

Report

The Social Dimension of EU Enlargement Chapter 19 and its impact on social & employment policy reform

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In its recently published new “Western Balkans Strategy” the European Commission underlines that the European Union has a credible enlargement perspective for the Western Balkan countries and wants to enhance its engagement with the region. As particularly promising possible EU member countries, Montenegro and the Republic of Serbia have been highlighted.



The delegation at the EESC with Andrej Zorko

The focus of this dialogue programme was therefore to discuss the social implications and dimensions of the enlargement process in the Western Balkans.



Marco Schwarz (FES) with Tanja Fajon MEP

Chapter 19 of the enlargement negotiations termed “Social policy and employment” is of particular interest in this regard. This chapter regulates minimum standards in the areas of labour law, equality, health and safety at work as well as anti-discrimination.

For this reason, the EU Office of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung has invited a delegation of five different trade unions from Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia to Brussels to make their voices and concerns heard in relevant EU institutions.



Christiane Westphal (DG EMPL) with delegates Kol Nikollaj and Anisa Subashi (KSSH Albania)

Meetings were arranged with MEP Tanja Fajon, Christiane Westphal (European Commission), Józef Niemiec (European Trade Union Confederation), Anton Lepik (International Trade Union Confederation), as well as, Andrej Zorko (European Economic and Social Committee).

The fruitful discussions underscored the EU's interest in the region but also revealed numerous challenges and obstacles on the way to full EU integration of

Western Balkan countries. In particular, the social dimension of EU enlargement must be thoroughly considered and examined and, ultimately, paid substantial attention to.



Delegates Biljana Pejovic and Ivan Pavicevic representing the Confederation of Autonomous Trade Unions Serbia (CATUS)

The active involvement of civil society in EU accession negotiations, and therefore also the participation of trade unions, is indispensable for a successful, balanced and inclusive integration process. This dialogue programme has shown that a reinforced emphasis must be put on good working conditions, improved living standards and effective protection of worker's and employees' rights in the Western Balkans.