

## Online discussion

### Bringing citizens into the fold: Making EU enlargement work in the (post) Covid 19 world

18 May 2021, 11h00-12h15 via Zoom

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The Western Balkans' pathway towards EU membership faces a major risk of lasting derailment owing to the Covid-19 crisis. The social crisis generated by the pandemic may end up fuelling identity politics, exacerbating populism and strengthening anti-European forces, thereby disrupting the Union's project of continental integration in the long term.

However, as with every major crisis, the pandemic offers an opportunity to rethink priorities and design innovative solutions. One of these could be to recentre the EU's approach around strengthening societal support for a comprehensive reform of current state structures. How can the EU better include citizens in its reformed approach towards the region? How can it serve as a stronger source of inspiration? And how can it build support for enlargement among the citizens of the Member States in the pursuit of a common future?

This online discussion will build on [concrete proposals prepared by the Weimar Plus Working Group on the Western Balkans](#) and discuss with the audience ways to better include citizens in the accession process and make transformation more effective.

#### Introduction

**Theresia Töglhofer**, Genshagen Foundation

#### Discussion

**Vedran Džihić**, Austrian Institute for International Politics, Vienna

**Lura Pollozhani**, Stella Network, Skopje

**Marta Szpala**, Centre for Eastern Studies, Warsaw

#### Moderation

**Florent Marciacq**, Austro-French Centre for Rapprochement in Europe & Centre international de formation européenne

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