

vi  point case study competition

HOW CAN EU

DO BETTER IN THE BALKANS?

This project is a follow up project from the 7th Leadership Development Programme, a programme designed for young people from the SEE region, as well as from the rest of Europe, who aspire to play an active role in the future of their countries. This project is conducted in its entirety by LDP fellows.

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Introduction

Ever since democracy knocked on the Balkans (in 1990's) the region has experienced two turbulent and challenging decades of trying to work its way towards the European Union. Despite the efforts made, due to different reasons, some Balkan countries are still unsuccessful in reaching their goal – joining united Europe. The EU acknowledged these efforts and bearing in mind the troubled past of the region, it made a clear European strategy to help the countries of the Western Balkans to overcome domestic issues and join the European Union as soon as possible. The millions of Euros of funding, the tens of European organizations, EU Information Centers and EU Representative Offices are all proof that the Union takes this region seriously and sees it as an integral part of both the continent geographically and the Union politically. But is this enough? Can the EU improve its performance in the Balkan region? What can and what should be done?

Once you step into Balkan region it is impossible not to notice the vibrant energy of the youth in each country. When you look at the numerous institutions and organizations such as universities, theaters, NGOs you immediately notice how European the youth in the Western Balkans is, and how much they strive for advancement, knowledge and progress. ViEUpoint is a project that gave an amazing chance to the audience that was in large part tamed during these two decades - **the youth**, allowing them to share opinions on the topic: How can the EU do better in the Balkans? Hence, viEUpoint offered a unique opportunity to young people from five Balkan countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Kosovo and Macedonia) to write case-studies with a clear focus on assessing the EU performance and providing constructive criticism regarding this performance in one of these five countries or in the Balkans as a whole.

Having decided to publish the five best case-studies we can conclude that the EU needs to take the voice of the youth into consideration in order to improve its performance in the Balkans based on the genuine ideas that we received. As Aleko Stoyanov put it *“The EU needs to replace the Office of the High Representative with the European Union Special Representative in Bosnia*

and Herzegovina". On the other hand Kalina Todorova urges the EU to act in the region stating that *"The EU needs to urgently reinvigorate its support for the Western Balkans enlargement, and not just vocally – it needs to back up its speech with deeds"*. Monika Moraliyska calls for the EU to further strengthen the regional cooperation among the Balkan states as a possible way forward. Sindi Brakollari pinpoints both agriculture and tourism as crucial areas in which the EU should take active measures in order to help Albanian economy flourish. And last but not least, as Martina Cvetanoska sums up in her case-study *"... the youth is the driving force for progress in all countries. Thus, the largest investments in a society should be directed to young people because they are the future of the country and society"*.

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How can the EU do better in Bosnia and Herzegovina?

Author: Aleko Stoyanov

Soon after the end of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereafter BiH or Bosnia) and the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA), the European Union (EU) engaged more deeply in the reconciliation and reconstruction processes in the former Yugoslavian republic. The EU introduced series of initiatives aiming to support Bosnia on its path towards EU integration. In 1997 the EU launched the OBNOVA and PHARE humanitarian programs and in 1998 the EU-BiH Consultative Task Force was established.¹ This was followed by the launch of Stabilization and Association Process (SAP) in 1993² and the granting of a potential candidate status at the 2000 Feira European Council³. All these initiatives took its effect and moved Bosnia closer to EU membership as its government signed the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) in June 2008.⁴ However, since than little progress has been made. This is particularly, due to predominant ethno-nationalist rhetoric, slow and stagnant reforms, which to some extent are the result of a weak, passive, and uncommitted role of the international community, and especially the EU as central actor in BiH.

Currently Bosnia is far away from a candidate status and it yet has failed to submit its EU application. Besides, it took Bosnia 14 months to form a government, which collapsed only half a year later⁵. It seems that EU's political support and economic aid per se are not enough to drive sufficient changes in BiH, thus transforming the country into a stable democracy, based on the rule of law, respecting human rights and working market economy.

¹ Brljavac B., "Europeanization process of Bosnia and Herzegovina: Responsibility of the European Union?", Vol. XIII, n° 1-2 | décembre 2011, see: <http://balkanologie.revues.org/index2328.html#tocto1n3>.

² Ibid.

³ See: Santa Maria da Feira European Council Summit 19 and 20 June 2000, Conclusions of the Presidency: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/fei1_en.htm.

⁴ See: European Commission, DG Enlargement: http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/potential-candidate-countries/bosnia_and_herzegovina/eu_bosnia_and_herzegovina_relations_en.htm.

⁵ Bosnia's Gordian Knot: Constitutional Reform, Crisis Group Europe Briefing No 68, 12 July 2012, p.1.

What can the EU do better in BiH to improve the situation in the country and bring it closer to EU membership?

Replacing the Office High Representative with the European Union Special Representative

The Office of the High Representative (OHR) for Bosnia and Herzegovina was created under the 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement. OHR is "...responsible for overseeing implementation of civilian aspects of the Peace Agreement..."⁶. After the OHR was granted with the "Bonn powers" in 1997 it became a key player in the Bosnian political life. Since then the OHR can impose legislation and sack officials who are obstructing the peace implementation process.⁷ Undoubtedly, the OHR's presence and the use of Bonn powers were beneficial for BiH and its citizens. Thus the OHR is able to pass important legislation, which has helped create effective governance on national level. The negative impact was that the institution took over the domestic government's job of governing the country,⁸ making the Bosnian leaders less responsible for their country, or as the High Representative Wolfgang Petritsch put it, back in 1999: "Every piece of legislation that I impose with my authority as the High Representative, gives politicians in Bosnia and Herzegovina a perfect excuse not to do their job properly..."⁹

Till recently the High Representative was double-hated. He has acted both as the OHR and European Union Special Representative (EUSR). In July 2011 Peter Sorensen assumed office as Head of the EU Delegation and as EUSR in BiH. With this move the EU corroborated its office in Sarajevo and now the staff amounts to 154¹⁰ people in contrast to 96¹¹ in the previous period. This appointment came in a moment when the OHR has refrained from more active role in the Bosnian political life in an attempt to allow the Bosnians to govern themselves without outside interference. The result was loss of popularity and statements as the one of the president of

⁶ See: Office of the High Representative website: http://www.ohr.int/ohr-info/gen-info/default.asp?content_id=38519.

⁷ Partos G., Bosnia to build on Ashdown legacy, 31 January 2006: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4663168.stm>.

⁸ Tirak G., The Bosnian Hiatus: A Story of Misinterpretations, Centre for European Policy Studies, No 219/November 2012, p. 4.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ See: The EU Delegation in Bosnia and Herzegovina: <http://www.delbih.ec.europa.eu/Default.aspx?id=8&lang=EN>.

¹¹ Bosnia: Europe's Time to Act, Crisis Group Europe, Briefing No 59, 11 January 2011, p.3.

the Party of Democratic Progress, Mladen Ivanic: "an OHR like this can stay for 300 years; what they do, other than draw salaries?"¹².

The EU Delegation in BiH has been strengthened. Now the EU could act more decisive in promoting its values and pursue its policy in BiH and in the region. Of course there is much more what to be done:

First, the EU should begin to play a more pivotal role in the Bosnian politics. It is obvious that without exerting pressure on the politicians in BiH there will be a slow progress, if any.

Second, the EU member states should speak with one voice and reach an agreement among themselves but also with its partners within the Peace Implementation Council (PIC) on the extension of the OHR. Currently the OHR powers are too broad and this might hamper BiH aspirations of joining the EU. As long as the OHR can impose the Bonn powers BiH cannot be considered completely a sovereign country, thus could not start negotiations for EU membership. Without an omnipotent OHR the Bosnian leaders might grasp that the future of their country lies in their hands and start acting more responsibly. In addition, the EU should unite around a common view on the Bosnian constitutional reform. Although the EU has been vocal on its demands for constitutional changes it has not been clear enough about the specific requirements.

Third, in the past few years lots of time has been lost which resulted in loss of credibility. The EU could not assert and prove itself as a strong and influential actor that is capable of solving "the Bosnian paralysis".¹³ To have a chance to reverse this trend the EU should act as one and speak in one, instead in 23 languages.

Support the Civil Society Organizations

Another step in improving the EU role in BiH could be by supporting the Civil Society Organizations (CSO). In modern democracies, a developed civil society increases the citizens'

¹² Bosnia: Europe's Time to Act, Crisis Group Europe, Briefing No 59, 11 January 2011, p.8.

¹³ Brljavac B., "Europeanisation process of Bosnia and Herzegovina: Responsibility of the European Union?", Vol. XIII, n° 1-2 | décembre 2011, see: <http://balkanologie.revues.org/index2328.html#tocto1n3>.

freedoms, promotes the rule of law, reduces state corruption and establishes greater government effectiveness. CSOs also act as information sources for state elites that can pass the message of what people want and expect from the state. States with a strong civil society are politically more stable.¹⁴

Currently in BiH are registered approximately 12 000 NGOs. Estimates of active NGOs, however, range anywhere from 500 to 1500.¹⁵ Of these, a significantly smaller number could be described as professional organizations. The main challenges which the CSO sector in BiH faces are related with lack of communication with governmental sector, poor communication within the civil society sector, domestic funds, foreseen for CSOs are distributed in non transparent manner, perception of political influence on some CSOs. In order to fight these deficiencies the EU in BiH could focus on improvement of transparency in funding CSOs from public budgets, improvement of cooperation between municipal governments and CSOs, improvement of cooperation among CSOs, establishment of institutional mechanisms for cooperation with civil society in the governments of the state, entities, and Brcko District, regional cooperation among CSOs.

By backing the CSOs in BiH the EU could drive a bottom-up change in the society and win an ally in country's European transformation.

Economic Assistance

The EU is successful only when it is seen as a driver of growth and prosperity – the most credible instrument for restoring political influence in the Western Balkans, respectively in BiH. The EU's policies should therefore stress on growth, competitiveness, employment and economic opportunities.¹⁶ This does not mean that the EU should pour extra money to the Western Balkans in general, but to set different priorities in the region. While IPA program was aiming institution building and adoption of *acquis* (2007-2013), IPA2 (2013-2020) could support

¹⁴ Bostic A. V., Analyzing EU's Civil Society Development in Bosnia and Herzegovina, European Perspectives – Journal on European Perspectives of the Western Balkans Vol. 3, No. 1 (4), April 2011, p.95.

¹⁵ See: <http://www.delbih.ec.europa.eu/Default.aspx?id=33&lang=EN>.

¹⁶ Bechev D., The Periphery of the Periphery: The Western Balkans and the Euro Crisis, European Council on Foreign Relations, ECFR/60, August 2012, p. 9.

the transition to a new model based on competitive export.¹⁷ However, the EU could allocate more resources to BiH, thus the IPA assistance for Bosnia is the lowest in the region – €23 per capita. Neighboring Serbia receives respectively €27.18, Albania €29.17, Kosovo €37.29, Macedonia €43.64 and Montenegro €54.63.¹⁸ For instance, the U.S. assistance to Bosnia, still much smaller than the EU's¹⁹ is rising steeply, from \$27 million in 2008, to \$36 million in 2010 and to \$47 million in 2011.²⁰

The prospects of BiH are highly dependent on a strong and prosperous EU. At present we have become eyewitness of multi speed Europe. Thus some suggest that in Europe of different speeds the Western Balkan countries, including BiH could be granted a second-class membership. Such scenario implies minimal redistribution of resources, limited access to decision-making, barriers to free movement of labor and as a result no sustained pressure for convergence. Anything less than a full EU membership would mean prolonging indefinitely the status quo - economic and political stagnation.²¹

Conclusion

Since the end of the war in Bosnia the EU has played a significant role in the reconciliation and reconstruction process. It built up a series of programs and funds to support the establishment of well functioning institutions based on the rule of law. With the appointment of a EUSR and the increase of its mission the EU gave a positive signal to the Bosnians regarding its engagement in the country. However, during the time this becoming a reality, considerable time has been lost. The lack of unanimity among the EU member-states (and their partners) regarding the OHR subsequent tasks and the details on the constitutional amendments led to loss of credibility which threatens the EU leading transformational force in the country. To

¹⁷ Bechev D., *The Periphery of the Periphery: The Western Balkans and the Euro Crisis*, European Council on Foreign Relations, ECFR/60, August 2012, p. 10.

¹⁸ *Bosnia: Europe's Time to Act*, Crisis Group Europe, Briefing No 59, 11 January 2011, p.6.

¹⁹ The EU's IPA's assistance for Bosnia in 2012 is more than €107 million, see: http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/how_does_it_work/miff_12_10_2011.pdf.

²⁰ *Bosnia: Europe's Time to Act*, Crisis Group Europe Briefing No 59, 11 January 2011, p.6.

²¹ Bechev D., *The Periphery of the Periphery: The Western Balkans and the Euro Crisis*, European Council on Foreign Relations, ECFR/60, August 2012, p. 8.

avoid such scenario the EU should learn to speak with one voice and secure its dominant role in BiH, support more actively the CSO sector in the country and as well as and increase the IPA's funds for Bosnia. If the EU fails to do so it might lose its paramount role in the Western Balkans and in BiH and its aspiration of shaping the 21st century world would become unsound.

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2. Santa Maria da Feira European Council Summit 19 and 20 June 2000, Conclusions of the Presidency: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/fei1_en.htm;
3. European Commission, DG Enlargement: http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/potential-candidate-countries/bosnia_and_herzegovina/eu_bosnia_and_herzegovina_relations_en.htm;
4. Bosnia's Gordian Knot: Constitutional Reform, Crisis Group Europe Briefing No 68, 12 July 2012;
5. Office of the High Representative website: http://www.ohr.int/ohr-info/gen-info/default.asp?content_id=38519;
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How can the European Union do better in the Balkans?

Author: Kalina Todorova

A diverse region with a history rich in conflicts and territorial squabbles, and yet one which shares a deeply similar culture and mentality, the Balkans is a place that is paradoxically heterogeneous and homogenous at the same time. Once dubbed the 'powder keg of Europe' and inextricably linked to the outbreak of the First World War, the region did not attract international attention for much of the latter part of the twentieth century as its countries slumbered in relative seclusion. Then, all eyes turned to Yugoslavia in the 1990s to witness its excruciatingly painful and bloody breakup. Currently, the region is making the world's news headlines again as Greece awkwardly sits in the centre of the European financial drama. But even as the Greeks endure their woes nearby and the future of the European Union becomes ever more uncertain, the countries of the Western Balkans still covet membership rights within it.

That is because a seat within the EU institutions is the only realistic and viable option for the region to gain respect and aplomb on the international stage after the flurry of unfortunate violence that occurred in the 1990s. European integration is seen not only as a cure that can heal the fragmented Western part of the peninsula and bring much needed growth and reconciliation after the fratricidal state breakup – it is a way to signal to the world that the former Yugoslav states have finally recuperated from the war trauma and have matured into independent and sovereign democracies. Locals generally perceive the Union as a positive force emanating pressure for tough reforms that their political leaders would not undertake otherwise, thus setting in motion the transformation from the typical Western Balkan state – dysfunctional and plagued by ethnic and territorial disputes – into a healthy and stable democratic polity.

At the same time though, public support for accession and trust in the Union is deteriorating: since March 2010 Serbian pro-accession opinions have been steadily decreasing, as reported by the Serbian government's European Integration Office.¹ According to a November 2010 survey by a popular local newspaper², 72% of ethnic Macedonians do not trust Brussels' policy towards their country. Even Croatia, which is to join the Union in 2013 due to its satisfactory performance in meeting with the Copenhagen criteria, has sometimes displayed serious moments of public doubts in regard to membership.³ This wavering of popular opinion is in large part due to the fact that the accession process has become longer and more costly than ever – this is only logical, given that Bulgaria and Romania required unprecedented post-accession monitoring. As a result, the EU is now resolved to allow only truly prepared states to 'join the club'⁴.

This should not become a reason to keep the Western Balkans in the EU waiting room without hope or clarity on when and how they might become a part of the Union. Croatia will soon become the 28th member state, but its journey towards this goal has been neither easy nor short – it submitted its membership application in February 2003 and started the accession talks in October 2005. Given these dates and the current financial predicaments that distract and enervate the Union, as well as the complications that arose after Bulgaria and Romania's accession, the Western Balkans will presumably have to wait at the very least for more than a decade before they are deemed ready to join. This estimation could have a severely demoralising effect over both the populace and the national governments. It is imperative for the EU to give candidate status to both Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina as soon as possible, and set start dates for accession talks for those who already have such a status. Montenegro opens negotiations in December 2012, but Serbia and Macedonia still do not have a specified date in sight. That is not to say that the setbacks that both countries face must be hastily ignored. On the contrary, Macedonia's infamous name disagreement with Greece (and strained

¹ Republic of Serbia, European Integration Office, 2012. *European orientation of the citizens of the Republic of Serbia trends* [online] Available <[here](#)> [Accessed 29 Dec 2012]

² Dnevnik, 2010. *Macedonians don't trust the EU*. [online] Available <[here](#)> [Accessed 29 Dec 2012]

³ EurActiv, 2011. *Support for EU in Croatia hits all-time low*. [online] Available < [here](#)> [Accessed 29 Dec 2012]

⁴ A.Thorp, 2011. *Croatia: the closing stages of EU accession*. Commons Library standard note [online] Available <[here](#)> [Accessed 29 Dec 2012]

relationship with Bulgaria, which receives less media coverage⁵), as well as Serbia's dispute with Kosovo, are issues that must be resolved before actual negotiations may proceed. As for Kosovo itself, it cannot ever hope to be integrated into the Union without first gaining the recognition of all of the members (currently 5 of the 27 refuse to acknowledge Kosovar independence). Brussels has the resources to broker the needed agreements on both sides – it can work from within, as well as apply pressure on Serbia and Macedonia to make compromise. Financial crisis or not, the Union is in the condition to act on these matters and it must use its soft power and diplomatic clout to defuse regional tensions. Bulgaria and soon Croatia could seize the opportunity to finally show some drive and initiative in their foreign policy and become regional leaders by offering expertise and assistance to their neighbours, drawing on their own accession experience.

An excellent example of successful EU activity in the Western Balkans is the visa liberalisation process that occurred there. According to a European Council on Foreign Relations policy brief by Grabbe, Knaus and Korski from 2010⁶, the visa liberalisation experience clearly shows that the Western Balkan national administrations have the capacity to introduce worthwhile reforms as long as they are sufficiently motivated, and provided by the EU with clear criteria and guidelines on how to comply with the requirements. Populism in both policies and rhetoric is a typical element in the Balkan political landscape – local leaders are reluctant to push for even much needed reforms because of the high electoral costs, but at the same time an overhaul of the judicial system and ample anti-corruption measures are required in each Western Balkan country (in Bosnia and Herzegovina's case even constitutional changes must be introduced⁷). This calls for the EU to adopt a specifically tailored 'carrot' approach to enlargement policy in the region. One of the conclusions of the ECFR paper is that local governments are ready to advance unpopular reforms, as long as the EU offers in return attractive and tangible to the electorate rewards like the visa liberalisation that proved to be a

⁵ Eur Activ, 2012. Bulgaria vetoes Macedonia's EU accession talks. ^[online] Available <[here](#)> [Accessed 29 Dec 2012]

⁶ H. Grabbe, G. Knaus & D. Korski, 2010. *Beyond wait-and-see: The way forward for EU Balkan policy*. European Council on Foreign Relations policy brief. [online] Available <[here](#)> [Accessed 29 Dec 2012]

⁷ J. Rupnik (editor) 2011. *The Western Balkans and the EU: The hour of Europe*. European Union Institute for Security Studies monograph [online] Available <[here](#)> [Accessed 29 Dec 2012]

great success. However, the visa liberalisation regime also displayed one serious shortcoming – Kosovo was omitted from it, including Serbian citizens that reside on its territory⁸. This is an unproductive tactic that only goes on to perpetuate the differentiation of Serbs and Kosovars.

The EU must improve its image in the Balkans and re-rally the public's support in order to ensure that the national governments are motivated enough to carry on with the ambitious reform agenda that is set. A way to do this is by rewarding accomplishments of governments by giving potential member states candidate status. Candidate status, along with the responsibilities which it entails, is a powerful tool that the EU must learn to use more effectively. It serves as a strong motivational boost for potential members and makes Brussels look more favourable in the eyes of the public. Giving deserving states candidate status is a process that would be beneficial not just for potential members, but would also be good for the Union itself – a competent and consistent policy towards the Western Balkans that yields as a result the next successful round of enlargement could go a long way to appease Eurosceptic opinions and theories about 'enlargement fatigue', the idea that the Union has exhausted its capacity to renovate itself by admitting new members. In this way Brussels could also try to quell criticisms that it is unable to form a coherent foreign policy approach. By supporting and eventually incorporating Albania and the former Yugoslav states into its configuration, the Union would also enhance its image of a normative structure with strong moral obligations and a sense of solidarity, washing away the shame of the European failure to adequately act in the wake of the ethnic violence in Bosnia.

The EU needs to urgently reinvigorate its support for the Western Balkans enlargement, and not just vocally – it needs to back up its speech with deeds. EU Representative for Foreign Affairs Catherine Ashton and US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton's recent joint visit to Sarajevo, Belgrade and Pristina on 30th October 2012⁹ is a gesture of goodwill, but is not enough to convince the Western Balkan public that the EU is firmly committed to the integration of the entire peninsula and that the Union would be geographically incomplete without it. Concrete

⁸ Same ISS monograph as above

⁹ European Union External Action, 2012. *Catharine Ashton visits the Western Balkans*. [online] Available <[here](#)> [Accessed 29 Dec 2012]

actions must be taken: reform and Europeanization will not come to the region unless Brussels finally mobilizes its diplomatic arsenal to bring resolutions of pressing issues. The Union must sever its patrimonial presence in Kosovo (the EULEX mission¹⁰) and instead start to lay down the road towards European integration for the Kosovar government. The first step in this process should be full recognition of Kosovo's independence by all members of the Union. Serbia needs to be made aware that further steps towards integration are impossible unless Belgrade initiates a *détente* with Kosovo, and then must be rewarded for the compromise with an opening date for negotiations. Macedonia must be told to tone down the nationalist rhetoric and get in return a start date for accession talks. Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina are in need of guidance in order get to the stage when they would be ready to start absorbing the *acquis*. Because of the complex fabric of multi-ethnic Balkan society and many obstacles of state building in the region, it may appear that the political landscape there is an intractable quagmire of disputes that cannot be solved. That is not true. Change can and must be instigated there, and Brussels has the obligation to use its influence to take an active and responsible role in the advancement of European integration in the Western Balkans.

¹⁰ EULEX Kosovo – European Union rule of law mission. Available <[here](#)> [Accessed 29 Dec 2012]

How can the EU do better in the Balkans?

Author: Monika Moraliyska

The region of the Western Balkans has undergone dramatic changes in the last decades that have led to a new, more democratic way of development. However, the region is still characterized by major ethnic and religious pressures that lead to nationalistic moods and create potential of new conflicts evolving. The consent achieved is fragile and needs more than ever the European perspective to be stabilized.

Why the EU?

The European Union and the accession to it, as a strategic ultimate goal, is the only reasonable and sustainable perspective of the countries in the Western Balkans region. It is a tool to address the risks of instability in the Balkans, and a prerequisite for the support of the necessary pro-democratic reforms, further entrenching the region's post-war transition.

In the last decades, the Western Balkans were a place where world leaders exercised their influence, turning the region into a battle field of their complex international relations. A decade ago the strategic interests of the USA seemed limited to the interests of its military business. Later on, the American approach to the region changed, influenced by the soft-power regional approach of the EU that included measures towards reunification of the countries in the region, recovery aid and European integration. However, the American policy towards these countries, on a bilateral basis, contradicts to the regional approach of the EU, and has a *“strong disintegration element that competes and gets over the integration trend stimulated by the EU”¹*.

¹ Chavdarova M. (2008), “Political systems and international relations in the Balkans”, Sofia

On the other hand, in the beginning of the 20th century, the dynamic Albanian community of the Balkans took over a key role in the strongly unbalanced international relations in the region, and was used by external factors for its destabilization. As Vesselin Prodanov points out: *“The control over a concrete region, state or community, is much easier to be applied in the conditions of a constant destabilization and conflicts environment. The destabilization of the Balkans is a factor that was often implied by the Great powers for control of this region”*². In this respect, the European approach, which strives for multiethnic community on the Balkans, seems much more relevant and adequate than supporting the individuality and rights of a concrete minority group.

This is why the only alternative of the Balkan countries remains their European path. Strengthening stability and democracy in SEE, on behalf of the EU, is an investment in deep and sustainable democracy in the EU’s wider neighborhood. This policy is also of mutual interest and helps to avoid higher costs of dealing with the consequences of instability.

On the other hand, regional stability is not the only potential benefit. European integration, even in its early stage, provides benefits as access to European markets and funds and programs, receiving know-how and technical aid for the necessary reforms in the region, etc. There are also mutual benefits of deeper trade integration, such as a larger internal market, economies of scale and expanded investment and job opportunities. Considerable benefits are available also to citizens and civil society, through participation in different programs and initiatives³ and visa-free travel⁴.

What should the EU approach be?

As already mentioned, European integration (incl. full accession), is the only option for the Western Balkan countries, and this is the path that they have taken. In 2012, there have been a number of positive developments of these countries towards this goal. At the same time, the

² Pradanov V., “Violence in modern ages” (Essays), Sofia

³ Includes support to civil society organizations through the Civil Society Facility

⁴ Introduced in Croatia, Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina

European Commission conclusion show that reforms are still pending in most countries in series of spheres.

The good news is that all countries advance on the European integration path. However there are major differences in the stage of development, as well as in the institutional relations of these countries, which predetermine also a different stage of progress of the countries' integration. This does not allow the applying of a single approach to the region and makes integration more difficult. In some respects this is inevitable, as it stems from real circumstances of different nature, but I consider that **applying a more unified approach would add value to the process of integration for both – the EU and the region itself**. For the region it would be better to be considered and treated as one, and it would be bigger and stronger. Besides that within its frames the more advanced countries would drag the less developed ones in the right direction.

This is why more efforts should be made towards achieving a bigger degree of coherence – economic and democratic - in the region of the Western Balkans. But how? **There is only one way and this is regional cooperation. It should be deepened and strengthened to a much bigger extent.**

Regional cooperation exists and is supported by the EU. Together with good neighborly relations it is as an essential element of the Stabilization and Association process. In 2012 The Commission stated that further progress has been achieved in this respect as *“bilateral and multilateral contacts between leaders and politicians of the region have continued, also in sensitive areas such as war crimes, borders, refugee return, organized crime and police cooperation, and within regional fora”*⁵.

However, in that form, regional cooperation, having such serious issues in its agenda, is insufficient and should be further strengthened and something more – it should be deepened. The more prepared and developed the region, the easier and more useful for both sides the EU integration of these countries would be. On the contrary – the less prepared the region is, the

⁵ Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2011-2012, European Commission

less value added for them and for the EU would be generated from their mutual cooperation and rapprochement. So the region should be coherent at its most, for the benefits to be at their maximum for both – the acceding countries and the European community.

For that reason, before the Western Balkan region is ready for EU accession, and in order that it is more prepared for closer cohesion with the EU, it's better that it achieves a higher level of cohesion within itself first. This means more efforts to be made by both sides for achieving more coherence – institutional, economic, social, in the form of tolerance to ethnic minorities, etc., before making efforts for accession. In this way, the acceding countries, together not only as a region but as a union, would be more prepared to meet the opportunities and challenges of accession, as well as to respond and comply with the EU principles and values.

What are the benefits of this approach? They would be similar to the benefits that the EU got in its early stage of development. The first thing is preserving peace and stability in the integrated countries, which was why the Common Coal and Steel Community was established. The second important goal was the thought – which proved correct – that the merging of economic interests would stimulate economic growth and help raise living standards in united Europe. The third is connected with European citizenship and how the people perceive themselves – free to go and live, study and work wherever they want in the union.

This is why the major role of the EU should be stimulating the region to get more coherent first, by supporting the deepening of the regional cooperation between countries. Let's say, that we have the grounds and agreements for political cooperation. What about economic cohesion? Well, **it should be deepened to the extent of a single Balkan market, similarly to the single European market where there is freedom of movement of goods, services, people and capital**⁶. A single common market in the region would lead to serious benefits for the countries and the region as a whole – new markets for the national producers, economies of scale, specialization, better job opportunities for the workers, etc. It would also be a stimulus for

⁶ This could include also a regional "Schengen" area, which allows free movement of persons between the Western Balkans countries, without the still existing border control.

attracting new investments in the region. **This would be the first step to the establishment of a real regional economic union and ultimately - a political union - the Balkan Union.**

The political union would at first sight look like the former Yugoslavia, but actually it would only geographically cover this ex-state, as it would represent a union of individual and independent countries that have pooled their resources together for the sake of stability, economic benefits and better opportunities for their people. **This would be also an adequate response to the ethnic tensions in the region,** as having these freedoms written on paper would formally not allow chances for discrimination in crossing the borders, hiring at work, residence, etc., based on ethnic, religious or other circumstances.

Can the EU approach be improved?

It is true that the idea of a Balkan Union sounds like a utopia, but it is not impossible. There are some major non-negligible factors that make it difficult – the differences in political systems, ethnic populations and minorities, economic development. But **there is one main hinder to regional coherence and these are the bilateral issues between certain Western Balkan countries, as well as issues connected with the minorities within some of the countries.** This is also another important reason why regional cooperation should be further deepened.

Regional cooperation and good neighborly relations are essential elements of the Stabilization and Association process. One of the recommendations of the European Commission for the region today is namely *“issues stemming from past conflicts, including war crimes, refugee return, treatment of minorities and ensuring equal rights for all citizens ... to be urgently addressed. Progress in regional fora and the inclusiveness of regional cooperation ...needs to be enhanced⁷.*

There are two aspects of regional cooperation – institutional and financial.

⁷ Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2012-2013, European Commission

The institutional framework needs to be improved, enhanced and if necessary – restructured. Possibilities should be sought for the existing structures to be charged with more powers to apply different instruments for strengthening of the regional cooperation.

The main institutional bodies that play major role in the regional cooperation process are the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP) and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC). However, I consider the work of these initiatives is insufficient and unable to provide a powerful tool for improving regional coherence. The RCC, individually and assisting the SEECP, plays a key role in promoting regional cooperation in SEE and in the coming period, *“it will place more emphasis on this role by assessing existing cooperation activities, promoting the principle of inclusiveness, identifying needs and complementarities, facilitating new activities and improving the existing ones”*⁸. However, it will *“focus (only) on a number of selected actions, also taking into account resource constraints”*⁹. What is more - its role is limited mainly to informational, coordinating and event-organizing activities.

The SEECP is *“a forum for diplomatic and political dialogue”*, so its work is also focused on soft measures.

It is my belief that some of the existing forms of regional cooperation must be built on further and be empowered with more obligations and eventually – with financial funds that they would redistribute, on the basis of their thorough expertise in regional cooperation. For example, the RCC could try to raise more funds from national governments in the region and other donor-countries and organizations and invest them in real value-added regional projects.

As it concerns the financial support, if it’s not possible for new funds to be raised, then the existing funds need to be reallocated with focus on regional cooperation.

The European Commission supports these countries through the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance¹⁰. However, *“economic and social development, regional cooperation and territorial*

⁸ Strategy and Work Program 2011 - 2013 of the RCC

⁹ The annual budget of the RCC Secretariat is slightly under 3 million euro, <http://www.rcc.int/pages/6/2/overview>

¹⁰ For 2007-2013 IPA funds were € 11.6 billion, for 2014-2020 the Commission has proposed € 14.1 billion

cooperation (cross-border, trans-national and interregional cooperation actions)" are identified as the last priority of the Commission and are the least-supported.

The second big financial instrument is the Western Balkan Investment Framework¹¹. The problem here is that most of the funds go into the countries in the region, but not in the region as a whole, i.e. not in regional cooperation, which could add value to the regional coherence. Even though the WBIF raises significant funds, in 2011 from all 112 projects (at value of 220 million euro) approved for financing by the fund, only 6 were regional (42,2 million euro), i.e. less than one fifth of the funds¹².

That's why some funds from these or other EU programs could be redirected towards regional cooperation in the Western Balkans (for example for the Balkan single market).

In 1950, the nations of Europe struggled to overcome the devastation of the World War II. European governments concluded that pooling coal and steel production would make war between historic rivals France and Germany "not merely unthinkable, but materially impossible"¹³.

In 2012, even though the war period is over, the situation is similar on the Balkans. Regional cooperation is the only path not only to make war and inter-country conflicts impossible on the Balkans, but also for the achievement of more coherence and making the region look and act as a region, instead of just a mix of various nations that have to live together. The future of the Western Balkan countries, like the past, is for them to be together, to cooperate and achieve more together, and strive together for a common goal – that of being together in the EU.

¹¹ Another very useful and successful instrument is the CARDS program for regional cooperation

¹² WBIF Annual Report 2011

¹³ Schuman Declaration, presented by French foreign minister Robert Schuman on 9 May 1950

How can EU do better in Albania?

Author: Sindi Brakollari

Through the centuries Balkan Peninsula became as alienated from Europe as it seemed as there was a tectonic rift. Indeed, Balkans were not moved anywhere, much less Europe made the relocation. But mental inner distance led to the creation of a paradox "to be a part of Europe and not to be called such". Recently people from this area seem to say: call us Southeast European, Euro-Mediterranean, only do not call us Balkans. It's known that Balkan is the problematic peninsula of the continent. All should agree that "if Balkan is the problem of Europe, Europe is the solution for Balkan".

Albania is a part of this peninsula. In XX century, Albanian communism created a new departure. Europe for Albanians became doubly distant, multiple hostile, prohibited. We were divided from Europe, we were surrounded by barbed. Today we talk about a return of Albanians in Europe. The integration theme is the most passionate theme of all Albanians. For us, Europe's more than a luxury, an escalation towards progress, it is a necessity. As the loneliest country of the continent, a folk without a family, finding our lost family creates access to a completely new phase of existence. For the first time in these last 600 years, Albania is getting ready to become truly a part of the continent's largest union, where it can be free, serious and moral.

It should be noted that it is the first time in Albania's history that a century after independence case, another goal brings together as by magic, politics and society, public opinion and religious beliefs, elite and ordinary people. This is the European goal. It is not an exaggeration when I say that Europe for Albanians means everything. Except the common values, except the standards, the pace of progress, European pact teaches us something that, in other circumstances, it would be hardest to acquire; harmony within itself.

Today, more than ever, to be a part of the EU is a national objective. The goal itself is not sticking to a chosen elite level. It's embracing the underlying values of EU, and that could make our society more democratic, prosperous and free, hence it would allow people to live better. Europe is helping us become a part of the Union, but I think there is much more work to be done. In my case study I will treat two sectors of economy on which I think that the EU should pay more attention in my country.

As a former communist country, Albania has emerged from its old system very damaged. 50 years were lost, 50 years away from the present. Since 1991 we have had to work with gigantic steps to recover ourselves, that we could be closer to the level of the other countries. Transition to a modern and open economy has been difficult for a small country like Albania. First, I want to concentrate my attention on the first sector of Albanian's economy, agriculture as an important sector with large prospect in the country.

Extending along the Adriatic and Ionian seas, Albanian's coastal areas are the most favorable areas for agricultural production. Most of the vegetable country's production is concentrated in these areas as mild and relatively short winters provide an ideal climate to produce a wide range of vegetables, including off-seasons for export. Altogether the small-scale production structures favor vegetable production, where also greenhouses and irrigation are common in order to improve production conditions. The coastal area is also interesting for fruit and wine production. While the production of fresh olives and olive oil, that has a long tradition in Albania, is stagnating in terms of surface and production volume, fruit and wine production is growing fast. Overall, the number of fruit production has increased by more than 80% since 2000 and production has more than doubled as yields have improved. High productivity increases are also reported for citrus fruit trees. Other fruit crops with steadily growing production include figs, cherries and kaki. The fruit production sector benefits from the fair low production costs in Albania. From this data we can see that Albania is a country that can offer a lot in agriculture. The total agricultural surface is 697000ha including forest, arable lands, orchards, olive groves, vine yards, pastures. Employment rate in agriculture is 58%, more than half of the population, but GDP share of agriculture is 21%. Annual growth of agricultural

production is > 3%. This sector is limited primarily to small family operations and subsistence farming because they lack modern equipment, because of unclear property rights and the prevalence of small, inefficient plots of land. So I state that EU should pay attention to the agricultural sector of Albania's economy, as much as it pays to transport, justice and home affairs or environment. A comprehensive project of EUR 10 million is financed with IPA 2011 in order to increase awareness and capacity of actors involved in rural development and facilitate the development of the agro-food sector and quality farming through implementing IPARD-like measures.

But EU can do more, such as:

- Improving the access of the farmers to credits for investments,
- Involving Albania in EU policies for agriculture,
- Setting strict rules and strict control on products that come from European countries here. Ugly phenomena happens here like changing the expiry date or different other forgeries.

Albanian agriculture needs more investment for a wider industrialization of the economy. Albanian economy isn't able to provide the Albanian farmer the market he deserves. The relationship consumer-producer doesn't work properly here. What we ask from EU is to pay more attention to these issues and we ask for the help to rise gradually, even in the sector of agriculture.

Second, another very promising sector for Albania economy is tourism. Albania's tourism sector has great development potential. I will mention the most important: the coast facing the Adriatic and Ionian seas offers various forms of relief with wonderful views, suitable climate, water resources, rich animal and plant world, archaeological sites, medieval castles etc. No Wonder in 2011 Albania has been placed by the Lonely Planet guide 'Best in Travel' among the top 10 destinations to be visited.

These touristic potentials were not put in good use in the past, but today they represent a very good opportunity for development. Nowadays, it is our next best chance and challenge. The

tourism sector is one of the fast growing industries in the country. It has strongly benefited from the EU integration. They are making Albania, so far one of the main destinations to be discovered. "Tourism is playing a vital role for the Albanian economy. Accounting for around 11% of the nation's GDP, tourism brought in 1.2 billion euro in profit in 2011 and with tourist numbers rising to more than 4 million last year it is important that Albania produces a long-term plan to capitalize off the back of its growing popularity," is expressed by Ravin Maharajah, the Partner of Lalzit Bay Resort & Spa in Albania. However, tourism in Albania is facing many problems. The main problem is the lack of a clear strategy. This problem comes from the fact that tourism is not seen as the main economic industry of the country. Some problematic issues include unregulated waste disposal, unclear land ownership, spatial planning such as illegal construction, illegal logging and hunting, poor road and public utilities infrastructure. If we look at the education aspect, there is a lack of qualified hospitality sector personnel and accommodation classification system. Bodies are becoming aware and starting to tackle these issues despite the setbacks, local, national and international. But to solve these problems we need European aid.

We want Europe to assist in the creation of conditions for better investment climate in the state, conditions for attracting foreign tourists, in the creation of specific tourist products, new forms of tourism development in areas where it can be done, in the improvement of the levels of security in the country and last, but not least, in the organization of a very intensive promotional campaigns. This work may be done through financial assistance and better use of financial aid, investment growth, promotion of Albania as a reliable and safe place, offering information campaigns for citizens, better information and protection for tourists, training courses for managers and staff. The orientation of the government in taking action for different problems, facilitating tourism in the Albanians Communities, improving the geographical and seasonal distribution of tourism, improvement of working conditions, improved knowledge of the tourism sector; increasing co-operation among member countries etc . In fact "an action plan in favor of tourism" (European Commission, 1997) was created and the goals for this area were already defined in 1986, some of which are mentioned above. Some of the other findings of this action plan are cost savings to Albanian firms and in the medium term

creation of additional jobs as real economic growth. Such plans should be created intensively now more than ever because it is a great need. Albania is a new place in the Europe tourism trade, which means that it needs a lot to be understood and done by Albanians with the help given to us by the United Europe.

Conclusion

Tourism authorities on national and local level within the country must pay equal attention in the future to the nature and quality of the destination and the destinations brand and the values that it conveys to customers. In Albania, the process of tourism development, management and marketing or even the promotion should be managed within an integrated structure, which arises the need of foreign aid.

To resume, Albania, as a Balkan state, is far from the development of the EU countries, but this country and all its citizens are very enthusiastic about the idea of being a part of this union and very enthusiastic to work on this issue. It's often said that people solve their own problems. Sounds accurate, but it is not always true. In this case much less. We need your help. Today we, Albanians, inhabitants and a living entity of this continent, need European Union to do something more for us.

After a research on what can EU do better in Albania, I stand at the conclusion that there should be a bigger attention on agriculture and tourism, more investment, more projects and more work. Only this way Albania can become decent to take part in the EU and in a more distant future it will be able to help her "family" to reach the common goal: "The United States of Europe", as the most powerful political and economical organization on Earth.

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How can the EU do better in the Balkans?

Author: Martina Cvetanoska

The EU is a unique economic and political partnership between 27 European countries that together cover much of the continent. It was created in the aftermath of the Second World War. The first steps were to foster economic cooperation: the idea being that countries that trade with one another become economically interdependent and so more likely to avoid conflict. The result was the European Economic Community (EEC), created in 1958, and initially increasing economic cooperation between six countries: Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. Since then, a huge single market has been created and continues to develop towards its full potential. But what began as a purely economic union has also evolved into an organization spanning all policy areas, from development aid to environment. A name change from the EEC to the European Union (the EU) in 1993 reflected this change. The EU has delivered half a century of peace, stability, and prosperity, helped raise living standards, and launched a single European currency. Thanks to the abolition of border controls between EU countries, people can travel freely throughout most of the continent. And it's also become much easier to live and work abroad in Europe.¹

All the countries of the western Balkans have the prospect of future EU membership. The previous enlargements of the EU have demonstrated that the fulfillment of the Copenhagen political criteria under which the candidate country must have stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law and human rights, protection of minorities pose the greatest challenge and as such have absolute priority over other criteria.

By the time they join, new members must have **(The 'Copenhagen criteria')**:²

¹ http://europa.eu/about-eu/basic-information/index_en.htm

² Pascal Fontaine, *Europe in 12 lessons*, July 2010, p.11.

1. Stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities;
2. A functioning market economy and the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union;
3. The ability to take on the obligations of membership, including support for the aims of the Union. They must have a public administration capable of applying and managing EU laws in practice.

The EU is based on the rule of law. This means that everything that it does is founded on treaties, voluntarily and democratically agreed by all member countries. These binding agreements set out the EU's goals in its many areas of activity. One of its main goals is to promote human rights both internally and around the world. Human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights: these are the core values of the EU.³

Republic of Macedonia applied for membership of the EU in March 2004 and was granted the status of an EU candidate country at the European Council meeting in December 2005.⁴ However, the unresolved name dispute with Greece, have had the consequence that the EU accession negotiations have not yet been opened.

In addition, Republic of Macedonia is an independent country for 20 years based on the rule of law, democracy, human rights and market economy. The ability to take on the obligations of membership and Macedonia's readiness to begin negotiations for membership in the European Union are confirmed by four consecutive positive reports by the European Commission on the progress of Macedonia.

To this end, the EU has provided political and financial support, the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA). However, the provision of assistance from the EU is one step, a lot depends on the national institutions absorptive capacity, active involvement and commitment,

³ http://europa.eu/about-eu/basic-information/index_en.htm

⁴ http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ftu/pdf/en/FTU_6.4.1.pdf

which are crucial for the successful utilization of resources and achieving desired effects and benefits to society.⁵

IPA introduced in the framework of the reform of the financial instruments of the EU's external policies for the period 2007-2013 is due to the need to provide efficient support for countries aspiring to EU accession process. The total pre-accession funding for the current financial framework (2007–13) is EUR 11.5 billion. Among the main objectives of IPA assistance are support for institution building and the rule of law, human rights, including the fundamental freedoms, minority rights, gender equality and nondiscrimination, as well as administrative and economic reforms, reconciliation and regional cooperation. It is worth noting that assistance for civil society development and dialogue in the western Balkans is also one of the key objectives.⁶ In May 1999, the EU had already launched the Stabilization and Association Process (SAP) for these countries with the aim of helping to establish stable democratic institutions, to sustain open economies, and to ensure that the rule of law prevails. The 'Thessaloniki agenda', adopted on 21 June 2003 by the EU and the countries of the western Balkans, reflected the evolution in the relationship. Since then, the EU, as part of its strategy, has made the prospect of membership and its benefits visible and concrete for the citizens of the western Balkans. Among the key measures was full visa liberalization for the citizens of five western Balkan countries for travel to the 'Schengen countries'.⁷ Carefully managed enlargement process is a very powerful instrument that the EU uses to support the transition of states into modern, functioning democracies while providing peace, stability, prosperity, democracy, human rights and the rule of law on the European continent. In terms of the western Balkans, the EU's strategic interest is the establishment of democracy, security and stability due to the unrest and violence that followed the region in the past. At the beginning of the development of relations with the region, the EU is supporting countries in the adoption of EU standards through the establishment of appropriate institutional framework: administrative, legal structures and law enforcement bodies.⁸

⁵ *Користење на фондовите на ЕУ во Република Македонија*, Институт за европска политика ноември, 2012 година, р.5

⁶ http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ftu/pdf/en/FTU_6.4.1.pdf

⁷ http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ftu/pdf/en/FTU_6.4.1.pdf

⁸ *Користење на фондовите на ЕУ во Република Македонија*, Институт за европска политика

IPA provides assistance in various forms for the countries which began to implement political and economic reforms on the path to membership of the EU, such as:

- Investment, procurement contracts or subsidies,
- providing experts from Member States to achieve administrative cooperation,
- support for the beneficiary country,
- assistance for implementing and managing programs in exceptional cases, budget support.

The assistance is related to improving conditions in the beneficiary countries and the movement of their citizens closer to the EU. Regional and Horizontal program support projects of regional cooperation, infrastructure, justice and home affairs, internal market and trade, market economy, support for civil society, education, youth and research.

Conclusions, suggestions and ideas

According to the above, in Macedonia there is a lack of information about the IPA funds and financial support that they can provide to improve the functioning of the various segments of society, in order to fulfill the Copenhagen criteria and to bring the country closer to the functioning of the countries which are members of EU. Therefore, in Republic of Macedonia should be certain places such as EU corners that will provide all sorts of information about the EU and the funds and financial support for the candidate countries. They should also provide information on the advantages offered by the European Union and the advantages of the European citizen such as travelling, working and living anywhere in the EU, funding programmes in the fields of education and culture to bring EU citizens closer together etc.⁹ By taking such actions, citizens of the candidate countries will know what to expect and what awaits them when their country becomes an EU member. Another thing is that the financial support of EU will be felt in western Balkan countries only when they are used for the

ноември, 2012 година, р.5.

⁹ Pascal Fontaine, *Europe in 12 lessons*, July 2010, p.35.

construction of facilities of public interest, such as highways, roads, schools, hospitals etc. and also for development of modern and efficient public administration which is for the benefit of every citizen, therefore it is necessary to intensify the financial support in this direction.

In my opinion, the youth is the driving force for progress in all countries. Thus, the largest investments in a society should be directed to young people because they are the future of the country and society. I am a student and I am part of that youth and therefore my remarks and suggestions of the presence and assistance of the European Union in the Western Balkans and Macedonia will be in that direction. For example, the EU should support and partly fund excursions for youth and children and even for adults to visit the European institutions and the cities where they are located and also, young people from the countries of the European Union can come to Macedonia and the western Balkan countries, to personally convey the spirit of the EU and the way of living and studying in the European Union. Another idea is summer camps for children and youth summer camps also supported and funded by the EU, where through different ways will be taught European values and commitments of the Union. The youth from all over Europe will be able to participate in these camps. Furthermore, EU support is needed for scholarships to the best students of the Western Balkans, to study at universities in Europe in the field of EU policies and EU law and after finishing the studies their knowledge and experience will be implemented in their own countries. Competitions of innovations and research projects should also be funded because new ideas will develop the Union into a better place for living. Due to the excessive presence of young people in social networks and the internet in these times, to be informed and up to date with news and support offered by the EU, it is necessary creating a website as well as Facebook and Twitter pages that will be available to them.

John Gillingham for the current situation in the European Union in his book *Design for a new Europe* says: Europe desperately needs economic growth to maintain its international standing. New markets must be opened, risk aversion decreased, and entrepreneurship rewarded. The now-flagging European liberalization process must be given a push from the bottom up – and once set in motion, it must be sustained through competition. Market-induced change has

unexpectedly begun to take on a life of its own in the former accession nations of Eastern Europe – where growth advances at a handsome clip of nearly 5 percent – and in Turkey, the Western Balkans, and Ukraine. Europe should think of these fast-moving catch-up economies as comprising a nearby China – with big markets and large pools of accessible, cheap, and highly skilled labor. Their successes can also serve as models for policy making. Western Europe may, for the first time in a millennium, be reformed from the East.¹⁰ In this regard, the economy in the European Union is necessary to firmly stand on its own feet and to introduce new measures and policies for the functioning of the economies of the member states, so the benefits of the EU funds for the candidate countries will be much bigger.

¹⁰John Gillingham, *Design for a new Europe*, Cambridge University press, p.62.

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Aleko Stoyanov

“The EU needs to replace the Office of the High Representative with the European Union Special Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina”.

Kalina Todorova

“The EU needs to urgently reinvigorate its support for the Western Balkans enlargement, and not just vocally – it needs to back up its speech with deeds”.

Monika Moraliyska

“...more efforts should be made towards achieving a bigger degree of coherence – economic and democratic - in the region of the Western Balkans. But how? There is only one way and this is regional cooperation. It should be deepened and strengthened to a much bigger extent”.

Sindi Brakollari

“After a research on what can EU do better in Albania, I stand at the conclusion that there should be a bigger attention on agriculture and tourism, more investment, more projects and more work”.

Monika Cvetanoska

“...the youth is the driving force for progress in all countries. Thus, the largest investments in a society should be directed to young people because they are the future of the country and society”.