

GREEK PRESIDENCY PRIORITIES FOR THE WESTERN BALKANS

SUMMARY

The Balkans are a key priority for the Greek Presidency. Following the Copenhagen decisions on enlargement and considering progress made in the region, but also its fragility, it is important for the EU to keep the Balkan; high on its agenda. The Union must increasingly assume a leading role in the area, in support of stability, development and integration. The European prospect, eventually leading 10 EU membership, must be visible and credible to the peoples of the region. For their part, the Western Balkan countries will have to take on and implement the commitments set within the Stabilisation and Association Process. Progress in their road to Europe will be the result of their own efforts and performance.

The Greek Presidency sets the following priorities for its work in the Western Balkans:

1. ***PEACE, STABILITY AND DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT.*** Support full implementation of Resolution 1244 of the UN Security Council on Kosovo, as well as of the Dayton, Ohrid and Belgrade agreements. Turn the page of conflicts, promote ethnic and religious tolerance, combat nationalism. Maintain security presence, accelerate the return of refugees. Reaffirm EU leading role in the region and maintain the Balkans high in the EU-US dialogue agenda.
2. ***CARRYING FORWARD THE STABILISATION AND ASSOCIATION PROCESS (SAP) WITH THE FIVE COUNTRIES CONCERNED.*** Encourage the continuation of the ratification process for the Croatia and FYROM Stabilisation and Association Agreements, as well as, in co-operation with the Commission, achieve progress in negotiations with Albania, and proceed with feasibility studies with FRY and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Monitor respect of conditionality and encourage reforms,
3. ***DEVELOPING THE SAP AND ADAPTING IT TO THE NEW ENVIRONMENT AFTER ENLARGEMENT.*** Uphold the SAP as the cornerstone of EU policy in the area. Enrich" it with knowledge drawn from the enlargement process, in order to strengthen the accession - oriented dimension. Confirm that no additional intermediate overall contractual framework or agreement will be required from each SAP country between its successful fulfilment of the SAA and accession to the EU. Each country's progress will be assessed by its own merits. Reflect on ways to introduce the aim of economic and social cohesion into EU policies towards The region. Assess the priorities of CARDS and the adequate use of its inherent conditionality and review the ATMs effectiveness and implementation, on the basis of the forthcoming Commission's evaluation on the effectiveness and coherence of the SAP instruments.
4. ***LAUNCHING THE 'BALKANS EUROPEAN INTEGRATION PROCESS'*** Establish a new political forum that will increase the visibility of the SAP and complement it politically, by giving a clear public signal of the privileged relationship between SAP countries and the EU, and by promoting regional political co-operation. The Thessaloniki EU - W. Balkans summit is expected to give the necessary impetus to this endeavour.

- 5. FOCUSING ON SPECIFIC HORIZONTAL ISSUES OF SIGNIFICANCE TO THE REGION.** Ensure the follow up of the London Conference on organized crime and implement existing or new initiatives on Justice and Home Affairs issues in the area. Explore ways to address the issues of refugees, to ensure protection and rehabilitation of historic and religious monuments, and to ensure collection of small arms. Enhance regional co-operation on energy and infrastructure in general. Improve investment support, with a particular view to reducing unemployment. Follow up promotion of free trade, including bilateral Free Trade Agreements.
- 6. PROMOTING REGIONAL CO-OPERATION AND INITIATIVES IN SOUTHEAST EUROPE.** Follow up the Stability Pact progress report and assess its prospects. Support regional co-operation initiatives and increasing regional ownership in the area, in particular the Southeast European Co-operation Process (SEECP). Avoid overlapping activities.

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General goals and priorities

The Balkans are a key priority of the Greek Presidency.

Important progress has been achieved in the stabilisation of the region after a decade of conflicts and crises. Democratic governments are in place and free and fair elections have been held throughout the Balkans. Countries in the region are moving from reconstruction to economic recovery and sustainable development. All of them place high priority in their European prospect and, as potential candidates for membership, have embarked, albeit at different paces, in the Stabilisation and Association Process.

However, in many aspects, stability and progress under way are fragile. The implementation of international agreements ending conflicts in the region is not always satisfactory. Exclusiveness, nationalism and ethnic tension remain an obstacle to reconciliation and integration. The 2001 interethnic conflict in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia demonstrated how easily parts of the region could slip into crisis. Organised crime and corruption seriously compromise democratic development and economic recovery. The pace of economic reform is not always satisfactory.

It is up to the countries and peoples of the region to address and overcome these problems, thus securing their European option. For its part, the international community at large and the EU in particular must maintain its focus, political engagement and presence in the region.

It is important for the EU to keep the Balkans high on its agenda. This means sticking firmly to the Stabilisation and Association Process, while adjusting it as necessary to cope with the changing demands and circumstances. As the Western Balkans move from stabilisation and reconstruction to association and self-sustainable development, and the Union enlarges with ten new members, a powerful message must be sent to governments and peoples in the area, reasserting EU's support for their European vocation as potential candidates for membership, assisting them in their efforts, and further clarifying the path they will have to follow.

The Greek Presidency will be guided by the established principles and objectives of EU policy in the Western Balkans. In close cooperation with its partners and the SG/HR within the Council, as well as with the Commission, it will work for securing peace, promoting democracy, stability, sustainable development, regional co-operation, and fostering the rapprochement of the countries in the region to the European Union

The Greek Presidency sets the following priorities for its work in the Western Balkans:

- i. Further consolidating peace, stability and democratic development
- ii. Carrying forward the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP) with the five countries concerned
- iii. Developing the SAP and adapting it to the new environment after enlargement; reflecting on the effectiveness and priorities of its instruments

- iv. Launching the "Balkan European Integration Process"
- v. Addressing specific horizontal issues of significance to the area, including organized crime and corruption, return of refugees, protection and rehabilitation of historic and religious monuments, energy, infrastructures, investment support, particularly for SMEs, as well as development of free trade.
- vi. Promoting regional co-operation and related initiatives in Southeast Europe; reflecting on the functioning of the Stability Pact (SP)

A EU-W. Balkans summit meeting will be held in Thessaloniki on 21 June 2003

1. Further consolidating peace, stability and democratic development in the Balkans

Having in mind the considerable progress achieved in the last two years, but also its fragility, the Greek Presidency will deploy all efforts to further consolidate peace, to promote stability, democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human and minority rights, inviolability of international borders, peaceful resolution of conflicts and regional co-operation are principles of the highest importance in the area. Terrorism and violence, be it ethnically, politically or criminally motivated, should be unequivocally condemned.

Full co-operation with the International Criminal Tribunal on Yugoslavia must be ensured.

Full implementation of Resolution 1244 of the UN Security Council on Kosovo, as well as of the Dayton agreement -and subsequent Peace Implementation Council decisions, and the Ohrid and Belgrade agreements are an essential part of EU policy and a *condilio sine qua non* for achieving stability and democracy. The adoption and implementation of a Constitutional Charter and the Action Plan for the Internal Market in FRY (Serbia-Montenegro) is an urgent need.

The EU Police Mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina, starting in January 2003 is the first operational action under the European Security and Defence Policy, The Greek Presidency will work for continued EU support to this presence, in the form and to the extent that will be appropriate and necessary. In accordance with the Copenhagen European Council Conclusions (December 2002), it will prepare, in consultation with NATO, the take over by the EU of the operation in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia as soon as possible. Also, in view of the Union's willingness to lead a military operation in Bosnia following SFOR, the Presidency, together with the SG/HR will consult with the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the High Representative for B-H, NATO and other international players, and report to the Council in February.

Legislative and administrative reforms on arms sales compatible with the "European code of conduct" will be encouraged. Ensure civilian control over the military

The Greek Presidency will support activities and initiatives promoting ethnic and religious tolerance, multiculturalism and will combat regressive nationalism. Return of refugees and internally displaced persons, protection and rehabilitation of cultural and religious monuments and sites are crucial elements in this respect. Activities aiming at improvements of history textbooks and teaching should be encouraged.

Support to activities aiming at defending women's rights and improving their situation should be incorporated in EU policies towards the region.

Involvement of non-governmental organisations, civil society and local authorities in EU supported policies and activities in the region is of paramount importance, and will be strongly encouraged by the Greek Presidency.

The Greek Presidency will work together with the SG/HR as well as the European Commission and the European Parliament, in close consultation with regional and other international actors, including where relevant the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General in Kosovo, the High Representative for Bosnia-Herzegovina and the EU's Special Representative in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

The Greek Presidency will work for the strengthening of operational co-ordination and communication of EU action in the Western Balkans, in accordance with relevant Council guidelines.

Though the EU is moving ahead to take the lead in Southeast Europe, continued strong US engagement is necessary. Close co-ordination with the US on Balkan issues will remain a high priority under the Greek Presidency and the Balkans will be placed high on the agenda of the EU-US political dialogue. The Balkans will also be on the agenda of the EU dialogue with Russia, as well as with other relevant countries, considering the importance attached to stability in the region.

2. Stabilisation and Association Process: carrying forward the process with individual countries

Carrying forward the SAP with each of the five countries concerned is of first priority in the agenda of the Greek Presidency for the Western Balkans. Progress in the SAP, however, primarily depends on the countries' own performance and progress in the necessary reforms. Rushing through stages will not prepare countries to deal with the challenges that lie ahead and could create unrealistic expectations.

2.1. Albania

Support the opening of negotiations and co-operate with the Commission in order to make substantial progress towards a SAA, depending on respective efforts by Albania. Continue the monitoring mechanism of the Consultative Task Force (CTF).

2.2. Bosnia and Herzegovina

Given the substantial completion by Bosnia-Herzegovina of the road map, the Commission could be invited to prepare a "feasibility study on the opening of negotiations" for the conclusion of a SAA, as soon as the new central government and the governments of the entities take office, and the conditions set out by the Council on 21 October 2001 are fulfilled. In the event of a positive conclusion of

this study, the Council could discuss the next steps (i.a. invitation to the Commission to present draft negotiating directives). The mechanism of the CTF will continue.

2.3. *Croatia*

Encourage progress in the ratification process, in order for the SAA to enter into force and start being implemented, allowing for further deepening of relations within the SAP framework.

2.4. *Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*

Within an environment of full implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, conditions are ripe for further progress in the SAP, including through progress in the ratification process allowing for the entry into force and beginning of implementation of the SAA. The continued presence of the EU Special Representative will emphasise that the Union maintains its focus on the country.

2. 5. *Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia-Montenegro)*

Provided the remaining conditions are fulfilled by the FRY, i.e. the adoption of the Constitutional Charter and the Action Plan for the Internal Market, the Commission could be invited to prepare a 'feasibility study on the opening of negotiations' for the conclusion of a SAA. In the event of a positive outcome of this study, the Council could discuss the next steps (i.a. invitation to the Commission to present draft negotiating directives).

The modalities of the inclusion of Kosovo in the SAP will have to be addressed, with full respect of resolution 1244 and within the concept "European standards before status".

3. Developing the Stabilisation and Association Process and adapting it to the challenge of enlargement

The SAP is the centrepiece of EU policy with respect to the Western Balkans. It has already proved a precious instrument in achieving our shared goals in the region. However, in line with the ideas expressed by the Commission in its First Annual Report on the SAP, the SAP would need to be further developed in certain areas, in order for it to answer adequately the challenges facing the EU in the region.

Building upon the success of the SAP, it is particularly important at this juncture to underpin its role in promoting rapprochement and integration into the EU, thus reassuring the peoples of the region that the EU stands firm in its commitment for eventual full membership of Western Balkan countries into the Union. The EU must solemnly confirm that no additional intermediate overall contractual framework or agreement will be required from each SAP country between successful implementation of the SAA and accession to the EU.

The speed with which each country moves through the different stages of the SAP in the lead toward integration with the EU, taking ownership of the process, depends on its increasing ability to take on the obligations flowing from an ever closer association with the F.U as well as compliance, with the conditionality policy defined by the Council on 29 April 1997. It is the pace and extent of change within each country which will determine its prospects for

future membership and not the date of any application for membership. At the same time, EU policies and instruments should be further oriented towards supporting the efforts of these countries to adopt European norms and standards and gradually take on the acquis, in accordance with the Copenhagen criteria. The SAP should further strengthen its accession-oriented dimension, which will allow it to serve as a long-term flexible and dynamic framework for all Western Balkan countries. The principles of own merits, differentiation and catch up should be adopted, adapted as appropriate to the SAP.

The SAP could be enriched by 'borrowing' elements from the accession process. Such elements could include:

- The further development of the "twinning" facility, through which SAP countries could use expertise from Member State administrations to assist them in institution building and transposition of EU legislation
- Increased participation of SAP countries in Community programmes
- A mechanism through which, at the appropriate time, a review of national legislation with respect to its conformity with EU legislation would be initiated for each country, in consultation with the Commission
- Strengthening and streamlining existing monitoring mechanisms on the implementation of commitments by SAP countries to adopt core elements of the EU acquis and to move closer to EU standards in other fields.
- Assistance in border control and management, using experience and expertise from the accession process.

As the Western Balkan countries gradually move from stabilisation and reconstruction to association and sustainable development, policies pursuing economic and social cohesion at both national and regional levels become increasingly relevant, in particular having in mind the very high level of unemployment in most of them, as well as the social and regional dimension of ethnic problems. The Greek Presidency intends to initiate a reflection on integrating the aim of economic and social cohesion into EU policy towards the region, and on ways and means, including financial, of promoting cohesion through the SAP. Particular attention should be given to policies that encourage employment-generating investment in SME's, and to ways of mobilising private capital and savings to this end.

Notwithstanding existing mechanisms within the SAP, political dialogue with the Western Balkan countries could be further promoted through procedures inspired by arrangements already established with the candidate countries: alignment with demarches and declarations on CSFP issues, briefings in the EU member state capitals, regular contacts at HoM level in third countries, co-ordination in international organisations and conferences, etc.

EU assistance to the Western Balkans under the CARDs Regulation contributes substantially to the development of the region. In the light of progress achieved, there is a need to assess its effectiveness, and to reflect on its priorities and on the best use of its inherent conditionality. Strengthening the components of the programme oriented towards integration into the EU structures, including support to institution building and introducing elements for structural interventions to promote economic and social cohesion (*i.a.* productive sector investment, particularly in SME's, human resources development and business related infrastructure), and further supporting regional co-operation, including cross-border

cooperation, could be options to be considered.

The General Affairs Council, in its conclusions of May 13, 2002, invited the Commission to evaluate the effectiveness and coherence of SAP instruments, including assistance to meet the objectives of the process. This evaluation will be presented in the next annual SAP review, due in March 2003. Based on this evaluation, the Greek Presidency intends to work closely with the Commission in carrying forward the reflection on this issue. This could also prepare the ground for the review of the CARDS Regulation due in 2004, in view of the preparation of the next Multiannual Indicative Programmes.

The European Agency for Reconstruction (EAR) has proved a very successful institution for channelling EU assistance to the area. A reflection could be initiated on its prospects in the post-reconstruction period.

Co-operation in Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) matters with the region as a whole should be encouraged. The Greek Presidency, in co-operation with the Commission, will support the efforts to organise expert missions on a thematic basis to the W. Balkan countries, in view of developing CARDS JHA regional programmes. This will provide the opportunity to work towards developing a coherent policy both for the EU and member states, which could serve as the guiding principles for assistance in this sector. The twinning system for JHA issues, successfully applied in Croatia, could be expanded in all five countries in the region. Coordination with other international initiatives and organisations will be a priority in order to avoid overlapping. The problem of ensuring monitoring must be addressed.

On the basis of the above-mentioned Commission evaluation of SAP instruments, the implementation and effectiveness of the ATMs could be reviewed.

4. Launching the "Balkan European Integration Process"

The mechanisms for enhanced political dialogue and regional co-operation should be further developed through the establishment of a new political scheme, the "Balkan European Integration Process", building on the success of the November 2000 Zagreb Summit and on the GAC Conclusions of May 2002, based on ideas by the Commission. The "Balkan European Integration Process" could bring together on a regular basis the heads of state or government of the region and their EU counterparts. Similar regular meetings of foreign ministers could be held, while other ministers council could also meet, when appropriate.

The "Balkan European Integration Process" should give a clear public signal of the special and inclusive nature of the privileged relationship between the European Union and the SAP countries as well as of the commitment of the latter to strengthen and deepen regional co-operation.

The aim would be to provide a supporting political framework for reviewing and achieving the objectives of the SAP through:

- Discussing key issues of common concern, in areas such as foreign policy, Justice and Home Affairs with particular emphasis in combating organised crime, trafficking and corruption, co-operation in the field of energy, infrastructures and economic development.
- Informing and associating the SAP countries to major developments in the EU, including in institutional matters.
- Providing a genuine European framework within, which issues with regional and international implications could be addressed, in close co-operation with other relevant international actors.
- Enhancing the political visibility of the SAP and the EU in Southeast Europe and the credibility of a European future for the Western Balkans.
- Deepening the understanding of the association process in the perspective of candidacy and eventual accession.
- Strengthening regional co-operation and ownership.

5. Horizontal issues

5.1. Organised crime, trafficking and corruption and other Justice and Home Affairs matters

Organised crime is a key impediment to stability and the European prospect of the Balkans. It nourishes corruption and ethnic conflict, impedes the normal functioning of democratic institutions, the rule of law and market economy, and finances illegal armed groups.

Combating organised crime and corruption is a major objective of EU policy in the area and the Greek Presidency places it high on its agenda.

The successful outcome of the *London Conference* of November 2002 set out a framework for our work in this area, as part of the SAP and the Balkan European Integration Process. In line with the London Statement which mandates it (as well as the Italian Presidency) for the follow up, the Greek Presidency will focus on co-ordination among law enforcement agencies and relevant Ministries) of countries in the region, creation of the necessary legislative infrastructure in line with EU standards, judicial and police reforms, cross-border cooperation. Work should concentrate in the areas for priority action set by the London Conference for each country, as well as the relevant recommendations contained in the 2002 SAP annual review.

The Greek Presidency has announced at the aforementioned Conference specific measures to ensure the follow up of the actions adopted for key areas. Ways and means for further involvement of the Council and the Member States (through Council Working Groups, reports of Heads of Mission in the area, etc.), as well as the establishment of regular contacts with regional initiatives, including the SEECP, are also considered.

The EU visa regime is a particularly important issue for the citizens of Western Balkan states. It is also a sensitive issue for the EU. It would be appropriate to highlight and

further clarify the process by which SAP countries would prepare to satisfy the conditions set for an eventual gradual lifting of the visa requirement. This process would be closely linked to progress in the field of combating organised crime and in more effective border management. The Greek Presidency will work in this direction. The idea of establishing a visa-free area in the Western Balkans could also be explored.

5.2. Refugees and internally displaced persons

Refugees and displaced persons, over 1 million of whom remain in the region, is a major humanitarian, social and political challenge for the European continent, and has to be addressed both at European and regional levels. A country's willingness to achieve genuine and sustainable reintegration of minority returnees should be assessed as an indicator of its political and democratic maturity, as well as of its compliance with European standards.

The Greek Presidency will work for further EU encouragement to the return of refugees and displaced persons, and will support relevant Stability Pact and other regional activities.

5.3. Restoration of cultural and religious monuments and sites

The Greek Presidency will support EU co-operation with the Council of Europe aimed at ensuring restoration and preservation of the cultural monuments and religious sites which are the common heritage of the peoples of the region, irrespectively of their ethnic affiliation or religious beliefs UNESCO and the SEECP could also be involved in such activities Close contacts will be kept with the OHR regarding this issue in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Tirana SEECP Summit Declaration provides a good political basis to give fresh impetus to this initiative.

5.4. Development of energy and transport infrastructures

Economic development of the region and future integration with the EU largely depends on *development of transport corridors and energy networks* and their reconnection with the rest of Europe. In 2001 the Commission developed long term strategies for transport and energy in the region. These strategies have been endorsed in the framework of the Stability Pact and were complemented by an EBRD strategy in the water sector. The EU also supports regional programmes such as the Regional Electricity Market (REM) for the South East of Europe or the Transport Infrastructure Regional Study (TIRS). In this context, there is an increasing need for broader regional co-operation among the countries of the area in this field.

5.5. Investment support

Investment is vital for the Balkans, not least for the reduction of unacceptable levels of unemployment which persist in most countries, and contribute to social and political instability and crime. There is a vicious circle by which unresolved issues, lack of rule of law and flourishing criminality are powerful obstacles to investment, which in its turn is necessary for sustainable development, the only long-term answer to these problems.

Ways must be sought to break this vicious circle, taking into account the long-term nature of the above-mentioned problems. These could include the establishment by the IFI's of schemes aiming at supporting investment, particularly in the SME sector. Such initiatives should be supported by the EU.

In the case of Kosovo, the mobilisation of EIB loans, backed by EU guarantees, could be explored as a means of overcoming obstacles in lending by the IFIs, related to its present status.

5. 6. Small arms collection

A regional approach to individual initiatives on **small arms collection** is necessary, if the millions of light weapons and ammunition spread throughout the region are to be collected. Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo (FRY), and Bosnia-Herzegovina should be the selected targets. The Greek Presidency will work for continued EU support to the 'South Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons' (SEESAC), operating under the auspices of the Stability Pact in co-operation with the UNDP.

5. 7. Promotion of free trade

Countries in the region have already committed to provide **market access** to one another. In the Memorandum of Understanding signed in June 2001 under the auspices of the Stability Pact, all five countries (plus Romania and Bulgaria) agreed to sign before the end of 2002 WTO compatible free trade agreements with each other. Around half of these bilateral agreements are already in place. Achieving this ambitious target and implementing the other provisions of the Memorandum would send a very strong signal on the region's determination to work together.

6. Regional co-operation and the Stability Pact

Promotion of regional co-operation is a key objective of the SAP. Integration with the EU is only possible if future members can demonstrate that they are willing and able to interact with their neighbours as EU Member States do. Also the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe (SP), where the EU has a leading role, promotes regional co-operation in the broader Balkan region. Regional co-operation is not a substitute, but a necessary complement and stimulus to the road towards Europe.

Regional co-operation in South-Eastern Europe is essential in issues related to security, in combating organised crime, addressing the problem of refugees and establishing a workable human network. It is a necessary accompaniment to market opening and a key element in the development of transport and energy infrastructures, telecommunications and the Information Society.

Considerable progress has been made in Balkan regional co-operation, through SAP related activities, the Stability Pact and other regional initiatives. However, regional co-operation

can and should be further developed with EU support, through improved targeting and better coordination among various actors. Overlapping activities should be avoided.

Following the GAC conclusions of November 2001, a review of the priorities, activities and working methods of the SP was initiated. These issues were addressed by the Special Co-ordinator in a number of reports in the course of 2002; they were further discussed in the annual Regional Table on December 16, 2002, in Thessaloniki. The EU has asked the Special Co-ordinator, in consultation with the Informal Consultative Committee, to present a report on the achievement and further strengthening of SP-SAP complementarity in advance of the Thessaloniki Summit of June 2003. The Greek Presidency intends to carry this exercise forward so that the EU, in close co-operation with the Special Co-ordinator and other participant states, will be able to reach consensus on the orientations of the Stability Pact.

The EU has emphasised that the impetus for regional co-operation must come from the region itself. It has acknowledged the role of the South-East Europe Co-operation Process (SEECP) which is gradually showing itself to be the voice of the region. Following the November 2001 General Affairs Council decisions, the SEECP has been participating in the Informal Consultative Committee (ICC) established to ensure co-ordination between EU and SP activities in the broader Balkan area.

The Greek Presidency will work for further EU commitment and support to regional co-operation initiatives in the Balkans, in particular to the SEECP, with a view to deepen regional ownership of these processes. The mechanism established through the ICC should be strengthened.

The Thessaloniki Summit (21 June 2003)

The decision of the Greek Presidency to organise a Summit on 21 June 2003 in Thessaloniki between the EU and the countries of the SAP was welcomed by the Copenhagen European Council. The Thessaloniki summit should mark a new milestone in the special relationship between the European Union and the Western Balkans, at a particularly timely moment.

It aims to send a strong political message to the countries and peoples of the region, namely that:

- The Balkans remain a priority for the European Union, high in its agenda
- The EU is committed to the European future of all Balkan countries
- The European prospect is the most credible and attractive alternative for the region
- This prospect is in no way adversely affected by the ongoing enlargement.

At the same time the meeting should reconfirm the commitment of the SAP countries to rapprochement and gradual integration into the Union and their determination to work for the fulfilment of all related criteria and conditions, including democratic and economic reforms

and development of regional co-operation.

The Thessaloniki Summit will launch the "Balkan European Integration Process".

Participants in the Thessaloniki meeting could also:

- Exchange views on major international and regional issues.
- Review the state of play of relations with individual SAP countries, including implementation of recommendations by the May 2002 GAC, and set targets for the next period.
- Take stock of developments in the SAP since the previous Summit Meeting (Zagreb) and discuss possible adaptations of its priorities and instruments.
- Review recent progress in regional co-operation for specific issues, including the follow up of the London Conference on organised crime, with a review of the implementation of the Priority Action Plans for each SAP country.
- Examine developments and possible reforms of the Stability Pact and further encourage regional co-operation.

Format and modalities: The Thessaloniki meeting will gather the Heads of State or Government of the five SAP countries and of the EU Member States, together with the representatives of EU institutions. The leaders of the ten acceding states will also be present as well as the leaders of the three candidate countries (Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey). The representatives of Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey and Slovenia will be invited to participate in full in a short discussion of issues related to broader regional co-operation. Western Balkan states will be involved in the preparation of the meeting.