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## Progression and Regression: Challenges to the Rule of Law in Central Europe and the Western Balkans

6 February 2019, Chatham House

### 09.30 Welcome remarks tbc

10.00 – 11.15

#### **Session 1 . In Search of Progress: Rule of Law and Anti Corruption Reforms in the Western Balkans**

##### ***Spotlight on: Albania***

**Speakers:** *Dr Andi Hoxhaj*, Teaching Fellow in Law, University of Warwick

*Mia Marzouk*, Senior Research Analyst, Western Balkans, Foreign and Commonwealth Office

*Tena Prelec*, Research Associate, London School of Economics and Political Science

- What are the main obstacles to protecting and maintaining the rule of law in the Western Balkans? Why have anti corruption reforms not progressed beyond declarative commitments? How can sustainability of reforms be prioritised?
- Can Albania's reforms in these areas serve as a model for the region? How can knowledge sharing within the region be encouraged and local ownership of reforms improved?
- Is the Commission's new *Strategy for the Western Balkans* and the flagship initiatives included within it a step in the right direction and what was the regional response? Is there anything missing from the EU's approach and how can the gaps be addressed?
- How can the UK support the strengthening of the rule of law, as well as wider modernisation and reform efforts in the region, and what role can the country play in the Western Balkans post-Brexit?

11.30 – 12.45

#### **Session 2. Turning Their Back on EU Values? Assessing the State of the Rule of Law in Central Europe**

##### ***Spotlight on: Poland and Hungary***

**Speakers:** *Professor Ronan McCrea*, Professor of Constitutional and European Law, UCL

*Annabelle Chapman*, Freelance journalist; Warsaw Correspondent, Monocle; Contributor, the Economist

*Dr Gabor Scheiring*, ISRF Political Economy Research Fellow, University of Cambridge

**Chair:** *Joanna Hosa*, Wider Europe Programme Manager, ECFR

- How can recent democratic backsliding in EU member states Hungary and Poland be explained? What lessons can we learn from recent developments in these countries?

- How do current trends towards illiberal democracy within the Union itself affect the future of enlargement? What monitoring mechanisms can be put in place to ensure other member or candidate countries do not go down the same route?
- Is there a role that the UK can play in helping address and reverse these trends in other EU countries once it is no longer a member? Could being an outsider prove an advantage in this regard or is the country more likely to lose its clout within the EU post-Brexit?
- Finally, what differences and similarities exist between the two regions in focus? Can civil society organisations in Central Europe and the Western Balkans learn from each other and if so, how can an ongoing dialogue be encouraged?

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