



European Commission

STATE OF THE UNION 2017



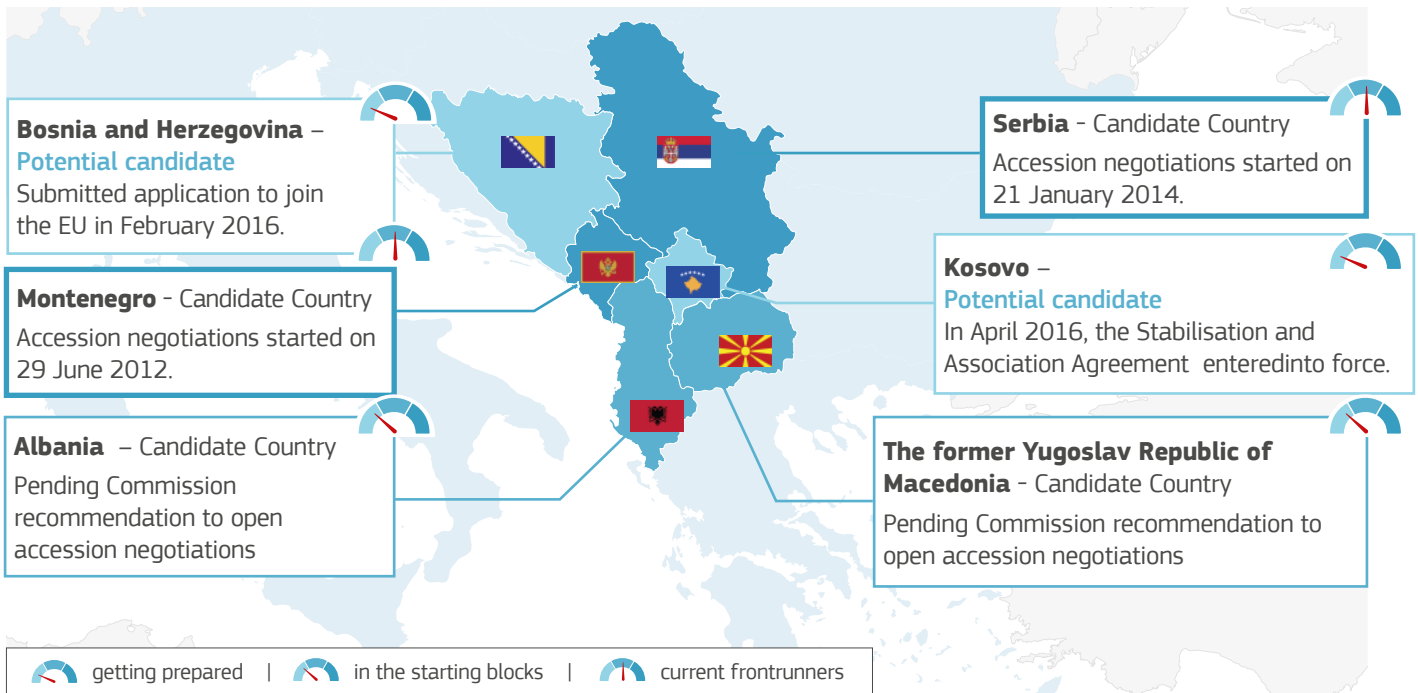
WESTERN BALKANS ENLARGEMENT: COMMON DESTINATION



"If we want more stability in our neighbourhood, then we must maintain a credible enlargement perspective for the Western Balkans. It is clear that there will be no further enlargement during the mandate of this Commission and this Parliament. No candidate is ready. But thereafter the European Union will be greater than 27 in number. Accession candidates must give the rule of law, justice and fundamental rights utmost priority in the negotiations."

European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, State of the Union Address, 13 September 2017

PROSPECTIVE EUROPEAN UNION MEMBERS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS



All candidate countries and potential candidates have a European perspective. The Commission works with each country to help them forward on their accession path. This process is fair and merit-based. Some countries are more advanced in the accession. To strengthen our leverage and boost reforms, the Commission will adopt a reinforced Strategy for the region in February 2018, which will focus on Montenegro and Serbia, the current frontrunners.

*Kosovo - This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the "Kosovo" declaration of independence.



“The European Union is stepping up its support to all partners towards achievable and realistic objectives, so that their progress will be irreversible by the end of our mandate.”

High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini & Commissioner Johannes Hahn, 20 September 2017, New York

Regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations form an essential part of the European integration process of the Western Balkans, and contribute to stability, reconciliation and a climate conducive to addressing open bilateral issues and the legacies of the past.

On 20 September 2017 High Representative/Vice-President Mogherini welcomed the continued commitment by the Presidents of Serbia and Kosovo to the normalisation of their relations, and recalled that progress by both on their EU integration agendas is firmly linked to progress in their bilateral EU-facilitated Dialogue.

Candidates and potential candidates must give the rule of law, justice and fundamental rights utmost priority. The rule of law is at the heart of the enlargement process. This means that countries need to tackle issues such as judicial reform and the fight against organised crime and corruption early in accession negotiations. This maximises the time countries have to develop a solid track record, ensuring that reforms are deeply rooted and irreversible.

PROGRESS ON NEGOTIATIONS

Montenegro



Opened Chapters - 30
Provisionally Closed Chapters - 3
Chapters Remaining - 5

Serbia



Opened Chapters - 12
Provisionally Closed Chapters - 2
Chapters Remaining - 23

THE ENLARGEMENT PROCESS

The process of joining the EU broadly consists of 4 stages:

1

All Western Balkans countries have an EU accession perspective. Already today, they benefit from substantial EU assistance, Stabilisation and Association Agreements providing far-reaching access to the internal market, and detailed policy advice.

2

When a country fulfils basic political, economic and reform criteria, it becomes an official candidate for membership.

3

The candidate then moves on to formal membership negotiations. They cover 35 chapters, across all policy areas, to ensure that candidates are fully prepared to become members.

4

When negotiations and accompanying reforms have been completed to the satisfaction of both sides, an Accession Treaty is finalised and ratified and the country joins the EU.

ENLARGEMENT CRITERIA

The Treaty on the European Union states that any European country may apply for membership if it respects the democratic values of the EU and is committed to promoting them. The EU also needs to be able to integrate new members.

Countries wishing to join the European Union must have:

- ▶ stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities;
- ▶ a functioning market economy and the capacity to cope with competition and market forces in the EU;
- ▶ the ability to take on and implement effectively the obligations of membership, including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union.