

## The EU Accession Process

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## When did Serbia's Accession to the EU begin?

- Thessaloniki 2003, European Council Summit
- Negotiations launched for **Stabilisation and Association Agreement** 2005
- Recommended in 2007
- Finalised in 2008
- First thing therefore –the need to achieve agreement in the EU that Serbia is a potential partner for negotiation

## Implementation of Stabilisation and Association Agreement

- 2010 Ratification process started
- 2011 (January) Serbia completes European Commission Questionnaire
- 2011 (October) Candidate country status awarded
- 2013 (September) entry into force of Stabilisation and Association Agreement
- So what has been agreed?

## Copenhagen Criteria (1993)

- That Serbia has: -
- Stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities;
- A functioning market economy and the capacity to cope with competition and market forces in the EU;
- The ability to take on and implement effectively the obligations of membership, including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union.

## Principles of Stabilisation and Association Agreement

- Contractual relationships:
- Trade relations;
- Financial assistance;
- Regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations.

## Two Key Steps

- 2013 (December) European Council adopted the negotiating framework with Serbia
- 2014 (January) 1st EU-Serbia Intergovernmental Conference held
- Progress Report available at: -
- [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key\\_documents/2014/20140108-serbia-progress-report\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2014/20140108-serbia-progress-report_en.pdf)

## What happens next?

- **Screening** – the Commission carries out a detailed examination, together with the candidate country, of each policy field (chapter), to determine how well the country is prepared. The findings by chapter are presented by the Commission to the Member States in the form of a screening report. The conclusion of this report is a recommendation of the Commission to either open negotiations directly or to require that certain conditions – **opening benchmarks** - should first be met.
- **Negotiating positions** – before negotiations can start, the candidate country must submit its position and the EU must adopt a common position. For most chapters the EU will set closing benchmarks in this position which need to be met by the Candidate Country before negotiations in the policy field concerned can be closed.

## Final steps

- **Closing the chapters** No negotiations on any individual chapter are closed until every EU government is satisfied with the candidate's progress in that policy field, as analysed by the Commission. And the whole negotiation process is only concluded definitively once every chapter has been closed.
- **Accession Treaty** This is the document that cements the country's membership of the EU. It contains the detailed terms and conditions of membership, all transitional arrangements and deadlines, as well as details of financial arrangements and any safeguard clauses.
- It is not final and binding until it:
  - wins the **support** of the EU Council, the Commission, and the European Parliament
  - is **signed** by the candidate country and representatives of all existing EU countries
  - is **ratified** by the candidate country and every individual EU country, according to their constitutional rules (parliamentary vote, referendum, etc.).
- **Acceding country** Once the treaty is signed, however, the candidate becomes an **acceding country**. This means it is expected to become a full EU member on the date laid down in the treaty, providing the treaty has been ratified.