

# THE WESTERN BALKANS AND THE EU: REASSESSING THE RELATIONSHIP

**Thursday 19 September 2019, at 09:00 – 11:00**  
**Arkadiankatu 23 H (courtyard), 2nd floor, Helsinki**

The European future of the Western Balkans (WB) is increasingly uncertain. While the countries of the WB have been promised a European perspective, conditions for becoming part of the EU have become much stricter compared to previous enlargement rounds. At the same time, the EU's appetite for accepting new members has decreased due to numerous internal factors. As a result, the EU's enlargement policy seems to be stuck in limbo.

This seminar will reflect on the current state of play with regard to the advancement of the Western Balkans in the EU accession process. What are the potential benefits of the EU's expansion to this region? What kinds of options are possible for making the accession process more effective? What is the role of the enlargement in the context of wider debates on the future of Europe?

*Panelists:*

**Kaisa Penny**, Director, Kalevi Sorsa Foundation

**Milena Lazarević**, Programme Director, European Policy Centre – Belgrade, Serbia

**Sotirag Hroni**, Executive Director, Institute for Democracy and Mediation – Tirana, Albania

**Keijo Karjalainen**, Deputy Director, Unit for South-Eastern Europe, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland

*Moderator:*

**Emma Hakala**, Senior Research Fellow, Finnish Institute of International Affairs

**Speakers' biographies** 

## Speakers' biographies



**Kaisa Penny** is the Director of the Kalevi Sorsa Foundation. Sorsa Foundation is a Finnish think tank and a democracy support organisation. Penny holds a degree in Politics and International Relations and has a long working history in the fields of European and national politics having worked in social democratic party organisations both in Finland and at EU level before joining Sorsa Foundation at 2018.



**Milena Lazarevic** is one of the founders and Programme Director at the European Policy Centre (CEP), independent, non-profit think-tank based in Belgrade, Serbia. Milena is a proven expert in the field of public administration reform, in Serbia and in the Western Balkan region. Between May 2014 and March 2015, she acted as the Special Adviser to the Serbian Deputy Prime Minister in charge of public administration reform. As a consultant, she has worked for SIGMA/OECD, Regional School for Public Administration (ReSPA), the World Bank and several major international consultancy companies. Before co-founding CEP, Lazarevic worked for almost six years as a civil servant in the Serbian administration, first in the EU Integration Office of the Serbian Government (SEIO) and later in the Ministry of Public Administration. She is a Soros scholar and has an MA degree in European studies from the College of Europe and an MA in European Administrative Law from Belgrade University.



**Sotiraq Hroni**, former Albanian diplomat, and adviser to Albanian Prime Minister (1997) and to the President of the Republic (1997-1999), is the founder and executive director since 2000 of the Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM), a non-profit organization in Albania. He is responsible for overall management and development of the organisation, which operates in different program areas such as governance, security, policy hub, local governance and integrated development. He has also led the organization's efforts to build efficient cooperation and partnerships with public and private institutions, networking and fundraising. His continuous commitments stand with offering relevance to IDM's strategic development with the country's development priorities.



**Keijo Karjalainen** is Deputy Director for the Unit for South-Eastern Europe at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. As the Team Leader for the Western Balkans he has gained an in-depth understanding for the EU enlargement agenda and regional developments. He also follows closely domestic affairs and EU and bilateral relations, particularly in Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia. Previously he has served in the Finnish Embassy in Washington, D.C. (2013-2016), as well in London (2009-2013) and in the Permanent representation of Finland to the EU in Brussels (2006).



**Emma Hakala** is a Senior Research Fellow at the Finnish Institute of International Affairs. She defended her doctoral dissertation in political history in 2018 under the title "International Organisations and the Securitisation of the Environment in post-Conflict Western Balkans". Hakala's broader research interest is on environmental and climate security. She has also done research and published on sustainable energy issues, environmental citizenship in the Balkans and local water sustainability cooperation in Nepal. Hakala's current research explores new practices to respond and adapt to environmental security threats in the context of Finland. She is a member of the BIOS Research Unit and the WISE project (Creative adaptation to wicked socio-environmental disruptions).