

Editorial

Dear Reader,

On 10 June 1999 the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe was adopted in Cologne. In the founding document, more than 40 partner countries and organisations expressed their determination to strengthen the countries of South Eastern Europe "in their efforts to foster peace, democracy, respect of human rights and economic prosperity in order to achieve stability in the whole region". At a summit meeting in Sarajevo on 30 July 1999, the pact was launched. The Southeast Europe Association, sharing the vision of the Stability Pact (SP) of South Eastern Europe's political, economic and security integration in Europe, has intensively accompanied the SP's work throughout the five years of its existence. We have organized conferences trying to contribute in shaping the work of the SP, assessing its success and shortcomings. The Special Co-ordinator of the SP and his staff have on many occasions participated in and contributed to our conferences, workshops and dialogue projects, as for example in our project on "Interethnic Dialogue and Coexistence in the Western Balkan Region".

The fifth anniversary of the Stability Pact is another occasion to take stock. What is the situation in Southeast Europe five years after the end of the bloody conflict in Kosovo and after the launching of the SP? How does regional cooperation, being one of the basic concerns of the SP, function? Which contribution has the SP made to the stabilization of the region? In what respects was it successful, where are the deficits? What is the relationship between the SP and the Stabilization and Association Process of the EU? What are the lessons to be learnt from the experience of the past five years?

We have confronted the acting and the former Special Co-ordinator of the SP, German politicians, officials from the German Federal Foreign Office and the European Commission, and senior experts from think tanks in Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, and the U.S. with these questions. In this special issue of the *Südosteuropa Mitteilungen* we have compiled the answers of our experts to the above questions and added a selection of important documents on the SP. With this contribution we want to stimulate a debate on what political action is needed during the next five years and beyond to ensure sustainable peace and prosperity in Southeast Europe.

This special issue of the *Südosteuropa Mitteilungen* has been conceptualised and realised in cooperation with the Office of the Special Co-ordinator of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe and the German Federal Foreign Office. The German Minister for Foreign Affairs Joschka Fischer has contributed a preface to this volume and his Ministry is giving additional financial support for its realisation. The Southeast Europe Association extends its warm thanks to both institutions for their successful cooperation and support.

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Editors