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FOREWORD

A few weeks prior to Austria's assumption of the rotating EU presidency on 1 January 2006, the Centre for the Study of Global Governance (London School of Economics and Political Science) and the Center for European Integration Strategies (formerly the Association Bosnia and Herzegovina 2005) organised in cooperation with Renner-Institute a seminar in Vienna focusing on the EU's approach towards the Western Balkans. The main goal of that event was to provide analysis and advice to the incoming presidency on key issues of EU enlargement.

It is evident that Austria will have to address a number of issues important for the future of Europe during its EU presidency. Due to its geo-strategic position and its history, Austria is in a privileged position to act as a driver for a refocused enlargement, especially with regards to the future of the Western Balkans. As discussed during the seminar there is a need and a chance for Austria to present a pragmatic but innovative vision and strategy for the future of the Western Balkans in the framework of the EU and to demonstrate in this way its commitment to the Western Balkans also beyond the six-month Presidency.

The seminar provided a link between an international conference held in Geneva in October 2005 to mark the tenth anniversary of the Dayton peace accords and an ongoing initiative by the two organising partners to review developments within the EU and the Western Balkans as they unfold during the Austrian presidency as well as subsequent presidencies.

The Vienna seminar also employed a regional approach that treats the Western Balkans as Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina,



Serbia and Montenegro, Albania, and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia¹ – as a region facing similar challenges while also encompassing important differences. Based on that approach, the seminar:

- highlighted the successes and shortcomings of existing EU policies and mechanisms towards the Balkans affecting the region's politics, economics and security;
- suggested ways to refine the EU's policy instruments towards the region to enhance their effectiveness and impact on the ground;
- analysed the EU's future involvement in the Balkans as part of the broader transformation of the EU's external relations;
- identified the best modes of the EU's cooperation with other international actors in and towards the Balkans, especially considering the implications of the EU's growing role in the region.

This collaborative project employed an interdisciplinary approach and gathered academic researchers, political analysts, and experts from various backgrounds and countries. Four separate sessions covered specific topics in the following issue areas: borders and politics; reconstruction and development; society, culture, and education; and EU working methods. These four sessions were complemented by a final, comprehensive session in which findings from those sessions were summarised, contextualised, and put into a comprehen-

¹ An abbreviated form of the country's name, Macedonia, is used in the continuation in this publication.



sive policy framework. For each session the organisers produced short briefs as background papers for a discussion.

The Centre for the Study of Global Governance and the Center for European Integration Strategies are pleased to present the seminar proceedings, including background papers and the interventions of discussants, in this publication.

Vedran Dzihic and Christophe Solioz



INTRODUCTION

The start of negotiations to determine the final status of Kosovo; initiatives for constitutional reorganisation in Bosnia and Herzegovina; uncertainty over Serbia and Montenegro state union; the post-referendum stabilisation of Macedonia (FYROM); the consolidation of Albania's reform process and progression in accession and association negotiations – all these represent important challenges for the European Union (EU) both in its role as a political actor projecting stability to the region through its association and enlargement instruments, and as a security actor playing a growing stabilisation role on the ground. Importantly, this moment of change in the Western Balkans also represents a window of opportunity for the EU to develop a more focused, comprehensive and effective approach to the countries of the region.

The EU's expanding involvement in the Western Balkans and its political, financial and security commitment have contributed to the significant improvement in the political and security situation in the region. However, the progress that has been achieved is not yet irreversible. Parts of the region still remain a serious and credible source of instability with a potential to affect the entire region and to reverberate even more widely. The sources of instability have in fact multiplied and become even more complex over past years. What was once a predominantly ethnic issue is now combined with political, economic and social grievances, which cut across individual societies. In addition, the very process of European integration of the Balkan states is itself dividing the region into countries that have a credible prospect of accession within a half-decade (Croatia) and those whose membership