

Enlargement – Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia

Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH) were all (along with Croatia and FYR Macedonia) formed as a result of the break-up of Yugoslavia in the 1990s. All three countries border each other in the Western Balkans region and are considered 'potential candidate countries' for membership of the European Union. To join the EU, states must meet the measures of the EU's *Copenhagen Criteria*. All three countries have signed *Stabilisation and Association Agreements* (SAAs), and Montenegro and Serbia have both formally applied to join the EU.

Recent History

Bosnia-Herzegovina declared its independence from Yugoslavia in 1992, following a referendum. This break-up sparked conflict among the three large ethnic groups within the federation. Bosniaks and Croats generally favoured independence, whereas Bosnian Serbs, supported by the Serbian government, wished for a union with Serbia. Further conflict later erupted between the Croat statelet of Herzog-Bosnia and the Bosniaks. The wars lasted until the intervention of NATO and the signing of the Dayton Accords in 1995, by which time an estimated 100,000 people had been killed, many in acts of ethnic cleansing.

Under the Dayton Accords, BiH was administratively decentralised and divided into two entities, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska. Central government is *consociational*, with three rotating Presidents and set numbers of seats in both Houses of the Parliamentary Assembly for Croats, Bosniaks and Serbs.

After the dissolution of Yugoslavia, Serbia did maintain a federation with Montenegro. However, this gradually evolved into a looser relationship, and Montenegrins narrowly voted for independence in May 2006. Montenegro is now recognised as a separate nation by both Serbia and the EU. Much more problematic has been Serbia's relationship with Kosovo, which has a majority ethnic Albanian population (90 per cent) that favours independence from Serbia. Tensions resulting from Serb attempts to reduce Kosovo's autonomous status within Serbia erupted into violence in 1998, and only ended following a 78-day bombing campaign by NATO in spring 1999. Despite opposition from Serbia, Kosovo declared Independence from Serbia in February 2008, resulting in violence from Serbian protestors. The EU recognised Kosovo as a new country and, despite opposition from Russia, the EU deployed a *Rule of Law Mission* (EULEX) to police Kosovo's transition to Independence. President Boris Tadic of the Pro-EU Democratic Party was re-elected as Head of State in May 2008. The Serbian government is currently led by prime minister Mirko Cvetkovic, also of the Democratic Party. He has led a coalition with the nationalist Socialist Party since July 2008.

Issues concerning membership

BiH, Serbia and Montenegro, have all commenced efforts to become members of the EU. The EU began

talks with BiH at the Zagreb Summit in 2000, when a Road Map for reform was agreed. The EU subsequently agreed to open SAA talks in 1995; the same year it opened them with Serbia. Montenegro signed the SAA in 2007 and formally applied to join the EU in 2008.

Bosnia-Herzegovina's government is currently restricted by the terms of the Dayton Accords. Although it is slowly taking on more responsibility, the national government remains fractured and reform has recently stagnated. In March 2007, the EU Enlargement Commissioner, Olli Rehn, said the EU would not consider closer ties with Bosnia unless it takes steps to reform the police and judicial system, and cooperate with the UN War Crimes Tribunal. However, Bosnia is slowly taking on more responsibility, for example a police reform bill was passed in 2008, and Bosnia signed the SAA in the same year.

Serbia faced similar problems over its opposition to Kosovo's Independence and its failure to arrest suspected war criminal General Ratko Mladić; an issue that led to the suspension of its SAA negotiations in 2006. However the arrest of Radovan Karadzic - a second suspected war criminal - in 2008 was seen as important progress and Serbia signed a SAA with the EU in April 2008.

Facts and Figures

- The EU currently has a 6,500 strong peacekeeping force (Eufor) in BiH, and a 1,500 strong police and justice mission in Kosovo.
- The EU has donated €6.8 billion in aid to the Western Balkans region since 1991 and a Western Balkans Investment Framework was launched in 2009.

Quotes

'You [Serbia-Montenegro] are a European country, you should have a European future.' – Jose Manuel Barroso, EU Commission President, Belgrade, 2006

'If the UN Security Council fails to pass a resolution [on Kosovo], we risk instability and even chaos in the Balkans.' – Olli Rehn, EU Enlargement Commissioner, March 2007

Technical Terms

Consociation: Arrangement in which various groups within a country or region, share power according to an agreed formula or mechanism.

Stabilisation and Association Agreement: A strategy to prepare countries for membership negotiations with the EU. SAAs typically offer the incentive of free trade in exchange for commitments to political, economic, trade or human rights reform.

Copenhagen Criteria: Rules set down in the 2002 Copenhagen Accords that must be met before a country can join the EU.

Links

- http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/index_en.htm
- <http://www.euractiv.com/en/enlargement>
- http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/country_profiles/default.stm