

ENLARGEMENT: EU SUCCESS STORY



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European Union

The enlargement policy of the European Union has been pursued for more than four decades; successive accessions have seen the number of members gradually increase from the original six to 28. It has brought nations and cultures together, enriching and injecting the EU with diversity and dynamism. Within a framework of strict but fair conditionality, the prospect of accession drives political and economic reforms, transforming societies and creating new opportunities for citizens and business. At the same time, enlargement reinforces the Union's political and economic strengths.

The Enlargement policy is so-called horizontal and "composite" policy (it is part of all other EU policies); it is not sectorial policy and thus is related to a number of issues and questions. It is a framework for the integration of countries willing to become EU members. The theorists say that European project has no "finalité politique" (the ultimate political shape of the European Union): the enlargement policy is one of the proofs of that theory. Although first enlargement happened already in 1970's, the Enlargement policy itself has started to be shaped at the end of 1980's, as the answer to political changes in the Eastern Europe (fall of Berlin Wall, reunification of Germany and dissolution of communist regimes in Central European states). Since then, it has become an efficient tool in expanding European Union to a major economic and global actor. European integration has always been a political and economic process that is open to all European countries prepared to sign up to the founding treaties and take on board the full body of EU law. According to Article 237 of the Treaty of Rome "any European state may apply to become a member of the Community". Article F of the Maastricht Treaty adds that the member states shall have "systems of government [...] founded on the principles of democracy". After the policy was shaped, in the Lisbon Treaty was included an article saying that any European country may apply for membership if it respects the democratic values of the EU and is committed to promoting them.

UNITING EAST AND WEST

The six founding members of the EU in 1957 were **Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg** and the **Netherlands**. The enlargement process has been done in several waves. The EU Summit in Copenhagen in June 1993 decided to open EU membership to the Central and East European countries. The then established criteria are those to be followed by all countries applying for membership of the EU.

Copenhagen criteria

Criteria that have to be fulfilled if a country wants to join the EU:

- **political** – it must have stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law and human rights
- **economic** – it must have a functioning market economy and be able to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the EU
- **legal** – it must accept established EU law and practice – especially the major goals of political, economic and monetary union.
- At the Madrid Summit, in 1995, the EU has defined another, **administrative** criterion saying that a country has to have sufficient administrative capacities.

European integration process for Western Balkans

The EU's relations with the Western Balkan countries take place within the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP), defined in 1999. It has 3 aims: **stabilising** the countries politically and

SERBIA AND THE EU

The EU **assistance** to Serbia since 2000 amount to € 300 per Serbian citizen, which is **€ 2,4 billion** in total. That makes the European Union the largest donor to Serbia, since it invested nearly 5 times as much as the second placed donor.

Most of the Serbian **exports** are directed towards EU (57%) and other European States including CEFTA (29%), totalising **87%** of Serbian exports in value.

EU 27 with EFTA and CEFTA countries account for almost 70% of **Foreign Direct Investments** influx in Serbia, the EU alone providing **57%** of FDI in the country.

encouraging their swift **transition to a market economy**, promoting regional cooperation and eventual **membership of the EU**. A country is offered the **prospect** of membership (it becomes a **potential candidate**, which means should be offered official candidate status when it is ready).

The process helps the countries concerned build their capacity to adopt and implement EU law, as well as European and international standards. It is based on an ever-closer partnership, with the EU offering a mixture of: trade concessions (duty-free access to EU markets); economic and financial assistance; assistance for reconstruction, development and stabilisation; Stabilisation and Association Agreements (SAA): a far-reaching contractual relationship with the EU, entailing mutual rights and obligations.

Each country moves step by step towards EU membership as it fulfills its commitments in the SAP. The Commission assesses progress made in annual progress reports published each autumn.

The SAP has defined additional specific conditions for Western Balkans:

- security and economic stability of the region; regional cooperation;
- respect of peace agreements (Dayton and Erdut agr.);
- return of refugees and IDPs and respect of international obligations
- cooperation with International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia - ICTY.

FROM SIX TO 28

1973: First countries to join then European Economic Community, on 1 January 1973, were *Great Britain, Ireland and Denmark*.

1981: *Greece* enters the EEC.

1986: *Spain and Portugal* join the club; the number of countries has doubled.

1995: *Austria, Finland and Sweden* become members of the European Union.

2004: "Big-bang": on 1 May 2004, 10 countries enter the EU in a biggest enlargement wave ever. Those are *Estonia, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Hungary, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Cyprus and Malta*; the EU club counts 25 members. It was historic expansion that reunited Europe after decades of division.

2007: Another two countries from former Eastern bloc – *Romania and Bulgaria* – are accepted in the EU.

2013: On 1 July, *Croatia* becomes the 28th member of the European Union.

CANDIDATE STATUS

There are 5 **official candidate** countries for membership of the European Union: Iceland, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey.

SERBIA

Serbia was identified as a potential candidate country at the Thessaloniki summit, the European Council meeting held in June 2003.

- 1.10.2005:** Negotiations launched for SAA
- 3.5.2006:** SAA negotiations called off, because Serbia's co-operation with the ICTY has not improved
- 13.6.2007:** SAA negotiations resumed, after Serbia commits to cooperating fully with the ICTY
- 7.11.2007:** SAA with Serbia is initiated
- 29.4.2008:** SAA and Interim agreement on trade and trade-related issues are signed
- 19.12.2009:** Visa requirement lifted for Serbs travelling to Schengen countries
- 22.12.2009:** Serbia applies for EU membership
- 31.1.2011:** Serbia replies to Commission questionnaire
- 1.3.2012:** European Council confirms Serbia as a candidate country
- 28.6.2013:** European Council decides to open accession talks with Serbia and to organise first intergovernmental conference no later than January 2014

POTENTIAL CANDIDATE COUNTRIES

ALBANIA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA and **KOSOVO*** have the status of potential candidate countries.

MAIN STEPS TO ACCESSION

1. The applicant country (potential candidate) submits its application to the country holding the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union.
2. The European Commission makes an initial evaluation of the applicant country and submits its findings to the Council of the European Union.
3. If the European Commission has a favourable opinion of the applicant country's status, the Council of the European Union may decide to consider the applicant a candidate country.
4. The European Commission investigates the candidate country in greater detail in a process known as screening. The resulting screening report identifies the gaps in the body of common rights and obligations binding for all EU Member States (also

known as the *acquis*) that the candidate country will have to fill. 5. The *acquis* is divided into 35 chapters, each of which covers a specific policy area. Negotiations begin so as to help candidate countries prepare to fulfill the obligations of EU membership. The chapters cover the major aspects of EU policy, such as free movement of goods, capital, and workers; economic policy, energy, transport, regional policy, foreign policy, fundamental rights, and more.

6. After the candidate country has reformed its national laws so that they match the *acquis*, every criterion has been fulfilled, and every chapter has been closed, the agreements reached are set out in an accession treaty, which must be signed by the candidate country and all EU Member States. The accession treaty must also win the support of the Council of the European Union, the European Commission, and the European Parliament. The candidate country then becomes an acceding country.

7. After the accession treaty has been signed, it must be ratified by the acceding country and each individual EU Member State according to their constitutional rules (i.e. parliamentary vote, referendum).

8. The acceding country then becomes an EU Member State on the date specified in the accession treaty.

INSTRUMENT FOR PRE-ACCESSION ASSISTANCE - IPA

The Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) is the means by which the EU supports reforms in the enlargement countries with financial and technical help. IPA funding will amount to some € 11.5bn over 2007-13. The beneficiary countries are: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Iceland, Kosovo*, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey. Since 2007, the enlargement countries have received EU funding and support through this single channel.

Serbia has access to: IPA Component I (Transition Assistance and Institution Building) and IPA Component II (Cross-Border Cooperation). This assistance is managed by the EU Delegation to Republic of Serbia. As a candidate country, Serbia will have access to Components III to V when the country receives accreditation to manage assistance itself (under the Decentralised Implementation System). Conferral of management powers for decentralised implementation system should be finalised in 2014. Consequently, it has been decided that Serbia will not use Components III to V within the current financial perspective.

Areas funded through IPA are:

Justice/home affairs – efficient judicial system, fight against organised crime and corruption and human and minority rights; **Public administration reform** – at local and central government level, public procurement, tax and customs administration, statistics;

Social development – social inclusion of vulnerable groups, education, employment, health, human resources development and internally displaced people and refugees;

Environment & energy – nature conservation, water and air quality, waste management, climate action, renewables, energy efficiency and security;

Transport - support to government agencies in the sector, contribution to the infrastructure reconstruction of roads, railways and inland waterways;

Private sector - SMEs, regional development, competitiveness in tourism and exports, internal market and intellectual property; other sectors are **Cross-Border Cooperation, Agriculture, Rural development, Media, Culture, Civil society and Support to participation in EU programmes.**

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence

In Serbia the EU Information Centre is there to answer your questions related to this issue or anything else of your interest.

Mon - Fri: 10:00 - 19:00
Sat: 10:00 - 15:00



EU Info Centre

Dečanska 1 (Dom omladine)
Belgrade, Serbia

T: +381 11 322 9922

E: info@euinfo.rs

W: www.euinfo.rs

Facebook: [euinfo.rs](https://www.facebook.com/euinfo.rs)

Twitter: [euicbg](https://twitter.com/euicbg)

YouTube: [euicbg](https://www.youtube.com/euicbg)



Delegation of the European Union to Serbia

19a Avenue, Vladimira Popovića 40/V,
New Belgrade, Serbia

T: +381 11 308 3200

E: delegation-serbia@eeas.europa.eu

W: www.europa.rs