

**Is the Catching up of Central and Eastern Europe
(CEE) Member States a Mirage?**

3RD OF DECEMBER 2014

18.30 – 20.30

SOFITEL BRUSSELS EUROPE

PLACE JOURDAN 1

AGENDA

18.00 – 18.30	Registration
18.30 – 18.40	Welcoming note by Ms Assya Kavrakova , Director, ECAS
18.40 – 18.50	Ms Danuta Maria HÜBNER , MEP (tbc)
18.50 – 19.10	Presentation of the 2014 Edition of the Catch-up Index by Mr Marin Lessenski , Program Director, European Policies Initiative, European Policies and Civic Participation Program of the Open Society Institute – Sofia
19.10 – 20.00	Contributions from a panel of experts: Ms Dace Akule , Director, Centre for public policy PROVIDUS Dr Zoltán Pogátsa , Faculty of Economics at the University of Western Hungary Dr Seán Hanley , Senior Lecturer in Comparative Central and East European Politics, UCL School of Slavonic & East European Studies Mr Markus Trilling , EU funds campaign coordinator, Bank Watch
20.00 – 20.30	Discussion
20.30 – 21.30	Networking cocktail

At the end of 2014, the EU has the chance to both re-examine past experience as it marks the 10th anniversary of the fifth enlargement and plan for the next political cycle of 2014-2019.

In 2014, the EU is celebrating the anniversary of the fifth enlargement of the EU, when 12 countries joined the EU in 2004 and 2007. The occasion is special for at least two reasons: first, it was the biggest wave of enlargement and second, the majority of the countries were former communist countries. The enlargement was lauded as a success for the EU, bringing about “shared stability, security and prosperity” and “reuniting Europe after years of artificial division” according to enlargement commissioner Stefan Füle.

However, since 2008 the EU has also entered a tumultuous period, enduring the gravest economic and financial crisis of its existence, it has witnessed the rise of euro-skepticism and populism and, more recently, new critical geopolitical challenges in its neighbourhood. Although the reasons for the economic and political crisis were not related to enlargement, there were serious repercussions on the EU project as a whole and on the countries that acceded recently. The CEE member states have suddenly found themselves in a rather different EU context compared to the pre-accession realities and expectations of 2004-2007. Some political debates (e.g. on free movement) have even reached the stage where the rolling back of some of the fundamental achievements of the EU is contemplated.

Thus, along with the celebratory mood, the enlargement anniversary is an opportune moment to pose some more sombre questions. These questions require assessment of the state of the union and the state of affairs in the member states after years of EU membership. They include:

- How has enlargement changed the EU, Europe and the individual countries?
- What was the impact of accession to the EU for the “younger” member states?
- How successful are these member states in achieving comparable levels of development (in terms of economy, quality of life, democracy, governance) to the “older” member states?
 - What is the impact of the economic and political crisis on the common EU project and the CEE member states?
 - How can we capitalize on the new beginning represented by the next political cycle of 2014 with its new European Parliament, Commission, President of the European Council, etc.?

Ultimately, the catch-up process was probably the main motivation for joining the EU club from the viewpoint of the newer member states and their citizens. These new European citizens wanted to see their societies advance and catch-up with the rest in terms of economic development, levels of democracy, quality of life, and good governance.

The current event is aimed at discussing the “catch-up” process within the EU from various viewpoints, involving different country perspectives and policy areas, and focussing on the lessons learnt from the success stories as well as the challenges that are holding back the CEE countries.

One of the instruments that can be useful in gauging the level of success (or failure) of CEE countries in reaching the “old” member states’ level of achievements is the Catch-Up index.

The European Catch Up Index measures the performance of 35 countries, comprising the EU member states, and the candidate and potential candidate countries across four categories: Economy, Quality of Life, Democracy and Governance. There are scores for each category as well as an Overall Score, constructed from the scores for each category. The Catch Up Index was initially designed precisely to capture the progress of the EU10 countries, the EU members from Central and Eastern Europe, in catching up with the rest of the EU. The index was developed by the European Policies Initiative (EuPI) of the Open Society Institute – Sofia.

The special online platform at www.TheCatchUpIndex.eu allows users to view and work interactively with the data from the index. Their reports based on the index are available for download at www.eupi.eu and www.TheCatchUpIndex.eu.