



## Andrassy Forum for Western Balkan Studies, 26-27th March 2014

The first meeting of the **Andrassy Forum for Western Balkan Studies** was held at the Andrassy University Budapest on the 26th and 27th of March 2014. This two-day meeting brought together academic expertise from Germany and Austria, the Visegrad Four (V4) and the Western Balkan (WB) countries. The research focus of the forum is the relationship between Visegrad Four and Western Balkan states in the various processes of EU integration. The hosting institutions, as German-speaking university in Hungary, is acting upon its general objective to act as a bridging institution between the German speaking countries of Austria, Germany, Switzerland and South Tyrol and the Central European states, whereas in the frame of this project this function is extended to the states of the Western Balkan region.

The **First Networking Workshop** started off with a working session of the V4-partners in the project and colleagues from the Western Balkans, Austria and Germany. *Christopher Walsch* and *Christina Griessler* chaired the morning session, whereas Walsch presented some information on the Andrassy University Budapest and Griessler talked about the objectives of the current Visegrad-project. The session continued with introductions of all project partners and participants aiming to get to know the partners, their work and to get acquainted with their expertise. A "brainstorming" session to come up with some ideas for joint research projects, which shall guarantee the continuation of the network, concluded the morning session. The following institutions and participants took part at the meeting:

- **Andrassy University Budapest (AUB):** <http://www.andrassyuni.eu/>  
Participants / Organisation Team: *Ellen Bos, Christopher Walsch, Christina Griessler*
- **The Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM):** <http://www.pism.pl/>  
Participants: *Tomasz Żornaczuk, Anita Sobjak.*
- **Hungarian Institut for International Affairs (HIIA):**  
[http://www.hiia.hu/default\\_eng.asp](http://www.hiia.hu/default_eng.asp)  
Participant: *András Hettyey*
- **Association of International Affairs:** <http://www.amo.cz/?lang=en>  
Participant: *Pavel Danke*
- **Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association (SFPA):**  
<http://www.sfpa.sk/en/>  
Participant: *Tomáš Strážay*
- **University of Zagreb, Faculty of Political Sciences:** <http://www.fpzg.unizg.hr/>  
Participant: *Nataša Beširević*
- **Institute for Development and International Relations (IRMO):**  
<http://www.irmo.hr/en/>  
Participant: *Senada Šelo Šabić*



- **University of Sarajevo**, The Department of Political Sciences: <http://fjn.unsa.ba/bs/>  
Participant: *Ešref Kenan Rašidagić*
- **CEDEM - Centre for Democracy and Human Rights**: <http://www.cedem.me/>  
Participant: *Nenad Koprivica*
- **University of Pristina**: <http://www.uni-pr.edu/Ballina.aspx?lang=en-US>  
Participant: *Dashamir Berxulli*
- **Institute für Political and International Studies in Skopje**: <http://ispn.org.mk/>
- **South East European University in Tetovo, Faculty of Public Administration and Political Sciences, Macedonia**: <http://www.seeu.edu.mk/en/faculties/pa>  
Participant: *Sela Ylber*
- **Corvinus University Budapest**: <http://www.uni-corvinus.hu/>  
Participants: *Elia Gjini, Christopher Walsch*
- **The Babeş Boylai University, Cluj, Romania**: <http://www.ubbcluj.ro/en/>  
Participant: *Marc Stegherr*
- **netPOL – Network for Political Communication**: <http://netpol.at/>  
Participants: *Marc Stegherr, Christina Griessler*
- **Queen's University Belfast**: <http://www.qub.ie/>  
Participant: *Ada-Charlotte Regelmann*

In the afternoon of the 26 of March 2014 the meeting of the *Andrassy Forum for Western Balkans* continued with a number of presentations on the perspectives of the V<sub>4</sub>-states towards the Western Balkan and the countries the Western Balkan's perspective towards the European Union.

*Vedran Džihic* from the *Austrian Institute for International Affairs* in his presentation **The relationship between the Visegrad Four and the Western Balkans** addressed the necessity of cooperation between the states of the Western. Džihic argued that in this respect the V<sub>4</sub>-countries can be a role model for the EU-candidate countries in the Western Balkans. For the Western Balkan states to achieve a success story comparable to the V<sub>4</sub>-countries, it requires some creativity by the government of the respective states and a new branding, to bestow some positive image onto the region. *Nenad Koprivica* (*CEDEM - Centre for Democracy and Human Rights*) in his presentation **Perspectives of Montenegro towards the EU path** addressed the questions of how Montenegro can integrate into the EU and what are the drivers for integration? The divergent reactions by the EU Commission and the EU Council towards the ambitions of the countries in the region creates confusion. In the case of Montenegro the process of EU accession started after its independence from Serbia in 2006. In 2007 Montenegro signed the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) with the EU, which entered into force 2010. The negotiation for EU membership started in 2012. Koprivica stated that the transformative power of the EU worked for Montenegro, but does not always work, as e.g. Macedonia shows. *Ešref Kenan Rašidagić* (*University of Sarajevo*) in this presentation on **Bosnia in Dire Straits: Comprehensive Reform as**



**Prerequisite for the EU** looked at the lessons not learnt. As the recent demonstrations in Bosnia Herzegovina showed the role of the political elite does not have to be taken for granted. The country is bankrupt, as the political elite constantly borrowed money from the IMF to buy social peace, to increase salaries of public servants before elections and to assist wars veterans, however the money was not used to invest in the infrastructure or the economy. The protests changed the politicians attitudes, who started to talk to and engage with the people and. For the first time in twenty years they promised reforms. *Natasha Beširević (University Zagreb)* gave her paper on **The Croatian EU accession: a potential model for future EU enlargement?** The main question of the paper was, if the experience of Croatia's EU accession can be a role model for the other Western Balkans states. *Beširević* argued that the negotiation process has changed since the Visegrad-states entered the EU in 2004. Especially, the negotiation of Chapter 23, the rule of law and fundamental rights, are conducted more thoroughly than previously. The accession process became more longer, requires more painful reforms, EU conditions are more difficult to implement due to weaker state institutions, the political elite can't assume to win elections being pro-EU and the cost-benefit advantage is not always visible. As internal conditions are important in the accession process, Croatia cannot be compared with other countries in the region, it therefore cannot act as a role model.

On the 27 March in the morning the Workshop continued with presentations by *Dashir Berxulli (University of Pristina)*, *Elian Gjini (Corvinus University Budapest)* and *Senada Šelo Šabić* from the *Institute for Development and International Relations (IRMO)*. *Dashmir Berxulli's* presentation on **Linking research and the needs of a society in transition** looked at the role and the relevance of universities in the political transition process of Kosovo. The presentations tried to identify the link between the roles of the universities to the political transition process. *Berxulli* asked, if the democratic and economic development can be supported by research conducted in universities, or services the universities offer to the government or to political parties? *Berxulli* closed his presentation stating that the human factor is important for countries in transition. *Elian Gjini* in his presentation on **Albania's slow transformation: possible causes** claimed that history matters! There is a historical continuity, which impacts on the successes and failures of CEE developments, as it creates the initial conditions whereon West Europe and East Europe constituted itself. *Gjini* questioned, if there are any differences between Albania and the other parts of the Balkans? He claimed that the geographical area is defined by its contradiction created by the legacies of the imperial Ottoman State versus the European Monarchies. An individualistic development was not possible in the Ottoman Empire. The historical legacies created a situation where Albania's path towards EU integration is going to be distinct from the other countries in the region. *Senada Šelo Šabić's* presentation **The Croatian accession experience – (ir)relevant for further enlargement in the Western Balkans** focused on two key aspects of Croatian experience in acceding to the European Union: the rule of law and



the national consensus for EU membership. In relation to the accession process it can be observed that the rule of law has become the crucial aspect during the negotiation process. For Croatia the chapters 23 on “Judiciary and Fundamental Rights” and 24 “Justice, Freedom and Security” became the key issues during the negotiation process. Furthermore, the national consensus of the political elite, civil society and population helped to get into the EU. Šabić concluded that it is in the national interest of Croatia to support the EU enlargement in the Western Balkans. She claims that at the moment the accession experience of Croatia is the most relevant for the EU candidate countries in the region.

In conjunction with the Andrassy Forum for Western Balkan Studies the **Expert Session on Elite Systems in Southeast, Central and Eastern Europe** took place in the afternoon of 27 March. The organizers of the session, *Zoltán Tibor Pállinger* and *Ellen Bos* laid out that the region of Southeast, Central and Eastern Europe constitutes an excellent laboratory for comparative transformation elite research, as states located in this area are in various states of the transformation process. *Réka Várnagy* in her contribution **Women representation in political elites in Central and Eastern Europe** proved how limited women’s representation is in the region and discussed legal quotas, party rules and recruitment, and capacity development as strategies to ameliorate the situation. *Ada Regelmann* discussed **The role of political institutions in the creation of minority elites in post communist Central and Eastern Europe**. She drew on the two concepts of horizontal and vertical integration when analysing the cases of Slovakia and Estonia. *Helmut Fehr* introduced the public in **Elites in Central Eastern Europe** to perceptions of Czech and Polish politicians in a uniting Europe. In order to gain majorities, Fehr argued, these elites continuously focus on discourses that bolster the national consciousness of their electorates. *Sela Ylber’s* contribution **Mazedonien und die Europäische Union: Die Rolle der Eliten in diesem Prozess** reported about the repercussions of the seven year standstill of EU accession negotiations on the political culture and the political elites of the country.

After a coffee break *Imre Szilágyi* presented in his lecture **Slovenian and Croatian Elites** a longue durée view with national consciousness to be the prime driver of mass mobilisation on behalf of the elites, whether this occurred in royal or communist federal Yugoslavia or in the independent nation states thereafter. *Ralf Thomas Göllner* spoke about **Die politischen Eliten in Rumänien**. In this country it is particularly political and security service networks that dominated elite selection in the transition period, whereas later developments point to the fact that officeholders could consolidate their positions and that entrepreneurs and managers are today the greatest beneficiaries in the political system of Romania. *Umut Korkut* asked in his **Liberalization Troubles: Elitism, Populism, and Progressivism** whether liberalization troubles the courses of democratization and Europeanization. Korkut observes that the failure of economic liberalization place the achievements of political liberalization in peril and concludes that a new interpretation of liberalization should



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consider the adverse effects of elitism. Finally the word was with *Ellen Bos*, who summarized the major research project “Támop” at Andrassy University Budapest’s interdisciplinary Donau-Institut that was successfully realized in the course of 2012 and 2013. In her **Scientific Research at Andrassy University Budapest under the auspices of the TÁMOP-4.2.2/B-10/1-2010-0015 support scheme: a conclusion** she presented the major achievements: a two year budget of 240 million Hungarian Forint was used to hold 10 international conferences and 13 public lectures at the university and to organize 21 doctoral workshops. 24 six month research fellowships were given to junior and senior researchers, coming from Hungary and the wider Central European region, including the establishment of a working paper series that by early 2014 offers more than forty academic contributions in the fields of legal studies, political and economic science, European integration, and Central European history. A total of 91 scientific articles were published through TÁMOP. The support scheme gave a boost to research at Andrassy University Budapest and consolidated the reputation of its doctoral school.

*Christina Griessler*

*Christopher Walsch*