

Bridging the Gaps: Are the European Union and South-East-Europe drifting apart?

Workshop organised by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation,
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11:00 – 11:15 Welcome Address by Michael Weichert, Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Berlin

11:15 – 12:45 Session I: What Union are we talking about – How can the EU continue to enlarge, if it doesn't know where it is heading itself?

- What prospects does the Lisbon treaty have with a pending referendum in Ireland and uncertainty about ratification in Prague and Warsaw? What is the alternative?
- What impact does this have for enlargement? Are we reliving the debate about 'widening versus deepening' the EU of the 1990s?
- What impact does the economic crisis have on the already mostly negative perception of enlargement in the general public and consequently on governments of EU member states?

12:45 – 14:00 Lunch

14:00 – 15:30 Session II: The Balkan ghetto – what impact does it have to keep the countries of the Western Balkans in limbo?

- What is the impact of the perspective of joining the EU slipping further and further into the future?
- How does this slippage and the current economic crisis impact on the political climate in the Balkans?

15:30 – 15:45 Coffee break

15:45 – 17:00 Session III: Marriage counselling – bridging the gap between a growing reluctance and increasingly frustrated expectations.

- The EU doesn't only have its foreign policy credentials to lose if it fails in the Balkans, the possible price a stagnating Western Balkans could be much higher and directly affect EU member states.
- How can the EU react to the already deposited and expected membership bids? What reaction could be expected in the Balkans?
- How can the understandable frustrations about the uncertainty in the Balkans as well as the equally understandable reluctance within the EU be bridged?