

**DRAFT (5 June 2018)**

**The Hague Session**

**“The Netherlands and EU Role in the Western Balkans:  
Improving Stability – At What Cost?”  
Tuesday 3 July 2018 – Clingendael (The Hague)**

Each country in the Western Balkans faces a unique set of circumstances, but the region’s structural challenges continue. The security situation remains fragile, economies are volatile and high levels of corruption and deficits in democracy and rule of law, in combination with an increased influence of external actors, threaten to undermine the progress made so far. In this context, the EU is aspiring to revive its relationship with the Balkan countries. The new European Commission strategy for the Western Balkans (published last February) searches to keep the region on track to EU accession and revive the EU’s strategic influence over the region.

European Commission president Juncker has mentioned 2025 as a feasible date for accession, which begs the question how the reform process can be invigorated in the intervening time. The EU’s Western Balkans strategy contains various proposals on how to improve stability in the region, and some were already adopted in the EU’s Sofia Agenda (May 2018). This seminar examines how the EU, as well as The Netherlands and other member states, can improve stability in the Western Balkans. The seminar brings together experts from the consortium’s partners Clingendael and ECFR, as well as policymakers from the Dutch MFA and MoD. It is convened in a confidential setting, aimed at facilitating and encouraging direct exchange between academic and think-tank experts, as well as Dutch policymakers.

**Seminar Programme**

09.00	Registration and coffee (Hall)
09.30 – 11.00	<b>Session 1: The Western Balkans Reform Agenda – What’s At Stake ?</b> Speakers: Vessela Tcherneva, <i>ECFR</i> Kristof Bender, <i>European Stability Initiative (TBC)</i>
11.00 – 11.30	Coffee Break
11.30 – 13.00	<b>Session 2: Stability or <i>Stabilocracy</i> in the Western Balkans – What Role for the EU and The Netherlands ?</b> Speakers: Igor Bandovic, <i>The European Fund for the Balkans (TBC)</i> Suzanne de Groot, <i>Dutch MFA (TBC)</i>
13.00 – 14.00	Informal lunch

The seminar will be moderated by Peter van Ham (Clingendael)