

## FOREWORD

“Monitoring the Process of Croatia’s Accession to the EU” is the title of a project launched in 2002 by the office of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Zagreb in cooperation with the Institute of Public Finance. The principal aim of this research project is to have the different phases of the Croatian process of accession to the EU monitored and evaluated by Croatian researchers. In addition to the regular official reports on the progress of the implementation of reforms in Croatia by the government and international organisations, this project aims to present on an annual basis a critical view by independent domestic experts on the accession process, covering political, economic and social fields. The first results of this work were published last year in a report under the title *Croatian Accession to the European Union: Economic and Legal Challenges*. The positive response to the publication within the Croatian public as well as in international circles encouraged us to continue with the work. In order to enlarge the view and analysis of the reform process, this second report – as compared with its predecessor - concentrates rather on institutional aspects of policy and the legislation, as presented in the different chapters of the book.

Since the publication of the first report the situation of Croatia with regard to the accession process has changed. Croatia’s strong commitment to meeting the requirements of the Stability and Association Agreement (SAA) of November 2001, despite some critical voices, led to many positive reactions from EU-countries and in February 2003 the Croatian government applied officially for EU membership. Finally, after the voluminous EU questionnaire has been answered and handed over to the European Commission, a final decision is expected for spring 2004, whether or not Croatia will receive candidate status. The country has made already considerable progress on its way to becoming a member of the EU. However, apart from this positive development there remain a number of deficits to be overcome that require further steps and activities in the process of adapting to EU standards.

Like the first publication, this second report attempts to give the reader an in-depth view of some of the problems and political approaches in this context. To allow an intensive discussion of the problem areas presented in this study the Institute of Public Finance and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung have agreed to organise a series of workshops in the course of the year on the topics of the different chapters. Through this publication and the subsequent workshops we hope

that we will be able to provide a useful contribution to the public debate on Croatia's accession to the EU, thus making the way for further steps on this way a little smoother.

Finally, I would like to thank all those who contributed to this project, particularly Dr. Katarina Ott, director of the Institute of Public Finance and editor, as well as Prof. Dr. Nenad Zakosek for assisting in editing the contributions.

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