

7 DECEMBER 2016, BRUSSELS

# BALKANS: BOOSTING CONNECTIONS ON THE ROAD TO THE EU

EUROPEAN POLICY SUMMIT



In association with



With the support of



09.30 - 10.00 Welcome coffee and registration of participants

10.00 - 11.15

## **SESSION I** EU MEMBERSHIP: THE LONG ROAD FROM VISION TO REALITY

European Union leaders have pledged to continue membership negotiations with countries in the Western Balkans despite Brexit, saying their commitment to EU expansion remains as strong as ever. Speaking at the Balkans conference held in Paris in July, Federica Mogherini, the EU High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy, insisted the EU would continue to nourish “Euro-enthusiasm” in the region and said EU integration of the Balkans was important for peace and stability both in the region and in the EU. Meanwhile, Johannes Hahn, Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy & Enlargement Negotiations, has warned that one of the biggest challenges in preparing the Western Balkans for EU membership is restructuring the economic model to ensure that all countries are functioning market economies driven by export and investments rather than import and consumption.

- Given the hard work that lies ahead on Brexit and waning public appetite for further EU enlargement, are European leaders being overly optimistic in promising that membership negotiations with the Western Balkan states will remain on track?
- What are the key sectors where progress has been made and which questions pose the biggest challenge in the EU membership negotiations?
- To what extent are other actors establishing themselves next to the EU’s presence in the region?

### **Speakers:**

**Ditmir Bushati**, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Albania

**Gordon Duguid**, Senior Adviser for South Central Europe, U.S. State Department

**Stefan Füle**, Special Envoy for the OSCE and Western Balkans at the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs; European Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighborhood Policy (2010-2014) and Trustee of Friends of Europe

**Tanja Mišević**, Chief Negotiator for Serbia’s Accession to the European Union and Professor at the Faculty of Political Science of Belgrade, Serbia

**Helga Schmid**, Secretary General of the European External Action Service (EEAS)

**Goran Svilanović**, Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)

### **Moderator:**

**Shada Islam**, Director of Europe and Geopolitics at Friends of Europe

11.15 - 11.45 Coffee break

11.45 - 13.00

## **SESSION II** **ATTRACTING BUSINESS AND INVESTMENTS BY BOOSTING REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY**

Increased connectivity, especially in the transport and energy sectors, will help the Western Balkans to attract more investments, thereby boosting the region's economic growth and capacity to create jobs. Better connectivity can also help forge good neighbourly relations among countries in the region and ensure stronger connections with the EU. The EU has set aside up to €1 billion for connectivity investment projects and technical assistance for the 2014-2020 period, with special attention given to transport networks, regional energy efficiency and green growth. Chinese, Turkish and other foreign investors are also putting their money on connectivity projects. Boosting connections is not just about hard infrastructure, however. It also requires "soft" reform measures to open markets, create a transparent regulatory framework that builds investor confidence, and the removal of barriers.

- While the focus is very much on hard connectivity, are countries in the region implementing the "soft" reform and improved economic governance measures required to create real intra-regional connections in the region and is digital connectivity getting enough attention?
- What progress is being made to reduce income and labour market inequalities across the region and how does the inequality challenge impact on investment plans?
- Are countries moving fast enough to ensure respect for the rule of law and in fighting organised crime and corruption?

### **Speakers:**

**Marta Arsovska Tomovska**, Minister of Information Society and Administration, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

**Tanja Fajon**, Member of the European Parliament Delegation for relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina, with Kosovo<sup>1</sup> and Trustee of Friends of Europe

**Damian Gjikhuri**, Minister of Energy and Industry, Albania

**Ismir Jusko**, Minister of Communication and Transport at the Council of Ministers, Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Zana Tabaku**, Chief Executive Officer of Appdec, an application development center

### **Moderator:**

**Shada Islam**, Director of Europe and Geopolitics at Friends of Europe

<sup>1</sup>This designation is without prejudice to position on status, and is in line with UN Security Council Resolution 1244/99 and the International Court of Justice Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence. For the UNDP, the references to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of the Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

13.00 - 14.00 Lunch

14.00 - 14.15

## **SEVDAH CONCERT BY DAMIR IMAMOVIC**

TRADITIONAL GENRE OF FOLK MUSIC FROM BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

As Grandson of Zaim Imamović, one of the most influential sevdah singers of the Western Balkans, Damir Imamović, also a musician, started developing his own repertoire while performing in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as across Europe.

In 2006 he put together the «Damir Imamović Trio» (DI3) with Vanja Radoja on violin and Edvin Hadžić on double bass, with whom he recorded «DI3 Plays Standards». After a series of successful performances in Bosnia and the region, as well as in Germany, Switzerland, Turkey, and Italy, DI3 recorded their first live CD at Youth Cultural Center «Abrašević» in Mostar (BiH) in 2007. This album soon became one of the most listened to CDs of the «new sevdah» movement in former Yugoslavia.

The solo CD «Dvojka », released in 2010, received excellent international reviews and crowned a successful series of solo performances, suggesting Damir's new step towards the oldest of all the sevdah forms – solo performance.

Damir Imamović's sevdah is based on a passionate research of traditional music of Bosnia and Herzegovina. While meeting sevdah masters, musicians, singers and authors of this art form, he constantly expands his repertoire and creates a special style of contemporary sevdah. Director Marina Andree made a documentary «Sevdah», inspired by an emotional part of this process, which received the Audience Award at the Sarajevo Film Festival in 2009.

Damir has been cited as the «king of sevdah music» by the Huffington Post and «a true revolutionary of the genre» by Sevdalinkas.com.



14.15 - 15.30

## CONVERSATION WITH

### JOHANNES HAHN

European Commissioner for European Neighbourhood policy and Enlargement Negotiations

## SESSION III

### MIGRATION, YOUTH, JOBS AND THE PERILS OF RADICALISATION

The flow of refugees and migrants through the so-called “Balkans route” may have eased in recent months but the crisis has been a vivid reminder of the crucial role played by the Western Balkans in tackling immigration and human trafficking. The region has also seen a rise in radicalisation of young people and a high number of fighters going to join the so-called Islamic State in Syria and Iraq. Meanwhile, prime ministers of the Western Balkans have signed up to establishing a Regional Youth Cooperation Office to fund projects that enhance youth cooperation, diversity, regional mobility and reconciliation as well as promoting opportunities for professional qualifications. The focus on young people is important for a region where a lack of opportunities has resulted in youth unemployment figures of over 50 per cent in many countries and also prompted a heavy brain-drain across the region.

- Now that the crisis has eased on the so-called “Balkans route”, what is the state of cooperation between the EU and the Western Balkans on questions related to immigration and refugees?
- What is being done to counter the rise in radicalisation by implementing better policies in areas such as education and job-creation and just how can the EU help the Western Balkans in this struggle?
- What the main priorities of the new Regional Youth Cooperation Office and how will it operate in practice?

#### Speakers:

**Đorđe Bojović**, Head of Programme Department at European Grassroots Antiracist Movement

**Valon Murtezaj**, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kosovo<sup>1</sup>

**Doris Pack**, President of the Robert Schuman Institute (RSI), Budapest; Chair of the European Parliament Committee on Culture and Education (2009-2014)

**Alida Vračić**, Executive Director of the Think tank Popolari, Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Rastislav Vrbensky**, Manager of the Istanbul Regional Hub for Europe and the CSI of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

#### Moderator:

**Shada Islam**, Director of Europe and Geopolitics at Friends of Europe

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15.30 End of conference



## **Friends of Europe**

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