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## **ANTICIPATED IMPACT OF THE NEW EU-MEMBERS TO THE SELECTED ISSUES OF THE INTEGRATION PERSPECTIVES OF THE WESTERN BALKANS**

### **Introduction**

On May 1, 2004 an unprecedented enlargement of the European Union took place<sup>385</sup>. This event was remarkable for various reasons. From the foreign policy point of view, South East Europe and more narrowly the Western Balkans will be influenced by this enlargement like no other region on the continent. It will be even more valid in 2007 after the expected accession of Bulgaria and Romania, two South East European Countries. The European Union will be spread around the territory of the Western Balkans. For several decades, nations of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia used to have much closer relations with Western Europe than almost all new EU member states from Central Europe. It is natural that a certain bitterness of being “over-jumped” in European integration exists. Such emotions of “historical injustice” are understandable, but non-constructive. The success story of new member states creates a new quality of the European Union. It provides new opportunities for countries of the Western Balkans as well. A major question is: are the countries of Central Europe and the Western Balkans able to exploit the existing opportunities for the benefit of a wider region and the EU as whole?

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Note: This article does not necessarily represent official view of the Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic

<sup>385</sup> On 1 May 2004 Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia became members states of the European Union.

This paper presents an attempt of a short analysis of the current situation and the motivations of the involved new member states and the anticipated impact on selected issues from a stabilization and integration perspective for the Western Balkans.

## **The Changing International Environment of Europe in 2004**

Without a doubt the year 2004 will become the most significant milestone in international and security development in Europe since the end of Cold War in 1990. The robust NATO enlargement on March 29, 2004<sup>386</sup>, followed by that of the EU in May, sealed the transitional period of many former Soviet satellites in Central and Eastern Europe. After several years of painful reforms, thorough preparations and long negotiations, they have achieved their strategic objectives. Now, they are institutionally fully integrated into the Euro-Atlantic community. The day after represents a new start in a global play, in which the team result of the EU is as important as the individual achievements of players.

The new EU members are facing many different challenges simultaneously. EU and NATO membership solved the main concerns of vital state interests, such as territorial integrity or national security. In a political sense, both institutions are of crucial importance by creating a solid and stable framework for internal and external competition of political concepts and ideas. The basic institutional reforms of political, economic, judicial and security systems were accomplished during the preparatory process for integration. The fulfilment of the so-called "Copenhagen criteria"<sup>387</sup> was the *sine qua*

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<sup>386</sup> On 3 April 2004 Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

<sup>387</sup> In order to join the European Union a prospective member shall fulfill the economic and political conditions known as the 'Copenhagen criteria', according to which it must: be a stable democracy, respecting human rights, the rule of law, and the protection of minorities; have a functioning market economy; adopt the common rules, standards and policies that make up the body of EU law.

*non* condition for admission. However, the costliest and most painful issues like social security, pension or health system reform are undergoing planning or consideration only. Governments in the majority of the new member states are weak and in the coming months they will have to resist increased pressure from the opposition. In many countries, the political scene was relatively stable due to the closeness of the strategic goal of EU membership. Now, after the accession, political opposition can be more aggressive. Governmental coalitions were recently shaken for different reasons in Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. The upcoming elections for the European Parliament, the first time in this part of Europe, will also intensify the political fight.

### **Countries Involved - Foreign Policies of Relevant New Member States in the Western Balkans**

Four of the ten new EU members (Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia) have close traditional links with countries in Western Balkans. Poland, as a sub regional leader, also pretends for a visible role to play. All of them are actively present in Balkan operations; such as SFOR (Bosnia and Herzegovina), KFOR and UNMIK (Kosovo) and Concordia (Macedonia). The intensity and nature of the relations of those countries is a function of their geographic proximity, historical and ethno-linguistic ties. For comparative assessment of possible influence of new EU member states in the Western Balkans, the following criteria of their actual involvement were selected: the level of diplomatic representations, the declared and fulfilled priorities of respective national official development assistance (ODA) programs, their respective involvement and activities in regional EU-linked multilateral structures (like the Stability Pact) and other multilateral or bilateral initiatives. Every criteria has its own limits, which reflects different national situation. Slovenia, Slovakia and in some extend Czech Republic are, in case of resident diplomatic representation, faced with the general challenge of re-establishing the whole network of national foreign services

after gaining sovereignty in early 1990s. Poland and the Czech Republic are geographically too distant to take part in the Stability Pact. Croatia is the most developed among the countries in the Western Balkans and thus, the general level of ODA does not correlate with the intensity of relations. Despite all reservations, assessment of this set of criteria would allow us to make a conclusion about the real policy of some new member states in the Western Balkans and its limits. Based on this conclusion, one could anticipate the short term impact of EU enlargement on countries and key issues in this region.

Slovakia has a long tradition of excellent relations with all Slavic nations of the Western Balkans. As an integral part of Czechoslovakia for seven decades in 20th century, Slovaks have their own experiences within a multinational state. Unlike SFR of Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia separated in a peaceful and constitutional way. The Western Balkans were one of the main concerns and foreign policy priorities of Slovakia since its establishment as an independent state. Historical ties between Slovakia and the region have a personal human dimension represented by a small, but vigorous Croatian national minority in Slovakia, and relatively numerous ethnic Slovaks living in Vojvodina (Serbia) and Slavonia (Croatia). The level of public solidarity and sympathies with Serbs during the NATO air campaign in 1999 created headaches for the Slovak government through the decline of public support for NATO accession. After the end of Prime Minister Mečiar's government in Slovakia in 1998 and the successful return of the country to the track of European Integration with significant engagement of civil sector, Slovakian experiences were used in Croatia and the former Republic of Yugoslavia. This focus on two countries was the result of political priorities and was strengthened by the fact that Slovakia inherited only two diplomatic missions in the region; in Belgrade and Zagreb.

The network of Slovak diplomatic representation in the Western Balkans will be enlarged by the new Embassy in Sarajevo later this year (2004). The special focus of Slovak diplomacy in the Western Balkans was recognized by the international community when E. Kukan, Minister of Foreign Affairs,

served as Special Envoy of the UN Secretary General for the Balkans (May 1999- June 2001). Under his auspices, an international conference in Bratislava was organized in July 1999, at which an informal platform of the democratic civil forces in FR Yugoslavia, called Community for Change, was established. The Bratislava process successfully fulfilled its mission and formally ended in 2002. Within the framework of Official Development Assistance, Serbia and Montenegro is a priority county for Slovakia. In 2003, a special bilateral tool, the Bratislava-Belgrade Fund (BBF) was established. In 2003 Slovak Government assigned more then EUR 1 Million to the BBF representing 30% of total ODA disbursement<sup>388</sup>.

Without any doubts, Slovenia has traditionally the closest relations to countries of the Western Balkans due to the cohabitation with the other nations in the common Yugoslav state for the major part of the 20th century. Slovenia could be considered as the single net beneficiary of the collapse of the former Yugoslavia. This country and its leadership managed to maximize some comparative advantages like advanced economic development, a high level of ethnic and confessional homogeneity and social and political stability. Although the Slovenian strategic goal of ensuring the political extraction from the Balkans was achieved, the country is still linked to South East Europe with many ties. Some unresolved issues like the final settlement of maritime borders with Croatia, refugees or problems related to compensations for “deleted” persons are important, but not decisive neither in foreign nor internal policy. On the side of other post-Yugoslav nations, the success of Slovenia is perceived in a mixed manner, sometimes with certain jealousy or suspicion. Slovenia, despite starting from scratch, opened resident embassies in all post-Yugoslav capitals and a Consulate General in Tirana. This shows its primary interest and ties to Slavic nations of the Western Balkans. This focus is illustrated also by recipients countries of the Slovenian ODA. Slovenia is active in all regional multilateral frameworks with a focus on the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe and the South East

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<sup>388</sup> For more detail see in the *Information about Official Development Assistance provided by the Slovak Republic in 2003*, accepted by the Government of the Slovak Republic on 28.4.2004, full information available at [www.rokovania.sk](http://www.rokovania.sk)

Cooperation Initiative (SECI). The International Center for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance is based in Slovenia with activities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Albania, Serbia and Montenegro and Macedonia.<sup>389</sup> Slovenia, as a coastal state, is together with other Western Balkans countries (except Macedonia), a member of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative.

Hungary, as a direct neighbour of Croatia and Serbia, has also intensive relation with the Western Balkans. In a deeper past, before WW I, almost all of Croatia and a significant part of Serbian territory were part of the Hungarian Kingdom. Today, ethnic Hungarians from Vojvodina create the second biggest national minority in Serbia after Albanians in Kosovo. The primary interest of Hungary revolves around security and conditions for ethnic Hungarians. During the NATO air campaign against Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1998, Hungary, as a fresh NATO member, fulfilled its duties. During 1990s, several thousands of young ethnic Hungarians and Serbs escaped to Hungary in an attempt to avoid compulsory military service in the Yugoslav National Army. Hungary has been an active member of the Stability Pact since its establishment. Within its scope, Hungary initiated in 1999 the *Szeged process* as a concrete step to promote democratization of the FR Yugoslavia. Since the very beginning, the process has focused on strengthening local government. The new mission of the broadened Szeged process concerns the promotion of values of European integration through the development of regional and cross-border cooperation, and support for local governments. Its scope of operation includes Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro.

For both neighbouring countries economic cooperation with the region is an other area of strong interest. Similarly, after joining the Schengen system, their borders with Serbia and Croatia will become the external border of the EU.

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<sup>389</sup> Among relevant countries Slovenia, Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia are enlisted as donors to the International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance., see [http://www.sigov.si/mzz/eng/foreign\\_poli/the\\_international\\_trust\\_fund\\_for\\_demi.html](http://www.sigov.si/mzz/eng/foreign_poli/the_international_trust_fund_for_demi.html)

The Czech Republic used to have traditionally intensive relations with Yugoslavia. After the Velvet Revolution, part of the Czech elite was exclusively oriented westwards and neglected East and South East Europe. On the other hand, president V. Havel and his moral appeal several times exposed himself in favour of human rights and the democratization process in the Western Balkans. As a new NATO member, the Czech Republic was only symbolically involved in 1999 in the air campaign against FR Yugoslavia. Czech diplomacy, together with Greece, launched an initiative to persuade Serbs to accept conditions of the international community. The Czech Republic is active in economic cooperation and trade with the Balkans, and significantly enlarged its official presence in Belgrade after democratic changes in 2000.

Poland, as the biggest new EU member country, has the potential and ambition to play the role of regional leader in Central Europe. Due to its geographic location, Poland has limited direct contacts with Western Balkans. Using the advantage of a well established foreign service, Poland quickly built up a diplomatic presence in all new capitals in the region. Polish diplomacy is involved in the Western Balkans as an observer. The massive engagement of Poland in peacekeeping and stabilization forces in the Balkans are rather driven by the logic of leadership (e.g. responsibility and capabilities) than by a genuine anxiety or feeling of threat. Poland's natural interest lay in its immediate Eastern European neighbourhood, not in the Balkans. This could be easily demonstrated by ODA projects, which are in Europe almost exclusively oriented towards the post-Soviet area<sup>390</sup>.

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<sup>390</sup> Poland's Development Cooperation, Annual Report 2002, at <http://www.msz.gov.pl/docs/53/eng.pdf>, 22.4.2004

**Tab. 1. Resident diplomatic representation of relevant new EU member states in Western Balkans (March 2004)<sup>391</sup>**

	<b>Czech Republic</b>	<b>Hungary</b>	<b>Poland</b>	<b>Slovakia</b>	<b>Slovenia</b>
<b>Belgrade</b>	Embassy	Embassy	Embassy	Embassy	Embassy
<b>Skopje</b>	-	Embassy	Embassy	-	Embassy
<b>Sarajevo</b>	Embassy	Embassy	Embassy	*	Embassy
<b>Tirana</b>	Embassy	Embassy	Embassy	-	Consulate General
<b>Zagreb</b>	Embassy	Embassy	Embassy	Embassy	Embassy

\* Note: According to the decision of the Government of the Slovak Republic a resident Embassy in Bosnia and Herzegovina should be opened in 2004.

**Tab. 2. Priorities and flow of the ODA from relevant new EU member states in the Western Balkans (2003)<sup>392</sup>**

	<b>Czech Republic</b>	<b>Hungary</b>	<b>Poland</b>	<b>Slovakia</b>	<b>Slovenia</b>
<b>Serbia and Montenegro</b>	Eligible	PRIORITY		PRIORITY	PRIORITY
<b>Macedonia</b>	Eligible	Eligible		Eligible	PRIORITY
<b>Bosnia and Herzegovina</b>	Eligible	PRIORITY	Eligible		PRIORITY
<b>Albania</b>				Eligible	PRIORITY
<b>Croatia</b>					PRIORITY

<sup>391</sup> This table is based on information at web sites of respective Ministries of Foreign Affairs, [www.mzv.cz](http://www.mzv.cz), [www.foreign.gov.sk](http://www.foreign.gov.sk), [www.kum.hu](http://www.kum.hu), [www.ms.gov.pl](http://www.ms.gov.pl), [www.sigov.si/mzz](http://www.sigov.si/mzz), 14.04.2004

<sup>392</sup> This table is compiled from Canadian International Development Agency CIDA-ODACE office, Bratislava, 2003 and comparison of the ODA flow in 2003 from selected European countries, processed by the Department of the international economic cooperation of the MFA of the Slovak Republic in April 2004. According to the website [www.gov.si/mzz/eng/index.html](http://www.gov.si/mzz/eng/index.html) all Western Balkans are priority areas for Slovenia.

**Tab. 3. Participation of relevant new EU member states in regional cooperative initiatives in Western Balkans (March 2004)<sup>393</sup>**

	Czech Republic	Hungary	Poland	Slovakia	Slovenia
<b>Stability Pact</b>	since 2002	since 1999	since 2002	since 2002	since 1999
<b>SECI</b>	-	Member	-	-	Member
<b>CEI</b>	Member	Member	Member	Member	Member

## Selected Issues

### *Democratization process in the region*

The recent enlargement of the European Union could serve as a good example and motivation for countries in transition. Support for democratization in the region will continue and the voice of the new members would obtain more political weight in the region. The perception of being “on the European integration track” is an important incentive for all countries in the Western Balkans. In this sense, Croatia could serve as a good example from the region.

### *Involvement of the Western Balkans in international cooperation*

New Member states support the involvement of both Serbia and Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Partnership for Peace cooperation program with NATO. However, it is unrealistic to expect that NATO, in Belgrade’s case, could back down from demands that they cooperate with

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<sup>393</sup> This table is based on information at web sites of respective Ministries of Foreign Affairs, processed by the Department of the international economic cooperation of the MFA of the Slovak Republic.

the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia (ICTY) and withdraw international legal suit against NATO countries.

In other formats of international regional cooperation like the Central European Initiative new EU member states could increase their involvement, including financial measures.

### *Question of Kosovo*

New EU member states are in general more sensitive towards Serbian arguments on territorial integrity. They are in better position to influence Serbian representatives mistrusted by the international community. They will argue in favour of a “carrot” policy, which more or less proved itself in Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The EU after enlargement will become even less enthusiastic about the final goal of Kosovars; Kosovo independence.

### *Recognition of Constitutional name of the FYR of Macedonia*

Countries of Central Europe have, in general, strong sympathies with Macedonian efforts to achieve full international recognition of the constitutional name of their state. 13 years after the end of the common Yugoslav state, FYROM is forced to use this strange official name in main international organizations like UN, EU or NATO. However, direct action in favour of Macedonia immediately after admission is hardly possible. The threat of the Greek veto to the enlargement would be no more valid, but institutional cohesion will prevent new member states from unilateral steps.

### *Rapprochement with the EU and NATO*

Countries of the Western Balkans on certain aspects could build on the existing empathy of new member states, which have undergone a deep social and economic transition. Fears by some analysts of the Western Balkan region that some new members would create artificial obstacles for future enlargement of both institutions are groundless. “Front-line” EU members

are above all interested in the predictable development and prosperity of their immediate neighbourhood. Their support for the Western Balkans is in fact not based on pure humanist approach, they are driven by strong security and economic interests. The basis of the support for further rapprochement, like the opening of accession negotiations, is fulfilling all conditions namely the Copenhagen criteria and cooperation with the international community and the ICTY.

### *Competition vs. Cooperation*

Despite some unresolved issues with neighbouring countries, fears of obstruction to EU accession entertained by countries of the Western Balkans by new member states are groundless. Enlargement as a promotion of stability in the neighbourhood is an evident win-win strategy.

### **Conclusions**

EU Enlargement and full incorporation of new member states is an enormous political and administrative task. A new balance between real capabilities and declared political priorities of new member countries would be established in relatively short time. There are no causes for change of recent trends as they were described in the new member states earlier. The Western Balkans will remain highest priority for Slovenia, Hungary and Slovakia. The Czech Republic and Poland will keep their presence in the region minimal and will avoid involvement in internal (in the regional sense) political affairs.

The countries of the Western Balkans will be influenced on a different level. Albania will not be directly touched by the recent enlargement. Macedonia could profit from the enlargement by increasing the number of countries inside the EU sympathizing with their efforts to be recognized under their constitutional name. Bosnia-Herzegovina would be affected by the transition from SFOR to EUFOR, but politically far more important for BiH is the Croatian drive to open enlargement negotiations with the EU. Such steps

will probably eliminate any temptations to create a “Great Croatia”. Croatia itself could count on the support of new member states and the transfer of negotiation know-how in case of opening of negotiation. The condition for support is fulfillment of all criteria as it was in case of recent enlargement. Serbia and Montenegro is currently the most complex puzzle in the Western Balkans. EU enlargement itself will hardly influence directly any key questions like Kosovo or the final constitutional settings between Serbia and Montenegro. However, the involvement of countries which better understand political dilemmas of transition could result in a deeper empathy on the side of the EU as a whole.

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