

INVITATION

Expert Discussion

The [Brussels office of the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung](#) and the [Western Balkans Strategy Group](#) cordially invite to the following expert discussion:

Moving forward: How can the Croatian and German EU presidencies make 2020 a successful year for the EU's Western Balkans policy?

Date Wednesday, November 20, 2019

Time 12:15 – 14:00

Venue Leopold Hotel, Room Eleonore, Rue du Luxembourg 35, 1050 Brussels

Croatia and Germany will hold the EU Council Presidency in 2020. Both states have a special responsibility towards the Western Balkans: after Slovenia, Croatia is the second former Yugoslav state that joined the EU. Germany is perceived in the region as the leading power in the EU and, at the same time, the most important advocate for the further stabilisation of the region through EU integration. This seems all the more urgent in view of recent setbacks – the rejection of Northern Macedonia and Albania by the European Council. However, the forthcoming presidencies are not only associated with positive expectations, but also with fears: in Croatia, positions reminiscent of the nationalist agendas of the 1990s are being adopted up to the highest government circles. How can a government that is allying itself with Croatian nationalists in its immediate neighbour, Bosnia-Herzegovina, become an advocate of peaceful, democratic development in its neighbouring countries as part of the EU integration process?

Germany continues to enjoy a high reputation, but is regarded as too weak or too indecisive to implement a proactive, reform-friendly Balkan policy within the EU. There are also frequent accusations that Berlin, too, is focusing more on stability through partnership with authoritarian heads of government than on democratic reform based on the rule of law.

Despite these fears, how can the Croatian and German EU presidencies make 2020 a successful year for the EU's Western Balkans policy? What are the priorities, what are the mistakes to be avoided from the point of view of civil society actors from the Western Balkan states?

Programme

12:15 – 12:30 Registration

12:30 – 12:35 **Welcome by Eva van de Rakt**, Head of Office, Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung
European Union

12:35 – 14:00

Expert discussion with:

- **Lejla Gačanica**, Independent consultant and Researcher (Sarajevo) on Croatia's EU presidency: A particular challenge and responsibility
- **Fisnik Korenica**, Group for Legal and Political Studies (Pristina) on Serbia and Kosovo: Realistic steps towards normalisation instead of quick fixes
- **Petar Todorov**, Institute of National History (Skopje) on North Macedonia and Albania: How to keep momentum

Comment by **Reinhard Bütikofer**, Member of the European Parliament, The Greens/EFA

The expert discussion will be moderated by **Walter Kaufmann**, Head of East & Southeast Europe Division, Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, Berlin

Lunch will be served during the event. This invitation is personal and the event will be held under the Chatham House Rule*. **Please register by November 15 via [this link](#) as space is limited.**

For further information, please refer to

Zora Siebert

Head of EU Policy Programme

Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung European Union

Rue du Luxembourg, 47-51

1050 Brussels

T +3227434105

E zora.siebert@eu.boell.org

I eu.boell.org

*Participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed. Taking photographs, video or audio recordings as well as all kinds of activities on social media are not allowed during the meeting.

The Green Political Foundation