

THE WESTERN BALKANS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION – GROWING TOGETHER OR MOVING APART?

Challenges, Opportunities, and Perspectives

MONDAY, 30 MARCH - WEDNESDAY, 1 APRIL 2020
Protestant Academy Loccum

The future development of the Western Balkans including the region's integration into the EU was uncertain for a while. The veto by the French President Emmanuel Macro against the opening of accession negotiations with Albania and Northern Macedonia has further complicated the situation. 20 years after the Zagreb summit in 2000 which provided perspective of European integration and after decades of profound crises in the region, the future of the Western Balkans seems less certain than a few years ago. Revanchism, ethno-nationalism, and authoritarian developments risk being the key feature of the 2020s. Brain drain and information disorder weaken perspectives of future prosperity.

While taking into account the numerous challenges within and among the countries of the region and with and inside the European Union, this conference has a forward-looking approach and aims to develop innovative ideas which might help to stop that the Western Balkans and the EU are growing further apart. Together with practitioners and experts coming from the countries of the region and across the EU, we will address three intertwined challenges – namely authoritarian rule, ongoing ethno-political cleavages, and the search for a new European approach for the region. Jointly we will try to develop new opportunities and perspectives on possible solutions.

The conference committee:

Thomas Müller-Färber, International and Security Affairs, Protestant Academy Loccum

Tobias Flessenkemper, Member of the Board of the Southeast Europe Association (Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft – SOG)

Conference languages are German and English with simultaneous interpretation. The Conference is held under the Chatham House Rule.

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THIS CONFERENCE IS FUNDED BY:



Gefördert durch:

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Entwicklungsdienstes

**bpb: Anerkannter
Bildungsträger**

DAY 1

MONDAY 30 MARCH 2020

13:30

REGISTRATION

Guests who travel from abroad are welcomed to arrive the day before (Sunday, 29 March 2020)

14:00

WORDS OF WELCOME

Thomas Müller-Färber, International and Security Affairs, Protestant Academy Loccum

Tobias Flessenkemper, Board Member of the Southeast Europe Association (Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft – SOG), Düsseldorf/Belgrade

14:15

KEY-NOTE LECTURE | The Western Balkans in the European Union: A difficult relationship

Between “enlargement fatigue” and “accession refusal”, the Western Balkans cannot be detached from the European Union as a region, yet today the perspectives of “togetherness” seem more elusive than 2003 when the EU promised their full integration. This key-note lecture will introduce the range of issues, opportunities, and challenges of a difficult relationship and provide an overview of current and historic developments that shape the Western Balkans predicament. How will this region, surrounded by EU Member States, find its place in the political, cultural, social, economic and institutional construction of Europe?

Florian Bieber, Professor of Southeast European History and Politics and Director of the Centre for Southeast European Studies at the University of Graz, Vienna (confirmed)

15:30

COFFEE & CAKE

16:00

PANEL DISCUSSION | The Western Balkans in the European Union: What next?

The panel discussion will allow for a panoramic overview on the ideas, initiatives, and concerns regarding the immediate future of the region and Europe as a whole. The purpose is to identify possible pathways for new, alternative or forgotten approaches to overcome the current political and diplomatic gridlocks, to reduce elements of state capture, from which the region is suffering, and to develop positive visions for European “togetherness” against the backdrop of a continental surge of revanchism, glorification of war criminals and abusive use of history. In that sense, this discussion shall nurture the work of the second day of the conference and allows to test ways out of ossified structures of thinking about Europe and the Balkans.

Wojciech Kowalski, Advisor, Western Balkans Strategy, DG NEAR, European Commission, Brussels (invited)

Florent Marciacq, French-Austrian Centre for Rapprochement in Europe (CFA / ÖFZ), Vienna (confirmed)

Simonida Kacarska, Director, European Policy Institute, Skopje (confirmed)

Jasmin Mujanovič, Assistant Professor of Political Science and Policy Studies at Elon University and author of the book “Hunger and Fury: The Crisis of Democracy in the Balkans”, Elon/Sarajevo (confirmed)

Moderator: *Christian Hagemann*, Deputy Director, Southeast Europe Association (Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft – SOG), Munich

17:00

Coffee & Tea Break

17:15

Continued plenary discussion

18:30

DINNER

19:30

EVENING WITH THE PRESS | What Keeps You Up at Night When You Think About the Western Balkans?

Representatives from the press who focus their career first and foremost on the Western Balkans share their views and perspectives on the region. What keeps them up at night when they think about the Western Balkans?

What is it that most people don't understand about the region? What is for them still puzzling about the Western Balkans? What are the most crucial questions for the future? What can Western Europe learn from the Western Balkans? Etc.?

Adelheid **Wölfl**, Western Balkan Correspondent, Der Standard, Vienna (confirmed)

Norbert **Mappes-Niediek**, Free Journalist and writer focusing on South Eastern Europe, Graz (confirmed)

Moderator: Tobias **Flessenkemper**, Board Member of the Southeast Europe Association (Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft – SOG), Düsseldorf/Belgrade

21:00 FINALE AND COME-TOGETHER

DAY 2 TUESDAY 31 MARCH 2020

08:30 BREAKFAST

IDEA WORKSHOP

The purpose of this workshop is to identify innovative ideas to address three intertwined challenges that the Western Balkans are facing – authoritarian rule, ongoing ethno-political cleavages, and the search for a new European approach for the region. The idea workshop will be structured by plenary input sessions and breakout phases (e. g. Forums) in order to allow more detailed discussions. The goal is that we arrive in the end at a set of presentable recommendations and appealing questions that need to be addressed in the future.

FORUM I – **Europe: On A Search for A New EU Approach Western Balkans**

The European approach towards Western Balkan is in crisis. Emmanuel Macron's veto to the starting of accession talks with Albania and North Macedonia brought the EU's strategy to transform the region to a sharp end and raised the question how the Union and its Member States wish to go on in the future. What were the strengths and the flaws of the old EU-approach? How would a new strategy of the EU and its Member states towards the region look like? Will it be as powerful as the accession tool?

FORUM II – **“Togetherness”: Dialogue and Reconciliation**

Despite numerous attempts to reconcile, many intra- and inter-societal conflicts from the 1990s wars remain virulent in the Western Balkans. They slow down economic progress, burden the political sphere, and were often named as one of the major obstacles to the European integration of the region. Considerable efforts were undertaken in the past in this fields with projects and initiatives reaching from transitional justice, cultural exchanges, youth contacts, dealing with the past projects, and bilateral disputes reconciliation. What impact did these efforts have and what should be done in the future to overcome ethno-political cleavages?

FORUM III – **Democracy: Strengthening Democratic Change**

The recent EU strategy for the Western Balkans issued in Spring 2018 makes clear that the countries of the region “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“. Authoritarian control of the states and societies in the region are widespread in the region and they have become more severe in recent years – apart from some positive development such as in Northern Macedonia. What can be done to promote sustainable democratic change?

9:15 PROCEDURAL INTRODUCTION | **What Will Happen During the Idea-Workshop**

9:30 PLENARY IDEA SPEED-DATING | **Input Phase: Swift Introduction of Curcial Ideas Relevant to the**

Topics of the Three Discussion Forums

How is the current debate? What are the ideas that are currently discussed? What proposals should be addressed by whom in the future?

FORUM I – Europe: *Adnan Ćerimagić*, European Stability Initiative (ESI), Berlin (confirmed)

FORUM II – “Togetherness”: *Mario Mažić*, Youth Initiative for Human Rights (YIHR) and Board Member of the Humanitarian Law Center Kosovo, Zagreb (confirmed)

FORUM III – Democracy: *Max Brändle*, Head, Friedrich Ebert Foundation’s office in Serbia, Begrade (confirmed)

10:30

BREAKOUT ENRICHMENT SESSION | Commenting and Discussion the Proposals Made During the Idea-Speed-Dating Session

FORUM I – Europe

(Room #)

Adnan Ćerimagić, European Stability Initiative (ESI), Berlin (confirmed)

Aleksandra Tomanci, Executive Director of the European Fund for the Balkans, Belgrade (confirmed)

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

Peter Grk, National Coordinator for Western Balkans, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Slovenia, Slovenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Secretary-General, Bled Strategic Forum Ljubljana (confirmed)

Moderation: *tbc*.
Rapporteur: *tbc*.

FORUM II – “Togetherness”

(Room #)

Mario Mažić, Youth Initiative for Human Rights (YIHR) and Board Member of the Humanitarian Law Center Kosovo, Zagreb (confirmed)

Đuro Blanuša, Secretary-General, Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO), Tirana (confirmed)

Marika Djolai, European Center for Minority Issues (ECMI) Flensburg (confirmed)

Saranda Bogujevci, Activist, Member of Parliament in Republic of Kosovo, Co-artist of Bogujevci/Visual History Exhibition, Priština/Manchester (confirmed)

Christoph Lüttmann, Managing Director, CSSP, Berlin Center for Integrative Mediation, Berlin (confirmed)

Moderation: *Thomas Osorio*, University Leuven (confirmed)
Rapporteur: *tbc*.

FORUM III – Democracy

(Room #)

Max Brändle, Head, Friedrich Ebert Foundation’s office in Serbia, Begrade (confirmed)

Corina Stratulat, Head of European Politics and Institutions Programme and Senior Policy Analyst, European Policy Center, Brussels (confirmed)

Ardian Hackaj, Director, Shteti Web, Cooperation and Development Institute (CDI), Tirana (confirmed)

Siddharth Tripathi, Postdoctoral Fellow Willy Brandt School of Public Policy, University of Erfur and Visiting Fellow at German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), Erfurt/Berlin (confirmed)

Christian Castagna, Director, VoisinageS (NeighbourhoodS), Paris (confirmed)

Moderation: *Valeska Esch*, Aspen Institute Germany, Berlin (confirmed)
Rapporteur: *tbc*.

11:15

Coffee & Tea Break

11:30

Discussion in the 3 Forums continues

12:30

LUNCH

- 14:00** | **PLENARY SESSION | What to Do? How to Move on With the European Policy Towards the Western Balkans?**
- The purpose of this panel is to provide insight into the current policy debate about the future approach towards the six Western Balkan states. What will be Brussels' approach towards the region in the years to come? What does Western Europe want from the region – what are its interests? What are possible scenarios for the future development of the region if there will be no promising approach by the EU? What are the entry points for a policy debate about a strategy for the future? Etc.?
- Majlinda Bregu*, Secretary General, Regional Cooperation Council, Sarajevo (confirmed)
Alain Richard, Member of the French Senat (La République en Marche) former French Minister of Defense and , Paris (invited)
Damir Arnaut, Member of the House of Representatives (Naša stranka political party), Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo (confirmed)
Michael Brand, Member of the German Parliament (CDU), Human Rights Committee, Berlin/Fulda (confirmed)
Josip Juratović, Member of the German Parliament (SPD), Spokesperson of the Subcommittee on Crisis Prevention and Conflict Resolution and Member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Berlin/Heilbronn (confirmed)
- Moderation: *Thomas Müller-Färber*, Protestant Academy Loccum
- 15:00** | **COFFEE & CAKE**
- 15:30** | **Plenary Session continues**
- 16:15** | **Coffee & Tea Break**
- 16:30** | **BREAKOUT SESSION | Writing Session – 3 Future Questions and 3 Recommendations**
- Based on the insights and knowledge you gathered throughout the day your group is asked to write (on a pinboard) about the topic of your discussion forum at least three policy recommendations and three questions that need to be addressed in the future. Together with the results you have collected in your discussion forum throughout the day, we will ask you to present the results of your writing session tomorrow morning at the plenary session.
- 18:30** | **DINNER**
- 19:30** | **CULTURE TALK | Culture, Arts, and Politics**
- How do themes like the disappointed aspiration for the European community, the ongoing rejection by the West or the labeling as a crisis region resonate in art and culture? What can we learn from this view? The purpose of this evening talk is to change perspective and try to look upon the region from another point of view.
- Alida Bremer*, Author, Translator, Editor, and Literary Scholar, Münster (confirmed)
Miranda Jakiša, Professor at the Department of Slavonic Studies, University of Vienna (confirmed)
- 21:00** | **FINALE AND INFORMAL COME-TOGETHER**

DAY 3
WEDNESDAY 1 APRIL 2020

- 08:30** | **BREAKFAST**

09:30	PLENARY DISCUSSION Reports from the Discussion Forums – Presenting the Results of the Writing Session --- followed by plenary discussion ---
10:30	Coffee & Tea Break
10:45	CONCLUDING PLENARY SESSION Way Ahead: Key Take Aways of the Conference and What Shall We Do With it? <i>Christiane Hullmann</i> , Deputy Head of Department, Western Balkans, German Federal Foreign Office, Berlin (confirmed) <i>Gordan Bakota</i> , Ambassador of the Republic of Croatia in Germany, Berlin (confirmed) <i>Vedran Džihič</i> , 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) <i>Peter Grk</i> , National Coordinator for Western Balkans, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Slovenia, Slovenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Secretary-General, Bled Strategic Forum Ljubljana (confirmed) Moderation: <i>Thomas Müller-Färber</i> , Protestant Academy Loccum
12:30	GOODBYE LUNCH
13:20	DEPARTURE Shuttle Service to Wunstorf Train Station & Hannover Airport (HA)

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 60 to 80 participants and is open to those with the expertise to share or an interest in the subject. .

ARRIVAL/DEPARTURE:

Loccum is located 50 kilometers west of Hanover in Lower Saxony, Germany. The nearest airport is Hanover (HA). 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, 30 March, departing in Wunstorf train station at 12:30 (please follow the station exit marked “ZOB”). Wednesday, 1 April arriving in Wunstorf at approx. 14:00 p.m. For those who arrive at Hannover Airport, we organize individual pick-up.

ACCOMMODATION & FEE

Participants who are not listed as speakers are welcomed to lodge at the conference venue (<http://www.tagungsstätte-loccum.de/>).

- For a two-night stay including all meals (breakfast, lunch, cake, dinner) we charge **210 Euro**.
- For students, we offer a reduced fee of **100 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 **13203**

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. Cancellations after March 8 2020 will cause compensation of 25 % of the fee.