

## EU Integration of the Western Balkans and the Hungarian EU Presidency

### Objectives

The project aims at creating a public intellectual forum for discussing challenges of the EU integration process of the countries of the Western Balkan region and the Hungarian EU presidency scheduled for the first half of 2011. The organizers intend to meet this goal by inviting outstanding individuals, representing a number of governmental and non-governmental organizations, to give lectures and to get engaged in the discussion of topics which are central to these problems. In line with its mission, the ICDT is committed to pay special attention to the opinion and advice of representatives of the civil society in the Western Balkan region, and therefore a whole section will be designed exclusively to non-governmental organizations. Based on the lectures and discussion at the conference, the organizers will create a paper of policy recommendations for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Hungary, with the aim of supporting political decision making with regards to the Hungarian EU Presidency.

### Background

The European integration of the countries in the Western Balkans, viewed as a tool for both the final solution of the conflicts within the region and the development and progress of these countries, will be a central field of interest for the Hungarian EU Presidency in the first half of 2011.

The EU's further enlargement has been one of the most disputed as well as the most supported topics within the European Union, and with the NATO accession of Albania and Croatia on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009, the Euro-Atlantic integration of the region has already reached a milestone.

EU integration of the region is a priority external economic and political interest for Hungary as well. A strong reason for this is the fact that during recent years, the country has become the biggest exporter of capital in Central and Eastern Europe, with Hungarian-based transnational corporations owning major capital interests in the countries of the Western Balkans.

### Project Description

The Centre for Euro-Atlantic Integration and Democracy (CEID) and the ICDT, in cooperation with their associates/partners in the Western Balkans will organize a conference where professionals from Hungary, from the EU and from the countries of the Western Balkan region will have discussion on the topic. The conference is divided into 3 sessions: the first panel will focus on the strategic questions of the EU integration of the countries of the Western Balkans; the second panel will address the challenges of the upcoming Hungarian EU Presidency; the third panel aims at discussing the role of civil society in the integration process of the countries of the region.