

**Experts' Roundtable****Western Balkan - EU relations in the light of the Ukraine crisis****Athens, Tuesday 21 October 2014, 16h00 – 18h00**

Hotel Airotel Stratos Vassilikos, 114 Michalakopoulou

*Challenges such as the financial and economic crisis and rising re-nationalization tendencies in many of the EU member states seem to have pushed the topic of EU enlargement to the background of the EU agenda for quite some time. In addition, slow pace in reform processes and lack political will to solve bilateral issues have disappointed enlargement supporters and led to so-called "enlargement fatigue" on the EU side. The decreasing impact of the enlargement topic is probably best illustrated by the fact that the "Strategic Agenda for the Union in times of change" passed by the European Council in June mentions the topic in only one sentence ("our enlargement policy continues to foster democracy and prosperity"), a tendency underlined by newly-elected European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker stating that "no further enlargement will take place over the next five years".*

*However, the spring crisis in Ukraine has changed the geo-political reality in and beyond Europe decisively: the violent war events in the EU's nearest neighborhood and deteriorating relations with Russia have drawn European policy attention even more from the Balkans. Yet, the region has become an additional "proxy battlefield" in this new geopolitical conflict. If Russia had already before asserted itself politically and economically in the Western Balkan, it has now intensified its diplomatic, economic and propaganda activities in the region. The Western Balkan countries' reaction to this has been divers: while Montenegro, Albania and Kosovo have fully aligned with EU's Russia policy, Serbia struggles to maintain a tactical balance between the goal of EU integration requiring alignment with the EU's CSFP and its special relationship with the traditional ally Russia. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) has not been clear in its positioning and political leaders in Bosnia-Herzegovina could not agree on a common line, with Republica Srpska tending to exploit Crimea's annexation for its own secession goals.*

***What consequences do these recent developments have for the future relations between the EU and Western Balkans? Can the EU use the accession process lever to enforce a harmonization of the (potential) candidate countries' foreign and security policy? How to develop the EU's enlargement approach?***

**Draft Agenda** (as of 10/15/14)**16h00 Welcome and Introduction**by ENoP WG Chairs **Stefanie Ricken** (FES) and **Rebecca Wagner** (hbs)**16h15 Introductory statement:****Enlargement in the light of the "new EU management" and the Ukraine crisis****Leonidas ANTONAKOPOULOS**, Head of EP Information Office to Greece*(requested)***Comments by****Maria Eleni KOPPA**, Professor at University of Athens, former MEP and EP's Rapporteur on Enlargement**Jens BASTIAN**, Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP)**Mirko DAUTOVIC**, Head of hbs Commission "State Capture", Sarajevo**17h00 Open debate with invited experts and policy makers****17h55 Conclusions**

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And by the associate:  
Catdem Fundació Catalanista i  
DemòcrataThis project is  
co-funded by  
the European  
Commission