



# **Political dialogue with the countries of the Western Balkans**

14 September 2006



Enlargement

# The EU and the Western Balkans

Recognising the importance of the Western Balkans the EU has:

- Promoted stability in the region through its assistance programmes
- Supported democracy through political dialogue
- Launched in 1999 the Stabilisation and Association process (SAP)



# Stabilisation and Association Process

The SAP is the framework policy of the EU in the region serving to:

- Promote European values and principals
- Act as an anchor for reforms
- Open the way for eventual membership of the EU



# Stabilisation and Association Process

The SAP aims to:

- Bring peace and stability to region
- Promote stable democratic institutions
- Ensure rule of law prevails
- Develop and sustain prosperous, open economies



# Stabilisation and Association Process

## Basics:

- Regional Approach – 1996, after Dayton
- SAP – proposed by the Commission in May 1999
- Covers Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Kosovo (under UNSCR 1244)
- Comprehensive policy framework, bundling earlier EC instruments, inspired by enlargement methodology.
- Geopolitical rationale: Stabilization of the region and gradual rapprochement with the EU.
- Prospect of full integration into EU structures: Status as “potential candidates” (Feira European Council)
- Differentiated, progressive and benchmarked.



# Stabilisation and Association Agreements (SAAs)

SAA is a formal agreement providing a framework for:

- Closer political dialogue
- Establishment of free trade area
- Enhanced regional cooperation
- Harmonisation of legislation



# Stabilisation and Association Agreements (SAAs)

## Nature of SAAs:

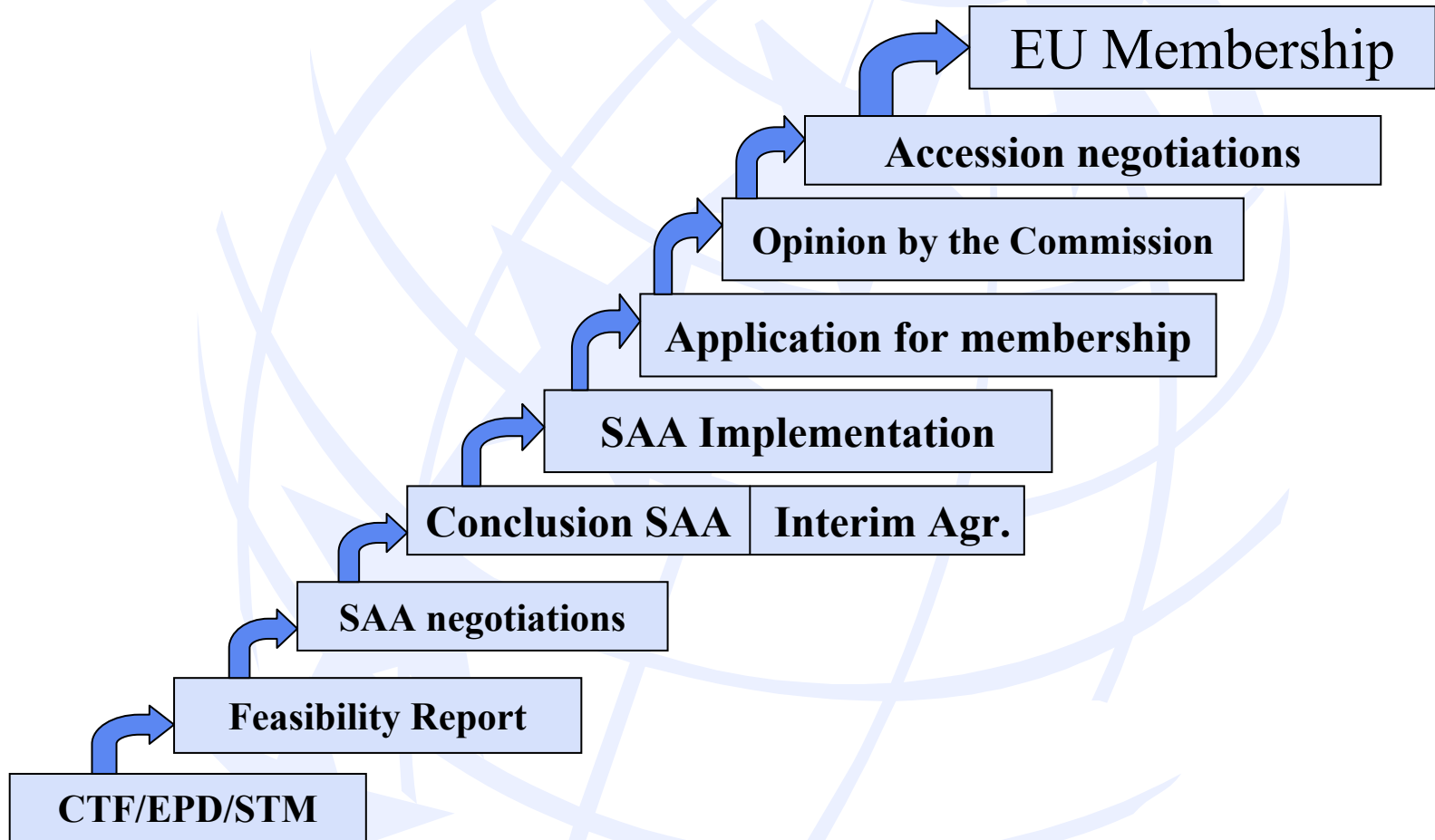
- Binding treaty, signed with a state, contains mix of rights and obligations, modelled on the Europe Agreements, tailor-made for each country.

## Contains:

- Political dialogue
- Regional cooperation, including free trade agreements and conventions on number of issues
- Free trade area with the EC within X years
- Four freedoms - progressive
- Harmonisation of legislation
- Cooperation, e.g. in justice and home affairs (visa, border control, illegal migration, money laundering etc)
- Cooperation policies (economic, statistical, industrial, banking, SMEs, customs, social, agriculture, transport, environment etc)
- Financial cooperation
- New Joint Bodies



# The road to an SAA and future EU Membership





# Political dialogue & reform advice

- Regular political and technical visits, including seminars
- Consultative Task Forces / Enhanced Permanent Dialogue: Reform monitoring and advice
- Political Dialogue under the bilateral agreements
- European Partnerships and Progress Reports – roadmaps for further reforms
- Linkage of SAP instruments: Report -> Partnership -> Advice -> Assistance -> Reports



# European Partnerships

- Partnerships adopted by the EU.
- Identify reform priorities for short and medium term, help the countries prepare for further integration into the EU.
- Check list against which to measure progress.
- Guides Community assistance.
- Countries adopt plans for implementation of the Partnership priorities.
- Progress monitored through SAP structures and reported in the Commission's Progress Report

