

EVALUATION ROADMAP

Roadmaps aim to inform citizens and stakeholders about the Commission's work to allow them to provide feedback and to participate effectively in future consultation activities. Citizens and stakeholders are in particular invited to provide views on the Commission's understanding of the problem and possible solutions and to share any relevant information that they may have.

TITLE OF THE EVALUATION	Strategic, country-level evaluation of the EU's cooperation with Serbia over the period 2012-2018
LEAD DG – RESPONSIBLE UNIT	DG NEAR A4
INDICATIVE PLANNING (PLANNED START DATE AND COMPLETION DATE)	Q1– 2019 Q1 – 2020
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	DG NEAR: https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/countries/detailed-country-information/serbia_en EU Delegation to Serbia: http://europa.rs/?lang=en EEAS: https://eeas.europa.eu/category/tags/serbia_en

The Roadmap is provided for information purposes only. It does not prejudice the final decision of the Commission on whether this initiative will be pursued or on its final content. All elements of the initiative described by the document, including its timing, are subject to change.

A. Context, purpose and scope of the evaluation

Context

At the Thessaloniki Summit in 2003, the EU granted all countries of the Western Balkans a clear perspective of EU membership, subject to fulfilment of a set of conditions, in particular the Copenhagen criteria¹ and conditions set under the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP) which was launched in June 1999. The SAP rests on (1) Contractual relationships (bilateral Stabilisation and Association agreements); (2) Trade relations (autonomous trade measures); (3) Financial assistance (the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance – IPA); (4) Regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations.

Serbia formally applied to the EU in 2009. In December 2013 the European Council agreed to hold the 1st EU-Intergovernmental Conference with Serbia in January 2014, signalling the formal start of Serbia's accession negotiations. In the course of the negotiations, EU and candidate countries conclude Accession Partnerships that include commitments which have to be implemented by the date of accession. Such partnerships identify priorities for action in order to support efforts to move closer to the European Union within a coherent framework and also provide guidance for financial assistance. The European Commission then adopts, on an annual basis, its so-called Enlargement Package which includes individual reports on candidate countries, assessing the implementation of the European Union's enlargement policy. At the end of September 2018, 14 out of 35 chapters were opened (two of which are provisionally closed).

Financial assistance to Serbia has been provided mainly through EU pre-accession assistance aimed at supporting candidate countries' alignment with EU standards and policies, including the EU acquis where appropriate, with a view to membership. Under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA)² 2007-2013, the main focus areas of funding in Serbia were (1) Strengthening the rule of law and public administration; (2) overcoming the economic crisis and improving competitiveness; (3) Social inclusion and reconciliation, ie. the integration of vulnerable groups and minorities, including the Roma, as well as refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees³.

Over time the need to strengthen links between priorities established by the Commission in the annual

¹ The so-called Copenhagen criteria are: (1) stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities; (2) a functioning market economy and the ability to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the EU; (3) ability to take on the obligations of membership, including the capacity to effectively implement the rules, standards and policies that make up the body of EU law (the 'acquis'), and adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union.

² Council Regulation (EC) No 1085/2006 of 17 July 2006.

³ https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/mipd_serbia_2011_2013_en.pdf

progress reports and the programming of assistance, as well as beneficiaries' ownership of the latter, became clear. Under IPA II (2014-2020) assistance was to support targeted reforms within the framework of the so-called 'sector approach', with pre-defined sectors closely linked to the enlargement strategy (e.g. democracy and governance, rule of law, and growth and competitiveness). The indicative allocation of financial assistance under IPA II was distributed across (1) support to socio-economic and Regional development and sub-sectors: Environment and climate change, Transport, Energy and Competitiveness and innovation; (2) support to reforms in preparation for Union membership in the area of Democracy and governance and Rule of law and fundamental rights; (3) support to Employment, social policies, education, promotion of gender equality, and human resources development; (4) support to Agriculture and rural development. EU pre-accession assistance has also been available to co-finance Serbia's participation to certain EU programmes. Serbia has also benefitted from multi-country support, which aimed to complement to national assistance by providing (1) Horizontal support in the form of Technical assistance, information and training for authorities in IPA II beneficiaries, through the TAIEX instrument and in the form of twinning, (2) regional cooperation, networking and sharing of best practices, (3) Regional investment support and (4) Territorial cooperation⁴.

In addition to pre-accession funds, Commission support to Serbia has also been available through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), the Instrument for Stability (IFS 2007-2013/IcSP 2014-2020) and grants blended with loans from International Financial Institutions (e.g. EIB, EBRD, and CEB).

In February 2018, the European Commission adopted its strategy for 'A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU cooperation with the Western Balkans' which has given a new impulse to accession perspectives.

Purpose and scope

This evaluation is a country level evaluation. It should therefore determine the extent to which the EU's cooperation with Serbia has contributed to the country's reform efforts and progress towards the strategic objective of preparing it to take on the obligations of EU membership, against the Copenhagen criteria and specifically the (1) Political criteria; (2) Economic criteria; (3) Preparation for the acquis.

The evaluation will assess the financial assistance provided by the European Commission as well as policy and multi-stakeholder dialogue it has been involved in.

Accession negotiations and high level political dialogue are not to be assessed within this evaluation; rather they are to be considered as part of the Enlargement policy framework against which the European Commission has provided financial assistance and policy and multi-stakeholder dialogue.

Temporal scope: considering that the European Council granted Serbia the status of candidate country in 2012, this evaluation will assess the performance of the European Union's cooperation with Serbia covering the period 2012 end 2018.

Geographic scope: Serbia.

B. Better regulation

Consultation of citizens and stakeholders

DG NEAR works with the EU Delegation to Serbia, relevant line DGs (e.g. AGRI, EMPL, REGIO, DEVCO, EAC, RTD) and the European External Action Service (EEAS) in its cooperation with Serbia. Staff from those institutions and services will therefore be consulted. Stakeholders to be consulted within this evaluation also include: Serbian national / local authorities and civil society representatives, the National IPA coordinator (NIPAC), and other members of the IPA Monitoring Committee, the media and other watchdog representatives, as well as other donors and actors (e.g. EU Member States, EIB, OECD SIGMA) which have contributed to the European Union's cooperation with Serbia.

Not being an evaluation in the sense of the Better Regulation guidelines as it does not refer to a major initiative, the present study will not develop an online open public consultation (OPC). Instead, consultations will be targeted and will be conducted via phone/email/face to face discussions and possibly through a survey. Field visits are also foreseen. Furthermore, this evaluation not being linked to legislative and non-legislative initiatives, delegated acts or implementing measures, no impact assessment is required.

Data collection and methodology

Data will be collected during the Inception, Desk and Field phases of the evaluation. The choice of consultation activities (e.g. face-to-face interviews, focus groups, survey) should allow for the collection of detailed data from a

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/instruments/multi-beneficiary-programme_en

broad sample of stakeholders, as well as for triangulation with data collected through desk research.

As per the Commission's 2015 Better Regulation guidelines on evaluations, evaluations are to be based on the best available evidence (factual, opinion based, etc.) drawn from a diverse and appropriate range of methods and sources (triangulation). The following sources of information are suggested:

- Strategic documents such Indicative Strategy Papers, Multi-annual Indicative and Planning Documents (MIPDs);
- Programming documents (Action documents, Decisions, Financing Agreements);
- Reporting documents, e.g. annual reports, European Court of Auditors reports, Results Oriented Monitoring reports, and evaluations at national, regional and strategic level;
- International sources of information and other relevant sources.