

Merkel sees the Balkans in the EU, When?

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On July 5, an online conference was held under the leadership of Germany on the prospects for the accession of the Western Balkans to the European Union. The event was attended by the heads of government of Serbia, Albania, the Republic of North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Kosovo, as well as the President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen.

The German Chancellor said that six Western Balkan states, due to geopolitical reasons, will become members of the European Union in the future. In her opinion, this is in the interests of the European Union. Perhaps the main interest of Brussels is to prevent the growth of the influence of Russia and China in the region. That is why Germany has become more active in this matter. Berlin recalled the Berlin Process initiative, which began in 2014.

Merkel's words were supported by the chairwoman of the European Commission. She said the priority is to accelerate the agenda across the region and support the Western Balkan partners in their work to carry out the necessary reforms to move along their European path. A similar opinion was expressed by French President Macron. In addition, the German Chancellor has pledged three million doses of COVID-19 vaccine. But she did not say whether it will be a free delivery or not.

The European Union, represented by Merkel, Macron and Ursula von der Leyen, are trying to save positions in this region after a long time of inaction. They themselves do not hide the fact that the actions of China and Russia are prompting them to activate. Let's not forget about Washington. It was with

the direct participation of the administration of the previous US President that the agreements were signed between Belgrade and Pristina.

It is important that the current actions of the European Union are conditioned by an attempt to correct its mistakes. But not the desire to make life better in these Western Balkan countries. It should be that way. The main achievement of the Berlin Process initiative to date is the agreement to abolish roaming in the Western Balkans region, prepared with the support of the European Commission and entered into force on July 1, 2021. The next step will be to prepare a roadmap to reduce roaming charges between the EU and the Western Balkans. It seems that this is not what the Western Balkan countries have been striving for during these 7 years.

Brussels cites 2025 as the likely date for Serbia and Montenegro, which have advanced the farthest in the EU accession negotiations. But at the same time, with reservations, if it is possible to overcome all the barriers that exist on the path of European integration. And they are very serious. Even approximate dates are not named about other countries. Let's not forget that besides the position of Germany and France on this issue, there is the opinion of other countries. For example, the Netherlands, Poland and Bulgaria are against the admission of these states to the European Union.

The slowness of the European Union is characteristic not only of relations with the Western Balkans. It is noteworthy that the Berlin Process initiative began in 2014, when the whole of Europe entertained itself with anti-Russian sanctions after the annexation of Crimea and the outbreak of the war in Donbass. Anti-Russian initiatives were in vogue. And Ukraine was promised a lot. But most of this has not been accomplished. Not long ago, Merkel and Macron called for a summit with Russian president Putin.

Author: Timoschuk
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