

Conference

STRATEGIC AUTONOMY UNDER PRESSURE: CAN THE EUROPEAN UNION ENLARGE IN TIMES OF INTERNAL TRANSFORMATION?

Wednesday, 11 March 2026

College of Europe in Tirana, Godina Liria Building (Aula Magna)

Agenda

08:30 – 09:00	Registration
09:00 – 09:15	Opening and introductory session Igor Vidačak, Director of Studies, ETI Department, College of Europe Ewa Ośniecka-Tamecka, Rector of the College of Europe
09:15 – 11:00	Panel 1: Strategic Autonomy as Internal Transformation: What is the EU Becoming? Moderator: Jelena Džankić , Programme Director, Widening Europe Programme, European University Institute Nikolaos Tzifakis , Professor, University of the Peloponnese <i>The EU's ontological security and its evolving normative role: The centrality of enlargement for its strategic autonomy</i> Simon Schunz , Resident Professor, College of Europe in Bruges <i>From the European Green Deal to the Competitiveness Compass and Clean Industrial Deal: Implications of the EU's Internal Regulatory Shift for Candidate Countries</i> Damir Kapidžić , Professor, University of Sarajevo <i>What is Democracy for the EU? The Impact of Internal Inconsistencies on Illiberal Governance in the Western Balkans</i> Nadan Petrović , Professor, University of Rome-La Sapienza <i>Managing Migration as an Institutional Challenge: EU Internal Governance Gaps and Their Externalisation to the Western Balkans</i>

Note: This agenda may be subject to change.

	Odeta Barbullushi , Resident Professor, College of Europe in Tirana <i>Western Balkans Responses to Growing Transatlantic Rift: Strategic Choices, Diversification and Change</i>
11:00 – 11:15	Coffee break/refreshments
11:15 – 13:00	<p>Panel 2: Strategic Autonomy and Enlargement: Can the EU Integrate the Western Balkans?</p> <p>Moderator: Marika Djolai, Visiting Research Fellow, University of the Peloponnese</p> <p>Christophe Hillion, Professor, University of Oslo <i>EU Enlargement and Geopolitics: Scenarios and Models for Integrating the Western Balkans</i></p> <p>Steven Blockmans, Senior Research Fellow, CEPS <i>Gradual Integration: Opportunities, Risks and Threats</i></p> <p>David Phinnemore, Professor, Queen’s University of Belfast <i>Who Decides Enlargement? Domestic Ratification, Public Opinion, and the Politicisation of EU Integration</i></p> <p>Will Bartlett, Research affiliate, London School of Economics and Political Science <i>Economic Integration without Membership? Special Economic Zones and the Limits of Single Market Alignment</i></p> <p>Alba Cela, Executive Director, Albanian Institute for International Studies <i>Strategic Autonomy: What can the WB contribute to EU’s Defence, Crisis Management and Resilience</i></p>
13:00-13:45	Lunch break
13:45-15:00	<p>Panel 3: Enlargement from Below: Youth Engagement and Societal Support as Essential Components of EU Integration Capacity</p> <p>Moderator: Tara Miler, Student, College of Europe in Tirana</p> <p>Ema Mecaj, UN Youth Delegate of Albania to the UN, YEA <i>Rebuilding Trust in European Integration through Intergenerational Dialogue</i></p> <p>Bojana Lalatovic, Local Programme Officer, RYCO <i>Inclusive Integration Process and Engagement of Marginalised Youth in the Enlargement Process and Youth Organisations and their Involvement in the Promotion of EU Values</i></p> <p>Aleksandar Karatosho, Student, College of Europe in Tirana <i>Youth Perceptions on North Macedonia’s EU Accession and Initiatives to Promote EU Values</i></p>
15:00	End of the conference

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