

# European Fund for the Balkans

*Bringing the Western Balkans closer to the European Union*

## Invitation

**The European Fund for the Balkans and the ERSTE Foundation in partnership with the Austrian Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs are pleased to invite you to:**

## European Integration of the Balkans – New Realities

**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2014**

**11:00 - 14:00 PM**

### Location

“Marble Hall”, Austrian Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs  
Minoritenplatz 8, 1014 Vienna

*The event will be followed by a lunch with guests, speakers and participants.*

### Welcome and opening remarks:

**Ms. Doraja Eberle**, Chairwoman of the board, ERSTE Foundation, Vienna, Austria

**Ms. Hedvig Morvai**, Executive director, European Fund for the Balkans, Belgrade

### Presentation:

**Florian Bieber**, Director, Centre for Southeast European Studies, University of Graz and  
Coordinator of the Balkans in Europe Policy Advisory Group (BIEPAG)

**Milan Nič**, Managing Director, Central European Policy Initiative, Bratislava, Slovakia (BiEPAG)

### Discussion (respondents from Austria):

**Jan Kickert**, Political Director, Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs, Vienna, Austria

**Kristof Bender**, Vice-chairman, European Stability Initiative, Vienna, Austria

### Concluding remarks

### Moderator

**Wieland Schneider**, journalist, Die Presse, Vienna

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### RSVP

Please register to the event by sending email to [jovana.jovanovic@balkanfund.org](mailto:jovana.jovanovic@balkanfund.org).

If you have any questions contact us at [igor.bandovic@balkanfund.org](mailto:igor.bandovic@balkanfund.org).

Over the last decade, the countries of the Western Balkans have started their integration process into the European Union (EU), with the final goal of membership. However, to this day only Croatia has joined the EU and there is little prospect for membership by other Balkan members in the near future. Of the six other countries, only Serbia and Montenegro are steadily moving forward with the accession process. Others are lagging behind due to internal difficulties and international challenges. Unlike the domestic hurdles facing Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia remains entangled in a name dispute with Greece and Kosovo is still struggling for widespread recognition as a country. Albania, while struggling to find a domestic political consensus on the reform agenda, got a boost by getting the official EU candidate status last June. Over the past years, the economic and financial crises have preoccupied the EU and forced it to focus domestically. And more recently, the increasing conflicts in the EU neighborhood ranging from Russia/Ukraine to the Middle East have absorbed the attention of the EU.

Questions to be discussed at the meeting:

- How can the negative perception of EU enlargement be changed in key EU member states?
- Does the EU have to develop a new tool kit to facilitate enlargement in the Western Balkans?
- How can Austria use its EU membership to assist the remaining Western Balkan countries on their European path?
- How can Austria build a coalition for enlargement within the EU?
- How can the EU avoid the emergence of a two-tier Western Balkans with countries negotiating accession and those being left out?
- How can the regatta principle infuse the enlargement process with positive competition among the Western Balkans?
- How can civil society influence the governments towards a greater reform effort rather than a formalistic fulfillment of the accession related commitments?
- What are the interim steps in the enlargement process that can infuse elites and population of the Western Balkans with stronger support for EU accession? With diminished credibility of the membership conditionality could it not be supplemented by short-term oriented policy conditionality?
- What effects would the promise of immediate (or rapid) accession of the remaining Western Balkan countries have on their respective reform processes? How will this pivot impact EU expansion? What can the perspective members do to address this situation and their appeal to the EU community? Conversely, how can the accession process be improved to encourage reform and integration for potential EU member countries?