

INSTITUTE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE



KAS–IFAT Western Balkans Conference 2021 (online)

Membership or selective integration? Realities of the EU–Western Balkans relations

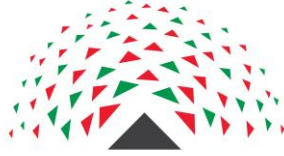
Date: 25th March 2021

The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) in Hungary and the Institute for Foreign Affairs and Trade (IFAT) have been long engaged in supporting exchange of views about the Western Balkans and its EU integration process. Although the pandemic will not allow us to have an in-person conference this year, it is nevertheless important to continue discussions about the EU–WB relations. As we could witness it in 2020, a promising beginning—with the Council’s support for the new enlargement methodology and the start of accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia—was followed by a disappointing end, culminating in the lack of conclusion on enlargement by the Council of the EU. These developments were received negatively by the friends of enlargement and aspiring member states alike.

This year is unlikely to bring any major breakthrough in the EU integration process of the Western Balkans either. EU enlargement policy will be also affected by changes in the leadership of two influential actors. As Germany will hold elections in September, the question arises what we can expect after the departure of Chancellor Angela Merkel. Will Germany remain committed to the EU integration process of the region? How will the Biden administration cooperate with the EU, and what will be its goals in the region?

Enlargement in 2021 will most probably be overshadowed by the economic recovery of Europe. The pandemic and its socio-economic consequences must be adequately addressed both in the EU and in the region in order to facilitate economic growth in the Western Balkans. At the same time, the region will need significant external resources to be able to get back to growth path which could further increase external actors’ rivalry. What are the key factors influencing the will of action of the EU member states (Germany, France, the Netherlands) and how can the EU prevent further expansion of external influence? Can China reach a quality change in its policy in the region?

The next KAS–IFAT Western Balkans Conference would surround these questions within the framework of the two panel discussions under Chatham House Rule. The invitation-only event would bring together experts and policy-makers from EU institutions and member states as well as from the Western Balkan countries.

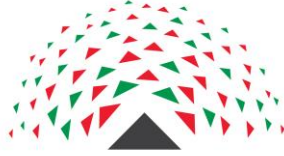


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Agenda **(in GTM+1/Budapest time)**

- 4:00 pm** **Opening remarks** by
- Márton UGRÓSDY***
Director of the Institute for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Hungary
- Michael WINZER***
Resident Representative of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Hungary
- 4:10 pm** **Panel 1: EU membership or selective integration for the Western Balkans?**
- Doris PACK***
President
Robert Schuman Institute, Germany
- Madeleine COURANT***
Center for Analysis, Planning and Strategy
Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, France
- Thomas HAGLEITNER***
Head of Unit in the Western Balkans Directorate
DG NEAR, European Commission
- Wouter ZWEERS***
Research fellow
Clingendael Institute, The Netherlands
- Moderator: *Ferenc Németh***, Research Fellow, IFAT
- 5:25 pm** **Break**
- 5:45 pm** **Panel 2: What can be expected from the external actors in the Western Balkans in the near future?**
- Maja PIŠČEVIĆ***
Nonresident Senior Fellow
Atlantic Council, USA
- Lucas M. SCHUBERT***
Research Associate
University of the German Armed Forces, Munich, Germany



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Vesko GARČEVIĆ

Professor of the Practice of International Relations
Boston University
Former Ambassador of Montenegro in Brussels (NATO) and Vienna (OSCE)

Dušan RELJIĆ

Head of Brussels Office
German Institute for International and Security Affairs

Moderator: *Anna Orosz*, Research Fellow and Program Manager, IFAT

7:00 pm **Concluding remarks** by

László MÁRKUSZ

Senior Research Fellow
Institute for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Hungary
Former Ambassador of Hungary to Pristina

Please note that this is an invitation-only event where Chatham House Rule is applicable.

Please confirm your attendance by Tuesday, 23 March via the following [link](#).

Registered guests will receive an e-mail with a link to the Zoom meeting on the day before the conference.