



**SÜDOSTEUROPA-
GESELLSCHAFT**

in cooperation with



Auswärtiges Amt

International Conference

“The EU and the Western Balkans: The Objectives of the Slovenian EU Presidency – Implementation and Continuation”

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1. The open status of the **Lisbon Treaty** is a complicating factor when considering further steps in EU enlargement policy towards the Western Balkans. At the same time, we do not share the position that there is a direct link between the Lisbon Treaty and the enlargement process. Furthermore, we believe that the main outlines of a solution of the Lisbon Treaty status could be developed by December 2008.
2. The **countries in the regions will influence the dynamics** of the enlargement process too. We understand from our communications with our WB partners that a number of them (Serbia, Albania and Montenegro) are contemplating the option of presenting an application for the EU membership by the end of this year, or at the beginning of the Czech Presidency. In particular, the case of **Serbia** could accelerate the enlargement dynamics in the whole region.
3. If these countries decide to present their applications during the French Presidency, the December EU Council would need to deal with this matter. The most probable solution would be to **refer the applications to the EC for assessment**. The preparation of the assessments could take at least 6 months (until June 2009?) or rather 12 months. The EU should find a fair, encouraging and individual merit based formula that would open the way for granting the aspirants candidate statuses in the foreseeable future.
4. As stipulated in the June 2008 European Council conclusions, further steps by the **former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia** in its progress towards the EU are possible by the end of this year, if all conditions, including the resolution of the pending name issue, are met. At this point, it does not seem that the Macedonian side is ready to accept a compromise solution. Under such circumstances, opening of the accession talks with FYROM during the Czech Presidency would be unlikely. We believe the Macedonian file would be rather dealt with by using the “rendez-vous” clause or at the later stage in a package solution.

5. Under this scenario, the Czech Presidency may explore possibilities of introducing additional instruments and mechanisms that would help candidate and potential candidate countries to implement the EU requirements more efficiently. The method of an “**advanced screening**” or “pre-screening” would be relevant particularly for countries with candidate status that have not started accession negotiations yet.
6. **Kosovo** issue will remain high on the WB agenda. The Czech Presidency will strive to make all the relevant community instruments available to Kosovo and embed it to the extent possible within the Stabilization and Association Process (SAP).
7. **Visa liberalization** is a priority issue, as it is a key instrument in strengthening the people-to people contacts and making the EU membership perspective more tangible. By the end of the French Presidency the first evaluations of the implementations of the road maps should be also available. The Czech Presidency can plan any further steps only on the basis of the first evaluation reports. These reports may diversify the countries of the regions and in particular Serbia, FYROM and Montenegro can move towards a visa-free regime faster than the other countries of the region.

Events

8. The EU-WB Foreign Ministers meeting on the margins of Gymnich
9. In February 2009, an expert meeting will take place at the Štiřín castle, near Prague.
10. We will engage in consultations with the incoming Swedish Presidency and the countries of the SEECP on how to best observe the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the Stability Pact.