



**45th Workshop of the PfP Consortium Study Group
“Regional Stability in South East Europe”**

**Croatia’s Accession to the
Eurozone and Schengen Area**

–

Potential Impact on South East Europe

– Programme and Workshop Outline –

14 – 17 September 2023

**Hotel Le Meridien Lav
Split, Croatia**

Draft as of 30 August 2023

Purpose

Since 1999, the Study Group Regional Stability in South East Europe has been assessing the post-war development in Western Balkan countries and its implications for the region and beyond. Embedded in the wider academic framework of both the PFP Consortium of Defense Academies and Security Studies Institutes, as well as the security-political research carried out by the Austrian Ministry of Defence, the Study Group's focus is on examining major conflict areas and proposing possible solutions to local authorities and international actors alike.

During the last two decades, the region of South East Europe has been on the agenda of Transatlantic, European and Austrian institutions with the goal of enhancing capabilities in the field of conflict management and peace support. Recent developments on the international level and in the region have given rise to the main topic of the upcoming 45th workshop of the Study Group entitled ***“Croatia’s Accession to the Eurozone and Schengen Area – Potential Impact on Countries in Southeast Europe”***, to be convened at the Hotel Le Meridien Lav, Split, Croatia, from 14 to 17 September, 2023.

Partners

The partners to this project are:

- Austrian National Defence Academy, Vienna/Austria
- Directorate General for Defence Policy at the Austrian Ministry of Defence, Vienna/Austria
- PFP Consortium of Defense Academies and Security Studies Institutes, Garmisch-Partenkirchen/Germany
- Institute for Development and International Relations (IRMO), Zagreb/Croatia

Topic Outline

On 1 January 2023, Croatia joined the Eurozone and Schengen Area, thus completing the process of European integration, which reflected the country's transformative success and has significantly changed Croatia's position in the regional and European environment. Slightly more than 20 years ago, Croatia was at the beginning of the process of post-socialist and post-conflict transformation, which started at the Zagreb Summit in 2000, when the Stabilisation and Association Process was launched.

Over the course of last 20 years, Croatia has gained extensive experience in various aspects of democratic transition and European integration. This could be a very useful asset both for its foreign policy calibration in the regional and wider European context and for transformational processes in other countries in Southeast Europe.

The current geostrategic context as determined by Russian aggression against Ukraine and its multi-layer consequences leaves only limited space for other regions on the EU's list of priorities. However, the current state of the EU integration process, democratic deficits of political elites, inter and intra-state tensions in the region, unfinished state-building processes, alarming levels of organised crime and corruption, as well as the growing influence of various assertive players are threatening the long-term stability in Southeast Europe. After more than 20 years of continued assistance to processes of political and economic transformation, the EU cannot afford any

backsliding in its own backyard. Therefore, the nearest EU member-states with greater sensitivity *vis-à-vis* Southeast European democratic transition could play a particularly important role in advocating the EU integration process of countries from the region in the Brussels corridors.

Additionally, not only could Croatia's experience be helpful to other countries in Southeast Europe, given the common challenges, but there is also a great symbolism in Croatia's finalisation of the EU integration process, which has potential positive spill-over effects at its borders. There are, however, voices, which argue exactly the opposite, claiming that firm control and strict regulations at the new Schengen border create a new artificial barrier between the EU and third countries.

In this geopolitical and regional context, the following questions seem to be of particular relevance:

- What could be the impact of Croatia's finalisation of the EU integration process (Eurozone and Schengen Area)?
- What are contemporary challenges to the current Schengen Area and Eurozone, as well as to the EU as a whole?
- What policies could/would Croatia employ to ensure the region's political and economic consolidation? How can these policies support non EU members in the region to meet the criteria for EU membership?
- What are country-specific challenges which could determine the future of EU accession processes in the region and how could Croatia's experience and position be utilised to foster transformational processes?
- What contribution can the EU, the OSCE, NATO, as well as other international actors, make to the strengthening of transformational process in the region?
- Who are the biggest opponents of accession of countries in the region to the transatlantic structure and how could their influence be curtailed?

Panel Structure and Guiding Issues

Panel 1: Croatia's Membership in the Eurozone – Opportunities and Challenges Ahead

- Lessons learned from Croatia's Eurozone integration process and implications for regional stability;
- Croatia's new position – opportunities and challenges in the regional and European environment;
- Implications for Croatia's economic policies in the region of Southeast Europe.

Panel 2: Croatia's Membership in the Schengen Area – Opportunities and Challenges Ahead

- Lessons learned from Croatia's Schengen Area integration process;
- Croatia's new position – opportunities and challenges in the regional and European environment;
- Implications for Croatia's security and humanitarian policies in the region of Southeast Europe.

Panel 3: Croatian Transitional Experience and Challenges faced by Individual South East European States (Part One)

- The case studies of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia;
- Bilateral relations with Croatia and co-operation in the field of EU integration;
- General impact on neighbourhood relations in South East Europe;
- Lessons for the individual South East European countries from the Croatian transformation and EU integration process.

Panel 4: Croatian Transitional Experience and Challenges of Individual South East European States (Part Two)

- The case studies of Albania, Kosovo and North Macedonia;
- Bilateral relations with Croatia and co-operation in the field of EU integration;
- General impact on neighbourhood relations in South East Europe;
- Lessons for the individual South East European countries from the Croatian transformation and EU integration process.

Programme

Thursday, 14 September 2023

- till 18.30 Arrival of the participants
- 19.00 **Official Opening & Reception at Gooshter Beach Club, Le Méridien Lav**
- BG Ronald VARTOK, Director, Military Policy Division, Austrian Ministry of Defence, Vienna
- Sandro KNEZOVIC, Institute for Development and International Relations (IRMO), Zagreb

Friday, 15 September 2023

- 07.00 – 09.00 Breakfast
- 09.00 – 09.20 **Introduction to the Study Group “Regional Stability in South East Europe” and Administrative Remarks**
- Benedikt HENSELLEK, Austrian National Defence Academy, Vienna
- Olaf GARLICH, PfP Consortium Operations Staff, Garmisch-Partenkirchen
- 09.20 – 09.40 **Key Note Speech**
- Andreja METELKO-ZGOMBIĆ, State Secretary for Europe, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Croatia, Zagreb
- 09.40 – 11.15 **PANEL 1: Croatia’s Membership in the Eurozone – Opportunities and Challenges Ahead**
- Chair:** Predrag JUREKOVIĆ, Austrian National Defence Academy, Vienna
- Marina TKALEC, The Institute of Economics, Zagreb
- Mario HOLZNER, The Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies (WIIW), Vienna
- 11.15 – 11.45 Coffee Break

11.45 – 13.15 **PANEL 2: Croatia's Membership in the Schengen Area – Opportunities and Challenges Ahead**

Chair: Sandro KNEZOVIĆ, Institute for Development and International Relations (IRMO), Zagreb

Terezija GRAS, State Secretary for European and International Affairs and EU Funds, Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Croatia, Zagreb

Ivan PITEŠA, Zagreb Office of the International Organisation for Migrations (IOM), Zagreb

Vladimir PETRONIJEVIĆ, United Nations Development Programme Serbia, Belgrade

13.15 – 14.30 Lunch

14.30 – 16.00 **PANEL 3: Croatian Transitional Experience and Challenges faced by Individual South East European States (Part One)**

Chair: Filip EJDUS, University of Belgrade

Sead TURČALO, University of Sarajevo

Milena BEŠIĆ, Center for Democracy and Human Rights (CEDEM), Podgorica

16.00 – 16.30 Coffee Break

16.30 – 18.00 **Interactive Discussion**

Moderation: Franz-Lothar ALTMANN, University of Bucharest

19.00 Dinner

Saturday, 16 September 2023

07.00 – 08.30 Breakfast

08.30 – 10.00 **PANEL 4: Croatian Transitional Experience and Challenges faced by Individual South East European States (Part Two)**

Chair: Michael SCHMUNK, ret. German Ambassador, Hamburg

Qendrim GASHI, Kosovar Institute for Policy Research and Development,
Prishtine/Priština

Noela MAHMUTAJ, Albanian Institute for International Studies (AIIS), Tirana

Rade RAJKOVČEVSKI, St. Kliment Ohridski University, Skopje

10.00 – 10.30 Coffee Break

10.30 – 11.45 **Plenary Session: Interactive Debate for Policy Recommendations**

Moderation: Predrag JUREKOVIĆ, Austrian National Defence Academy,
Vienna

12.00 – 13.00 Lunch

13.00 **Departure to the Side Programme**

Sunday, 17 September 2023

Individual Departures