

International Seminar „European Union and Western Balkans“

11th – 16th July 2011,
Hotel Sipan, Luka Sipanska, Island Sipan, Croatia¹

From 11th to 16th July 2011 the Atlantic Council of Croatia (Zagreb), the Center for International Studies, the International Institute for Peace and the Renner Institut jointly organised an international seminar on the topic “European Union and the Western Balkans” on the island Sipan in Croatia. The conference was attended by approximately 20 students from the Western Balkan region and several experts on the region and the EU were invited as speakers.

Tuesday, 12th July

After the official opening on 11th July by **Prof. Radovan Vukadinović** (president of the Atlantic Council of Croatia), **Dr. h.c. Peter Schieder** (president of the International Institute for Peace) and **Mag. Karl Duffek** (director of Renner Institut), the first panel on the topic “Security and Peace in Europe” started on 12th July.



In his introduction **Prof. Vukadinović** elaborated on the idea behind the current seminar, which takes place already since several years. One of its aims, besides deepening the knowledge of the discussed topics, is to bring together students of several countries of the Western Balkans in order to encourage dialogue between different nationalities. The already traditional simulation, a kind of role game in which students have to represent the opinions of different state and non-state actors of the international community, often leads to fruitful and interesting results, which are also forwarded to NATO-related organisations.



Mag. Duffek spoke about “Social Peace and Democracy” in the Austrian and the European context. He summarised the evolvement of social democracy in Austria since its beginnings and the development of the concept of social partnership. As the state was more or less controlled by two dominant parties (Social Democrats and Conservatives) this led to criticism in the 1970ies and the upcoming of the Green Party and the Freedom Party. Although the democratic system in Austria ensured social peace for a long time, several developments throughout the last years led to a high level of disappointment among the population, a low election participation, increasing criticism of the EU as well as the rise of right-wing parties, which pointed out the deficiencies of the system.

The increasing EU-criticism stems especially from the illusion that the welfare state would go on forever and from too high expectations of the EU, which is just the sum of its member-states. Furthermore many nation-states are hesitant to give up parts of their sovereignty to the European Union, which also resulted in certain inefficiencies in combating the financial crises (for example in Greece). According to Duffek the introduction of a

¹ Report and photos by Mag. Georg Leitner, International Institute for Peace

financial transaction tax would be of great importance. More important than that, the EU has to look at the concerns of its citizens and maintain social peace, otherwise populists take over and increasingly threaten democracy. It is also difficult to craft a common foreign policy in the EU because of the different national interests. What is more, the EU-enlargement was maybe done too fast.

Mag. Peter Stania (director of the International Institute for Peace) pointed out the problem, that the citizens of the EU were not asked about the latest EU-enlargement. **Mag. Karin Scheele** (Member of Government of Lower Austria) remarked, that this kind of direct democracy is also not practised in Austria. **Duffek** replied, that the EU can't make a referendum about everything and that there is a democratic legitimacy of decisions through the elected parties. According to **Prof. Lidija Čehulić-Vukadinović**, it would be important for Croatia to know if the European monetary union is going to sustain. **Duffek** regards the proposal to establish a separate Euro zone as very dangerous. Nevertheless the recent example of Greece shows the solidarity of the EU with one of its member-states, but the question is how far this solidarity is going in the future.



Dr. Schieder elaborated on the “Future and Significance of Neutrality” and referred especially to the example of neutrality in Austria. As the concept of neutrality is often looked down upon, Schieder remarked that maybe neutrality is as much a relict of the Cold War as NATO. In Austria the concept of neutrality is historically unique and can't really be compared to other models (like for example in Switzerland). After World War II the concept of “permanent neutrality” was installed in Austria and was a good model during the time of the Cold War, but after the EU-accession of Austria it has been transformed. The current concept of neutrality prohibits a NATO-membership, but not the cooperation with it (e.g. in the framework of the “Partnership for Peace”). Furthermore foreign military bases must not be installed on Austrian territory. Finally, Austria must not participate in a war, except it is mandated by the UN or is an act of self-defence according to Art. 51 of the UN-Charter. Therefore Austria's neutrality is also compatible with its UN-membership. The EU-treaty of Lisbon also includes the submission of the EU under the UN-charter. If the EU would defend itself this would also mean defending Austria.

When the concept of neutrality is criticized, it is often neglected that it doesn't exclude solidarity with other countries and organisations, e.g. in the field of crises assistance or in the framework of IFOR and SFOR. Currently more than 1000 troops are active in international peacekeeping missions. Since the 1960ies Austria has participated in about 45 international missions. There is also a cooperation with NATO against terrorism and even acts of peace enforcement are carried out in the framework of the “Partnership for Peace”.

About 70 to 80% of the Austrian population are in favour of neutrality and a full-fledged NATO-membership is not considered to be a welcome option. Furthermore Vienna, which hosts several international organisations such as the UN and the OPEC, has a tradition in serving as a place of meeting and mediation. The concept of neutrality was even presented to the GUAM-countries. In conclusion Schieder promotes a model of neutrality which stands for more international solidarity, active participation in peace operations which are backed by the UN, and the role as a negotiator in conflicts.



Mr. sc. Filip Dragovic (MUP RH) informed about “Cooperation and Security Institutions” in Croatia. As there are always 2 sides of the perception of the police, he tries to promote the positive aspects such as its role in Iraq and Afghanistan. On a European level the countries are confronted with a series of threats like terrorism, organised crime and since recently also cybercrime. Therefore the perception of security is also changing, for example because of illegal migration. Dragovic mentioned Europol and Frontex as specialized law enforcement agencies

that play an important role in Europe.

Furthermore he considers the police to be more capable of winning the “hearts and minds” of the people in conflict regions than the military. Since 2004 the Croatian police is sent to missions abroad and the “Department for EU integration and peacekeeping missions” was established. There is also an international cooperation with e.g. Interpol and Europol. Moreover Croatia is about to join the trilateral center in Dolga Vas, in which Slovenia, Austria and Hungary work together and administer a common database, in order to make custom controls more efficient.

Concerning illegal migration and crime he considers it as a main responsibility of the media and politicians not to over-exaggerate these threats. Dragovic concludes that the police should be more on the side of the citizens and that the security concept and the corresponding infrastructure have to change.

In the evening session **Dr. Sergei Konoplyov** (Director of the Ukraine Program, Harvard Kennedy School) and **Elaine Papoulias** (Director of Kokkalis Program on Southeastern and East – Central Europe, Harvard Kennedy School) spoke on the subject of “US Policy and Southeast Europe”.



Dr. Konoplyov made a few comments about the relations between the US and the Balkans from a historical perspective. The “Fourteen Points”-Program, which was coined by Woodrow Wilson in 1918 and outlined a vision of post-war Europe after World War I, strongly influenced the development of the Western Balkans. After the Cold War it was difficult for the US to find a clear position towards this region. The “Clinton doctrine”, which aimed at “maintaining international stability”, was then applied in the Balkans in form of the military intervention of NATO in Serbia in 1999. Under president

George W. Bush the US-policy towards the Balkans was downgraded, especially because its attention was drawn to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. In the meantime, the influence of Russia in Serbia and Montenegro is still very high. When speaking about the Balkans, Konoplyov maintains that it is important not only to see the US as a major actor, but also to look at the increasing role of the EU in this region.



Director Papoulias spoke about the crisis of the Euro and the current financial situation in Greece. She outlined 3 sorts of crises that not only affect Greece, but also the European Union in general: a crisis of leadership, an international and a political crisis. Therefore some of the main problems these actors are facing are not only of financial nature. Papoulias calls for systematic reforms and for solutions for other poor countries of the European Union. She regards the problems in Greece, among other reasons, as a product of false privatisation and criticizes, that the Greek state didn't know

how many people it actually employed. As it is difficult to introduce taxes overnight an appropriate means to tackle the financial problems in Greece might be the further development of its exports.

Wednesday, 13th July

The main topic on Wednesday was “Southeast Europe and EU-enlargement” and included discussions about the EU-entry of Croatia and experiences in Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina.



Prof. Dr. Čehulić-Vukadinović (Vice-President of the Atlantic Council of Croatia) gave a broad historical overview of the developments in Southeast Europe over the course of the last decades. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the wars in the Balkans in the 1990ies shaped the further development of the Balkan countries. In the aftermath of the wars the “Stabilisation and Association Agreement” between the EU and the Western Balkans was initiated. According to Čehulić-Vukadinović, the first step for the countries of Southeast Europe should be to become member of

NATO and then member of the European Union. Membership in NATO begins with the “Partnership for Peace”, continues with the “Membership Action Plan” and then leads to a full-fledged membership. The steps to become a member of the European Union are: “Stabilisation and Association Agreement”, candidate, negotiation, and member. The different Balkan states have a different status concerning EU and NATO membership; Romania and Bulgaria for example joined NATO in 2004 and the European Union in 2007.



Dr. Olja Injac (UDG, Podgorica) elaborated on the current situation in Montenegro, which became independent in 2006. According to Injac the country still needs to meet more EU-requirements, e.g. concerning the fight against crime, the implementation of institutional reforms and the fulfilment of the necessary recommendations.



Mag. Mladen Filipovic (first secretary, Permanent Mission of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the United Nations Office at Vienna, OSCE and other International Organizations in Vienna) gave a presentation on “The Euro-Atlantic Integration through Economic Reform” in Bosnia and Herzegovina. After the war in the 1990ies Austria was the biggest investor in Bosnia and opened many banks in the region. Still the infrastructure in the country needs to be improved and the global financial crises also had a negative impact.

People in Bosnia often don’t declare their income in order to keep more money, which poses a big problem for the public sector. Filipovic highlighted the importance of local authorities which can provide services and jobs, are flexible and can also apply for EU funds. He is optimistic about an EU-membership of Bosnia in the future, but maintains that the country first needs a functioning government. Another problem is the widespread corruption. Filipovic evaluates the influence of the European Union as positive, but although money from the EU is available sometimes it is not efficiently spent on necessary projects.



Mag. Scheele (Member of Government of Lower Austria) spoke about the European foreign relations towards Africa and outlined the major problems the continent is facing nowadays. Increasing climate change leads to desertification and drought and political conflicts are prevailing. Concerning the trade policy the subsidised exports from the EU to Africa pose a big problem as they harm local economies. Therefore Scheele advocates the stop of European protectionism. Another important aspect is the fight against corruption and the implementation of good governance. As Africa is inhabited by the youngest population worldwide education projects concerning sexual health are essential. Scheele considers development through international financial institutions to be more effective than bilateral help. Nevertheless African countries need to be more represented in these institutions.

Thursday, 14th July

On Thursday Europe and its foreign relations were discussed. **Dr. h.c. Schieder** commented on the European policy towards Asia and mentioned in this regard the different programmes for the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Black Sea/Caspian Sea region. Concerning the relations to China there are diverse positions and no common European policy exists, maybe only in the field of environment a similar approach can be determined. On the other hand the United States haven't got a coherent policy towards China either. The EU supports IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons) and uprooted people in Asia and also the MDGs (Millenium Development Goals) are an important issue.



Mag. Stania elaborated on the European relations towards Latin America, but first of all talked about the financial crises in Europe and the Arab Spring. The economic crises led to increasing unemployment especially among young people (in Spain more than 46% of the young population are unemployed). Furthermore nationalism and xenophobia increased, as for example the re-introduction of border controls on the Danish border shows. Also the 25000 refugees from the Arab Spring that now want to come to Europe seem to be a "problem" for the European states, but as about 250000 Hungarians fled to Austria in 1956 as a result of the Hungarian Revolution they were welcome. Stania also pointed out a double standard exercised by several European countries, which on the one hand talk about the importance of human rights but on the other hand supported dictators in Arab countries.

Concerning the relations between EU and Latin America several European countries confront Latin American countries with human rights issues and are in this regard hiding behind the US. But it must be considered that the US in the 1970ies supported several bloody dictators in Latin America and even nowadays also Europe still has democratic deficiencies (like the policy of Berlusconi in Italy shows). Therefore Stania pleads for a discussion among equal partners and demands that the EU should engage more actively in Latin America.



Dr. sc. Gordan Grlić Radman (permanent representative of the Republic of Croatia to the Danube Commission in Budapest, Secretary of the Danube Commission) presented the EU strategy for the Danube region, which aims to increase social cohesion and tackle problems in this part of Europe. The Danube region is culturally and linguistically very diverse, encompasses 14 countries and is inhabited by about 150 million people. The Danube Commission was initially founded in 1856 in order to facilitate free navigation along the

Danube. Nowadays the EU and the Danube Commission try to encourage more people in the EU to speak foreign languages and to speak at least 2 additional languages in addition to the mother tongue. The EU also aims to make discussions in EU institutions possible in different languages.



In the evening session **Ambassador Prof. Dr. Istvan Gyarmati** (President of International Centre for Democratic Transition (ICDT) and Tom Lantos Institute) delivered a Hungarian view on the Western Balkans in his presentation and commented on several global political developments. Because of globalization processes mass production is not limited by national boundaries anymore, which is one of the reasons why WTO and EU were founded. Therefore powerful global actors like China now invest in Africa, but also in Hungary. According to Gyarmati, China will become a

more open and democratic society due to the advancement of the information age.

Concerning the situation in the Western Balkans Gyarmati points out that nation building processes in Europe took several hundred years (like e.g. in France), therefore one can't expect countries like Afghanistan to become democracies in just 5 years. The nation building projects in the Western Balkans are "doomed to succeed", but the Dayton agreement needs to be revised as it still just a ceasefire agreement and no proper peace treaty. Albania is another challenge for the international community, as it is not sure which states might evolve out of the country in the future. The situation in Macedonia is often ignored although several years ago it was on the way to become a member state of the EU, a development which was – among other things – slowed down as a result of the Macedonian conflict with Greece. The example of Kosovo shows the problems of the Westphalian system of nations; furthermore does the recognition of Kosovo and Abkhazia by different states indicate that the recognition of states is often rather a political than a legal question. Gyarmati points out that Hungary has not done enough for the development of the Balkans yet and that it would be important to keep this region on the agenda of the EU.

As far as the European Union is concerned, Gyarmati considers the alienation of Turkey the biggest mistake of the EU in the 21st century. As a "protecting power" for the Bosniacs in Bosnia and due to its important role in the Caucasus, Turkey's influence is essential to solve the ethnic conflicts in these two regions. Therefore Turkey should be integrated and prepared to become a member of the EU. The European Union faces a crises of leadership, therefore Gyarmati proposes 2 steps to solve the problem: First of all a common economic, tax and fiscal policy needs to be build up, and only then can a common foreign and defense policy be implemented.

Friday, 15th July

In the morning a political role-play game called “simulation” was prepared by the students and executed under the supervision of Prof. Čehulić-Vukadinović. In the evening the representatives of the organising institutions officially closed the seminar and handed over the certificates to the participating students.