



Why WBIN?

The withdrawal of the UK from the EU is an epoch-making event that will have a long-term impact on the political, economic and security processes in Europe. The effects will be in line with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the opening of Eastern Europe quarter century ago.

As there was no experience with the events similar to the fall of the Berlin Wall, there is no such thing as the UK withdrawal from the EU, which could serve us as a model for behavior and positioning in the aftermath of it. That is why, along with the whole of Europe, we are left to creative solutions, but also to the estimates of the development of different processes in the future.

Balkan countries, i.e. Yugoslavia did not understand the significance and consequences of the fall of the Berlin Wall at the moment when it happened. The historical distance of quarter of century says that it was understood only by Slovenia and Croatia, which first moved towards independence. These two countries are the only EU members in the Western Balkans today. Other countries, including Serbia, have been on the road for membership for 13 years, but are away from it for a quite a number of years.

The purpose of this project is to avoid a bad experience from the period of the fall of the Berlin Wall, and that Serbia and other Western Balkan countries are actively positioning themselves to avoid bad consequences (for themselves) of the inevitable reorganization of the EU after the Great Britain withdraws.



EU

It turned out that the Union does not have a strategic “crisis plan” in the event that the British decide in the referendum to withdraw. It turned out that they only have a short-term, tactical response, and it comes down to the fact that Britain is asked to start without delay the process of withdrawal. This will be completed soon, but the question is what will then be done by the EU institutions and its remaining members.

What is certain to happen to the European Union is its institutional and constitutive redefining. The most striking conclusion after Brexit is that the EU must change its internal structure in the direction of strengthening the powers of the member states and weakening the “central” decision-making institutions. This is a kind of decentralization, where the basis would be that the main decisions are made by those who have legitimacy - those are representatives elected directly by citizens, and not as until now bureaucrats whose legitimacy has been questioned (Commission, Central Bank ...)

We will be present in the future in the decentralization of the EU, a process that is contrary to the prevailing tendencies, which are, to a large extent, verified by the Lisbon Treaty, on the unitarization of the Union.

Western Balkans

It is a general assessment that the UK withdrawal from the EU will put the EU's expansion issue at the sidelines, but at the same time there are chances that this crisis in the functioning of the EU at the same time also means a great opportunity for candidate countries to speed up their European path.

This project is based on this second assessment, which has good grounds. First of all, in the fact that the EU overnight on June 23rd to June 24th 2016, got in the position that there is no “instruction” on how to proceed and therefore it can be opened for constructive solutions.

The countries of the Western Balkans - Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia, Albania and Kosovo, are the only remaining countries that have a promised perspective for EU membership, and are still on that way. Here, the position of Turkey, which has the same formal position, but also a completely independent and specific path towards the EU, is neglected.

The fact that the Western Balkans is the only non-integrated European space in the EU, which is guaranteed to be that (the Thessaloniki Summit 2003), is the biggest asset to the proposal to accelerate the path to membership.

The asset is also that every EU expansion is in fact a political decision, and for the realization of this project only political solutions and political efforts are required.



The Western Balkans does not offer economic power or political influence as “dowry”, but it becomes very important from the point of view of EU security. As a space through which the greatest security challenges for the EU come from - refugees and terrorism.

And besides, the field of Russia's growing and more open influence, which sees in the Balkans an area through which it can more effectively deal with the EU.

All the countries of the Western Balkans have a strong pro-EU orientation and do not have a serious political force that could lead them to the other side in the near future.

What is WBIN?

The general idea is to offer a completely new agreement to the European Union, which will be used both by the EU itself and the Western Balkan countries individually. It foresees the following:

The countries of the Western Balkans, first of all, without the EU, agree on a joint approach to the EU, which will be required to dramatically speed up the accession process.

The EU will be asked to foresee, in the forthcoming process of general redefining of its organization, the possibility of “Conditional Membership”, which would be open, in reality, only to the countries of the Western Balkans.

“Conditional membership” would mean that the countries of the Western Balkans could be considered as EU members, i.e. to become “tangible” that they are already part of the family. This is not the case now, and according to the existing procedures, it will not be the case at least until 2020. Until then, very negative, and even catastrophic developments for both the Balkans and the EU are possible - from the economic, security, and geopolitical point of view (the influence of Russia).

“Conditional membership” is ONLY a political concept. It provides the countries that have it and their citizens certainty that the work is almost finished, and therefore, the citizens' support to EU membership is growing inexorably. On the other hand, it gives the European Union the belief that it is still a vital and desirable system, which greatly annuls the serious consequences of Brexit for European enthusiasm.

Countries that receive “conditional membership” enjoy the privilege of actively participating in the work of EU institutions, that they are at the table where decisions are made, and they are not at the table where others decide on them.

They do not ask to “jump the queue” into the EU and therefore do not seek full membership immediately. But they show an ambition to dramatically accelerate the movement towards



This is a fundamentally different concept from the current one (the process of joining through long-standing negotiations and meeting conditions) and is therefore necessary in order to stabilize the European concept after the impact of Brexit.

Concrete steps

The countries of the Western Balkans independently, in the absence of the EU, make a decision to create a forum (institutions) which simulate (imitate) the EU institutions, but in the Western Balkan region.

They have the Council of the WB (according to the Council of the EU), which works in a manner that the leaders of the member states meet twice a year - in May and November, and make strategic decisions, which are concerned only with EU accession, without bilateral issues. They are held one month before the EU Summit so that the decisions they make could be passed on to EU leaders at their meetings held in June and December.

They have ministerial councils - ministers of foreign affairs meet once a month, and ministers of other departments as needed - interior affairs on refugee issues, say, ministers of economy and transport - if they solve important infrastructure tasks ...

From the EU is asked that on its summit, at least twice a year, a representative attends - the Prime Minister or the President of the Western Balkan countries (rotating membership, that is, every 6 months, representative of another Western Balkan country). This representative can speak at the EU summit, but cannot vote.

Every month, the Ministerial Meeting of the EU, is attended by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of a Western Balkans country on behalf of everyone else. He can also speak, but he cannot vote.

The European Commission receives a representative of the Western Balkans. He participates in all sessions of the EC, can speak, but cannot vote. Since the sessions of the Commission (EU government) are more frequent, the representative of the Western Balkans should be a respected expert on which all WB countries will agree. And he is rotated for a certain period (a year). He is stationed in Brussels, and his costs are borne by the government of the country from which he comes.

Coordination between the Western Balkan countries and logistics goes through the ministries of foreign affairs. After each EU Summit or EU Ministerial Meeting, the representative of the WB conveys to the other conclusions, assessments and decisions.

There are no secretariats, no bureaucracy, no joint institutions, no costs. This alliance does not operate according to the principle of organization, because it throws away the possible suspicions that the creation of the state Balkan alliance is desired. But about that later.



Countries from “conditional membership” will not require to collectively, enter the EU together, but the principle remains that the one who fulfills the conditions enters. So, the previous negotiations go along with “conditional membership”, but political support is expressed unequivocally - the EU shows that the Western Balkans are part of it. So far, in the last 14 years, this has been done only declaratively.

More concrete steps

This is essentially the initiative of Serbia, but it would be good not to look so on the outside, because it will inevitably cause suspicion in many, if not all, that it is a kind of new Serbian “hegemonic” initiative. It is therefore good that the initiative be presented at the very top (the Western Balkans prime ministers), but in an informal and extremely discrete atmosphere. Discretion in the beginning is perhaps the most important factor for the success of the initiative. All the Western Balkans' prime ministers have excellent relations with each other, and this is a good circumstance, which should be used on time.

The initiative, even, should be presented in a place that is not Belgrade, or even in the Balkans, in order to annul the possibility of a story about “hegemonic” aspirations. Thessaloniki may be a good place, for symbolic reasons, because the EU has promised there to accept the countries of the Western Balkans in 2003.

The European Union is addressed only when basic principles are firmly established, which are listed earlier. This should be a positive surprise for the European leaders, who have, for years, been pushing the West Balkan countries into stronger interconnections.

Timing:

(D = the moment of delivery of the project)

Starting point D + 30 days.

Informal communication with other countries, i.e. offices of the Prime Minister and ultimately an informal meeting of Prime Ministers D + 90 days.

Presentation to EU leaders D + 120 days.

Adoption of a “conditional membership” strategy - EU summit.

Benefits for the Western Balkans

A strategic novelty in this concept is that the countries of the Western Balkans have a tangible EUROPEAN REALITY instead of the declarative EUROPEAN FUTURE to date.

Citizens of the Western Balkan countries will be more than clear that their country is a part of the EU.



Communication with the EU goes directly - through legitimate representatives of the countries of the Western Balkans. There are no mediators in the form of Brussels administration.

The demands, wishes and ideas of the countries of the Western Balkans are presented to the European Union most directly - in the meetings of their highest authorities, again without numerous mediators, which now often interfere with communication, and even politically decide, which is unacceptable.

Accession goes faster because people from the EU have representatives of the Western Balkans constantly in front of their eyes and listen directly to their ideas and aspirations. This is a much stronger impact of the Western Balkans on the EU than it is up to now.

Growing citizens' support to EU membership and becomes stable, to the very end of the accession process.

The ties between the Balkan countries are strengthening, and in the healthiest way - working together to achieve a common strategic interest.

The space for disputes between the Balkan countries is reduced.

It strengthens the political, but also economic credibility of the entire Western Balkans, which reflects on the attractiveness for the investors.

Benefits for the EU

With the Western Balkans' co-opt into “conditional membership”, the EU is emerging from a crisis of credibility in which it dramatically fell into with the withdrawal of the United Kingdom.

It helps with many disputes in the Western Balkans that exist now and which will inevitably exist until the last country of the WB becomes a full member.

It completes the unification mission of Europe by including the Western Balkans, the only non-integrated area so far. It can be considered complete.

It shows the ability of the EU to quickly transform itself and thus preserve its attractive identity.

All this in the long term strengthens pro-European forces within the EU and reduces the space for separatist tendencies that emerged abruptly after Brexit.



By establishing a “conditional membership”, the EU practically introduces the so-called “second league” of the EU to its system. The Union is reluctant to admit it, but the things evolve in a way that the EU will split into several “levels”, first of all, to developed and less developed members. With this, it elegantly introduces into the system this option, initially only for the Western Balkans, but in the perspective it can develop it in such a way that some of the existing members “fall out of the first league” and be in the status of the WB countries - less obligations, but also less privileges.

Potential hazards and risks to the Western Balkans

It is certain that this initiative in many, if not all, Balkan countries will be assessed as a Serbian attempt to be a hegemon in the Balkans. It will also be assessed as an attempt to create a new Yugoslavia. All these remarks can be suppressed in the short term, since the concept is such that it does not foresee new institutional relations between the Balkan countries, but only better cooperation in achieving a common strategic goal.

It will also be attacked from the standpoint that this will slow down some of the individual movements towards the EU. First of all, in Montenegro, which believes that it has moved most of all Western Balkan countries and that it will be the first one to enter. This can also be quickly and relatively easily annulled because WBIN does not require a common and simultaneous membership in the EU, but when each country fulfills the conditions individually.

Serbia will not go with Kosovo in the same basket, Kosovo will not be in the same basket with Serbia. Here is needed the help of someone from the EU (Mogherini, Merkel ...), but also from the United States, to persuade Pristina not to make trouble.

The bureaucracy of each country will exert pressure and will seek its own place of “security” - either in Brussels or in special state offices in their own countries, imagining that they are new jobs that require new institutions to be implemented. There are no new jobs (positions), there is only more and more creative work with the existing services.

Croatia. Its opposition will be almost certain, because with this move it loses the image of the “best in the Balkans”, which it gave to itself. It will be aware that its influence on the Balkan affairs is reduced and that it is a kind of lawyer of the Balkans in the EU institutions. These should be uniquely opposed by all WB governments.

Russia. From here, one should expect the greatest opposition and the strongest pressure. The entry of the entire Western Balkans into “conditional membership” in the EU virtually closes the door for Russia's expectations that in the WB they will be able to do something in the long run in terms of strengthening its influence.

Dodik. Given that the initiative is based on the cooperation of the governments of sovereign countries, Dodik and the RS will have almost no place in the new structure, and therefore it is necessary to expect opposition from him personally.



Potential hazards and risks to the EU

There is a huge opposition in the EU to receive new members, especially after Brexit. Here, the key activity of the governments of the EU member states is to explain to its domestic public that Western Balkan countries with this do not become full members and that they do not affect the life in the EU. There will be no entry of workers from the Balkans towards the EU, there will be no changes in their employment regime, there will be no refugees.

There will be remarks that a “conditional membership” opens up space for unlimited EU expansion, and hence gives hope to many other countries to become EU members one day. This is excluded, because apart from the Western Balkans, which have the status of candidates, all other European countries (Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova ...) are in the status of Neighboring Partners and they do not have and will not be guaranteed that they will once become members of the Union.

Britain. It is possible that from Britain there are voices that the EU with these urgent moves towards the Western Balkans shows that it is disappointed with the withdrawal of Britain and to resort to desperate steps, only to show its strength and vitality.

Politicians and bureaucrats who have linked their careers to the EU's current functioning, and are tied to the EU institutions, and are many, and their influence is strong will be opposed to such a solution, for in the short term it also calls into question their role, and therefore existence. The quest to maintain the status quo in bureaucracy will be, in general, one of the biggest challenges EU is facing if it wants to transform itself after Brexit.
