

IN THIS ISSUE:

- European Academy of the Joint Centre for Albania–Serbia relations completes second successful round. Read more about it on “Highlight” pages 1-2.
- AIIS Foreign Policy Forum Series gathers foreign diplomats to discuss on the current state of affairs in Europe and beyond. Read more about them on “Our Events”, pages 4-5.
- 60° Anniversary of the Treaties of Rome - AIIS co-hosts the conference “What future for the European Union Project?”. Read more about it in “Our Events” on page 3.
- - Europa Magazine, a publication of AIIS, launches its website. Read more about it in “Other activities and contributions” on page 6.

AIIS Albanian Institute for International Studies

Address: “Anton Zako Cajupi”, Nr. 20/5, Tiranë, Albania

Tel: +355 444 000 84 Fax +355 444 000 85

E-mail: aiis@aiis-albania.org; Web: www.aiis-albania.org

Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Albanian-Institute-for-International-Studies/512354502128050>

Twitter: @AIIS_Albania

AIIS Newsletter

April 2017

Highlight

European Academy of the Joint Centre for Albania-Serbia relations completes second successful round

The Albanian Institute for International Studies and the European Movement in Serbia with the support of the German Embassy in Tirana organized in the end of April the second edition of the European Academy, one of the key activities of the Joint Centre for Albania-Serbia relations.

AIIS welcomed to Tirana 6 students as well as 2 professors from Serbia who joined Albanian professors and students for the second round of a joint European Academy. The event was successful in that it brought to Albania for the very first time young people from Serbia just as last year.

The presentations started with Elena Pici, AIIS Associate Researcher. She said that the economic relationship between Albania and Serbia is the key pillar for achieving an interconnected and developed Western Balkans. This kind of cooperation can help to overcome nationalism. She said that by coming together as a regional market Albania and Serbia can overcome their smallness for internal and external investors. Enhancing existing industries and increasing the trade with less costs, all of this maintains the stability in the Balkans.



Albert Rakipi, Executive Director of the Albanian Institute for International Studies, said that the majority of Albanians want good relations with Serbia. For this purpose, parallel to the political dialogue between Rama and Vucic, was begun this collaboration between think tanks in Albania and Serbia. He said that the European Academy is an institution, a creative space for development and

working together.

Vojko Volk from the Department for Strategy Studies, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia spoke about the relations in the region and EU integration. He took the example of football games between ex-Yugoslav countries or Serbia and Albania as an example of what is going

(Continued on page 2)

European Academy of the Joint Centre for Albania-Serbia relations completes second successful round

(Continued from page 1)

wrong in the region. These countries try to avoid playing football with each other. "If you cannot play a football game", he said, "what game can you play? Economic game?". The first thing to do in the Balkans is reconciliation, playing a football game without killing each other. In the EU, he said, especially in the relations between France and Germany after the Second World War, in the beginning was the reconciliation and then the economy, but in the Balkans it is being attempted to be the economy first and then the reconciliation, but the economy is not enough.

Arjan Starova head of the Atlantic Council of Albania and Former Minister talked about the Euro-Atlantic cooperation in the region. He said that at a general look, concerning the Euro-Atlantic integration of the Western Balkans have been big steps forward. But in spite of the big development of the last decades, the nationalist mentality persists in the region and this has become, according to Mr. Starova, an obstacle for the further development of the region. "EU and NATO should take care of it," he said, "time has come for big players to focus in this persisting phenomenon which is an obstacle".

Professor Aleksandar Pavlovic talked about the representation of Albanians in the Serbian literature from the 18th and 19th centuries. He said that there is a simplistic picture that the Albanians and Serbs just need to take European values and everything will be all right. "In the last 2-3 centuries the West has constructed an image of the Balkans as backward", he said, "but we are not even close by any standard to the hostilities as that between France and Germany". The Serbian Professor said that the oldest description



of Albanians in the Serbian literature by Dositej Obradovic is positive. Until the middle of the 19th century Kosovo is almost totally absent from the literature.

Alba Cela from the Albanian Institute for International Studies presented the results of a poll realized by the Institute about the popular perceptions about Serbia in the Albanian population.

The results show that almost half of the population in Albania says that the relations between the two governments are normal. Also half of the population said that the relations between the two societies are normal. When it came to the knowledge of Serbia, the results were mostly poor. Few people knew really what Serbia imported to Albania and what Albania exported to Serbia. Also, really few people had visited Serbia and a part of them had passed transit in Belgrade and not really gone there for tourism. Also few people had read any Serbian author or seen any Serbian movie, but

these numbers were much more about Albanians towards Serbian culture than were for Serbians towards the Albanian filmmakers or Albanian writers.

Professor Jovan Teokarevic from Belgrade University, who joined the Academy for the second time this year after being present last year as well, presented in a comprehensive and analytical way the recent white paper from the European Commission that outlines the different scenarios that can be expected for the developments in the Union and their repercussions. Teokarevic explained at length the meaning and implications of the concept of "differentiated integration" and associated terms such as "multi-speed Europe" or "concentric circles" integration.

Besnik Mustafaj, former Foreign Minister of Albania and former MP spoke about the future of the Albania-Serbia relations. He said that the political communication between the two countries is in the highest level ever. But the main question according to Mr. Mustafaj is how sincere these meetings and this communication is. The reality, according to Mr. Mustafaj, is poor compared with this show. There is little communication between our societies. Generally speaking, he said that the governments of Albania and Serbia don't do anything to promote communication between the young people, academia, etc. He believes that the rapprochement between the two countries is desired more from the Western European countries.

The academy finished with a small ceremony of awarding participation certificates to all participants and with an invitation to keep the networking and partnerships links formed working for the future.



What future for the European Union Project?

Reflections from the conference held on the occasion of the 60° Anniversary of the Treaties of Rome



The Albanian Institute for International Studies with the cooperation of the Italian Embassy in Tirana, organized on March 31, 2017 a conference on the 60° Anniversary of the Treaties of Rome with the topic: "What future for the European Union Project?"

The conference gathered members of the European Parliament, professors, ambassadors and dean of the faculties, all on the topic of the future of the European Union Project. The main aim of this event was to bring different ideas and perspectives of different levels of the society on the EU Enlargement, the importance of the electoral process including the establishment of the reforms and what the future holds regarding the European Union Project. Sixty years ago in Rome, the Treaties of Rome established a common market where people, goods, services and capital can move freely and created the conditions for prosperity and stability for European citizens.

The keynote speakers to this event were Hon. Elly Schlein, Member of the European Parliament, Hon. Majlinda Bregu, President of the European Integration Committee and Mr. Lorenzo Vai, Istituto Affari Internazionali - IAI. H. E Alberto Cutillo, Ambassador of Italy in Albania, Mr. Albert Rakipi, Chairman of AIIS and Prof. Edmond Rapti, Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Tirana were also present in the discussion panel to greet the opening of the conference, as well as to answer the students' questions.

Hon. Majlinda Bregu, a deputy of the Albanian Parliament, highlighted a very important fact, emphasizing that EU does not see Enlargement

as a priority anymore. The recent developments with Brexit, migrant and economic crisis have put Enlargement out of the agenda. "There is certain annoyance when the enlargement is mentioned. If you don't demand it, the topic of enlargement isn't even included in the meetings," said Bregu. According to her, the only thing that separates Albania from Europe now is the rule of law. Albania is preparing to hold general elections next June but a political deadlock could put them at risk as the main opposition Democratic Party has been staging a protest since more than a month threatening to boycott elections unless a caretaker government is put in place to guarantee free and fair elections.

Mr. Lorenzo Vai from the Istituto Affari Internazionali, discussed that the European Union should not be considered as flawless. The recent events have deeply affected the Union by revealing its political-institutional constraints along with the weaknesses of the member states.

Elly Schlein, an Italian member of the European Parliament, mentioned that the anniversary of the Treaties of Rome should be a celebration, but there is little to celebrate at the current stage. "It is evident that the EU that we have now is not the one that was imagined by those who founded it", said the MEP, representing the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats at the European Parliament. Commenting on Albania's prospects of joining the EU, the Italian MEP said "we should retrieve the spirit of foundation, even with countries like Albania which believe more than us."

European Social Model- a new and necessary concept for Albanian students

European Social Model academy wraps up in Berat, Korca and Elbasan

The Albanian Institute for International Studies, using the experience of last year, organized this year in three various locations the second edition of the academy "Albanians and the European Social Model."

The purpose of the academy was to present to youth in various Albanian cities and municipalities the objectives, products and important concepts and ideas of the project undertaken by Friedrich Ebert Albania office in consortium with 8 influential Albanian think tanks and organizations. The Academy this year took place in Ura Vajgurore in the region of Berat as well as in the two universities of Elbasan and Korca.

The program included various presentations and lectures that offered insights to the idea of the European Social Model and whether it can be applied in Albania. The participating students were also given packages containing the final publications of the project including the reports and policy papers: -Albanians and the European social



model : disadvantages, obstacles, challenges and visions ; -Albanian and the European social model : internal democracy in Albanian political parties ; case study applied to Socialist Party, Democratic Party and Socialist Movement for Integration; -Albanian and the European social model : towards a redefinition of the social contract and Albanians and the European social model : public administration in Albania: between politics and citizens.

The Academy involved representatives of different think tanks and presented the students with various tools and

(Continued on page 4)

OUR EVENTS:

European Social Model- a new and necessary concept for Albanian students

(Continued from page 3)

resource websites that they could use to learn more and explore in depth the concepts and explanations given. These include also the website political that was presented by Rigels Xhemollari and Afrim Krasniqi. What we could observe from all three academies was that students had very little information on the Europe Social Model but also were eager to discuss and even challenge some of the ideas and conclusion presented either in the lectures or in the books. The discussion were lively and the lecturers felt satisfied with the participant's involvement in general. AIIS will seek to bring this opportunity even to other schools and other cities in the future.

German perspective on the EU and EU enlargement



"The door of EU stays open for Albania"
Susanne Schütz, Ambassador of Germany to Albania

Germany's commitment to the EU integration of Albania and other Balkan countries was reinforced by the German ambassador in Tirana, Ms. Susane Schütz during our first Foreign Policy Forum for 2017. During her speech on the German perspective on the EU and EU enlargement, Ms. Schütz said that since the 2003 Thessaloniki Summit on the European perspective of the Balkan countries hasn't changed. She pointed out the multiple challenges that the EU is facing and especially a rise in anti-EU

populism. Nevertheless, these challenges do not change the commitment of the Western Balkan countries. Ms. Schütz stated that the top 5 priorities remain important for Albania's EU integration process. Justice reform and vetting, essential progress in fighting corruption, public administration reform, were some of the key priorities mentioned by the German ambassador. Although, she stressed the fact that these are not issues only for the political elites, but also for the civil society groups. She considered

the Berlin process initiative in 2014, as a very positive approach until now. It aims to increase networking in the Western Balkans, to achieve normalization of the relations between the Western Balkan countries. The fact that Bulgaria and Romania were the only Balkan countries who joined the EU despite not being ready, has led many member states to demand more practical results from the other countries. "Albania is in a good course", she said, "we hope that the vetting process will not be undermined".

OUR EVENTS

Malta's Presidency of the European Union: Priorities and challenges



In the context of the Presidency of the Council of the European Union from January 2017 till June 2017 that is being held by Malta, the Maltese Ambassador to Albania, Godwin C. Pulis reinstated his country's continuous support for the EU integration of Albania in a Foreign Policy Forum organized by AIIS. He pointed out the importance of integration the Western Balkan countries have, when it comes to Mediterranean security issues. However, he expressed also his fear for Albanian integration because of the many protests that are

taking place which show instability and miscommunication in politics. The ambassador appealed for both political parties of Albania to start a dialogue in order for them to arrive to a consensus as it comes to the vetting law and the electoral code in general. He stressed that Albania has to focus on the justice reform and the upcoming June elections in order to make possible the negotiations with EU. He also expressed his concerns about the migration issue which is affecting Malta as well.



Talking UK-ALBANIA relations

United Kingdom's support for Albania's EU integration process will not be diminished after Brexit.

The British Ambassador expressed his support for the integration of the Western Balkans and Albania because they compose a very important strategic region for EU. Referring to Brexit he insisted that Britain will remain part of Europe even if it does not remain part of EU and it will continue to cooperate closely with Western Balkan countries. He also referred to the political crisis in Albania and stated that UK hopes there

will be fully participatory elections by all the political parties. "The most important thing of all", he said, "are free and fair elections". Other observances of the Albanian political life strongly emphasized that the political parties should find a common language on choosing the most suitable solutions for the country. He mentioned the judiciary system as one of those changes, in order to have a truly independent judiciary

system and political stability. By mentioning Byron's voyage, Mr. Norman said that the United Kingdom has a deep connection with Albania, which will not alter after Brexit. The British diplomat, Mr. Norman, also announced the launching of new trainings in the field of defense and security, as well as the cooperation between Albania and UK on important issues, such as the fight against organized crime.



On an open Foreign Policy Forum with students of the Faculty of Law at the University of Tirana, Johan Ndisi, the first Swedish ambassador in Albania emphasized Sweden's support for Albanian EU integration and mentioned that Sweden has invested a lot, politically and financially in Albania. Every year Sweden gives 9 million Euros in areas like environment protection, climate change, rule of law and economic development. Concerning Sweden's Presidency of the UN Security Council, Ambassador Ndisi said that UN membership is a key feature of

Priorities of Sweden's Membership in the United Nations Security Council 2017-2018

Sweden's foreign policy, according to the ambassador. A member of UN since 1946, Sweden is the second largest per capita contributor to UN funds and a great defendant of international order. Three main priorities of Sweden's January presidency of the UN Security Council were to ensure a good start of the new Secretary General, Antonio Guterres; secondly, to raise the UN effort for conflict prevention and the link between women, peace and security. Three main priorities of Sweden's January presidency of the UN Security Council were to ensure a good start of the new Secretary General, Antonio Guterres; secondly, to raise the UN effort for conflict prevention and the link between women, peace and security. The third priority was improving the working methods of the UN Security

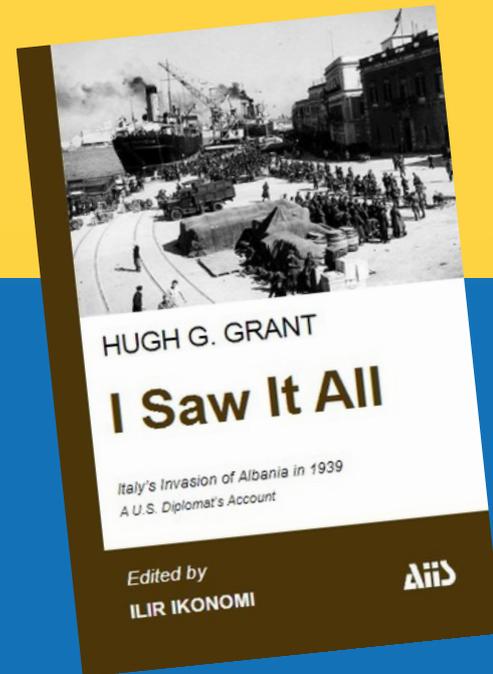
Council. The Swedish ambassador said that for the first time civil society groups were invited to the discussions of the Security Council. The idea, according to the ambassador, was to make UN more popular, to make foreign policy more open and transparent.



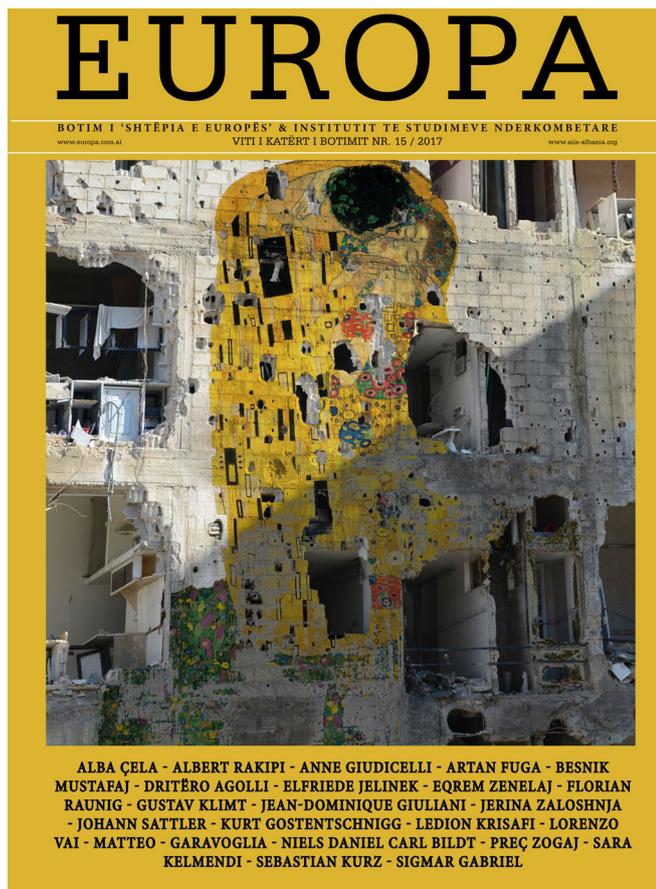
AIIS New Publications

I saw it all - Hugh G. Grant

Hugh G. Grant, Chief of the American Mission in Tirana and a firsthand witness to that fateful event, documented the meltdown of the Albanian independence in the weeks and months following the Italian occupation. Minister Grant speaks from the unique perspective of a U.S. diplomat who, unlike most of his European colleagues accredited in Tirana at that time, was not engaged in a particularly active role in the tiny country. As such, he can be considered a fairly objective and impartial observer of the happenings that brought about the occupation and the subsequent events. Therefore it is fair to say that his compelling account is a must read for history scholars and politicians.



Our magazine *Europa* latest issue:



Featuring a superimposed picture of Gustav Klimt's painting "The Kiss" against the walls of a war-torn Syria building on its front cover, the *Europa* magazine, an Albanian language publication of the Albanian Institute for International Studies, has launched its latest issue with a special section dedicated to Austria, Albania's traditional ally since more than a century.

Speaking at the magazine's launching ceremony, the Austrian Ambassador to Albania Johann Sattler recalled how Austria-Albanian diplomatic relations date back to the 18th century, when Albania was still under Ottoman rule, with the opening of a consulate in Durrës in 1751.

On its fifteenth issue, the *Europa* magazine, offering a critical approach to developments in Albania, the region and the EU, also launched its europa.com.al new website.

Now in its fourth year of publication, the *Europa* magazine offers a critical approach to political, economic developments in Albania and the region, with a special focus on literature and arts and dedicating special sections to Albania's partners.

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