

In the past period, Serbia has made a significant improvement on its path towards EU membership. Following the decision of the European Council of June 2013 to open negotiations, the First Inter-Governmental Conference on Serbia's EU accession took place on 21 January 2014, on which occasion accession negotiations on membership were formally launched. The initial stage of negotiations- analytical overview and assessment of conformity of Serbian regulations with the EU acquis and their application (screening) had already commenced in September 2013, and was finalized in late March 2015.

The beginning of a more advanced stage of relations between Serbia and the EU was marked by coming into force of the [Stabilization and Association Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States and the Republic of Serbia \(SAA\)](#), on 1 September 2013.

By means of the SAA coming into force and Serbia's attaining the candidate status, sectoral cooperation between the Republic of Serbia and the EU has been expanded and now encompasses all the chapters from the acquis communautaire. In other words, apart from the most frequent and most important forms of cooperation so far, the ones in the areas of [trade](#) and

[investment](#)

, sectoral cooperation are also being realized in the areas of [common foreign and security policy](#)

,

[energy](#)

, the

[rule of law](#)

, etc. Certain sectoral areas of cooperation have been institutionalized and are taking place within separate mechanisms established for EU candidate countries.

Sectoral cooperation is being implemented partly by using resources available through the [Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance \(IPA\)](#)

, and partly through bilateral financial assistance of the EU Member States. Apart from the said forms of vertical cooperation in sectoral areas, by signing the Framework Agreement on the general principles governing participation in Community programmes, the Republic of Serbia has also acquired the right to participate in the horizontal form of cooperation, i.e. the so-called [Community Programmes](#)

.