**Call PoSIG Teacher Academy 2024:**

***Sectoral Integration: New Ways to EU Membership?***

Dear partner!

As in previous years with issues like *EU Neighbourhood Policy* or *Populism* and *Trade Policy in the Age of Populism* we continue with our PoSIG Teacher Academy in 2024 with a highly interesting issue on integration policy. Of course this may first of all lead to specific pictures from actual politics. But the intention is clearly focused on the academic relevance in research and academic teaching.

The call is addressed to our partner institutions of [www.posig.info](http://www.posig.info) but furthermore to all our scientific partner institutions on Western Balkan, Black Sea Region, Caucasus, Middle East and Central Asia connected to activities in the field of Integration & Governance. In these regions several disputes about economic cooperation spaces, strategic and political direction of integration and the interest of big players is very present. Therefore the issue is of high relevance and of academic interest. What we already know is that we will look at the EU resources in the field of higher education and research we can use for our academic interests as expression of EU Soft Power policy – a policy field we are all well connected to.

The PoSIG Teacher Academy 2024 will be organized in cooperation with [www.salzburg-europe-summit.eu](http://www.salzburg-europe-summit.eu)

**Teacher Academy - Goals:**

Identification of joint interests in research/research collaboration or teaching on this issue. Therefore a paper has to be presented.

To bring participants up to date on research in the field to boost their teaching.

To identify HE strategies using the Erasmus +  and H2020 environment  of the next EU budget periode.

**Dates and requirements:**

Date: 21-25 October 2024

Invited presenter: Teacher and researcher in Political Science / International Relations working in this field or interested in training in this field.

**Deadline** for submission of papers is 31 January 2024 to: doris.wydra@plus.ac.at

Nomination of candidates for Erasmus+ KA 171 grants: By the sending institution after selection of candidates by the hosting partner institution 27 February 2024.

Erasmus+ KA 131 staff mobility grants of participants are supported.

Placements for trainees on the topic of the TA can be added depending on available grant resources until End May 2024

**Contacts University of Salzburg:**

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Sectoral Integration: New Ways to EU Membership?

**PoSIG Teacher Academy 2024**

21-25 October 2024

With the Russian attack on Ukraine and Ukraine’s consequential bid for EU membership (followed by the Republic Moldova and Georgia), the number of accession candidates is steadily increasing, while since 2013 no new member has joined the European Union. This has increased pressure on the European Union to live up to the European promise made to the states of the Western Balkan region in the Thessaloniki Declaration in 2003, not least for geopolitical considerations (Petrovic and Tzifakis 2021). At the same time none of the candidate countries is fulfilling the conditions for full membership (as the yearly reports by the European Commission provide ample evidence of): the “transformative power” of the EU (Börzel and Lebanidze 2017; Börzel and Risse 2009) seems unable to counter democratic backsliding, the consolidation of competitive-authoritarian regimes and the dominance of “stabilitocracies (Džankić, Keil, and Kmezić 2019; Kmezić 2019; Bieber 2018).

In order to break this stalemate, the year 2022 has seen the emergence of new proposals to revitalize the enlargement process. What they have in common is an emphasis on “staged accession”: while full membership still would only be possible after the fulfilment of all criteria (in particular in the area of fundamentals including the rule of law, good governance and transparent and effective administration), the idea is to move forward with integration in specific policy areas. Different models have been presented:

Lang and Buras (2022) suggested the creation of an enlargement partnership, mainly aimed at Eastern Partnership countries. Following the approach of the European Economic Area the idea is to enable a full integration into the European internal market (but always also considering existing member states’ concerns when it comes to labour migration) far beyond association agreements. In this respect, it is in particular the energy union which could provide possibilities for increased cooperation, but integration should move beyond this. Following the idea of functional integration which lies at the heart of the European integration project, the potential is seen for spill-over effects into further policy areas. As potential third pillar of the enlargement partnership the area of foreign policy was identified, where candidate countries should become observers in the security structures of the European Union and enhanced cooperation in projects of the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO). Already in 2020 Gressel/ Popescu (Gressel and Popescu 2020) suggested something along this lines with their “Eastern Partnership Security Compact”.

Probably the most developed proposal which develops the idea of a “membership apprenticeship” is the Austrian Non-Paper on Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy, which has been introduced in May 2022. Without excluding full membership at a later point, the focus is primarily on sectoral integration, not least to provide the countries of the Western Balkans finally with a credible accession perspective. In this paper we find suggestions for a gradual integration into the single market and policy fields such as trade, climate, energy, research, health, and foreign and security policy. This is supported by a merit-based approach and a quantified assessment of the reform progress (also including a principle of reversibility) and gradual access to EU funds (Emerson and Blockmans 2022). Very similar to this, but with a different terminology and introducing new patterns of membership, is the “template for staged accession” by the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) and the European Policy Centre (CEP): starting with initial accession (based on a functioning association agreement and moderate ratings for cluster averages), candidates with each further step (the advancement depending on cluster grades) receive better access to EU- funding (already in stage 3 100% of conventional membership) and more substantial participation in the institutions with each step taken (Emerson et al. 2022). A very recent paper published by CEPS presents the broad variety of suggestions on sectoral integration, including also the ideas of the EU-Ukraine Association Council (September 2022), a Czech Non-Paper (November 2022) and the Tirana Declaration (December 2022). “Sectoral blocks”, which are suggested for enhanced integration are: the internal market (debating whether this would include all four freedoms); the Green Agenda (based on the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans with roadmaps for climate action, energy, sustainable transport, environmental remediation and sustainable agriculture); Digital Europe (the Digital singe market); foreign and security policy; justice, borders and Schengen; and Monetary Europe. But proposals for sectoral integration also include references to participation in agencies and programmes, building on the already existing participation of the Western Balkan states in programmes like Erasmus, Horizon and Creative Europe (Emerson and Blockmans 2023).

The PoSIG Teacher Academy 2024 will discuss prospects and challenges of these approaches to sectoral integration and will search for concepts to research and teaching of sectoral integration.

The topics discussed should be:

* Which sectors/ policy fields seem most promising for sectoral integration? On which already existing achievements (e.g. in the field of energy networks, education, telecommunication and roaming) can this sectoral integration build? Which Roadmap to sectoral (and further) full integration could the different Western Balkan states propose? Which synergies would this create in the region?
* What are the challenges of sectoral integration? Would the functional logic over “ever deeper integration” work and can we expect spill-over effects between sectors? How could sectoral integration affect the struggle on the “Fundamentals” (rule of law, efficient and transparent administration, anti-corruption mechanisms)?
* Which institutional challenges might arise? Is there a need for new institutions? Which reforms of already existing European structures and institutions would be necessary for sectoral integration to be successful? Is there a need for a change of the EU treaties? And how can successful be measured? Is quantification the solution concerning the assessment of progress of candidate countries?
* Can models of sectoral or staged integration revitalize the integration process and provide new pathways to EU membership?
* Beyond the political discourse about the size, institutional arrangements and time plans for the EU enlargement process we want to identify relevant indicators for successful integration. In the PoSIG Teacher Academy 2024 we will search for concepts to research and teach sectoral integration opportunities.

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