

### **EU membership is the foremost strategic foreign policy priority of the Republic of Serbia.**

EU is Serbia's most important trading and investment partner and, consequently, one of the major factors of its economic stability. Under Article 49 of the Treaty of the European Union, any European country that respects the set of values spelled out in its Article 2 (human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, rule of law and respect of human rights, including the rights of minorities) and which has committed itself to promoting them may apply for accession to the European Union. In Copenhagen, in 1993, the European Council (comprising representatives of EU Member States on the level of Heads of State or Government) complemented these criteria with the so-called «Copenhagen criteria» (political, economic and legal), which have been expanded by the Madrid criteria on relevant administrative capacities required for progressive and smooth EU integration. All these criteria were included in the 2009 Lisbon Treaty of the European Union and are part and parcel of the so-called *Acquis communautaire* (often shortened to *acquis*).

A country aspiring to become an EU member signs with the EU a bilateral Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA), governing relations between the two sides pending full EU membership.

**The Republic of Serbia signed the Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the EU on 29 April 2008 which, upon completion of the ratification process in the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, the Parliaments of EU Member States and the European Parliament, entered into force on 1 September 2013. It was granted EU candidate status on 1 March 2012, whereas the European Council Decision of 28 June 2013 on initiating accession negotiations with Serbia**, opened the most demanding phase of EU integration – membership negotiations, which imply full alignment with the EU system, values and legislation.

These negotiations are focused on conditions under which the candidate country will adopt, implement and carry out the *acquis communautaire*, divided into [35 theme chapters](#) .

The Government of the Republic of Serbia appointed Dr. Tanja Miscevic as the chief negotiator of the Republic of Serbia on accession to the European Union, at its meeting of 3 September 2013.

At the same time, the Government adopted a decision to create a Negotiating Team for the accession of Serbia to the EU, which will be responsible for coordinating and managing the process of negotiations, in line with the platform for negotiations to be set out by the Government.

More detailed information on EU enlargement is available at <http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement>.

### **1) [Chronology of relations between the Republic of Serbia and the European Union](#)**

### 2) Beginning of the negotiations with the European Union

The most important stage of the EU integration process begins at the moment of initiating membership negotiations, which is symbolically reflected in holding the First Intergovernmental Conference on the negotiations between the EU Member States, on the one hand, and the candidate country, on the other.

***Based on the application of the Republic of Serbia for EU membership filed on 22 December 2009, the European Commission recommended in its Progress Report on Serbia, submitted to the Luxembourg General Affairs and External Relations Council on 22 April 2013, the commencement of the accession negotiations with Serbia. The European Council decided on 20 December 2013 that the accession negotiations with Serbia be opened. The First Intergovernmental Conference took place on 21 January 2014, and the Negotiating Framework drafted by the European Commission was presented on the occasion.***

[Information concerning the process of negotiations for accession to the European Union](#)

### 3) EU Presidency

The EU Presidency alternates, on a rotating basis, between the Member States every six months. The Lisbon Treaty of 2009 introduced the concept of triple-shared Presidency, the so-called “Trio”. The Trio Presidency of the EU operates in such a way that the next three states to hold the EU Presidency in the following 18 months draft a joint programme.

The joint programme of the current “Trio” (Italy-Latvia-Luxembourg) was presented in June 2014 and the main goals set for the Presidency were working to resolve the economic and financial crisis and strengthen the European Economic and Monetary Union, enabling further integration, competitiveness and efficiency of the EU financial market, creation of new jobs, development of “Digital Europe”, etc. Italy opened the cycle of Trio Presidency by holding the EU Presidency from 1 July to 31 December 2014, when it was succeeded by Latvia.

Latvia currently holds the EU Presidency, which extends over the first half of 2015. On the eve of its Presidency, Latvia singled out priority activities aimed at improving competitiveness and economic growth, developing digital society in the EU, introducing electronic government, as well as the “Engaged Europe” agenda. The Presidency will focus on cooperation with the states of the Eastern Partnership and Central Asia, strengthening of trans-Atlantic relations, but also on continuation of the EU-US Free Trade Agreement preparation and promotion of relations with the BRICS countries and Japan.

For further information please consult: <https://eu2015.lv>

### 4) Cooperation with the European Parliament (EP)

Cooperation between the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia (NARS) and the European Parliament (EP) is being maintained through the EP Delegation for Relations with the

Countries of South-East Europe (SEE). Chairmanship of the Delegation is held by EPP group (Head of the Delegation is Slovakian MEP Eduard Kukan). Inter-parliamentary cooperation is also going on with EP groupings directly, including in the framework of sharing experiences between the relevant Committees on European Integration of Parliaments from the SEE region.

Meetings between the EP and the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia have taken place since 1994, but it was not before 2004 that they were formalized with the initiation of Inter-Parliamentary Dialogue meetings. In addition to the Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) and the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE), Serbia attaches great importance to the Western Balkan Group, established at the founding meeting of 6 October 2009.