

Regional Cooperation and Regional Identity in the Western Balkans: Similarities and Differences

**Central European University, Budapest
Nádor utca 9, Monument Building, Popper Room
23 May (Monday) 2016**

Maintaining good neighborly relations and participating in regional cooperation, as explicit conditions for progress towards integration into the EU, is one of the most efficient tools in the hands of Brussels to support stability in the Western Balkans. With the aid of regional cooperation, the EU aims to foster a shared understanding within the region which should have a positive effect on the stabilization of political regimes in the area. Despite these efforts, the Western Balkan countries have not created a joint understanding or image of the region, have not agreed on what defines the region and where it belongs to, as some countries define themselves Central European or Mediterranean. The countries' own perception/image is rather diverging, which drives the region apart instead bringing it closer together. The search for national differences seems to be prioritized, as distinctiveness assists in the nation building process. However, the nation building process in the western Balkans is confronted with other national minorities, who feel to belong to another state. The EU attempted to overcome this problem by de-nationalizing EU member states by creating a European identity and by implementing border-free travel.

In the first panel, the speakers will examine the image construction and belonging issues, while the second panel will focus on specific events in the region which shape the identity. The final round-table discussion will gather all the speakers for a more informal discussion with a high participation of the audience.

09:15 – 09:40 Registration

09:40 – 10:00 Welcome remarks and introduction

John Shattuck, CEU President and Rector

Christina Griessler, Research Fellow for netPOL, Andrassy University Budapest

Péter Balázs, Director of CEU Center for European Neighborhood Studies (CENS)

10:00 – 11:45 Panel I. – Internal and external image of the Western Balkans

Chair: Péter Balázs, Director of CEU Center for European Neighborhood Studies (CENS)

Speakers:

Jelena Džankić, Research Fellow at the European University Institute in Florence

Anđelko Milardović, Professor and Senior Research Scientist, Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies in Zagreb and President of the Institute for European Studies and Globalization in Zagreb

Cvete Koneska, Senior Europe Analyst for Control Risks Group in London

Milena Dragičević Šešić, Professor of Cultural Policy, Cultural Management, Cultural and Media studies at the University of Arts in Belgrade

Commentator: Amila Emšo, International Relations MA student, CEU

11:45 – 12:45 Buffet lunch

12:45 – 14:30 Panel II. – Self-assessment about where the Western Balkans belongs: Case studies

Chair: Melani Barlai, Research Fellow for netPOL, Andrassy University Budapest

Speakers:

Illir Kalemaj, Assistant Professor of International Relations, Political Science and European Studies at the University of New York in Tirana

Christina Griessler, Research Fellow for netPOL, Andrassy University Budapest

Anastas Vangeli, Researcher, Graduate School for Social Research at the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN)

Hana Semanić, Research Fellow, CEU Center for European Neighborhood Studies (CENS)

Commentator: Adela Danaj, Political Science MA student, CEU

14:30 – 15:00 Coffee break

15:00 – 16:15 Round-table discussion

Chair: Sanja Tepavčević, Program Manager of the Frontiers of Democracy Initiative, CEU

All speakers are participating