



The Balkans: Proximity and Neighbourhood

Workshop on 22-23 April 2022 Andrássy University Budapest

An interdisciplinary workshop that aims at approaching the region through various innovative perspectives to evaluate its subjective and objective position towards the rest of Europe.

The Balkan region is located in the neighbourhood of the European Union and shares a long history with the European continent. This workshop aims at freeing the Western Balkans from their image as an enclave for the purpose of offering a more constructive analysis and comprehensive European perspectives. Beyond the ‘Western Balkan’ label (‘WB’ label), there is a set of countries embedded in a larger macro- and interregional reality. Mapping the larger area of the enclave’s genuine *neighbourhood* will emphasise how *close* the WB are to their EU environment. This new conceptual framework furthermore serves to address recurring questions about integration and democracy. Proximity and neighbourhood as concepts bear the potential to rethink the region instead of excluding a part of it from our European interrogations.

The workshop will address a number of different areas of research:

1. **To broaden the perspective on the peninsula as a whole.** The focus is on multiple *boundaries*, not political borders. The European integration of the WB calls for leaving the pejorative label aside and rethinking the region’s practical and geopolitical location in terms of neighbourhood.
2. **New angles on the challenges of democracy.** Countries in the region aiming for EU membership are blocked at the threshold of EU integration and tend to turn into ‘stabilitocracies’. The export of the so-called Visegrád 4’s notion of ‘Europeanization’ promoting illiberal democracy, is reaching the Balkans through Hungary and Slovenia.
3. **Ethnicism** creates the illusion that a neighbouring land is ‘closer’ than the native, as with Serbia in the eyes of Bosnian Serbs. **Minority issues** raise the question of the very **quality of citizenship**. This concept deserves attention now that the relationship between the state and its citizens needs to be renegotiated.
4. To rethink the ‘Balkans’ beyond geopolitical labels and constructed fractures is a genuine contribution to the relaunch of the exhausted European project, as the regions can be seen as a **paradigm of Europe**.

This workshop is funded by the Hanns Seidel Stiftung and organised by the Andrassy Forum for Western Balkan Studies together with the Centre for the Research of Democracy (ZeDem) at Andrassy University Budapest and the Network for Political communication (netPOL). We wish to thank you for the generous financial and material support to make this workshop happen.

**Programme
(Draft 06.04.2022)**

VENUE:	Andrássy Universität Budapest Festetics Palota, 1088 Budapest, Pollack Mihály tér 3.
DATES:	22-23 April 2022
	22 April 2022
Venue	Andrássy Saal
08:45 - 09:00	Registration
09:00 – 09:10	Welcome by Rector Prof. Zoltán Tibor Pállinger, Andrassy University
09:10 - 9:15	Welcome by Hanns Seidel Stiftung
09:15 - 9:30	Welcome by Workshop Organizers
09:30 - 10:30	Keynote Speech Ivan Vejvoda, Acting Rector, IWM Vienna
10:30 – 11:00	Coffee Break
11:00 - 12:30	<i>Panel 1 – Reframing Regions and Narratives</i> Adam Bence Balazs, <i>The Western Balkans: A European story</i> Christina Griessler, <i>Why EU-Enlargement? A geo-political perspective</i> Dragan Prole, <i>The Balkanization of Europe? The short history of a metaphor</i>
12:30 - 14:00	Lunch Break
14:00 – 15:30	<i>Panel 2 – The Historical Background and Cultural Connections</i> Etleva Lala, <i>How medieval history acts as a bridge rather than an obstacle in the Balkans?</i> Marc-Stefan Peters, <i>In-between the Double Eagles – Russian and Austrian Influence on Serbs</i> Vedran Obućina, <i>Have a Good Life, Komišija! How to Engage Interfaith Cooperation in Local Bosnia and Herzegovina</i>
15:30 – 16:00	Coffee Break
16:00 - 18:00	Free time for networking
18:00 – 19:30	Evening Lecture: Maria Mexi, <i>Digital transformation and the platform economy - time for decent 'digiwork'</i>

23 April 2022

Venue

Lecturer Room 6 (Hörsaal 6)

09:30 – 11:00

Panel 3 – Democracy and Culture

Maria Mexi, *Democracy in retreat: what future for the Western Balkans?*

Frauke Seebass, *The ethno-territorial ordering in the context of the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue*

Christopher Walsch, *Ivo Andric and proximity*

11:00 – 11:30

Coffee Break

11:00 – 12:30

Discussion on continuation of the project

12:30

END