

Possible Results:

Through the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe the EU, for the first time in history, undertook to draw South Eastern Europe closer to the perspective of full integration into its structures. All Southeast European countries have been recognised as potential candidates for EU membership. As the EU's main contribution to the Stability Pact, the European Commission designed the Stabilisation and Association Process for the Western Balkans.

The European perspective has proved to be the most powerful incentive for reconciliation, co-operation and internal reforms in the region. Countries in the region view the Pact as the primary instrument of political and institutional support for the EU integration of SEE countries. More important: The Stability Pact has succeeded in giving life to regional co-operation. For the first time in history, SEE countries perceive such co-operation as a building block, not a stumbling block for European integration.

How could the Stability Pact make a difference? First, the Pact has made it clear that regional co-operation is an indispensable component and a precondition for Euro-Atlantic integration. It is the fast track to full EU membership. The EU, on its part, has recognised that it should not reward a race towards membership. "If countries want to join the European Union, they have to demonstrate that they can develop regional co-operation and can solve their problems in co-operation with their neighbours," Commissioner Verheugen once stated. People in the region have understood that such co-operation is one of the founding principles of the European Union itself.

Secondly, the Stability Pact has given evidence that co-operation serves the mutual interests of all participating countries. Against this background, the Pact has been engaged in facilitating the resolution of transnational issues, using the tool of regional co-operation as a catalyst for reconciliation, good-neighbourliness and improved political relations.