

Western Balkans between Internal Transitions and the European Integration Process

Central European University, Budapest
Nádor utca 15, 103 Tiered Room
24 April (Monday) 2017

The Western Balkans is a region where legacies of the past interfere with the present and negatively contribute to the transitional processes of these countries. The region is officially committed to following the EU and NATO path, although it faces many challenges when it comes to meeting the criteria for both memberships. The difficult democratic transition, the lack of political will, and weak political culture delay the process of bringing the region closer to Euro-Atlantic integration. Meanwhile, the recent years in the Western Balkans have been labeled by a deteriorating situation across the region. All the countries face a new crisis of democracy and democratic values (fragile institutions, violation of human rights, freedom of media, fragile civil society). The democratic transition has obviously not delivered on its promises. Such crisis changes the political landscape of the region resulting in an adaptation of political elites, and seeking for new tools to retain power, and secure the legitimacy in the eyes of the citizens.

This conference will analyze the transition processes in the Western Balkans, it will examine the role of the EU and the urgency for a closer monitoring of the situation in the region and finally it will give a comparative and case country studies offering practical policy solutions.

09:30 **Registration**

10:00 **Welcome remarks and introduction**

Jan Niklas Engels, Director, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Budapest

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

10:15 **Panel I. – The three transitions of the Western Balkans: Political, democratic, civil society**

Chair: Christina Griessler, Research Fellow for netPOL, Andrassy University Budapest

Speakers:

Venera Hajrullahu, Executive Director, Kosovar Civil Society Foundation, Kosovo

Damjan Zdravev, Researcher and Civil Society Activist, Macedonia

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

11:45 **Coffee break**

12:15 Panel II. – Is the EU Sleeping in the Western Balkans? Need for a Comprehensive Strategic Approach

Chair: Sanja Tepavčević, GTFP Teaching Fellow at Budapest Business University

Speakers:

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

Jovana Marović, Executive Director, Politikon Network, Montenegro

Ivana Radić Milosavljević, Teaching Assistant in International Relations Studies at the University of Belgrade, Serbia

13:45 Concluding remarks

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

14:00 Lunch