



Vienna, 22-23 November 2018

# EU-Russia Expert Network on Foreign Policy

## Another area of competition – or cooperation? Russia and the EU in the Western Balkans

**A**lmost 20 years after the end of the Yugoslav wars the Western Balkan region continues to face serious challenges. Political systems and economies are weak, while nationalist sentiments and poverty are both undermining sustainable solutions to persistent ethno-territorial conflicts. The region is geographically surrounded by the EU and NATO. Western efforts to achieve stability rely essentially on offering membership perspectives to both organisations: Serbia and Montenegro have started formal membership negotiations with the EU, Albania and the Republic of Macedonia are candidate countries, while Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo are potential candidates. Albania and Montenegro have

become NATO members in recent years. However, there has been growing engagement by other international actors in the region, who do not necessarily see eye to eye on many issues with the EU and NATO, or among themselves. This includes Russia, Turkey, the Gulf states, some Islamic militant organisations, as well as China.

During the seminar, we want to explore the state of internal and regional developments in the Western Balkans. Based on this analysis, we want to reflect jointly on EU and Russian policy towards the region and consider the question of whether the Western Balkans is just another area of competition or if it could offer areas for cooperation.

**Friday, 23 November 2018**

**Diplomatische Akademie Wien (Favoritenstraße 15a)**

**09:00 – 09:30**

### **Welcoming remarks**

**Markus Ederer**, Ambassador of the EU to Russia

**Ivan Timofeev**, Russian International Affairs Council

**09:30 – 10:30**

### **Info Session 1: Politics, economies and societies in the Western Balkans**

#### **Chair:**

**Sarunas Liekis**, Vytautas Magnus University, Vilnius

#### **Inputs:**

**Dušan Reljić**, SWP, Brussels

**Ekaterina Entina**, Higher School of Economics, Moscow

11:00 – 12:00

## Working Groups: The EU and Russia in the Balkans – risks of confrontation and areas for cooperation

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13:00 – 14:00

### Info Session 2:

## Persistent and/or future conflicts in the Western Balkans and their impact on the region: Serbia and Kosovo, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Macedonia

#### Chair:

**Sergei Utkin**, Institute of World Economy and International Relations, Russian Academy of Science, Moscow

#### Presentation

**Vedran Džihić**, Austrian Institute for International Affairs, Vienna

#### Comments

**Adam Balcer**, European Council on Foreign Relations, Warsaw

**Alexandr Pivovarenko**, Institute of Slavonic Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow

**Oskar Benedikt**, Austrian Ministry of European Integration and Foreign Affairs, Vienna

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14:00 – 16:00

## Working Groups: The EU and Russia in the Balkans – risks of confrontation and areas for cooperation

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16:30 – 17:30

## Plenary: Conclusions from Working Groups

#### Chair:

**Ivan Timofeev**, Russian International Affairs Council

#### Comments:

**Angelina Eichhorst**, European External Action Service, Brussels

