

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

Western Balkans Back in Focus

How to Shape Europe's Reengagement with a Region in Crisis?

Monday 14 – Wednesday 16 May 2018

The Western Balkans region is back in focus. Decision makers across Europe have called recently for more vigorous actions towards the six non-EU countries in the region. On May 17 the Bulgarian EU-Presidency will host a large summit on Western Balkans in Sofia. After years of benign neglect, the EU is now ready for an active reengagement with Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Kosovo. In its new Western Balkans strategy, published in February 2018, Brussel is clearly expressing its willingness to move ahead. The year 2025 is named as the first possible target date for a new round of enlargement with Serbia and Montenegro as the most likely candidates to join the EU-family.

There are good reasons for the EU's renewed attention to its immediate neighborhood. In recent years the Western Balkans was shaped by troubling trends and developments. Democratization and the freedom of the press are backsliding. Reform-oriented politicians were sidelined. Authoritarian patterns of policy-making started to spread. Almost 20 years after the end of the wars at the Balkans, ethno-nationalist tensions continue to linger. Inflammatory rhetoric, glorification of war criminals, and antagonistic interpretation of the past are relatively common in the region. In this constellation, the difficult economic situation with high rates of unemployment in particular among the younger generation could be seen as a dangerous breeding ground for renewed extremist trends. The growing interest in the region by external powers – in particular by Russia and Turkey – is further complicating the tense situation.

Against this background, the conference is evaluating Europe's reengagement with region. With the intention to substantiate the new EU Western Balkans strategy, we will search for concrete policy tools feasible for future European initiatives in those fields that are crucial for the region's move towards EU accession – namely reconciliation and transitional justice, regional cooperation and bilateral dispute resolution, and the promotion of sustainable democratic change. In particular, we will give special focus to the role of civil society initiative in Western Balkans policy-making and institutional reforms. Recent development in Macedonia where an increasingly authoritarian government was replaced by a new reformist leadership highlights that active citizens' engagement could be a crucial driver for change in the region.

DAY 1

MONDAY 14 MAY 2018

Arrival

(Guests who travel from abroad are welcomed to arrive the day before (Sunday, 13 May 2018))

13:30

Welcome Coffee & Cake

14:00

WORDS OF WELCOME

Thomas Müller-Färber

Program Director, International and Security Affairs, Protestant Academy Loccum

Tobias Flessenkemper

Board Member of the Southeast Europe Association (Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft – SOG), Senior Fellow and Balkans Project Director at the Centre International de Formation Européenne (CIFE), and Lecturer Universität zu Köln

14:10

THE BROADER STRUCTURES AND MAJOR TRENDS THAT SHAPE THE WESTERN BALKANS – NOW AND THEN

Where the Western Balkans Came From...

A Contemporary History of the (Western) Balkans' State System

Konrad Clewing

Department of History, Leibniz Institute for East and Southeast European Studies (IOS), Regensburg

[confirmed]

...Where It Is Now And Where It Might Go?

A Long and Bumpy Road to Western Europe?

Vedran Dzihic

Senior Research at the Austrian Institute for International Affairs (oiip), lecture at the University of Vienna and non-resident Senior Fellow at the Center for Transatlantic Relations, Vienna

[confirmed]

15:30

Coffee and Cake

16:00

SPOTLIGHT I: INTRODUCING THE EU WESTERN BALKANS STRATEGY (COM 2018/65)

What is said – and what is left out?

The EU is reengaging in the Balkans. There seems to be new wind in the sails of EU enlargement. In February 2018 the EU issued a new strategy for the region entitled “A credible enlargement perspectives for an enhanced EU engagement with the Westerns Balkans”. But what exactly is the value added of this document? This first Spotlight gives a brief, concise, and pointed introduction into the EU Western Balkans strategy highlighting what this document is proposing and – even more important – what it is omitting.

Natasha Wunsch

Senior Researcher, European Politics Group at the Center for Comparative and International Studies, ETH Zürich

[confirmed]

16:20

A JUMBLE OF MUTUALLY REINFORCING PROBLEMS

Scrutinizing the Western Balkans' Major Current and Future Challenges

Western Balkans region is facing numerous problems. The new EU strategy is listing some of these challenges in relatively blunt manner. It highlights for example that the countries of the Western Balkans “show clear elements of state capture, including links with organized crime and corruption at all levels of government and administration, as well as a strong entanglement of public and private interests”. Moreover, the new strategy points out that “none of the Western Balkans can currently be considered a functioning market economy” and that the “bilateral disputes between countries in the region” will not be accepted by the EU. What makes the situation in particular complicated is the fact that the region’s

challenges are intertwined and mutually reinforcing. This expert panel is scrutinizing and evaluating the major problems of the Western Balkan by giving a special focus on the interplay between them. What is the current nature of the region's challenges? How severe are they and to which degree are they intertwined? How will these problems evolve in the future?

New and Old Extremism: Lingering Ethnic, Political and Religious Tensions

Sladjana Lazic

Research Fellow, Centre for Peace Studies, The Arctic University of Norway, Tromsø

[confirmed]

A Region of Chances or A Region of Risks?: Socio-Economic Situation of Western Balkans Countries

Matteo Bonomi

DOC Research Institute, Berlin

[confirmed]

Real or Exaggerated? Influence and Impact of External Powers (Turkey, Russia, the Gulf Region, etc.)

Igor Novaković

Research Director, International and Security Affairs Centre (ISAC), Belgrade

[confirmed]

Crooks and Criminals: Organized Crime at the Western Balkans Region

Srečko Latal

Regional Editor, Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) and Bosnia Herzegovina Director at the think tank Social Overview Service (SOS), Sarajevo

[confirmed]

Moderation: **Tobias Flessenkemper** Senior Fellow and Balkans Project Director at the Centre International de Formation Européenne (CIFE), Nice; lecturer Universität zu Köln

[confirmed]

--- followed by plenary discussion ---

17:15 Coffee Break

17:30 **Scrutinizing the Western Balkans' Major Current and Future Challenges Continues**

18:30 Dinner

19:30 **AFTER DINNER TALK: 10 Years of Republic of Kosovo – Achievements, Challenges, Perspectives in the European Context**

Ulrike Lunacek

Former Vice President of the European Parliament (the Greens/EFA) and rapporteur of the European Parliament for Kosovo, Vienna

[confirmed]

--- followed by plenary discussion ---

21:00 Finale and Informal Come-Together

DAY 2

Tuesday 15 May 2018

8:15 Morning prayer (optional)

8:30 Breakfast

9:15 **CRUCIAL FIELDS FOR FUTURE EUROPEAN ACTION**

Putting Democracy and Reconciliation in Focus, Creating an Enabling Environment for Active Civil Society Engagement

The new EU strategy gives special attention to a number of crucial areas for action – among them reconciliation efforts, regional cooperation, the resolution of bilateral disputes, and sustainable democratization. However, apart from naming the region’s worrying trends and listing objectives and guidelines for future engagement, the document is only in parts outlining concert steps and detailed measures. In this program section, we will, on the one hand, evaluate in three panels the crucial areas of European engagement with the Western Balkans countries. On the other hand, we will try flesh out some concrete recommendations and suggestions for future European initiatives in the regions. Thereby we will give particular attention to the role of civil society engagement and a bottom-up approach of policy initiatives and institutional reforms. Regardless of whether it is about reconciliation, regional cooperation, or the promotion of democracy, building resilient societies and enabling active citizens involvement is regarded as one of the most crucial tasks of future European engagement with the region. How to create a bottom-up and inclusive approach in the action field of reconciliation, regional cooperation and democracy promotion that will win the hearts and minds of the people of the region?

CRUCIAL AREA FOR FUTURE ACTION I: MOVING BEYOND STABILITOCRACY
How to Promote Sustainable Democratic Change?

Srdjan Cvijić [confirmed]
Senior Policy Analyst, Open Society European Policy Institute, Brussels

Ariana Qosaj-Mustafa [confirmed]
Programme Director and Senior Researcher, Kosovar Institute for Policy Research and Development (KIPRED), Pristina

Bojan Elek [confirmed]
Researcher, Belgrade Centre for Security Policy

11:00 Coffee Break

11:30 **SPOTLIGHT II: THE “MACEDONIA MOMENT”**
A Blueprint for the Western Balkans?

In 2017, after national wide protests and the lingering danger of renewed ethnic and nationalist tensions, Macedonia – internationally called the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) – witnessed the replacement of an increasingly authoritarian and nationalist government by a new reform-oriented leadership open for civil society participation and is willing to become a committed democratic aspirant to the EU and NATO. Is this transformative moment highlighting that citizens engagement could be an important driver for change? Is the “Macedonia Moment” a blueprint for other parts of the Western Balkans?

Marko Trosanovski [confirmed]
President of the Institute for Democracy ‘Societas Civilis’ (IDSCS), Skopje

12:00	<p>SPOTLIGHT III: GERMANY’S ROLE IN THE REGION</p> <p>In his speech at the eight Aspen Southeast Europe Foreign Ministers’ Conference in May 2017, the German Foreign Minister, Sigmar Gabriel, called for more vigorous and visible actions in the Western Balkans. Highlighting the need for a more ambitious high-level support mechanism for the six non-EU Western Balkans countries – a “Berlin Process reloaded” – Mr. Gabriel said that “ it is in the interest of the countries of the Western Balkans as well as of the European Union to do everything to jointly adopt the right course again”. In light of this commitment, what has Germany done in the past? How is the current German engagement in the region? What could Berlin do in the future?</p> <p><i>Theresia Töglhofer</i> [confirmed] Associated Fellow, German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP), Berlin</p>
12:30	Lunch
14:00	<p>CRUCIAL FIELD OF ACTION II: FROM BILATERAL DISPUTES TO GOOD NEIGHBOURLY RELATIONS <i>How to Initiate Sustainable Regional Cooperation Among States and People?</i></p> <p><i>Marika Djolai</i> [confirmed] International Development Consultant and Social Inclusion Policy Analyst, Member of the Balkans in Europe Policy Advisory Group (BiEPAG), Sussex</p> <p><i>Đuro Blanuša</i> [confirmed] Secretary-General, Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO), Tirana</p> <p><i>Corina Startulat</i> [confirmed] Senior Policy Analyst at the European Policy Centre (EPC), Brussels</p>
15:30	Coffee and Cake
16:00	<p>CRUCIAL FIELD OF ACTION III: DEALING WITH THE PAST <i>How to Increase the Impact of Reconciliation and Transitional Justice Efforts?</i></p> <p><i>Gesa Bent</i> [confirmed] Project Advisor, Civil Peace Service Projects, Kurve Wustrow</p> <p><i>Carla Schraml</i> [confirmed] Integrative Mediator and Project Manager for CSSP’s Bosnia and Herzegovina Program, CSSP – Berlin Center for Integrative Mediation, Berlin</p> <p><i>Zarije Seizović</i> [confirmed] Professor of Political System of Bosnia and Herzegovina, International Humanitarian Law and Law of Defence and Security at the Faculty of Political Sciences of the University of Sarajevo</p>
17:30	Coffee Break
18:00	<p>SPOTLIGHT IV: INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUES An Instrument for Trust Building and Reconciliation?</p> <p>In some – certainly, not in all conflicts – religion and religious actors had a positive impact in terms of peacebuilding. How is the situation at the Western Balkans? What role did religion play in the region’s conflicts of the past? Do current ethnic and nationalist tensions have a religious dimension? Are inter-religious dialogues instruments for trust building and</p>

reconciliation?

Imam Vahidin Omanović

Director of the Center for Peacebuilding in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sanski Most

[confirmed]

18:30 Dinner

19:30 OPEN CHAT CIRCLES: **TALKS & DRINKS**

What Keeps You up at Night When You Think About the Western Balkans?

Circle I Cooperation and Disputes in the Western Balkans Region (Room A)

Circle II Europe's Role (Room C)

Circle III Economic and Social Challenges (Room E)

Circle IV Open Chat (Room B)

21:00 Finale and Informal Come-Together

DAY 3

Wednesday 16 May 2018

8:15 Morning prayer (optional)

8:30 Breakfast

10:00 CONCLUDING DISCUSSION:

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED? WHAT HAVE WE MISSED?

With Perspectives...

...from the Academia World

Adis Merdzanovic

Research Fellow, South East European Studies at Oxford (SEESOX), St. Antony's College, University of Oxford

[confirmed]

...from the Worlds of Politics

Dennis Gratz

President of the Main Board of the Socio-liberal party Naša Stranka, representative in the House of Representatives of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo

[confirmed]

...from the World of Media

Rüdiger Rossig

Head of Department and Regional Coordinator for South Eastern Europe at Deutsche Welle, Bonn

[invited]

11:00 Coffee Break

11:15 Concluding Panel continues

12:20 **Words of Farewell**

Tobias Flessenkemper

Board Member of the Southeast Europe Association (Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft – SOG), Senior Fellow and Balkans Project Director at the Centre International de Formation Européenne (CIFE), and Lecturer Universität zu Köln

Thomas Müller-Färber

Program Director, International Affairs, Protestant Academy Loccum

12:30 Goodbye Lunch

13:20 Departure Shuttle bus to Wunstorf train station

German-English translation will be constantly provided during panel discussion

This is a preview program and as such may be subject to change

Inquiries about participation to: Miriam Kamber, Project Manager

T: + 49 (0) 57 66 81 113 • F: + 49 (0) 5766 81 900 • E: Miriam.Kamber@evlka.de

Inquiries about the program to: Dr. Thomas Müller-Färber, Program Director

T: + 49 (0) 57 66 81 109 • F: + 49 (0) 5766 81 900 • E: Thomas.Mueller-Faerber@evlka.de

FORMAT:

Conferences at the Protestant Academy Loccum provide forums for open-minded discussions on urgent and pressing issues. They endeavor to establish dialogues between actors from different fields and backgrounds with the intention to provide impetus to “think out of the box”. The Protestant Academy Loccum hosts meetings over 48 hours/two nights for between 70 to 90 participants and is open to those with the expertise to share or an interest in the subject. To allow a free exchange of thoughts, simultaneous translation will be provided throughout the conference (English <> German). The conference is off-camera and off-record and strictly follows the Chatham House rules which allow participants to use the information received freely but neither reveal the identity nor the affiliation of the speakers or any other participant.

VENUE:

The village of Loccum (about 3000 inhabitants) is part of the small rural town Rehburg-Loccum. It is situated about 50 kilometers west of Hannover in Lower Saxony/Germany, and about 10 kilometers west of the “Steinhuder Meer”, the largest lake in Northwestern Germany. Loccum is famous for its medieval Cistercian monastery, and the Protestant Academy as a place for highly regarded conferences and seminars of public interest.

ACCOMMODATION:

Participants who are not listed in the program as speakers are welcomed to lodge at the conference venue (<http://www.tagungsstaette-loccum.de/>). For a two-night stay including all meals (breakfast, lunch, cake, dinner) we charge 195 Euro. For students, we offer a reduced fee of 75 Euro.

Conference fees are to be paid in cash at the check-in or transferred in advance to: Kirchliche Verwaltungsstelle, IBAN DE36 5206 0410 0000 0060 50, Evangelische Bank eG Kassel, SWIFT/BIC GENODEF1EK1. When choosing transferal, please include your name and the reference number **11587**.

REGISTRATION:

Please register with name, email, address, institution/organization by e-mail to Miriam Kamber (Miriam.Kamber@evlka.de). Registrations will be confirmed by email. Should you need to cancel, please contact us as soon as possible.

TRAVEL:

Loccum is located 50 kilometers west of Hanover in Lower Saxony, Germany. The nearest airport is Hanover (HAJ). The nearest train stations are in Wunstorf, Stadthagen, Minden and Nienburg. Detailed travel directions will be sent to all registered participants.

SHUTTLE BUS:

(Please book a seat in advance!): Monday, 14 May, departing in Wunstorf train station at 12:20 (please follow the station exit marked "ZOB"). Friday, 17 June, arriving in Wunstorf at approx. 14:00.

It is funded by: #



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