

INTRODUCTION

The present book on Economic Integrations, Competition, and Cooperation is part of a long lasting activity related to the efforts of researching of the theoretical, institutional, and business related topics characterizing the processes of the EU enlargement and deepening. All research and other efforts in this area are biannually presented at the International Conference, which covered in the year 2013 the specific issues of the Accession of the Western Balkan countries to the European Union. Based on conference's presentations and debates, the book contains selection of revised and adjusted conference's papers. The book structure contains articles divided into nine parts. The first part covers the theory and practice of economic integration and the last one is a summing up of the achievements prepared by students who are part of the Doctoral Students from Central and South-east Europe PhD Network (CESEENET). The other parts are ranging from theoretical topics to practical issues of the EU integration or accession impacts.

As in the past the number of conference participants and of the papers presented was impressive and the book contains the most suggestive selection of them. By the years participants at the conference and the co-organizers of the event were increasing in their numbers. In 2013 the co-organizers were coming from the Western Balkan Region and from other parts of the EU and Europe. Thirteen institutions joint their interests and efforts to make the Conference a success and to prepare selection of the papers to be published in this book.

Beside theoretical and practical analyses focusing on the economic impacts of different forms of economic integration a special interest for book's readers might have the parts related to the specific position and accession impacts developed in the Western Balkan (WB) region states. Among other interesting and challenging parts related to the book is worth to mention that the Part VI contains articles presented and published in the French language only.

The scope of the book studying and presenting problems and achievements together with theoretical and practical impacts created through the EU enlargement and deepening processes is in fact highly adequate in the period of the EU post economic crisis environment combined with new visions and constellations of the EU developments in

the future. The expected enlargement of the EU is generally appreciated among WB nations. But on the other side the (too) long period of accession activities, is increasing different concerns and potential negative attitudes towards the future membership in the EU.

Generally the enlargement fatigue is not strong yet neither on the EU or on the potential candidate sides. New accessions agreements with Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova were set to sign the economic sections of association agreements with the European Union on June 27, 2014. The EU enlarging concepts are evidently no longer limited to WB countries and Turkey only. Understanding the specifics of the WB countries interests, problems, and perspectives in the process of the EU enlargement is becoming more and more important. New accession agreements could not be as effective as they could and needed to be if the old agreements signed with WB countries will not create more evident results rather shortly. The articles collected in the book give a lot of specific topics and arguments necessary to make accession of the WB countries more effective and acceptable. Better and broader understanding of the past and present accession impacts on to the WB countries is important from historic and practical economic perspective.

At the Thessaloniki Summit in 2003, the EU granted all countries of the WB a clear perspective of EU membership, subject to fulfilment of the necessary conditions, in particular the Copenhagen criteria and the conditions of the Stabilization and Association Process (SAP). Following such general EU membership perspective developments of more than last 10 years created formal and practical differences between WB countries and by that of potential time needed to successfully conclude the accession requirements by the individual candidate. In spite of differences among WB countries it is safe to say that the actual accession for any of them is still only a very remote possibility. Uncertainty leads to a decreasing accession interest, especially in those countries that are faced with most severe internal problems, like in case of B&H, or with internal and external political uncertainties, like in Kosovo. The EU has defined conditions as well as a process to guide and assist potential candidate countries and candidate countries in preparing for the EU membership. The papers collected in the book shade additional light and information on the understanding of the accession process from the local perspective. Even theoretical explanations and models used are better used by connecting them to the actual problems and expectations created among the people of the region.

The papers present valuable and continuous effort of developing and spreading the new knowledge about the positive and potentially negative sides of the accession process and later of the membership impacts. Research developed among scholars and practitioners in

the WB region, resulting in the publication of the findings, importantly increases the general level of the needed knowledge and information that is relevant for the future successful finalization of the EU enlargement process in the WB region.

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INTEGRATION