

the contents for SAAs. The main innovation here is the “regional cooperation agreement”: every country signing an SAA with the EU has to conclude a regional cooperation agreement with every other country in the region that has also signed an SAA.

These agreements also contain a “change clause” meaning that, beyond the general conditions applying to the five states involved, special conditions apply on a case-by-case basis. The general conditions have to do with democratization, respect for human and minority rights, returning refugees, economic reform and regional cooperation.

These two initiatives, the SPSEE and SAP, are now inseparable and complementary. However, it is increasingly obvious that the SAP has emerged as the key element in EU policy for the western Balkans. To date, five countries have signed SAAs: Albania, Bosnia, FYROM, Croatia and Serbia.

3.2 SPSEE implementation: a modest performance

It is hard to form a clear idea of the impact on evolving regional stability of the priorities introduced by the pact. For example, the democratic transitions in Serbia and Croatia have more to do with endogenous regional factors than the workings of the pact. Even on the “democratic transition” in Yugoslavia, the SPSEE seems to have had little impact, the new system being the product more of developments in Yugoslav civil society than of outside intervention. In both cases, the transition to democracy cannot be ascribed directly to the pact. Without the SPSEE, would we have seen the same democratic developments?

3.2.1 Successes and relative successes

The SPSEE has unquestionably scored successes, but it has some shortcomings as well. Numerous projects have been implemented: the list would exceed the scope of this study. We will look at just a few aspects of the pact at work in terms of the stability problems identified in Chapter 1.

Better cooperation among regional players

The SPSEE’s biggest success has been arousing a determination in SEE states to foster better regional cooperation. To this end, the SPSEE has also received strong support from the EU, which has clearly identified regional cooperation as an essential prerequisite for European integration. The EU introduced the SAP as a way to avoid letting the quest for EU membership turn into a race for SEE countries. In any case, the prospect of EU membership has been a powerful incentive for SEE states to make the necessary compromises and reforms. This system was so effective that we may now wonder whether the SAP and SAAs were the main force strengthening regional cooperation.

³¹ Bodo Hombach, “Letter From Brussels,” *Newsletter, Special edition – Regional Conference, Bucharest*, No. 11, November 8, 2001. <<http://www.stabilitypact.org>>.