



9th INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EUROPEAN STUDIES

'EU Integration of Western Balkans: Dynamics and Challenges', Tirana, Albania

13-14 November 2024

EPOKA University, in Tirana, Albania, in partnership with the Magna Charta Observatory; the Center for Southeast European Studies, University of Graz, Austria; and Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Belgrade, Serbia, organizes the 9th International Conference on European Studies (ICES'24) titled 'EU Integration of Western Balkans: Dynamics and Challenges' in Tirana, Albania.

ICES'24 is organized within the framework of the Jean Monnet Module "EU Integration of Western Balkans: Patterns and Issues" coordinated by the Center for European Studies at EPOKA University and co-funded by the European Commission.

13 -14 November 2024

Tirana, Albania

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

13 NOVEMBER 2024

VENUE: TIRANA INTERNATIONAL HOTEL AND CONFERENCE CENTRE, CONSORTIUM ROOM

09:00 – 09:30 | PARTICIPANTS ARRIVAL AND REGISTRATION

09:30-10:00 | WELCOMING REMARKS AND SPEECHES

Dr. Jubjana Vila, ICES'24 Chair, Head of the Center for European Studies, EPOKA University

Prof. Dr. Ahmet Öztaş, Rector, EPOKA University

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Lisen Bashkurti, Dean of Faculty of Law and Social Sciences, EPOKA University

H. E. Mr. Reinout Vos, Ambassador, Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Albania

David J. Lock, Secretary General, Magna Charta Observatory

10:00-11:00 | KEYNOTE SPEECH

“IS THERE A FUTURE FOR ENLARGEMENT? HOW THE EU CAN REMAIN RELEVANT IN THE WESTERN BALKANS AND BEYOND”

Prof. Dr. Florian Bieber, Director of the Centre for Southeast, European Studies, University of Graz, Austria

11:00 – 11:30 | COFFEE BREAK

11:30 – 13:00 | PUBLIC PANEL

“STRENGTHENING OF JUDICIAL COOPERATION IN CRIMINAL MATTER IN THE LIGHT OF EU ENLARGEMENT”

Chair: **Assoc. Prof. Dr. Teresa Russo**, Professor of EU Law, Chair Holder of the EUVALWEB Jean Monnet, University of Salerno, Italy.

Speakers:

Lorenzo Salazar, Deputy Prosecutor General in Naples (ret.), Italy

Fulvio Baldi, Deputy Prosecutor General at the Italian Supreme Court, Italy

Carmine Pirozzoli, Italian Liaison Prosecutor in Albania

Florian Kalaja, Judge at the Court of Appeal of Organized Crime and Corruption, Albania

Gledis Nano, Former General Director of State Police, Albania

14 NOVEMBER 2024

VENUE: EPOKA UNIVERSITY CAMPUS

09:00 – 09:30 | PARTICIPANTS ARRIVAL AND REGISTRATION

09:30-10:30 | WB-EUPATH SEMINAR/CONFERENCE HALL

“THE BUMPY ROAD TO CLIMATE NEUTRALITY AND JUST TRANSITION: CHALLENGES FOR THE WESTERN BALKANS”

Prof. Dr. Emmanuella Doussis, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece

10:30-10:50 | COFFEE BREAK

10:50 – 12:30 | ROUND 1: POLITICAL AND LEGAL DYNAMICS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

SESSION 1.1: REGIONAL DYNAMICS, SECURITY AND STRATEGIC CHALLENGES/ CONFERENCE HALL, E-BUILDING

CHAIR: EMMANUELLA DOUSSIS, NATIONAL AND KAPODISTRIAN UNIVERSITY OF ATHENS, GREECE

- **Doris Malaj** (Institute of European Studies, University of Tirana, Albania) – *“Albania and North Macedonia: Understanding Their Diverging Paths to EU Membership”*
- **Enver Abdullahi** (Mother Teresa University-Skopje, North Macedonia) – *“Challenges in the New Geostrategic Context for the EU Enlargement Policy in Western Balkans”*
- **Alba Gerdeci** (EPOKA University, Albania) – *“The U.S. Non-Surrender Agreements: Exploring the Legal and Political Implications of Albania’s Agreement on Its EU Integration”*
- **Reina Shehiⁱ & Marko Merajⁱⁱ** (EPOKA University, Albaniaⁱ; INSTAT, Albaniaⁱⁱ) – *“Territorial Conflicts and Regional Security in the Western Balkans”*

SESSION 1.2: CROSS-BORDER LEGAL DYNAMICS/ DIVERSITY MEETING ROOM, E-BUILDING

CHAIR: GIORGIO BERETTA, UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM, NETHERLANDS

- **Jetnor Kasmi** (University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany) – *“Beyond Exploitation: Tackling the Deepening Crisis of Human Trafficking in Albania and the Balkan Region”*
- **Armela Xhaho** (University of Groningen, The Netherlands) – *“Irregular Migrants in Albania: Trends, Challenges, and Policy Solutions”*
- **Laura Tahiri** (South East European University, North Macedonia) – *“International Legal Cooperation in Criminal Matters Between the Republic of Kosovo and the EU”*
- **Gentjan Skara** (EPOKA University, Albania) – *“Arbitration in EU Competition Law and the possibilities of application in Albania”*

SESSION 1.3: DEMOCRACY CHALLENGES AND REGIONAL RELATIONS/ EAGLE MEETING ROOM, E-BUILDING

CHAIR: **REINA SHEHI**, EPOKA UNIVERSITY, ALBANIA

- **Avdi Smajllaj** (EPOKA University, Albania) – *"Causes of Democracy Drawbacks in the Western Balkans"*
- **Bashkim Rrahmani** (AAB College, Kosovo) – *"Kosovo Serbia Relations under the Shadow of International Agreements"*
- **Christina Matiuta** (University of Oradea, Romania) – *"Digitalization as a Way to Fight Corruption and Promote Participatory Democracy: Evidence from Romania"*
- **Alina Carmen Brihanⁱ & Catalina Mihaela Ficutⁱⁱ** (ⁱUniversity of Oradea; ⁱⁱEuropean Parliament) – *"Building Connectivity with Western Balkans – from Transport, to People and Cultures: Reforms, Challenges, and Perspectives"*
- **Jubjana Vila & Iris Buçiçi** (EPOKA University, Albania) – *"Insights on the Approach and Challenges to Reconciliation Efforts of Regional Civil Society Organizations in the Western Balkans"*

12:30-13:20 | LUNCH

13:20 – 14:40 | ROUND 2: EU INTEGRATION AND TRANSFORMATION DYNAMICS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

SESSION 2.1: LEGAL CULTURE, JUDICIAL TRANSFORMATION, AND EU INTEGRATION/ CONFERENCE HALL, E-BUILDING

CHAIR: **GENTJAN SKARA**, EPOKA UNIVERSITY, ALBANIA

- **Dušan Pejaković** (UNDP Montenegro) – *"The Role of Judicial Reforms in Strengthening the Rule of Law and Democratic Governance in Western Balkan Countries: A Comparative Analysis of EU Integration Dynamics"*
- **Gelanda Shkurtaj** (EPOKA University, Albania) – *"The Legal Culture is the Only Justice Reform"*
- **Dorina Saja** (Faculty of Law, University of Tirana, Albania) – *"Preliminary Investigations and Comparison with Italian Legislation"*
- **Dea Haxhiu** (EPOKA University, Albania) – *"The Justice Reform in Albania and the Myth of Non-Punishment: A Political Analysis"*

SESSION 2.2: ECONOMIC & REGULATORY REFORM IN THE WESTERN BALKANS/ EAGLE MEETING ROOM, E-BUILDING

CHAIR: **ALBINA HYSAJ**, EPOKA UNIVERSITY, ALBANIA

- **Elena Polo** (Institute for European Studies, University of Tirana, Albania) – *"Western Balkan Candidate Countries' Transformation in Complying with the EU Economic Criteria: Lessons Learned and Future Challenges"*
- **Andrea Piletto Massaro** (Università di Torino / Université Catholique de Lyon (UCLy)) – *"The EU Integration of Western Balkans: A Test Bench and an Opportunity for the European Single Market"*
- **Armanda Tola** (EPOKA University, Albania) – *"The Integration of ESG Criteria in Financial Institutions in Albania"*
- **Ledio Luku & Juljan Llupo** (NOA Dekra Control, Albania) – *"Low Voltage Directive (2014/35/EU): Transposition and Implementation Challenges in Albania"*

SESSION 2.3: MEDIA, NATIONALISM AND POLITICAL BEHAVIOR/ DIVERSITY MEETING ROOM, E-BUILDING

CHAIR: **AVDI SMAJLJAJ**, EPOKA UNIVERSITY, ALBANIA

- **Marko Merajⁱ & Mirela Alhasaniⁱⁱ** (INSTAT, Albaniaⁱ; EPOKA University, Albaniaⁱⁱ) – *“Nationalist Rhetoric and its Echo: The Impact of the Language of Berisha and Vučić on Voting Behavior and Political Participation”*
- **Mirela Alhasani** (EPOKA University, Albania) – *“The Socio-Political Impact of English Dominance on Europe's Multilingual Identity: Benefits and Future Challenges for the EU”*
- **Valmora Gogo** (College University Beder, Albania) – *“The Effect of Media on Public Opinion Formation in Albania on EU Integration”*
- **Genci Murja** (EPOKA University, Albania) – *“Political and Voting Behavior in Albania: What are the Political and Voting Patterns of the Tirana Electorate?”*

14:40-15:00 | COFFEE BREAK

15:00 – 16:30 | ROUND 3: ECONOMIC GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT POLICIES IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

SESSION 3.1: ECONOMIC POLICIES AND GROWTH/ EAGLE MEETING ROOM, E-BUILDING

CHAIR: **MIRELA ALHASANI**, EPOKA UNIVERSITY, ALBANIA

- **Fjoralba Caka** (Faculty of Law, University of Tirana, Albania) – *“The Economic Pros and Cons of Discriminatory (Preferential) Trade Liberalization: The Case of Stabilization and Association Agreement Between EU and Albania”*
- **Gresi Lika** (EPOKA University, Albania) – *“Dynamics of Longer-Term Economic Growth in a Developing Non-EU Economy: Empirical Investigation of the Albanian Economy”*
- **Albina Hysaj** (EPOKA University, Albania) – *“The Impact of the Human Development Index on Economic Growth in Western Balkans”*
- **Besjon Zenelaj & Enxhi Brahimaj** (EPOKA University, Albania) – *“The Importance of Online Customer Reviews as Key Influencer in Purchase Decision-Making in the Industry of Tourism: Evidence from the Albanian Coastline”*
- **Erinda Imeraj & Anida Fizi** (EPOKA University, Albania) – *“Public Spending and Growth Dynamics in the Western Balkans: A Long-Term Analysis”*

SESSION 3.2: EU FUNDING AND CAPACITY-BUILDING/ DIVERSITY MEETING ROOM, E-BUILDING

CHAIR: **NIUTON MULLETI**, EPOKA UNIVERSITY, ALBANIA

- **Marija Fileva** (Faculty of Law “Iustinianus Primus” – Skopje, North Macedonia) – *“The parallel of the Professional Qualifications Recognition: CETA’ s Chapter eleven versus the MRAs from the Berlin process”*
- **Jonida Meniku & Daniela Kortoçi** (Polytechnic University of Tirana, Albania) – *“Economic Impact and Development Challenges from EU Infrastructure Investments: Case Study of Albania”*
- **Irsida Dinoshi** (University College of Business, Albania) – *“The Role of Vocational and Education Training Sector in the Economy of Albania”*
- **Nimshad** (Eduzone Global Campus) – *“Strengthening Higher Education in the Western Balkans through EU Programs: Insights from Albania”*
- **Manzoor K.** (Global Campus Network) – *“The Practicality of EU funding to Promote Higher Education in Western Balkan countries”*

Keynote Speaker:

Prof. Dr. Florian Bieber



Florian Bieber is a Professor of Southeast European History and Politics and Director of the Centre for Southeast European Studies at the University of Graz, Austria. He holds a Jean Monnet Chair in the Europeanisation of Southeastern Europe. He is the coordinator of the Balkans in Europe Policy Advisory Group (BiEPAG) and has been providing policy advice to international organisations, foreign ministries, donors and private investors. He studied Political Science and History at Trinity College (USA), the University of Vienna, and Central European University (Budapest). He has worked for the European Centre for Minority Issues and taught at Kent University (UK). He is also a Visiting Professor at the Nationalism Studies Program at CEU. He has been a Visiting Fellow at the LSE and New York University, and held the Luigi Einaudi Chair at Cornell University. Recent publications include *Debating Nationalism* (Bloomsbury 2020) and *The Rise of Authoritarianism in the Western Balkans* (Palgrave 2020), as well *Negotiating Unity and Diversity in the European Union* (Palgrave, 2021, with Roland Bieber).