

# **A Decade of Negotiations: The Negotiation Process of the Republic of Serbia with the European Union and the Challenges of Structural Reforms a Decade Later**

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## **Abstract**

*The negotiation process between the Republic of Serbia and the European Union (EU), which began in January 2014, faced significant challenges during the past decade, which led to a temporary halt in the process of Serbia's accession to the EU. Despite the introduction of a revised EU enlargement methodology in February 2020, its failure to accelerate Serbia's accession process stems from structural issues within the contemporary EU enlargement strategy and the geopolitical complexity of the Western Balkans region. However, there are certain obstacles in the demanding nature of the structural reforms that Serbia must undertake in order to comply with EU standards and principles. These reforms cover various sectors, including the judiciary, public administration and economic management. The paper investigates the causes of the stall in the negotiation process, such as political resistance, lack of administrative capacity and the need for institutional transformation a decade after the start of negotiations in these areas. Moreover, the issue of corruption and the rule of law remains a significant social and political problem. Serbia's negotiation process with the EU has repeatedly exposed the need for the establishment of an independent and efficient judicial system, free from political influence and corruption. This has undermined public confidence, the inflow of additional foreign direct investment and the overall economic stability of the country. In addition, economic disparities within Serbia represent a huge challenge. The process of privatization, fiscal consolidation and market liberalization deepened social inequalities and caused dissatisfaction among certain segments of the population. Achieving economic stability while ensuring social cohesion remains a delicate balancing act. Despite these difficulties, Serbia has also made significant progress during its decade-long negotiation process with the EU. Reforms have been launched, and some benchmarks have been met, which shows the country's commitment to EU integration. Using the methods of document content analysis and discourse analysis, this paper critically examines the mutual interaction between Serbia's long-term negotiation process with the European Union and the delicate process of implementing structural reforms in the period from January 2014 to January 2024.*

**Keywords:** EU accession process; revised enlargement methodology; EU accession negotiations; structural reforms; Serbia; European Commission; EU Member States.

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