



CFSP

and Serbian Accession
to the European Union

ISAC'S CFSP POLICY OPINION

No 1 / September 2015

Rebecca Harms,

Member of the European Parliament

Alliance '90/The Greens,

Chair of the Greens–European Free Alliance Parliamentary Group

On Serbia's accession to the European Union

First of all, I would like to underline that, from my perspective, I am a German member of the European Parliament, representing Green European fraction, from my perspective it is good that you underline that the idea of the membership in the EU is Serbian idea. And that there is still strong commitment to achieve it. So, based on the experiences from the last 10 years, I think on both sides, on those negotiations, if they are opened in the future, we need true commitment. And for the European side, I dare to say, even if representing only a small political group in the European Parliament, which is not the most powerful institution, when it comes to foreign affairs in Brussels, the EU Europeans during the last 5 years at least maybe, took it a bit too easy what is going on with negotiations and preparations, especially of negotiations and what was going on in their neighbourhood in the Balkans, and also in the Eastern neighbourhood in between EU and Russia.

On the position of the citizens' of European Union, but also the EU itself, on the neighbouring regions and accession processes of some of the countries in those regions

Due to all the internal problems created by the Euro crisis and what came after, I think the Europeans in Brussels and in the member states, were mainly busy with themselves. And it took several steps, several experiences with catastrophic developments in the direct neighbourhood – south of the Mediterranean or the East – before people in Brussels came back and said: "Yes, we have to take care; we have to take better care of our neighbourhood, we have

to take responsibility in our neighbourhood because otherwise we will suffer from instability from maybe failed states and we will have even more problems that we have now. The security situation in the neighbouring regions has really changed and therefore it is really very important that the EU comes up with clearer and better profiled idea of what European neighbouring policy means. We need more tailored-made approaches and for sure the south of Mediterranean, the MENA countries for example, are different in their requirements. So are possibly also Balkan countries and for sure the situation is completely different in the East.

On the place of Russia in these relations between EU and candidate states in the EU neighbourhood

Here we come to Russia, and I am like Carl Bildt in this regard, so among those who are very outspoken on the fact that something has changed since a while ago already in Russia and that EU has not taken serious enough changes. This does not mean that what we did in Ukraine was completely wrong, we just did not take good enough care. But the Association Agreement with Ukraine, for example, was not forced by the European side to Ukraine. I would even dare to say the opposite. Without a very strong citizens' movements which their Euromaidan movement is until today, EU would never ever have signed the Association Agreement, not even after Yanukovich left Ukraine and went to Russia.

On foreign policy of Serbia have in the light of European integrations

As for Serbia, I think it means a lot that the EU decided so far to protect the right of self-determination, and to protect the rest of the peace or the European continent against a new foreign strategy by Russia.

So, there is so far a great strategy by the EU based on sanctions which nobody loves, but which are the only instrument if we do not want military aggression. So, sanctions and dialogue should be followed by those who want to be with the EU. And I am very astonished that I hear here in Belgrade again and again, not only about special relations with Russia, because this is normal all over the East and in the South-East of the continent, but that I meet kind of belief that Russia is coming closer to Belgrade right now, because they are special friends of Serbs. So I think they have a special interest in Belgrade against EU, to be very outspoken, because I am not a diplomat, I am a politician. My perspective is Russia sees Belgrade as a kind of outpost. People in Serbia believe that deepening energy dependence with Russia means better perspectives for economic development in Serbia. I think, on this again quite opposite is right, and if I would be a citizen in Belgrade, I would do everything to escape from a deeper integration especially with energy with Russia.

On Serbia's relations with Russia in the future

Look at the example of the countries in the direct neighbourhood with Russia. They are easy victims for Russia, since they depend a lot on resources, energy resources from Russia. So if I would be interested in better democratic development in Serbia, if I would be interested in how to overcome the corruption, I would do everything to escape more influence from old thinking via the comeback of the so-called special relationship between Serbia and Russia. As I am still remembering the times of war in the 90s in this region of Europe, I am still convinced that there is even special responsibility among the Europeans for this region of Europe to be taken up and not to be forgotten. The European integration, also the economic integration, was always intending to achieve peace and security. So applying experiences from European integration since the 50s of last century, to this situation is the best we can do for the Balkans and for Serbia.

This Policy Opinion is based on the Ms. Harms' presentation on the Conference "CFSP and Serbian Accession to the European Union", 20 May 2015 in Belgrade