



ReSPA

Regional School
of Public Administration

BUILDING TOGETHER
GOVERNANCE FOR THE FUTURE

European Integration and Accession Meeting of the Regional Thematic Group

30-31 May 2023

Provisional Programme

Tirana, Albania

Address: tbc

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Background

The European Union has confirmed its full and unequivocal commitment to the EU membership perspective of the Western Balkans and has called for an accelerated accession process and further advancement of the gradual integration between the European Union and the Western Balkans during the enlargement process. The foundation of the process lies in the respective Stabilization and Association Agreements, opening up trade and aligning the Region with EU standards, thus committing to reform agenda, rule of law, foster good neighbourly relations and build shared prosperity. The prospect of EU membership is an incentive to bring forward reforms in the Western Balkans, mostly related to political and economic governance, fighting corruption, reforming public administration, rule of law, media freedom, etc.

[The Western Balkans Strategy](#) (2018) as well as the **new enlargement methodology** [“Enhancing the accession process – A credible EU perspective for the Western Balkans”](#) (2020) constitute important strategic documents, which aim to make the enlargement policy more comprehensive, inclusive, credible, dynamic and predictable. The EU and WBs constantly have **high-level Summits** reaffirming the EU membership perspective of the Region and the EU’s strategic partnership with the WBs. On the other hand, the **Economic and Investment Plan for WBs**, the **Green Agenda** for the WBs and the Instrument of Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III) are concrete initiatives and mechanisms to boost reform-driven change in the Region.

In terms of specific developments, the administrations of the Region are at different stages in their accession process, with **Montenegro** and **Serbia** in more advanced stages of membership talks, **Albania** and **North Macedonia** have launched the first intergovernmental conferences on accession negotiations and the screening process is underway, while **Bosnia and Herzegovina** has recently received the candidate status. Overall, while the EU remains committed to integrating the Western Balkans, progress has been relatively slow. Significant challenges must be addressed, particularly in improving the rule of law, fighting corruption, and strengthening democratic institutions.

Reforming public administration and building strong institutions is now at the heart of the accession process: the re-organization of the negotiating chapters into clusters sees **Public Administration reform under the fundamentals, meaning that the Region** must deliver more credibly on the commitment to implement reforms that lead to strong and resilient institutions, good governance, etc. The current **principles of Public Administration** make a clear reference to strengthening the capacities and mandate of the structures that coordinate the European Integration process, harmonising policy planning with the accession priorities, transposing of EU acquis, etc.

The **Regional Thematic group on “European integration and accession”** is one of 5 thematic groups that operate in ReSPA. It serves as a regional platform to enhance and promote regional cooperation and the exchange of experiences and knowledge in the domain of European integration and accession negotiations, as well as identify and address prospective needs and initiatives for capacity building and learning. The regional thematic group will contribute to a more efficient implementation of the EU accession agenda in the Region by networking the key officials responsible for European integration and accession negotiations process as well as officials in charge of the coordination of EU pre-accession assistance, boosting the exchange of their experiences and mutual learning. The first meeting of the thematic group will focus on the following topics:

- Dialogue and exchange of experiences/information on the EU accession momentum in each ReSPA Member, institutional architecture of EU integration coordination and current state of the art related to IPA III planning and implementation;
- Explaining the EU Decision making: from EU policy to EU law and back;
- Usage of Digital tools in policy making and coordination of EU integration in WBs;

- New EU Enlargement Methodology and Green Agenda for Western Balkans in Relation with the UN Agenda 2030 and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);
- Accelerated and deepened political and policy engagement, further advancement of the gradual integration between EU and WB, integration of WB with the EU internal market, as well as sectoral cooperation with WB in areas of common interest;
- ReSPA planned activities in the domain of EUI for the upcoming period and direct support mechanisms;
- Identification of future prospective regional capacity-building activities in the domain of EUI.

The meeting will bring together public servants in charge of coordinating the EU integration process and leading/coordinating EU accession negotiations (where applicable) and those in charge of coordinating the EU pre-accession assistance.

Renowned experts and practitioners will lead and moderate various meeting sessions, while proactive participation is strongly encouraged.

PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME

DAY I: Tuesday, 30 May 2023

9:00 – 9:30	<i>Registration of the participants with welcome coffee</i>
9:30 – 9:40	<u>Welcome and background notes</u>
9:40 – 10:00	<u>Quick tour de table – introduction of the participants</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Experience and brief background</i>
10:00 – 11:00	<u>Moderated discussion and exchange of experiences and information on:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>EU accession momentum in each ReSPA Member,</u> - <u>Institutional architecture of EU integration coordination and</u> - <u>Current state-of-the-art related to IPA III planning and implementation</u> • <i>Representatives of each ReSPA Member will have up to 20 min to deliver a presentation/intervention/address on the topics above</i> • <i>Questions and discussions</i>
11:00 – 11:30	<i>Networking coffee break</i>
11:30-12:00	<u>Moderated discussion (continuation)</u>
12:00 – 13:00	<u>Usage of Digital tools in policy making and coordination of EU integration in WBs</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Tour de table – state of the art in the region</i> • <i>Presentation</i> • <i>Questions and discussions</i>

13:00 – 14:00	<i>Networking lunch</i>
14:00-15:30	Explaining the EU Decision making: from EU policy to EU law and back <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>ReSPA external expert</i> • <i>Questions and discussions</i>
19:30	Social gathering

DAY II: Wednesday, 31 May 2023

9:15 – 9:30	<i>Registration of the participants</i>
9:30 – 10:30	Decrypting the revised enlargement methodology: further advancement of the gradual integration between EU and WB during the enlargement process, accelerated integration and “phasing-in” to individual EU policies, the EU market and EU programmes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Presentation</i> • <i>Questions and discussions</i>
10:30 – 11:15	Prospective needs and initiatives for capacity building and peer exchange that can be addressed in a regional approach ReSPA planned activities in the domain of EUI for the upcoming period ReSPA direct support instruments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Tour de table with the participants</i> • <i>Discussions, brainstorming</i>
11:15 – 11:45	<i>Networking coffee break</i>
11:45 – 12:00	Synergies with the GIZ initiative “Promoting EU integration in the Western Balkans” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>GIZ representative</i> <i>Questions and discussions</i>
12:00 – 13:15	New EU Enlargement Methodology and Green Agenda for Western Balkans in Relation to the UN Agenda 2030 and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>ReSPA external Expert</i> • <i>Questions and discussions</i>
13:15 – 13:30	<i>Final remarks, conclusions</i>
13:30 – 14:30	<i>Networking lunch and departure</i>