

## IN THIS ISSUE:

- AIIS and EMINS join hands in establishing the Joint Centre for Albania-Serbia relations, with the support during the first year of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Rich calendar of activities in 2016., Read more about them "Highlight" pages 1,2
- Read more about the summary of perceptions from Albanian citizens on the relations with Serbia and the future of both countries in the EU. Check out the full executive summary in "Our research", pg 3
- AIIS hosted HE Dewi van de Weerd, Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to talk more about the priorities of the Dutch Presidency in a difficult time for Europe. Read more about our European Forum: in "Our Events", pg 4.
- We travel to Brussels and Belgrade, to contribute to EU related events. More in "Other activities and contributions", pg 2.

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# AIIS Newsletter

7 / April 2016

## Highlight

## Germany supports 2016 activities of Joint Centre for Albania-Serbia Relations

**E**xecutive Director of the Albanian Institute for International Studies (AIIS) Albert Rakipi and the German Ambassador to Tirana Hellmut Hoffmann signed an agreement to fund a joint centre that will improve relations between Albania and Serbia on Thursday, Jan. 28.

The project of two non-governmental organizations in Albania and in Serbia aims to support dialogue and exchange between the two countries.

"We strongly support this initiative! The approach (towards the EU integration) needs exchange! It is a good thing that in the context of this project are engaged not only political representatives of Albania and Serbia, but also more and more representatives from the

*(Continued on page 2)*





## Germany supports 2016 activities of Joint Centre for Albania-Serbia Relations

*(Continued from page 1)*

civil society, media, and cultural and educational institutions are joining in," said Hoffmann during the signing ceremony at the German Embassy.

The joint center aims to organize various activities and projects. AIIS and the Forum for International Relations of the European Movement Serbia (EMinS) will contribute in improving the relations between the two EU-candidate countries, Albania and Serbia.

Among the activities included in the project and that will happen in 2016 are:

- Holding discussions with Youth groups as well as business, culture, and science representatives
- Creating an exchange forum on controversial topics in the bilateral relations sector
- Founding of the European Academy of Youth with the participation of young Albanians and Serbians.
- Creating a several month-long bilateral internship program

- Exchange programs for journalists from both countries

The total amount of 40 000 Euro granted by the German party was sponsored by the Federal Government allocated for the Stability Pact for South East Europe aiming to guarantee peace in the region. "This is a strategic and long-term project that serves to the normalization process of Albania-Serbia relations, and the European future of the whole region," Rakipi said.

The collaboration of Albanian and Serbian non-governmental organizations aims to support the reconciliation process between Albania and Serbia, while youth exchange programs will aid in eliminating prejudices. The media reporting improvement could generate various opportunities for further collaboration which could not only benefit to Albania and Serbia, but to the Western Balkans as well.

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## OTHER ACTIVITIES AND CONTRIBUTIONS:

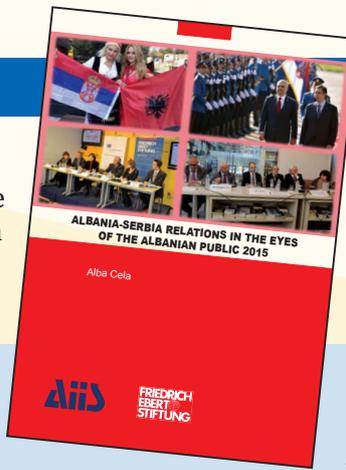


- Deputy Director of AIIS, Alba Cela attended the CEPS Ideas Lab organized in Brussels between 25-26 February 2016 with the topic 'An EU fit for purpose'. The LAB was a creative activity with 8 thematic panels and several side events focused mainly on the challenges facing the EU such as the migrants' crisis and the Brexit debate. Cela was part of a group of researchers from the Western Balkans who participated in the event, and took part in the thematic panel about EU Institutions and Foreign Policy.
- AIIS researcher Dritan Sulcebe moderated a panel in the International Conference: Civil Society and Beyond: A joint dialogue on the European Path, during 25-26th of February 2016. The event was organized by TACSO and European Movement of Serbia. The conference sessions were focused on the Multilateral dialogue between the EU and Enlargement Countries, the Civil Society Impact on National Conventions and Consultation Mechanisms in European Integration Process and lessons learnt in EU Accession process. Sulcebe moderated the third session: "Lessons Learnt in EU accession: How to regain Enlargement Momentum", with the speakers: Tomáš Strážay, Senior Researcher, Slovak Foreign Policy Association, Corina Stratulat, Senior Policy Analyst, European Policy Centre, Marina Škrabalo, Senior Adviser, GONG / Member of the European Economic and Social Committee, and Francisco de Borja Lasheras, Policy Fellow, Associate Director in the Madrid Office of the European Council on Foreign Relations.

# OUR RESEARCH:

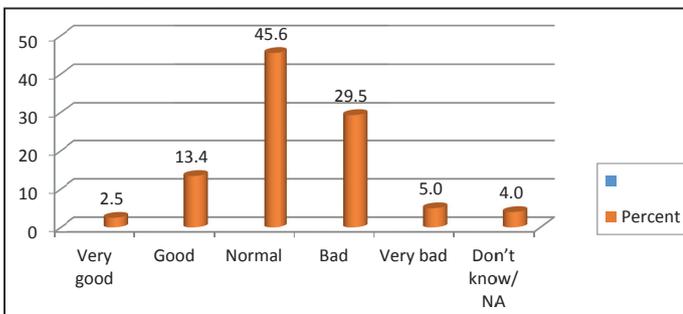
## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The majority of Albanian citizens believe that bilateral relations between Albania and Serbia are normal, with answers choosing this option at around 46 percent, followed by a second group that believes relations are bad or very bad at 34 percent. A smaller group of 16 percent believes the relations are good or really good.
- The group of people who believe relations between governments are normal is higher at 55 percent than those who believe relations between respective peoples, Serb and Albanian citizens, are normal at 42.5 percent.
- A third of all respondents (67.4 percent) believe Albanian - Serbian relations are important. 86 percent of Albanians, the overwhelming majority, believe that relations between Albania and Serbia are key to the stability and security in the entire region of the Balkans
- Most Albanians expect that relations with Serbia will improve in the future while a third does not think they will change. 50 percent of Albanians believe the countries are ready to build a friendly relation while 30 percent disagree.

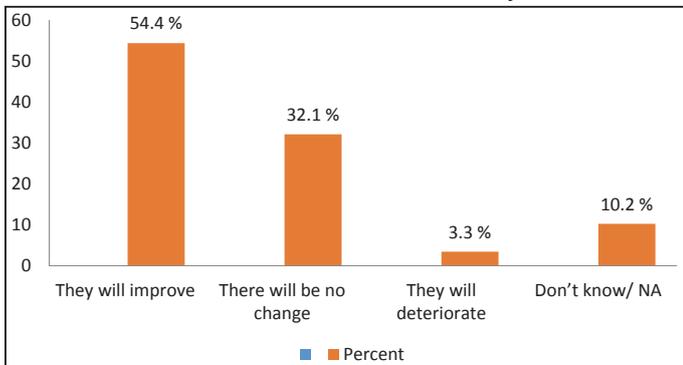


- Only 5 percent of Albanians say that Serbia constitutes a threat to Albania. More than 60 percent of citizens do not feel any country to be a threat to Albania.
- 37.4 percent of Albanians believe their government should pay considerable attention to the relation with Serbia while half of the sample follows with saying it should pay adequate or average attention.
- The overwhelming majority of Albanians, around 90 percent believe that Albania and Serbia should improve relations for their own sake, a percentage much larger than those who assess that the improvement of relations should happen per request of Brussels and Berlin. More than 60 percent of Albanians also say that the two countries should develop a relation despite the relation of Kosova with Serbia.
- Albanians consider the 'Historical Hostility between the two nations' and the past 'oppression of Kosovo Albanians and criminal heritage of the Milosevic regime in Kosovo' as the two key major obstacles in developing a bilateral relation. More than 80 percent of them in each case have mentioned these issues as first or second most important factors to be overcome in order to improve relations. Other obstacles which are mentioned by the respondents but placed as less relevant are 'Lack of communication for a long time between citizens of Serbia and Albania' and the 'level of economic relations between both countries and societies.' About 41 percent and 13 percent of the answers place the two factors (respectively) as standing issues in the third place of importance.
- Only 17 percent of Albanians have ever travelled to Serbia, a fourth of this have been there only transiting.
- Only 18 percent of Albanians have read books from Serbian authors while 30 percent have watched movies from well-known Serbian directors.
- The majority of Albanians, slightly over 80 percent, are in favor of having more joint cultural events with Serbia.
- Half of the sample responded that Albania and Serbia have normal economic relations while 21 percent said the economic relations were either good or very good. 12 percent of respondents claimed economic relations between the two countries were bad or very bad.
- Most Albanian citizens don't know what Albania imports from Serbia while a large group, about a third of the sample, claim the imports are mainly wheat and flour. 60 percent of Albanians believe their country is a touristic destination for Serbian people.

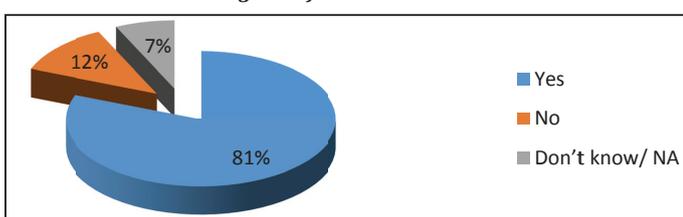
How would you generally evaluate relations between Albania and Serbia?



How will relations between Albania and Serbia be in the future?



Should both countries organize joint cultural activities?



## OUR EVENTS:

The Albanian Institute for International Studies hosted the European Forum: where the speaker was the Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Albania, HE Dewi van de Weerd. Ambassador van de Weerd presented and elaborated on the main priorities of the Dutch Presidency of the EU. The highest priority remains tackling the radical terrorist threat and the migration crisis. AIIS Deputy Director Alba Çela asked Ambassador van de Weerd about the strength of the commitment of the EU to maintain the Schengen agreement and Her Excellency reconfirmed that the EU is working hard to preserve this achievement.

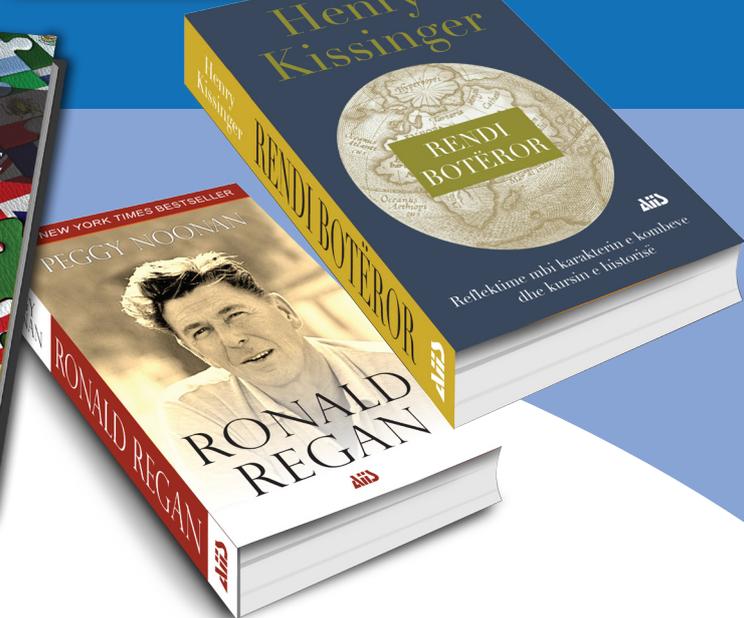
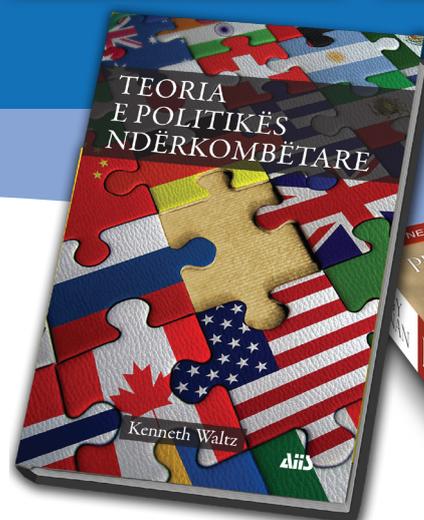
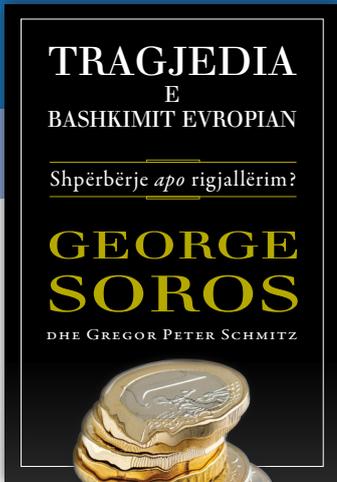
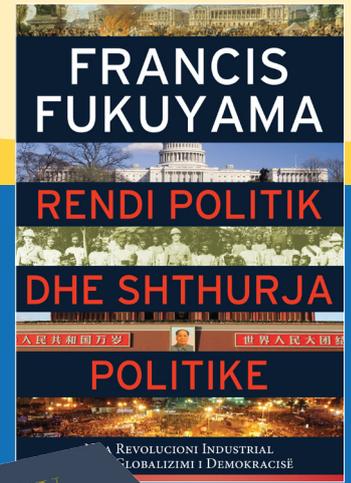
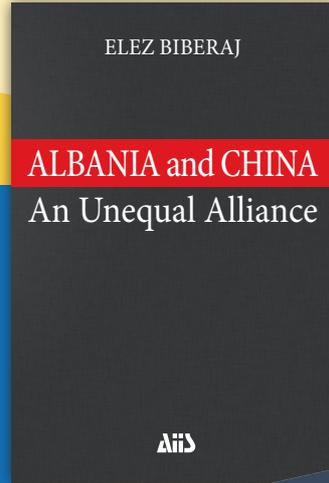


On March 15th 2016, the Albanian Institute for International Studies and the Embassy of the Republic of Italy to Albania organized the second session of a series of Foreign Policy Forums for 2016. Keynote speaker to this event was the Italian Ambassador in Albania, His Excellency Mr. Alberto Cutillo. The topic of the Forum was **"State of affairs in Europe and the potential implication on the EU and EU enlargement"**. With regard to the EU membership of Albania, Mr. Ambassador reiterated that the road towards full membership is a long one. It requires the fulfillment not only of the political criteria to open the negotiations such as the judiciary reform, fight against corruption, organized crime and an independent public administration, but also a consensus among all the EU member states to grant a membership status.

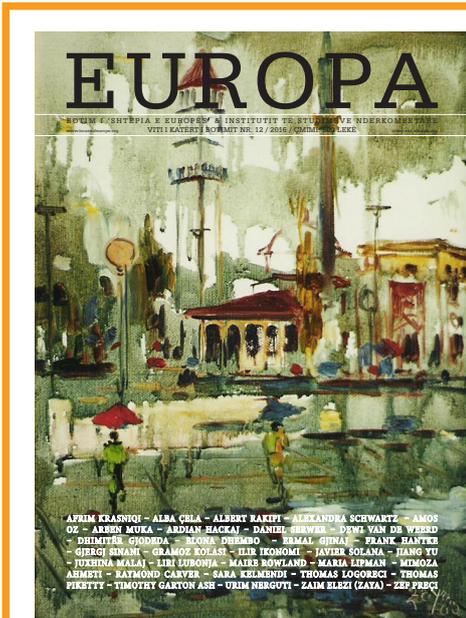
The Albanian Institute for International Studies co-organized a workshop together with the OSCE presence in Albania and the German Embassy to Albania on the topic of "Early Warning and Conflict Prevention, with the participation of many representatives from foreign embassies in Tirana.



# AIIS New Publications



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Our magazine Europa latest issue:

'Europa' magazine is an novel and pioneering publication targeting Albanian readers with the aim of encouraging a new, involving and critical approach to European integration, providing more space to promotion of European values including arts and culture as well as featuring thoughtful analysis on current developments within the EU. The magazine promotes critical thinking, open debate and provides the reader with a fresh perspective on both current events and more general trends. For subscriptions , inquiries and advertising please contact

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