security-related matters that affect the office, its assets and personnel.

EU as mediator in Kosovo-Serbia dialogue

- Brussels Agreement (2013)
 - three main targets:
 1. establishing an Association/Community of Serb majority municipalities (ASM) in the north of Kosovo;
 2. eliminating the parallel Serbian structures by incorporating the parallel police forces and judicial authorities in the Kosovo system;
 3. and promising that neither Belgrade nor Pristina would block the other's progress into the EU path (Lilyanova, 2016).

EU as mediator in Kosovo-Serbia dialogue

- Brussels Agreement (2013)
- Ohrid Agreement (2023) - Agreement on the path to normalisation between Kosovo and Serbia
 - The two parties should develop normal, good-neighbourly relations.
 - The parties will mutually recognise their respective documents and national symbols, including passports, diplomas, licence plates, and customs stamps.
 - Both parties will respect each other's independence, autonomy and territorial integrity and the right of self-determination.
 - The parties will settle any disputes between them exclusively by peaceful means and refrain from the threat or use of force.
 - Neither of the two can represent the other in the international sphere.
 - Serbia will not object to Kosovo's membership in any international organisation.
 - Neither party will block, nor encourage others to block, the other party's progress in their respective EU path.
 - The government of Kosovo will commit to ensure an appropriate level of self-management for the ethnic Serbian community in Kosovo.
 - Kosovo will ensure the security of the properties of the Serbian Orthodox Church within its borders.
 - Kosovo and Serbia will exchange permanent missions in each other's capitals.
 - Both parties are to continue to implement previous agreements.

EU Integration Issues and Challenges (Internal)

- Political instability, weak coalition governments, ethnic and political divisions - hindering effective decision-making and policy implementation
- Nepotism and corruption: trust in the public authority and political fragility.
- Political stability - necessitates enhancing the independence and capacity of democratic institutions like the parliament and electoral bodies
- High unemployment rates, limited foreign investments, lack of infrastructure, limited sectorial economic development, skills gap - challenge for Kosovo's long-term economic growth and social stability.
- Judicial reform and rule of law - Judiciary's independence from political influence, professionalism, organized crime and trafficking

EU Integration Issues and Challenges (External)

- Normalization of Relations with Serbia
 - Status of Kosovo: Serbia's refusal to recognize Kosovo's independence, diplomatic difficulties and tensions persist.
 - Managing inter-ethnic group relations, political representation and rights.
 - Trust building mechanisms and EU mediation efforts
- EU member states' position to Kosovo's Independence
- Power Politics - Geopolitics

EU Integration Issues and Challenges – EU Progress Reports (2019-2024)

- Gradual but uneven progress toward EU integration.
- Achievement -full implementation of visa liberalization in 2024.
- 1. Rule of law and judiciary reform** – moderate progress.
 - Initially foundational reforms but followed by slow and political influence on implementation.
 - Concerns - judicial independence and rushed legislation.
- 2. Public administration reform** - stagnated.
 - Strategic frameworks introduced; problems: depoliticization and professionalization affecting implementation
 - Anti-corruption efforts - minimal enforcement and few high-profile prosecutions; concern: institutional accountability.
- 3. Economic development** - steady improvement
 - Good fiscal indicators, job creation programs, and post-pandemic recovery efforts.
 - Structural weaknesses: limited tax base and weak investment capacity constraining long-term growth.
- 4. Adoption of a **climate law** and successful renewable energy investments - solar power.
- 5. Media freedom and civil society** - slight improvements.
 - Continued engagement from CSOs and modest gains in transparency.
 - Concerns: press freedom and public funding processes remain areas of concern.

EU Integration Issues and Challenges – EU Progress Reports (2019-2024)

- Discussion

EU Integration Issues and Challenges



Sources

- European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), Enlargement – Kosovo https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/kosovo_en
- European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), Enlargement, Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA)- Kosovo https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/overview-instrument-pre-accession-assistance/kosovo-financial-assistance-under-ipa_en
- EUR-Lex, Stabilisation and Association Agreement with Kosovo <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/stabilisation-and-association-agreement-with-kosovo.html>
- EULEX Mission in Kosovo <https://www.eulex-kosovo.eu/?page=2,16>
- European Commission, Commission Staff Working Document, Kosovo 2019-2024 Reports
- European Union Office in Kosovo https://www.eeas.europa.eu/kosovo/eu-and-kosovo_en?s=321
- Communication from The Commission to the European Parliament and the Council (2009) Kosovo* - Fulfilling its European Perspective https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/091014_kosovo_study_en.pdf
- Communication from The Commission (2005) A European Future for Kosovo <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2005:0156:FIN:EN:PDF>

MONTENEGRO

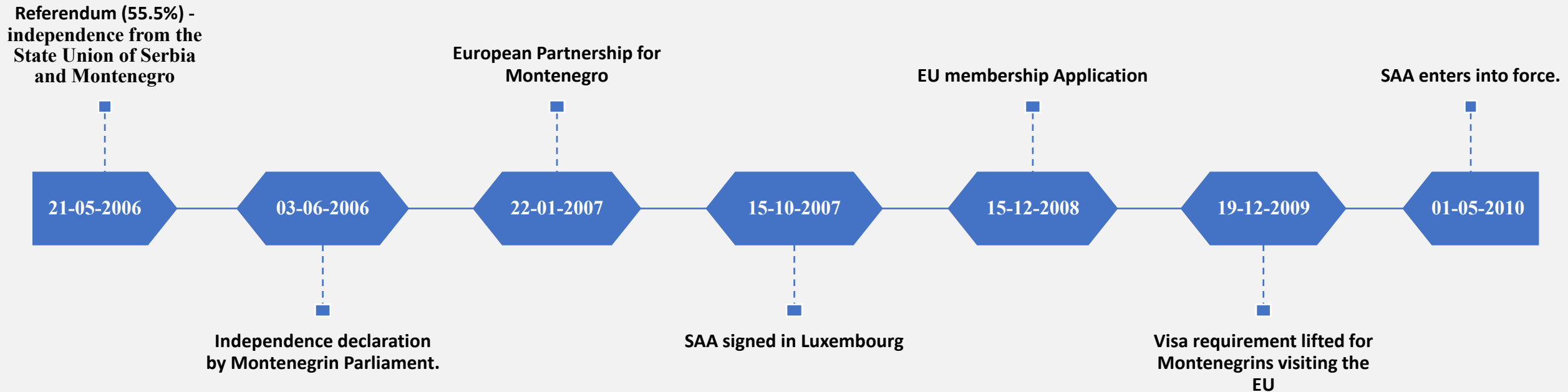
EU Integration, Issues and Dynamics



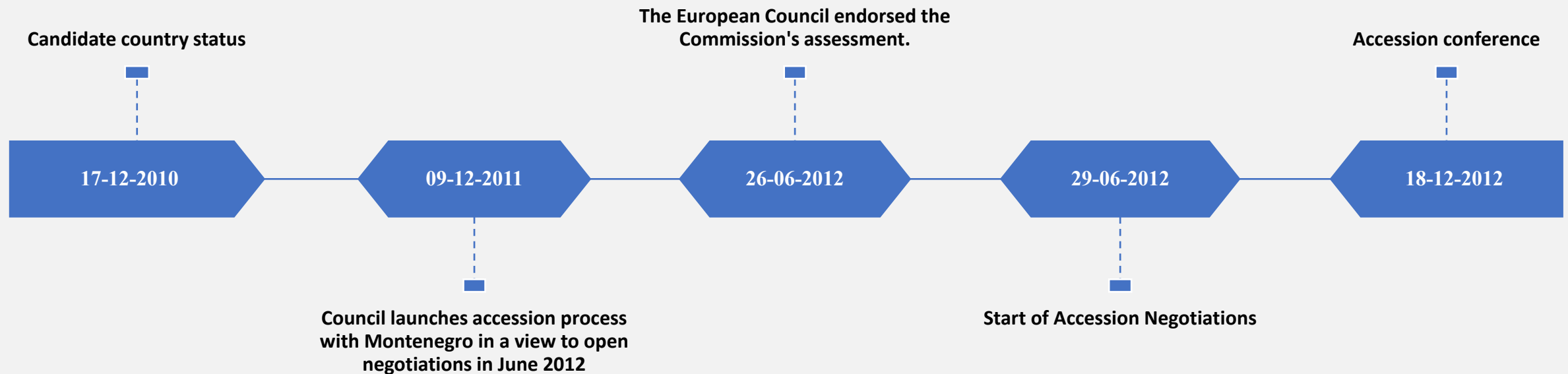
Background Information - Milestones

- Membership of the European Union and of NATO - priority goals of Montenegrin foreign policy.
- The key drivers of reform have been derived from these two priorities/integration processes.
- 2006 - Montenegro's parliament declared independence from the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro.
- 2008 - EU membership application.
- 2010 – EU Commission issued a favourable opinion on Montenegro's application - Council granted it candidate status.
- December 2011- the Council launched the accession process with a view to opening negotiations in June 2012.
- 29 June 2012 – start of the accession negotiations with Montenegro.
- 33 screened chapters have been opened, of which 6 are provisionally closed

EU Integration Process and Timeline



EU Integration Process and Timeline



SAA and Montenegro

- The SAP seeks to stabilize the region with the prospect of future EU membership for candidate countries and potential candidates from the region.
- Decision 2010/224/EC marks the European Union's (EU's) conclusion of the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) with Montenegro
- The aims of the agreement are to:
 - ✓ support the efforts of Montenegro to strengthen democracy and the rule of law;
 - ✓ contribute to political, economic and institutional stability in Montenegro, as well as to the stabilization of the region;
 - ✓ provide an appropriate framework for political dialogue, allowing the development of close political relations between the EU and Montenegro;
 - ✓ support the efforts of Montenegro to develop its economic and international cooperation, including through aligning its laws more closely to those of the EU;
 - ✓ support the efforts of Montenegro to complete the transition into a functioning market economy;
 - ✓ promote harmonious economic relations and gradually develop a free trade area between the EU and the Montenegro;
 - ✓ foster regional cooperation in all the fields covered by this agreement.
- The key strategic document for Montenegro's accession process is the Programme of Accession to the European Union (PPCG) which the government adopted in 2013.
- The government adopted the Programme of Accession to the European Union for the period 2014–2018 (PPCG) as a comprehensive strategic document that provides an overview of the current state of play and defines the framework and pace of reforms that are needed for Montenegro's further alignment with the EU's legal system.
- Adoption of the new Program of Montenegro's accession to the European Union 2022-2023

Pre-Accession Assistance

- The Republic of Montenegro- beneficiary of this instrument since 2007
- The Accession Partnership serves as a reference instrument for determining the different areas where funds are allocated (according to identified priorities). The decisions which establish the various financial instruments and programming documents provide the actual legal framework for the financial assistance.
- IPA (2007-2013): of a total of EUR 11.5 billion, EUR 236 million
 - Allocated to the first two out of five IPA Components: 1. Transition and Institution Building; 2. Cross-Border Cooperation, 3. Regional Development, 4. Human Resource Development and 5. Rural
 - Development. Institution Building; One part of the assistance (Component I- Transition Assistance and Institution Building) focuses on implementing the main priorities of the European partnership. In particular it involves investment and measures aiming at institution building, as well as transition and stabilization measures still necessary in the Western Balkans. It is delivered through annual national and multi-beneficiary programmes.
 - The other part of the assistance (Component II- Cross Border Cooperation) supports cross-border cooperation activities between Montenegro and EU member states as well as with candidate and potential candidate countries. It may also help Montenegro participate in Structural Funds' trans-national co-operation programmes under the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument.
- IPA II (2014-2020), of a total of EUR 11.7 billion, approximately EUR 271 million
 - The priority sectors for funding in this period are: Democracy & governance, Rule of law & fundamental rights, Environment & climate action, Transport, Competitiveness & innovation, Social development, Agriculture & rural development, Regional and territorial cooperation (Albania and Kosovo).
- IPA III (2021-2027), of a total of EUR 14.162 billion, EUR 206 million
 - Thematic rather than country based
 - Themes: rule of law and respect of fundamental values, strengthening democratic institutions and public administration reform,
 - promoting economic governance and reforms towards competitiveness.

Accession Negotiations Process

June 2012: The accession negotiations are formally opened at the first Intergovernmental Conference.

December 2013: 'Rule of Law' chapters 23 and 24 are opened, along with three other chapters.

February 2018: The European Commission adopts its strategy for 'A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans'.

May 2018: EU-Western Balkans Summits are relaunched, starting with a Summit held in Sofia, during which leaders confirmed the European perspective of the region and set out a number of concrete actions to strengthen cooperation in the areas of connectivity, security and the rule of law.

February 2020: Revised methodology, presented by the Commission, to drive forward the enlargement process with a stronger political steer and in a more credible, predictable, dynamic way.

By June 2020, all 33 screened chapters have been opened, three of which are provisionally closed.

October 2020: The European Commission adopts Economic & Investment Plan to support and bring the Western Balkans closer to the EU.

June and December 2021: Political Intergovernmental Conferences under the revised enlargement methodology are held to provide political steer to the accession process.

January 2024- 15th Intergovernmental Conference

26 June 2024 - 16th Intergovernmental Conference - The EU confirmed that Montenegro has, overall, met the interim benchmarks set for Chapters 23 and 24.

16 December 2024 – 22 chapters opened, 6 of which are provisionally closed.

Accession Negotiations Process

- After a decade of accession negotiations with the EU - Montenegro replaced the qualification of a regional frontrunner in European integration with the qualification of a leader in the length of negotiations in the region.
- Decision-makers perceive European integration superficially, they advocate for it rhetorically, knowing that the vast majority of citizens express their support for that process – real commitment questionable.
- EC reports, as well as reports of many relevant institutions - indicate an ongoing political crisis in Montenegro
 - fragmented and polarized political scene
 - absence of political dialogue and political will for reforms.
- Not enough effort in strengthening institutions, democratic review, and balance between different branches of government.

EU Integration Issues and Challenges

- Student Presentation
- Discussion

Sources

- European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), Enlargement - Montenegro https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/montenegro_en
- European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), Enlargement, Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA)-Montenegro https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/overview-instrument-pre-accession-assistance/montenegro-financial-assistance-under-ipa_en
- EUR-Lex, Stabilisation and Association Agreement with Montenegro <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/stabilisation-and-association-agreement-with-montenegro.html>
- European Commission, Commission Staff Working Document, Montenegro 2022 Report <https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-10/Montenegro%20Report%202022.pdf>
- Delegation of the European Union to Montenegro https://www.eeas.europa.eu/montenegro/european-union-and-montenegro_en?s=225
- Radulović, M. (2011). Montenegro's journey towards EU accession. The Western Balkans and The EU: "The Hour of Europe, 79-94. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep07053.8.pdf>
- Milica Zindović, Nikola Mirković, Daliborka Uljarević (ed.) December 2022 A Decade of Montenegrin Negotiations with the Eu: How to get out of the roundabout?. Friedrich-ebert-stiftung. <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/belgrad/20077.pdf>

Article Presentation and Discussion

- Smith, N. R., Markovic Khaze, N., & Kovacevic, M. (2020). The EU's stability-democracy dilemma in the context of the problematic accession of the Western Balkan states. *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 29(2), 169–183. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14782804.2020.1823823>
- Bieber, F. (2018). Patterns of competitive authoritarianism in the Western Balkans. *East European Politics*, 34(3), 337–354. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21599165.2018.1490272>
- Bieber, Florian and Tzifakis, Nikolaos, The Western Balkans as a Geopolitical Chessboard? Myths, Realities and Policy Options (June 1, 2019). BiEPAG Policy Brief June 2019, Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3406295>

Article Presentation and Discussion

- Economides, Spyros (2020). *From fatigue to resistance: EU enlargement and the Western Balkans*. Working Paper (17). The Dahrendorf Forum, Berlin, DE.
- Gordana Gasmi, Dragan Prlja (2020). European Path of the Western Balkans Region — Normative Aspects and Geopolitical Factors, *Regional Law Review : Collection of Papers from the First International Scientific Conference* (ed. Mario Reljanović). - ISBN 978-86-80186-60-3. p. 59–75 (only 2022-2023 academic year).
- Kartsonaki, A., & Wolff, S. (2023). An Impenetrable Knot of Blended Conflicts? The National Identity Constraints of European Integration in the Western Balkans. *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 17(2), 192–206. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17502977.2023.2182994>

Article Presentation and Discussion

- Lika, L. (2023). The meaning of the Western Balkans concept for the EU: genuine inclusion or polite exclusion? *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 24(1), 63–78.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14683857.2023.2170204>
- Radic Milosavljevic, Ivana; Petrović, Miloš (2024). *EU Enlargement Policy between the Chronological Precedence of the Western Balkans and the Geopolitical Urgency in the Eastern Neighborhood: A Realist Perspective*. *Političke perspektive – Political Perspectives: Journal for Political Research*, Vol. 14, No. 1, pp. 33-63. doi:10.20901/pp.14.1.02

Article Presentation and Discussion

- Kmezić, M. (2020). Rule of law and democracy in the Western Balkans: addressing the gap between policies and practice. *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 20(1), 183–198. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683857.2019.1706257>.
- Domachowska, A. (2021) "The Status of the European Integration Process of the Western Balkan Countries". *Studia Europejskie – Studies in European Affairs*, 4/2021, pp. 67-82. DOI: 10.33067/SE.4.2021.4 (2023-2024 academic year)
- Öhlén (2025) Future EU Enlargements—Opportunities and Dilemmas in Ekman, P., Lundqvist, B., Michalski, A., & Oxelheim, L. (Eds.). *The Depth and Size of the European Union in a Time of War*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Critical Analytical Paper Presentations

Course Metrics 2022-2025

- Class average: 3.34/4.00
- Attendance rate: 91.2/100
- Course instructor evaluation survey results: 3.93/4.00