



**Western Balkan's European future**  
**The role of non-EU states in shaping European Integration**  
*Changing Orders Research Programme*

Date: 11 October 2024  
Venue: Andrassy University Budapest

***EU and the "other Europe"***

The countries of the Western Balkans are part of Europe, but their path to EU membership has been a long and an inconclusive one. The EU is the most important and successful supranational organisation on the European continent and its existence has attracted many countries to become members. Some countries decided to stay outside, others wishing to join. The countries of the Western Balkans aim for EU-membership. European countries inside and outside the EU have supported the Western Balkan countries to achieve their aim of EU-membership. This one-day conference focuses on non-EU countries' support and assistance for the countries in the Western Balkan region and their bilateral relations.

***EU and the Western Balkans***

More than 20 years ago, the EU presented the states of the Western Balkan region with an EU membership perspective. Since then, the region is confronted with the EU's indecisiveness to follow through with their enlargement promise. Due to the lack of progress, the Western Balkan countries feel less encouraged to implement the for the EU accession required reforms. The EU's enlargement fatigue led to a reform fatigue and ended in a near stillstand of the entire process. Despite the change of priorities, as enlargement is now presented by the EU as a geopolitical necessity, and the nomination of new EU-candidate countries - Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine - the enlargement policy has not regained real momentum for the Western Balkan countries. Dates of a possible EU enlargement for the countries are continuously being pushed back, from 2025, some years ago, to currently 2030. But there is still no guarantee of accession happening soon.



### ***Western Balkans and the "other Europe"***

The Western Balkan states could remain in this pre-accession position for some time. Hence, it might be necessary to look for other European partners and to strengthen bilateral relations with non-EU members. Non-EU member states are active partners in various levels of European politics, are members of European and international organisations and have established good bilateral contacts with the EU. Non-EU countries can increase their role in supporting the Western Balkan's democratisation process and economic development. Closer cooperation with other European institutions, such as the Council of Europe (CeE) and Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) could be fostered. In the field of economic cooperation intensified relations between CEFTA and EFTA could be envisaged.

### ***Objective of Conference***

This workshop deals with the cooperation between the countries of the Western Balkans and the non-EU countries on a bilateral level and in the context of regional and international organisations. It addresses the role of non-EU states in supporting the Western Balkan countries in fostering closer contacts to countries all over Europe, inside and outside the EU. Participants might touch on questions of the bilateral relations between the Western Balkans and European countries, cooperation within international or regional organisations and other cooperation initiatives. Of interest is moreover, the non-EU countries' policy on the EU integration of the Western Balkan region. Are the non-EU countries supportive of EU-enlargement and what type of support is being made available, independently of the EU accession process? What is the status quo on relations between non-EU countries and the Western Balkans?

This conference aims to shift the focus away from the EU to include the role of European countries outside the EU into the discussion about the European future of the Western Balkan region. The Western Balkans might be able to move closer to Europe by connecting with European countries outside and inside the EU at the same time.



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### **Programme Overview**

- 08:30**      **Registration**
- 09:00**      **Welcome speech**  
Rector, Zoltán Tibor Pállinger
- 09:10**      **Introduction of overall theme of the conference**  
Christina Griessler
- 09:45**      **1. Panel: non-EU members on the Western Balkans**  
*Chair: Christopher Walsch, Corvinus University Budapest*
- **Øyvind Svendsen**, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs Norway  
*Norway and the quest for Euro-Atlantic integration in the Western Balkans*
  - **Edina, Szöcsik**, Institute of Federalism at the University of Fribourg,  
*Switzerland: Swiss and EU-relations: Current challenges and their causes*
  - **Matthew Kirlew**, British Embassy Budapest  
*Western Balkan and UK relations*
- 11:15**      Coffee break
- 11:30**      **2. Panel: Reaction of Western Balkans on relations to non-EU**  
*Chair: Laura Kromják, ELTE*
- **Lejla Ramic Mesihovic**, International Burch University  
*Crisis management aspect of the countries aspiring to join the EU*
  - **Miloš Petrović**, Centre for Euro-Atlantic Studies, Belgrade  
*Serbia between the unwillingness to fulfill EU membership criteria and selective integration*
  - **Reina Zenelaj**, Epoka University, Albania  
*Albania's EU Enlargement*
- 13:00**      Lunch



- 14:30**      **3. Panel: Forms of Cooperation on European Level**  
*Chair: Christina Griessler, netPOL, Andrassy University Budapest*
- **Eirini Patsea**, OSCE, Programme Co-ordinator Regional Trial Monitoring Project: *OSCE engagement in the Western Balkans and the case of the Regional Trial Monitoring Project*
- 16:00**      Coffee break
- 16:30**      **Concluding Discussion: New Forms of engagement on European Level**  
*Chair: Christina Griessler, netPOL, Andrassy University Budapest*
- Short remarks by each of the participants and discussion
- 18:00**      End of conference