

# **EU internal security policies in the Western Balkans: analysing the intersection between enlargement and civilian crisis management**

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*Paper presented to the 11<sup>th</sup> Biennial International Conference of the European Union*

*Studies Association, 23-25 April 2009, Los Angeles, USA*

Draft, comments and suggestions most welcome.

## **Abstract**

This paper analyses the EU's strategy and foreign policy toolbox for engaging the Western Balkan countries in achieving its goals in the area of justice and home affairs (JHA). It argues that the EU involves the Western Balkan countries in a dual-track strategy. By providing them with the prospect of future membership, the EU has initiated a pre-accession process which aims not only at strengthening cooperation in the JHA field but at gradually transforming these states into full-fledged member states that are capable of participating themselves in the European area of freedom, security and justice. EU external governance within the Stabilisation and Association Process is guided by a strategy of rule transfer based on conditionality, where network governance acts as a complement rather than a replacement for governance by conditionality. In addition, the EU has deployed ESDP police and rule of law missions in order to achieve its internal security objectives in those Western Balkan countries where the JHA-related activities of the Stabilisation and Association Process were deemed insufficient (Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo). The paper concludes by arguing that EU cooperation in justice and home affairs vis-à-vis these countries has become one of the driving forces of the EU's overall foreign policy engagement in the region.

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## Introduction

Based on the understanding that the internal security of the European Union can be enhanced if EU internal security problems are tackled at their external (extra-EU) origin, the Western Balkans have become a prime target of EU external action in justice and home affairs (JHA). With Bulgaria and Romania joining the EU on 1 January 2007 the Western Balkans – a term used to comprise the South-Eastern European states Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Macedonia and Albania – are entirely surrounded by EU member states. These states have particularly close relations with the EU, since they are, together with Turkey, the remaining European countries to which the EU provided the prospect of eventual membership. At the same time, however, the region has remained an area of concern for the EU. Some of these countries are politically unstable and plagued with war legacies and a political climate in which organised crime, corruption, irregular migration and trafficking in human beings could flourish. Tackling these security challenges has become a priority area for the EU, also with a view to realize the area of freedom, security and justice within the EU. The present paper will elaborate on the EU's relations with the Western Balkans in the area of internal security policies, focusing on two major questions: What are the objectives that the EU seeks to achieve in its justice and home affairs cooperation vis-à-vis the Western Balkans? And what foreign policy tools does the EU use to engage these countries in achieving its goals in the area of justice and home affairs?

The research proceeds by first analyzing the EU internal security objectives in this Southeast European regional setting. The paper then elaborates on the “modes of external governance” (Lavenex/Wichmann, 2009; Lavenex, 2004) through which the EU has sought to involve the Western Balkan countries in achieving these objectives. Although a focus is placed on the major framework of cooperation between the EU and the Western Balkans, that is the Stabilization and Association Process (SAP) as the EU's pre-accession framework, the paper also takes into consideration the role of other EU tools in the region, particularly civilian crisis management operations under the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP). Although formally separated in the EU's pillar structure, the JHA external dimension and ESDP civilian crisis management operations share more similarities than they appear to at first glance, such as for example the common “functional frame” of protecting EU internal security (Mournier, 2009). Also, Karen E. Smith proposed to consider the EU justice and home affairs policies as a “policy universe” which comprises issues “that are dealt with at

the EU level under a variety of different institutional set-ups (first pillar, second pillar, and remnants of the third pillar) – and across of them” (Smith, 2009: 3). She rightfully pointed out that some JHA issues, such as the fight against terrorism, have traditionally been dealt with by foreign ministers within the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy (Ibid). The question then is to what extent are these second-pillar instruments actually used for achieving EU goals in the area of justice and home affairs abroad? What is the relationship between ESDP civilian missions dispatched to the Western Balkans and JHA-related activities of the Stabilisation and Association Process? Having these questions in mind, the overall objective of the analysis is to elaborate whether or not an “EU JHA foreign policy” (panel outline) is indeed being realized in the Western Balkans and if yes, what are the concrete features that characterize this policy.

## **The EU internal security objectives for the Western Balkans**

In the 1990s, the EU’s crisis management and conflict prevention activities fell short of preventing the outburst and escalation of wars in the former Yugoslavia. When in 1998/9 the Kosovo crisis invoked a new round of hostilities in the region, the EU accepted that its existing strategy was insufficient to achieve the primary objectives as defined, i.e. the stabilisation of the region and the establishment of good neighbourly relations among these states. After the 1999 Kosovo war, the EU developed a substantially more ambitious strategy for the Western Balkans. These non-member states of Southeastern Europe should be guided in their transformation into “into stable, self-sufficient democracies, at peace with themselves and each other, with market economy and the rule of law, and which will either be members of the EU or in the road to membership” (quoted in Elbasani, 2008: 1). To achieve this objective, the EU decided to apply its most successful foreign policy instrument, i.e. the incentive of membership. In May 1999, the EU launched the Stabilisation and Association Process as its regional pre-accession strategy and provided these countries with the status of “potential candidate for EU membership” (European Council, 2000: point 67).

The policy field of justice and home affairs is for two reasons of particular relevance in the context of the Stabilisation and Association Process. First, the creation of effective and accountable state institutions in the policy domain was considered a key to advancing stability and prosperity in the region. Weak statehood is a common feature present throughout the Western Balkans, despite considerable variation between the countries (Anastasakis/Bechev,

2003). The JHA-related problems in this respect have been manifold including “non-existing or rather weak, non-professional and corrupt security forces, an inefficient and overly politicised judiciary, weak borders without efficient border controls and no professional and specialised anti-trafficking forces that could prohibit illegal migration and trans-border crime activities” (Luif/Riegler, 2006: 7). The EU’s interest was therefore to assist these states in improving their border control systems, creating an institutional and legislative framework in asylum and migration, training the police and establishing an efficient and independent judiciary.

Whereas the first strategic interest of the EU has been to improve the situation *in* the Balkans, the second concerned the prevention of insecurity spillovers *from* the region. Among the biggest security concerns for the EU has been the influx of irregular migrants from or through the region. While some parts of the region are themselves a source of illegal immigration into the EU, in particular Albanians and Kosovars, the problem relates mostly to the fact that the region is being used by local criminal gangs as a transit route for illegal immigrants coming from other regions, such as the Middle East or China (Schelter, 2003: 7). Most often, the illegal migration is operated by criminal groups and organised crime. The fight against organised crime has been the most salient JHA issue area of the EU-Western Balkan relations. “Organised crime is a real obstacle to democratic stability, sound and accountable institutions, the rule of law and economic development in the Western Balkans and a source of grave concern for the EU” (Council of the European Union, 2003b: 1). A particular reference to organised crime from the region was made in the European Security Strategy (ESS). It stated that Balkan criminal networks are responsible for the traffic of most of the heroin seized in the EU and also “for some 200,000 of the 700,000 women victims of the sex trade world wide” (European Security Strategy, 2003: 5).<sup>2</sup> The combat of arms trafficking and the prevention of radicalisation and recruitment for terrorist activities are additional priority JHA areas for the EU; however, they are overshadowed by the concern to control irregular migration and fight organised crime. The EU holds, however, that there are potential links between organised crime and terrorism in the region, in particular with regard to drug related crime, indirect financing of terrorism and arms and explosive supply (Council of the European Union, 2005c: 5).

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<sup>2</sup> The strategy listed organised crime as one of the five “key threats” to the EU.

The Stabilisation and Association Process pursues the threefold objective of stabilisation, transformation and European integration. The EU's regional pre-accession strategy builds upon the experiences of previous enlargements, but differs in some aspects from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). "While in the CEE the phases of stabilisation, transition and integration indeed overlapped, they did basically follow one another. In the Western Balkans, EU integration is a *condition* of stabilisation, rather than the other way round" (Batt, 2004: 19). European integration is one of the rare political objectives that is shared across ethnic and political dividing lines and that helps reform and stabilise the political environment. Still, the EU believes that in certain cases the pre-accession strategy is not sufficient in terms of managing a situation of crisis and securing post-conflict stabilisation. The Western Balkans is a heterogeneous region. While some countries, in particular Croatia, are well-advanced in terms of EU integration, others lag behind and struggle with war legacies and unresolved status issues, most notably Kosovo's bid for independence and Serbia's determined opposition against it. The EU considers Kosovo to be a key to stabilising the region in general and to achieving the strategic objectives in JHA in South-Eastern Europe in particular. So far, numerous fundamental democratic and security issues are insufficiently addressed in Kosovo. Criminal networks managed to benefit from Kosovo's unresolved status issue and from the uncertainty that comes along the unclear and disputed political configuration (Montanaro-Jankovski, 2005: 6-7). Also, Bosnia and Herzegovina has faced difficulties in becoming a viable state since the 1995 Dayton peace agreement. Political leaders from all the constituent peoples, most frequently from the Republika Srpska, apply a strong nationalist rhetoric and challenge the constitutional order of Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>3</sup> It is still questionable whether Bosnia is able to stand alone, that is, without international presence. The political landscape in the Balkans has remained volatile and unstable, regardless of the fact that a major conflict is improbable in the foreseeable future.

In brief, the stability of the region is closely linked to that of the EU. The EU has developed the understanding that if it does not succeed in stabilising, transforming and integrating these countries, it risks importing various types of instability, in particular through irregular migration and organised crime. Chris Patten, the former EU Commissioner for External Relations, expressed the EU's strategic interest in one sentence: "The choice for us in this

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<sup>3</sup> Following Kosovo's declaration of independence, the national assembly of the Republika Srpska adopted a resolution which condemned the step and announced that the Republika Srpska may also seek a referendum of independence if Kosovo is recognised by a majority of EU and UN member states (Commission of the European Communities, 2008a: 7).

case is very clear: either we export stability to the Balkans, or the Balkans export instability to us” (Patten, 2002).

## **The modes of EU external governance within the Stabilisation and Association Process**

In the context of the Eastern Enlargement, a rich body of literature emerged seeking to theorize how the EU can make candidate countries comply with its internal rules and policies (for an overview, see Sedelmeier, 2006). The rational institutionalist argument proved to have particularly strong explanatory power by emphasizing that adherence to EU rules prior to accession is mainly driven by rational cost-benefit calculations and actors in pursuit of maximising their own power (Schimmelfennig/Sedelmeier, 2004; Dimitrova, 2002; Grabbe, 2003; Vachudova, 2005). The crucial mechanism employed by the EU to make candidate countries accept its rules is the use of conditionality, meaning that the EU sets its rules as conditions which the applicant country has to fulfil in order to receive rewards (see Schimmelfennig et al., 2003: 496f). Looking beyond the Eastern Enlargement and focusing on the EU’s Wider Europe initiative for the Eastern and Southern European neighbours, Sandra Lavenex (2004) conceptualised the continuing process of extending parts of the *acquis communautaire* to neighbouring countries as “EU external governance”. The expansion of the EU’s legal order beyond the institutional and territorial boundaries of the Union is presented as a strategic attempt to gain control over policy developments in third countries through a process of external governance. Thereby, EU external governance mainly takes place in soft security issues, such as environmental and energy policies and justice and home affairs. In these policy realms, internal and foreign policy goals have come together because “rule-extension towards non-member states may follow functional needs when it is seen to increase the efficiency and problem-solving capacity of internal policies” (Ibid, 2004: 681).

Based on further empirical research, Sandra Lavenex and Nicole Wichmann (2009) proposed a refined concept on the “external governance of EU internal security”. By analysing the dynamics of the European Neighbourhood Policy they suggest looking at the role of transgovernmental networks in replacing more hierarchical modes of policy transfer in the JHA field. Drawing on the earlier work of Anne-Marie Slaughter, the scholars distinguish between three types of networks, namely information networks, implementation networks and regulatory networks (Lavenex/Wichmann, 2009: 85-86). The extension of established EU

transgovernmental networks to neighbouring countries is seen as an alternative form of external governance, since external governance by conditionality presupposes the existence of a clear supranational *acquis* and strong external incentives on parts of the Union - two factors which are not necessarily in place in the JHA *acquis* and the European Neighbourhood Policy, respectively. The empirical analysis of these assumptions made the scholars conclude that extended network governance might be a “vehicle for policy transfer through ‘softer means’” (Ibid: 83).

Contrary to their area of interest, the European Neighbourhood Policy, the EU enjoys in the Western Balkans the leverage that derives from the incentive of future membership. It makes a major difference in the day-to-day interactions whether or not the EU cooperates in the field of justice and home affairs with a third country that has the prospect to become a future member state.<sup>4</sup> This section argues that the external governance of EU internal security for the Western Balkans is guided by a strategy of rule transfer based on conditionality. The network governance as proposed by Sandra Lavenex and Nicole Wichmann is also of relevance in the regional setting of the Western Balkans, yet rather as a complement than a replacement of the EU’s governance by conditionality. The establishment of operational cooperation between the EU and the Western Balkans is framed as an integral requirement of the Stabilisation and Association Process and as a pre-condition to prepare for membership, a point which is well reflected in the EU’s external JHA strategy of December 2005:

The prospect of enlargement is an effective way to align with EU standards in justice and home affairs in candidate countries and those with a European perspective, both through the adoption and implementation of the *acquis* and through improvements in operational contacts and co-operation (Council of the European Union, 2005c: 6).

### ***The importance of governance by conditionality...***

When the European Union initiated its regional pre-accession strategy, it defined that conditionality shall be “the cement of the Stabilisation and Association process” (Council of the European Union, 2001b: Point III). Providing them with the status of potential candidate countries for EU membership, the EU maintained that the progress of each Western Balkan country in the step-by-step process towards eventual EU membership should depend on the respective performance in terms of meeting the 1993 Copenhagen criteria and other country-

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<sup>4</sup> Confidential interview, European Commission, DG Justice, Liberty, Security, 18 March 2009.

specific conditions. So far, only Croatia and Macedonia have managed to shift their status from potential to real candidate countries in June 2004 and December 2005, respectively. In its judgments whether or not a country qualifies for the next stage of the EU accession process, the EU has placed the strongest emphasis on the issue of delivering war crime suspects to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). Still, some JHA-related requirements such as the reform of the police and the justice system and the fight against organised crime have ranked high in the EU's assessments. The lack of progress in police reform, for instance, was one of the reasons why the EU refrained for some years from signing a Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) with Bosnia and Herzegovina (see detailed next section). These agreements are at the centrepiece of the Stabilisation and Association Process and establish a formal contractual relationship with the Union over the transitional period considered necessary to adopt core EU standards and rules (Pippan, 2004: 233-238). Each SAA involves a specific title on justice and home affairs, which provides for intense cooperation on issues such as preventing and combating crime and other illegal activities, migration and asylum, money laundering and illicit drugs.<sup>5</sup>

In view of the European perspective, the Western Balkan states are expected to progressively come closer to the relevant *acquis* and to initiate comprehensive reform programmes for the police, border guards and justice system, among others. The EU has encouraged the Western Balkan states to place a particular emphasis on four priority areas (police, public order and organised crime; integrated border management; judiciary reform; and asylum and migration) and to fight all forms of trafficking - human beings in particular - as well as the smuggling of drugs, arms and goods (Council of the European Union, 2003a: 2). The specific priorities in the field have differed, however, and are defined for each country in so-called European or Accession Partnerships.<sup>6</sup> The progress of the countries towards implementing the short- and medium-term priorities of the Partnerships is monitored by the European Commission, which publishes the results in annual country Progress Reports. The Council of the EU can provide further guidance in the EU-Western Balkans JHA ministerial meeting, usually conducted once a year, and through initiatives of the rotating presidencies. In November 2002, the EU invited the Western Balkans to a conference on organised crime in Southeastern Europe. The London

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<sup>5</sup> Macedonia was the first to sign such an agreement, in April 2001, quickly followed by Croatia (October 2001). The other states signed the SAA in more recent years (Albania in June 2006, Montenegro in October 2007, Serbia in April 2008 and Bosnia and Herzegovina in June 2008).

<sup>6</sup> Due to their advanced status, Croatia and Macedonia were provided with Accession Partnerships. The major difference between a European and an Accession Partnership is that the latter is structured according to *acquis* chapters, not according to short- and medium-term priorities.

Statement set out a “joint commitment” to defeating organised crime in Southeastern Europe and committed the Western Balkans to individually submit records of achievements (The London Statement, 2002). The focus on organised crime was further strengthened at the EU-Western Balkan summit in Thessaloniki in June 2003. Under the heading “Fighting organised Crime. Co-operation in other Justice and Home Affairs matters”, the Thessaloniki agenda emphasised the growing importance of JHA matters in EU-Western Balkans relations. The document “urged the countries of the region to define and implement further specific action-oriented measures to be pursued in the immediate future” (Council of the European Union, 2003d). These action-oriented measures were presented by each Western Balkan state at subsequent JHA ministerial meetings, the first of which was held in November 2003. Under the Austrian presidency in 2006, the Council adopted an “Action Oriented Paper on Improving Co-operation, on Organised crime, Corruption, Illegal Immigration and Counter-terrorism, between the EU, Western Balkans and relevant ENP countries” (Council of the European Union, 2006a). The document contained unusually precise instructions, including a timeframe by which each recommended action should be implemented. In total, seven priorities were outlined for the coming years, ranging from improving regional cooperation between law enforcement, prosecutors and the judiciary over fighting corruption more efficiently, to more effective donor coordination (Ibid).<sup>7</sup>

The EU’s conditionality approach in the region was strengthened by linking the incentive of visa-free travel to the countries’ performance in fighting illegal migration and organised crime.<sup>8</sup> Visa liberalisation is one of the most politically salient issues in the EU-Western Balkan relations, since the present EU visa policies confine the possibilities for Western Balkan citizens to travel into EU member states (ICG, 2005b). The EU has allowed these states to enter a visa liberalisation scheme and has linked visa-free travel to the fulfilment of

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<sup>7</sup> There appear signs, however, that the instrument of the Action-Oriented Paper falls short of meeting with the high expectations voiced at its launch. The problems partly stem from the way it was brought into existence. Instead of using the working group framework of the Council, the paper was developed in the “group of friends of the presidency” meaning that not all member states were present, but only those interested in the subject. By avoiding the formalities of the working groups/working parties framework of the Council, the paper could be speedily adopted in only four-month time (Luif/Riegler, 2006: 15). A side-effect of this procedure was that the member states which were not involved in the drafting of the document did not perceive the implementation of the paper as a priority. According to the first progress report on the state of the implementation, published in November 2006, only 13 member states and Europol contributed to the report (Council of the European Union, 2006d). In the second report, published in May 2008, 16 member states, and some EU bodies reported on the state of the implementation. This report mirrored a growing frustration among the participating states by stating that the low turnout “limits substantially the scope and hinders seriously the value of the exercise” (Council of the European Union, 2008: 25).

<sup>8</sup> All Western Balkan states with the exception of Croatia are placed on the EU’s negative visa list of Council Regulation 539/2001 (Council of the European Union, 2001a).

several conditions, including measures against illegal border crossing and the spread of fake travel documents, the signing of readmission agreements, an aligned visa regime, etc. In September 2008, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia signed EC visa facilitation and readmission agreements which provided these countries with facilitated travel opportunities for certain categories of the population in exchange for close cooperation in the return of illegal migrants and rejected asylum seekers (Trauner/Kruse, 2008). After these agreements entered into force in January 2008, the EU allowed these states to enter “visa liberalisation dialogues” which are based on the understanding that if the countries meet tailor-made benchmarks outlined in country roadmaps they will gradually move towards visa liberalisation. The roadmaps cover four areas of cooperation: document security; illegal migration and readmission; public order and security; and external relations and fundamental rights. The benchmarks set in the roadmaps are comprehensive, and according to a Council official, they are in some cases just as comprehensive (and in exceptional cases even more comprehensive) than the JHA accession conditions which the Central and Eastern European countries were required to fulfil in the 2004 and 2007 enlargements.<sup>9</sup> The incentive of visa liberalisation has turned into a powerful avenue of external leverage to encourage reforms in domestic justice and home affairs in the Western Balkans (see detailed Trauner, 2009).

### ***...and of network governance***

In terms of network governance, the EU sought on the one hand to foster the operational cooperation and networking *between* the EU and Western Balkans, and on the other hand to create regional cooperation structures and networks *within* the region. The EU encouraged these states to develop modes of operational cooperation between law enforcement agencies that are comparable to the Union’s internal interactions described in the academic literature as “intense transgovernmentalism” (Wallace, 2000; Lavenex/Wallace, 2005).

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<sup>9</sup> Confidential interview, Council Working Group on Western Balkans, 17 March 2009. The official named the example of establishing anti-corruption agencies, an issue area where the EU is seen to be stricter in the visa liberalization dialogue with the Western Balkans than in the accession negotiations with the Central and Eastern European countries. It is important to note, however, that this example could not be double-checked in a document analysis, as the roadmaps are treated as confidential documents and not made available to the public.

With regard to network governance between the EU and the Western Balkans, the EU has focused on the creation of information and implementation networks.<sup>10</sup> The EU's specialised bodies and agencies, such as the European Police Office Europol (Occhipinti, 2003), were tasked to exchange and analyse information and to facilitate cross-border operational cooperation between EU and Western Balkan law enforcement authorities. Europol has developed a Western Balkans' strategy and negotiated cooperation agreements that regulate the reception and transmission of Europol information and the conclusion of confidentiality agreements. Through exchanging information and data between Europol and these countries, the EU hoped to improve their understanding of Balkan organised crime networks and to increase their means of fighting against them (Delevic, 2007: 87). Europol signed a strategic cooperation agreement with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia and an operational agreement with Croatia (Council of the European Union, 2008: 8).<sup>11</sup> Europol, together with the EU's border management agency Frontex, has also conducted risk assessments and determined the risk routes where joint investigation teams should operate (Council of the European Union, 2006a: 10). The information channels were further strengthened by asking the member states' liaison officers to provide information for Europol's threat assessments on organised crime in the Balkans. This network of immigration officers, which the EU started to build up in 2001 (as the first such network worldwide), was supposed to establish closer contacts with the authorities of the region "with a view to contributing to the prevention and combating of illegal immigration, the return of illegal immigrants and the management of legal migration" (Council of the European Union, 2004). In 2003 the Council suggested broadening the agenda of the liaison officers to cover all areas of organised crime (Council of the European Union, 2003b: 5).

Implementation networks pursue the objective of assisting in the implementation of the adopted standards and EU law (Lavenex/Wichmann, 2009: 86). The creation of this type of network has been an integral part of the countries' preparations for EU membership. Seminars and workshop on the fight against organised crime were held in each country and financed by the Technical Assistance and Information Exchange (TAEIX) programme. The TAEIX programme was designed to react to emerging problems, e.g. an increase of human

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<sup>10</sup> The creation of regulatory networks, which are aimed at formulating common rules and standards (Lavenex/Wichmann, 2009: 86), has been of less significance. Due to the Western Balkans' bid for EU membership, the EU has been in a powerful and hegemonic position vis-à-vis these countries, enabling it to 'download' pre-defined rules and standards rather than to negotiate common rules and standards.

<sup>11</sup> The strategic agreements regulate the exchange of operational and technical information but exclude the exchange of personal data.

trafficking, at short notice and covered several issue areas such as financial crime, corruption, trafficking and money-laundering measures. The overall objectives of the network activities through the TAIEX programme were to upgrade the standards of policing in the region, to strengthen the regional aspects of policing in the fight against organised crime, to improve the management of the borders and to reform the judiciary (Montanaro-Jankovski, 2005: 21). By contrast, the EU's Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stability (CARDS) programme, replaced in 2007 by the Instrument of Pre-Accession (IPA), was designed to support the long-term processes of building institutions and strengthening law enforcement capacities. The EU's pre-accession programmes supported the launch of 'twinning projects' which involved the secondment of civil servants from EU member states to work as advisors to beneficiary institutions for a period of at least twelve months (Tulmets, 2005). The area of justice and home affairs, together with economic assistance, have been the most important areas of the EU's pre-accession funding. Of the €840 million earmarked in 2008 for the IPA component transition assistance and institution building, 33 percent was designed to "enhance governance, encourage administrative and judicial reform, strengthen the rule of law, support the fight against corruption and organised crime, promote human rights, protect minorities and develop civil society" (Commission of the European Communities, 2008b: 6).

When the EU launched its pre-accession strategy for the Western Balkans, it defined that each country may enter the EU on its own merits, yet European rapprochement must go "hand in hand" with fostering regional reconciliation and cooperation (see Zagreb Summit, 2000). This requirement also concerned the policy field of justice and home affairs, where a lack of regional structures and networks to tackle common cross-border problems was regarded as a key problem. The EU placed a particularly strong emphasis on improving operational cooperation amongst these states. In the project "Police Cooperation Convention for South East Europe", implemented in the first six months of 2006, the participating states Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia adopted a multilateral convention for the improvement of police collaboration in the region. The official aim was to "adopt the Schengen standards in South East Europe through the conclusion of a multilateral convention" (Council of the European Union, 2006b). The Convention governs the exchange of information, introduces new forms of cross-border cooperation such as cross-border pursuit, and clarifies a range of further measures such as the exchange of DNA data or the establishment of joint investigation teams.

Also, the EU supported the establishment of the Southeast European Co-operative Initiative (SECI) Regional Centre for Combating Trans-border Crime, an operative collaboration between customs and police authorities in the region. Seated in Bucharest, the SECI centre should help to fight trans-border crime in the region and is, according to Hubert Pirker, the former chairman of the Stability Pact's Initiative against Organised Crime, the attempt to set-up a "Europol for South-Eastern Europe".<sup>12</sup> Similar to Europol, the SECI centre issues analyses and reports and coordinates regional operations within the frames of seven specialised Task Forces that address matters of drugs and human trafficking, stolen vehicles, smuggling and customs fraud, financial and computer crime, terrorism and container security. The centre is assisted in operational matters by a network of prosecutors called the Southeast European Prosecutors Advisory Group (SEEPAG), who seek to facilitate judicial cooperation and the exchange of information in trans-border crime investigations. The EU ministers of justice and home affairs tasked Europol to cooperate with the SECI centre (see Council of the European Union, 2006c).

## **Which role for ESDP civilian crisis management missions**

The European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP), brought into being to promote European defense integration, has developed some civilian tools to complement the military dimension.<sup>13</sup> Organized in the second pillar of the EU, the ESDP crises management missions are institutionally separated from the EU's external action in the JHA field (Community first pillar and third pillar). However, the two spheres overlap in some respect, particularly with regard to the creation of accountable, transparent and democratically controlled security institutions in third countries (Hänggi/Tanner, 2005; Spence/Fluri, 2008). Also, as argued by

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<sup>12</sup> Huber Pirker made this statement at the conference 'Eine Strategie der Stärkung der Freiheit, der Sicherheit und des Rechts für die Menschen in der EU', organised by the Renner Institut and IDM on 13 October 2006, Vienna. The SECI centre closely cooperates with the Stability Pact's Initiative against Organised Crime (SPOC), aimed to strengthen regional capacities to fight cross-border organised crime. To permanently provide legal assistance to the SECI Centre in Bucharest, the SPOC secretariat was integrated into the legal department of SECI in January 2008.

<sup>13</sup> Based on the experience of the conflicts in the region of the former Yugoslavia, the EU understood that lasting peace and stability abroad needs a variety of instruments, including civilian ones, to address pre-crisis, active crisis and post-crisis situations (Nowak, 2006). The Feira European Council conclusions of June 2000 identified four civilian areas of intervention: the police, the rule of law, civilian administration and civilian protection. The exact objectives and personnel to be deployed in each area of intervention was defined in the years that followed. With regard to the police, for instance, EU member states committed to make available 5,000 personnel for international and autonomous police missions by 2003, with 1,400 of them deployable within thirty days.

Gregory Mournier, ESDP police missions and the external dimension of JHA pursue a comparable objective abroad, that is, to protect the internal security space from an external environment perceived as insecure. Drawing on an analysis of the European Police mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the scholar maintains that “the European Union (EU) civilian crisis management operations [...] can be seen as a means to protect the EU’s internal security by preventing illegal migration, trafficking and terrorism to reach the European territory. [...] by reforming the security sector of targeted countries, European police missions convey standards of internal security which are similar to the ones defined at European level in the Justice and Home Affairs policy” (Mournier, 2007: 47). According to this point of view, the ESDP civilian crises management operations can be regarded as an additional tool for achieving EU internal security objectives. Starting from this argument, the section elaborates on the relationship between ESDP civilian missions operating in the region and JHA-related activities of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

In the Western Balkans, ESDP civilian crises management operations have been deployed for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Kosovo. The first mission in the region, which was actually the first civilian crisis management mission ever launched under ESDP, was the European Police Mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina (EUPM), which started on 1 January 2003. In its initial phase, the mission included some 500 policemen from around thirty countries, downsized to some 200 international staff in January 2006. The mission was tasked to support the police reform process and to help develop local capacity and regional cooperation in the fight against major and organised crime.<sup>14</sup> The objectives of the mission and Bosnia’s EU integration process were closely aligned. Reforming the police and safeguarding the rule of law were pre-conditions to be met by Bosnia in order to begin negotiations with the EU on a Stabilisation and Association Agreement (Commission of the European Communities, 2003b). The EUPM was supposed to turn Bosnian police into more efficient crime fighters and to strengthen the BiH State Investigation and Protection Agencies (SIPA) and the State Border Service.<sup>15</sup> With the assistance of the EUPM, SIPA was indeed turned into the state’s central institution for fighting organised crime (Merlingen/Ostrauskaite, 2005: 314), yet a weak mandate of the mission, a lack of experience and a personnel that was unfit to fulfil the expected tasks made the EUPM an ineffective and unsuccessful mission, according to a 2005

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<sup>14</sup> EUPM officers were co-located with local authorities at state, entity and cantonal level, covering criminal police, border policing, public order and security, criminal justice, internal affairs and police administration.

<sup>15</sup> These objectives were among the key areas of concern, which the Commission identified in the JHA chapter of the annual Progress Reports, see for instance the 2003 and 2004 Progress Reports of the Commission for Bosnia (Commission of the European Communities, 2003a: 27-29; 2004: 13-14)

assessment of the International Crisis Group (ICG, 2005a). The report highlighted that the EU underestimated both the dimension and the complexity of the task in Bosnia.<sup>16</sup> In 2005, the EU renewed the mandate of EUPM, emphasising the mission's continued need to support the objectives of the Stabilisation and Association Process, "in particular with regard to the fight against organised crime and police reform" (Council of the European Union, 2005a). Under the renewed EUPM, whose current mandate was extended until the end of 2009, and with intense pressure exerted within the Stabilisation and Association Process, Bosnia has made some progress in the restructuring of the police structures, although the country's police has remained fragmented and its effectiveness limited (Commission of the European Communities, 2008a: 56f).

The second EU police mission (EUPOL Proxima) was established in Macedonia in December 2003. With a strength of 200 police officers and civilians, Proxima was tasked "to monitor, mentor and advise the local police, thus help to fight organised crime more effectively and consolidate public confidence in policing" (Council of the European Union, 2003c). Proxima remained for two years in Macedonia and was then replaced by the substantially smaller EU Police Advisory Team (EUPAT), with a mandate to June 2006. The police missions were tasked to supervise the implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement signed on 13 August 2001 which brought an end to the six months of near-civil war between members of the National Liberation Army, predominantly Albanian citizens from Macedonia, and Macedonian security forces. After the 2001 security crisis, the EU defined the reform of the Macedonian justice and home affairs' sector as a central element in stabilising the country and improving inter-ethnic relations. The EU was particularly concerned with the transformation of the police into a "capable, depoliticised, decentralised, community-based, multi-ethnic police service which is responsive to citizens' needs, accountable to the rule of law and transparent" (Ioannides, 2006: 71). The EUPOL Proxima mission formed part of the EU's dual track approach towards Macedonia, tasked to tackle urgent needs in the Ministry of the Interior and the police, while the European Commission assistance should focus on long-term structural changes in support of the country's institutional development, according to the priorities of the pre-accession process (Ibid). With the Macedonian government subscribing to major reform programmes in the Ministry of the Interior and the police, the EU police

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<sup>16</sup> One simple indicator for the lack of success was that the crime rate in Bosnia increased rather than decreased after the 2003 dispatch of EUPM. Also, the reform of the police stalled as Republika Srpska (RS) officials portrayed it as an attack of the foundation of the sovereignty of the entity which would be against vital Serbian interest (ICG, 2005a: 15).

missions were widely conceived as a success, even if some scholars questioned the sustainability of the activities of Proxima on Macedonian police forces (Hills, 2004: 67), mainly due to the short time period of dispatch. In the European Commission, such a criticism is countered by the argument that the operation was only useful at that particular period of time, since the pre-accession process, including more targeted assistance under CARDS and IPA, has taken over the post-conflict stabilization.<sup>17</sup>

The most comprehensive EU engagement under ESDP is taking place in Kosovo. The EU launched its biggest civilian mission in the former Yugoslav province. The European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), headed by the retired French army general Yves de Kermabon, should help the Kosovo authorities in all areas related to the rule of law, especially in the police, judiciary and customs areas. Approved by the Council in February 2008, EULEX has a budget of 205 million Euros for the first 16 months and a final staff target of around 3,000 (1,900 international and 1,100 local).<sup>18</sup> While the mission is framed as a technical mission tasked to mentor, monitor and advise, it has some executive powers as well, notably in the area of policing. The ESDP mission, together with the EU Special Representative, has turned the EU into a leading player in Kosovo in terms of stabilisation and crisis prevention, yet it is important to note that the EU is a weak actor in terms of enlargement. Although the European Council reiterated in June 2008 that it is willing “to assist the economic and political development of Kosovo through a clear European perspective, in line with the European perspective of the region” (European Council, 2008: 16), EU member states are divided on how to deal with Kosovo’s declaration of independence. So far, only 22 of the EU’s 27 member states recognised Kosovo as an independent state, with the others refusing to do so due to fears that domestic separatist movements will get a boost (e.g. the Basque separatists in Spain). The internal divide prevents Kosovo from entering the step-by-step process towards EU accession, with the European Commission being obliged to remain status-neutral. While the issue of enlargement is a long-term one for Kosovo, the problem of the unresolved status also concerns the more pressing issue of visa liberalisation. Serbia is already advanced in the process towards visa-free travel,

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<sup>17</sup> Confidential interview, European Commission, DG Enlargement, 16 March 2009.

<sup>18</sup> The actual dispatch of EULEX was delayed several times, as Serbs and Kosovars failed to agree on the exact mandate of the mission and where it should operate. Serbs opposed the EU mission and insisted to deal with the UN mission (UNMIK) only. UNMIK’s mandate recognised the territorial integrity of Serbia. A compromise between the EU and Serbia was found by weakening the EULEX mandate and emphasising that the mission would remain “neutral” with regard to Kosovo’s status. The compromise allowed EULEX to enter its operational phase in December 2008, but evoked strong protests on parts of the Kosovar Albanians (Vucheva, 2008).

whereas Kosovo has so far not been allowed to enter the visa liberalisation scheme. It is still unclear how to deal with Kosovo when Serbia and the other neighbouring states will have visa-free travel to the EU.<sup>19</sup>

## Conclusions

The paper has assessed the EU's strategy and foreign policy toolbox for engaging the Western Balkan countries in achieving its goals in the area of justice and home affairs, focusing on the modes of external governance in the policy field (governance by hierarchy versus network governance) and the role of ESDP police and rule of law missions in this regard.

The analysis has shown that the policy field of justice and home affairs has become one of the central, if not *the* central area of cooperation between the EU and the Western Balkan states. Following the succession wars of the former Yugoslavia throughout the 1990s, the focus of the EU has shifted from the prevention of armed military conflicts to the field of justice and home affairs. The strengthening of law enforcement agencies and state institutions and the establishment of accountable and effective police, border police and judiciary systems is seen as a key to advancing the overall prosperity and stability in the region. Moreover, the EU has developed a strong self-interest in coping with soft-security threats originating from the region, in particular in the areas of irregular migration and organised crime. To engage the Western Balkan states in achieving its internal security objectives the EU has developed a dual-track strategy. Providing them with the prospect of future membership, the EU has initiated a pre-accession process which aims not only at strengthening cooperation in the JHA field but also at gradually transforming these states into full-fledged member states capable of participating themselves in the European area of freedom, security and justice. The Stabilisation and Association Process has been guided by a strategy of rule transfer based on conditionality. Network governance, as defined by Sandra Lavenex and Nicole Wichmann (2009), has been a complement but not a replacement of the EU's governance by conditionality. In addition, the EU has deployed ESDP police and rule of law missions for achieving its internal security objectives in those Western Balkan countries where the JHA-related activities of the Stabilisation and Association Process were deemed insufficient. This was the case in Macedonia between 2003 and 2006 in order to implement the police-related stipulations of the 2001 Ohrid peace accord and is still the case in Bosnia and Herzegovina,

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<sup>19</sup> Confidential interview, European Commission, DG Justice, Liberty, Security, 18 March 2009

where the EU has assisted and mentored the police reform process. Whereas in Macedonia and in Bosnia and Herzegovina the ESDP police missions have reinforced and strengthened the JHA-related activities of the Stabilisation and Association Process, the ESDP rule of law mission in Kosovo has by and large replaced the EU's enlargement dimension. The EU member states are internally divided on how to deal with Kosovo's declaration of independence (Spain, Greece, Romania, Slovakia and Cyprus refuse to recognise the independence), so Kosovo presents a special case in the Stabilisation and Association Process. Due to the EU's internal dispute, Kosovo is not allowed to enter a formal contractual relationship with the EU or start the step-by-step process towards EU accession. The major instrument for achieving EU goals in the area of justice and home affairs in Kosovo is therefore the ESDP rule of law mission. It is tasked to assist the Kosovar authorities in creating state institutions that are capable of maintaining internal order and the rule of law from scratch.

To sum up, the guiding research interest of the present EUSA panel was the question of whether or not a "EU JHA foreign policy" is in the making (see panel outline). With regard to the regional setting of the Western Balkans, the argument can be put forward that such a foreign policy branch is not only in the making but has already gone beyond the nascent stages. In fact, EU cooperation in justice and home affairs vis-à-vis these countries has become one of the driving forces of the EU's overall foreign policy engagement in the region.

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