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- Our staff and speakers meet up with the students in Korca to discuss Europe, the EU and Albania's path to integration in the framework of the European Forum initiative. Read more in "Our events", pg 2.
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- AIIS is always enriching its team. Two new experts join our research program. Read more about them in "Welcome on board!", pg 2.
- Calling on experts and authors to contribute with Academic papers for our international conference next year "Albania 25 years after communism, Rebuilding state and society", read more in "Call for Papers", pg 4.



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AIIS Newsletter

2 / December 2014

Highlight

Albania and Greece in the media: Coverage, Perceptions and Impact.

The role of the media in both Albania and Greece cannot be overestimated as they have played an active and often unfortunately detrimental role in perpetuating and strengthening perceptions, stereotypes and instilling atmosphere of negativity when it comes to respective neighbors. AIIS with the support of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Albania has undertaken an initiative to monitor print media in Albania for a respective timeframe and produce quantitative and qualitative analytics about the coverage of Greece and various developments that relate to Albanian Greek relations. The forthcoming report will serve as a tool to train and raise awareness among reporters and other media actors for better and more responsible reporting on this issue.

Report: Greece and the Albanian-Greek relations in the Albanian print media 2014

The January-July 2015 period was very interesting for the Albanian-Greek relations due to the fact that within a short period of seven months

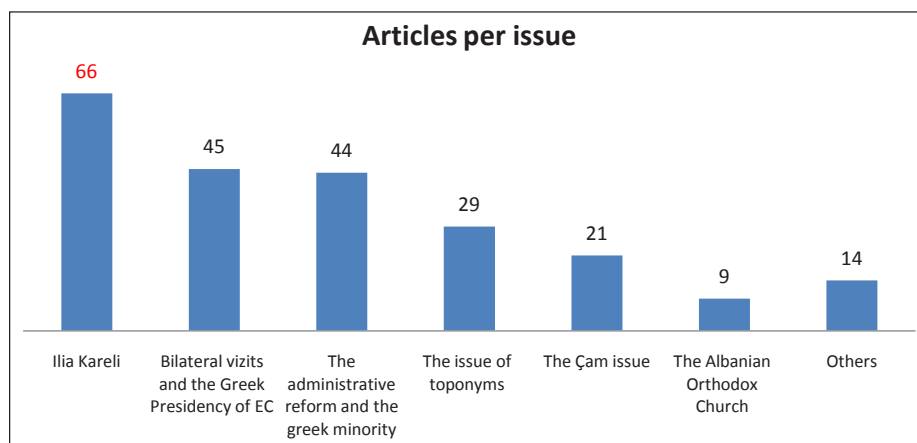
a very diverse set of events unfolded, sending different signals in the bilateral relations. These seven months monitoring of the Albanian printed media showed that Greece and the Albanian-Greek relations are constantly covered in the Albanian media.

This study tried to answer two main questions: "what are the main issues the Albanian printed media covered during this seven months period in relation to Greece and the Albanian-Greek relations?" and "how did the Albanian printed media cover these

Announcing:

AIIS is currently building a new virtual home, a new and interactive web page where you can be informed in real time about all our projects and activities. This new page is being supported by the Think Tank Program, of the Open Society Foundations. Come pay us a virtual visit in January 2015 at

www.aiis-albania.org!



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WELCOME ON BOARD



EBI SPAHIU

Researcher: Ebi Spahiu is an independent analyst of Central Asian and Western Balkan Affairs, focusing on gender and religious extremism, and she is currently based

in Albania. She has worked as a consultant for UN agencies based in Kyrgyzstan and other regional civil society organizations. She is originally from Albania, but has studied and worked in China, the United States and Kyrgyzstan. She has authored a number of analytical pieces focusing on countering violent extremism and human rights, including Centerpoint Now, CACI Analyst-Johns Hopkins University, Jamestown Foundation (Eurasia Daily Monitor & Militant Leadership Monitor), Open Doors International, The Stability Institute-CVE Journal.



DRITAN SULCEBE,

Researcher Dritan Sulcebe received his law degree from the Faculty of Law, University of Tirana in 2006 and a Master's Degree in International Relations from Webster University Geneva, in 2008. Mr. Sulcebe

has worked for the Ministry of European Integration as an expert of Methodology of Reporting and Translation from April 2008 until January 2010. The following year he worked as an Attorney at Law for the Law Office "Celibashi Consulting" from February 2010 up to January 2011. He was admitted to the Albanian Bar in November 2010. From 2010 until 2014 he has worked as a freelance lawyer and as an International Relations and European Integration Expert at the People's Advocate of Albania (2013-2014). Mr. Sulcebe currently resides in Tirana, Albania.

OUR EVENTS:

On the occasion of the series of activities organized for the International day of Human Rights, AIIS participated in the initiative **'Movies that Matter'** supported by the Embassy of the Netherlands in Albania. AIIS hosted a film screening for the documentary **'Dangerous Acts featuring the Unstable Elements of Belarus'** with an audience of selected human rights activists, researcher and journalists.



In the context of the project **'European Forum'** AIIS organized a series of lectures at the Public University of Korca 'Fan Stilian Noli' on November 7, 2014. The event was saluted by AIIS Deputy Director, Jorgji Qirjako who also explained the objectives of the project. Prof. Dr. Gjergji Pendavinji lectured on 'Europe as a concept and as action', Dr. Magda Vampa spoke on the topic 'The university and the concept of universality in today's Europe' and the final lecture was from Prof. Dr. Gjergji Sinani on "The concept of subsidiary and of completion as the basis of the functioning behind European institutions."



On 11 November 2014, AIIS hosted the Foreign Policy Forum lecture **'Talking today's Iran'** by **Dr. Seyed Vahid Karimi**, the Director for Europe at the Institute for Political & International Studies-IPIS in Teheran and former diplomat at Iranian U.N Mission to

New York. AIIS also facilitated Dr Karimi's lecture to MA students at the European University of Tirana.

On December 10, AIIS Researches Dhimiter Gjodede and Dritan Sulcebe participated in the workshop **"Challenges and potential of the economic relations between Albania and Kosova"**, organized by the Institute for development Policy in Kosova. This event is in the context of the jointly implemented project "Albania and Kosova, in quest of a common future " supported by Friedrich Ebert in Albania and Kosovo. Dritan Sulcebe presented during the workshop on the topic of Trade Developments between Albania and Kosova.

On December 14, 2014 AIIS organized the roundtable **"Cultural relations between Albania and Kosova: books, media and arts"**. AIIS Researcher Dritan Sulcebe, briefly presented the bilateral agreements between both countries in the field of culture and media. Discussants



included Kosovo MP Alma Lama who was also informed about AIIS project "Albania and Kosova, in quest of a common future". Other discussants included renowned journalist Ben Andoni, Andi Balla, Asllan Bajrami, Lutfi dervishi, Genc Mlloja, etc.

(Continued from page 1)

issues?". The study shows that despite the fact that the coverage of issues related to Greece and the Albanian-Greek relations is generally situational, depending on the different issues and cases under consideration; there is a continuation of some major themes in the general approach the media has towards Greece and the Albanian-Greek relations which is at worst negative and distrustful and at best hopeful for improvements and a new start.

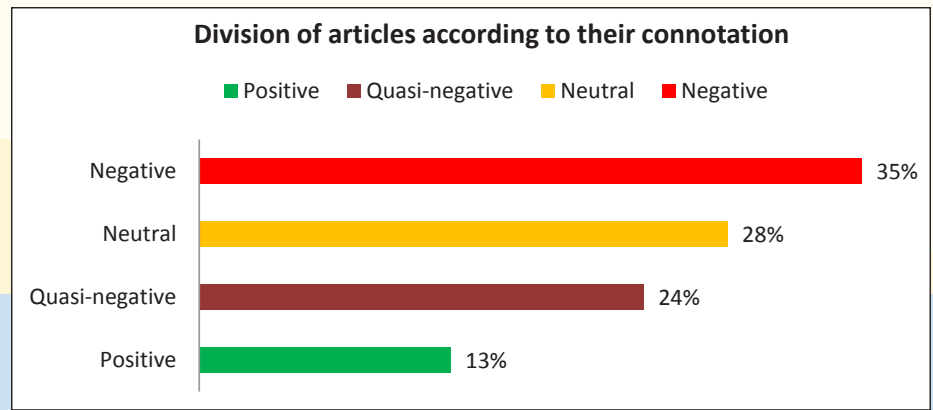
What is reported?

This study analyzed a sample of 225 articles from three daily Albanian newspapers published in Albanian - Shqip, Panorama and Mapo - and one weekly Albanian newspaper published in English - Tirana Times. Albanian media is very sensitive towards news related to the Albanian-Greek relations given the fact that from the sample we analyzed 213 articles have been published by the three daily newspapers in 7 months, which means at least 10 articles per month/each on average. Obviously, the intensity was not consistent as it depended on the specific issues that were 'hot' at the moment and which attracted public opinion's attention the most. The report peaks in January, April and June were related to three issues in particular: (1) the Greek Presidency of the Council of EU and the bilateral high level visits between Albania and Greece; (2) the Kareli case: the killing of an Albanian prisoner in a Greek prison; and (3) a mix of issues, although it is mainly related to the coverage of the administrative reform in Albania and the side implications this could have for the Greek minority in Albania. Other issues covered in a more balanced way throughout this seven months period were: the issue of the toponyms of birthplaces in the Albanian passports of Albanians born in Greece, the Cham issue and issues related to the Albanian Orthodox Church.

How are issues reported?

The study found that the negative connotation articles were the biggest group with 35 percent of the sample. The neutral connotation articles represented 28 percent of the sample while the quasi-negative articles and the positive articles followed with 24 percent and 13 percent respectively.

Despite the above 'negative' picture, the study showed that reporting in



the Albanian media was situational, depending on the specific case under consideration, and it varied considerably from case to case. Thus, this period saw the Albanian media moving from 'happy' stories to 'bitter' ones in a very short period as it was the case with the vastly positively covered Greek Presidency of the Council of EU and the bilateral visits in January and February (with 47 percent of articles having a positive connotation) to the vastly negatively covered Kareli case (with 68 percent of articles having a negative connotation). In between these stories and all over the period other stories were covered mainly through a neutral connotation as it was the case with the issue of toponyms of birthplaces in the Albanian passports of Albanians born in Greece (45 percent of articles had a neutral connotation).

There were some main themes throughout the sample:

(1) *Relations with Greece should be handled carefully as the country cannot be fully trusted.* This theme was present throughout the study in all three case studies that were analyzed especially in the negative connotation categories of each case. In the case of the Greek Presidency of the Council of EU, the bilateral visits and the EU candidate status of Albania, the message was: Greece is a rational actor, aiming at its own interest and will certainly ask something in return for its current support to Albania and the closer ties with Albania. These articles were mainly counterbalancing the more enthusiastic ones on the subject. In the case of Kareli and the toponyms, the message was: the same old Greece that cannot be trusted when it comes to the most sensitive issues with Albania and Albanians.

(2) *Greece mistreats Albanian migrants in many dimensions.* This category of articles was present in both Kareli and the toponyms case

and portrayed Greece as a systematic violator of Albanian migrants, that tortures them, bans them from seeing their families, bans them from entering Greece, makes their lives difficult even when they are born and have lived in Greece since then, violates their basic human rights, etc. This category of articles often was accompanied by a national collective victimization of Albania and Albanians towards Greece. These articles were also aiming at provoking an emotional effect to readers.

(3) *There is a potential in the Albanian-Greek relations for a long-term partnership.* This theme was present in the positive connotation articles when reporting bilateral visits and the finalization of the agreement that resolved the issue of toponyms. These articles were extensively referring to the novelty of developments with terms such as: 'new start', 'new chapter', 'new partnership'.

(4) *Albania and Greece can resolve issues but they are far from a 'romantic affair'.* This theme was mainly present in the neutral connotation articles and aimed at balancing enthusiasm for new positive developments in the Albanian-Greek relations with the issues that are still to be discussed and solved between the countries. This theme was especially present in the case of bilateral visits and Greece's support for Albania's EU candidate status as well as in the May coverage of the resolution of the issue of toponyms.

To conclude, as this study will further show, there are some core persistent themes in the Albanian media discourse, although the emphasis varies in accordance with the situation under consideration and the 'urgency' of events.

For more information on this report and on the project please contact Primary Researcher Sashenka Lleshaj,

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Other activities and contributions:



In the framework of the **TRAIN Programme: Fostering policy dialogue in the Western Balkans**, conducted by the German Council on Foreign Affairs (DGAP), Megi Llubani participated in the concluding seminar in Brussels between

November 2-6, 2014. The aim of the programme was to foster dialogue and interaction between think tanks and political actors in the Western Balkans. For this programme Megi wrote the policy paper: "Beyond Numbers: Women representation in the security sector in Albania". During the seminar, she met and discussed her paper with representatives of EU institutions; representatives of different Brussels-based think tanks and civil society organizations as well as diplomatic representations of in Brussels.

From 28 to 30 November 2014, Andi Balla participated at the **Annual Regional Expert Round Table "Western Balkans, EU and NATO in 2015 - For a Better or Worse?"** in Budva, Montenegro. This event was organized by the European Movement in Montenegro and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. At this roundtable Andi presented his coauthored media monitoring study "Albania and Serbia: Do perceptions equal reality".

From 3-5 December 2014, Alba Cela, Deputy Director of AIIS attended the international workshop **'Shaping the future in Albania'** organized by Suedosteuropa-Gesellschaft / Southeast Europe Association in Munich. Alba spoke on the latest development and upcoming challenges of the process of EU integration of Albania.



CALL FOR ACADEMIC PAPERS: Albania 25 years after communism, Rebuilding state and society

A quarter of a century ago, Albanians rose to overthrow a brutal dictatorship under the slogan "We want Albania to be like the rest of Europe!" A quarter of a century later, Albania has barely managed to gain the official EU candidate status after long and repetitive attempts. One could argue that despite recent progress, Albania remains one of the laggards of EU integration and of transition in general. The challenges of building a full democracy, a functional market economy and of achieving the major milestone of becoming an EU member state remain difficult for the country and pace of progress uneven.

The 25th anniversary of the European dream of Albania constitutes an important moment of reflection regarding the status of the European project in Albania and the ways in which to further it. It is in the contexts of this critical juncture that AIIS proposes to engage the academic community, political decision makers, civil society representatives, the media and the opinion makers in an overall analysis of what has happened and what needs to happen still to complete the path of Europeanization.

It is equally important to contextualize the case of Albania with the developments of transition, post communist state development as well as European integration progress in the region, as well as bring in relevant comparisons from countries in Eastern and Central Europe.

Therefore, the Albanian Institute for International Studies (AIIS) calls upon all interested scholars experts, and analysts to contribute with their research and academic papers to the theoretical and practical examination of the transition and European integration dynamics of Albania in particular but also of the Western Balkans and the wider Central and Eastern Europe.

Suggested topics (non exhaustive list)

- State building in post communist Albania
- Market economy challenges during transition
- State-society relations and modernization of social relations
- Post communist transition and European integration
- Comparative post communist experiences from the Balkans and Central -Eastern Europe
- Dealing with the past in Albania: lustration and internal reconciliation
- Regional reconciliation and the dynamics of regional cooperation
- Challenges of Foreign policy in transition
- Progress on human rights in Albania: balance of 25 years

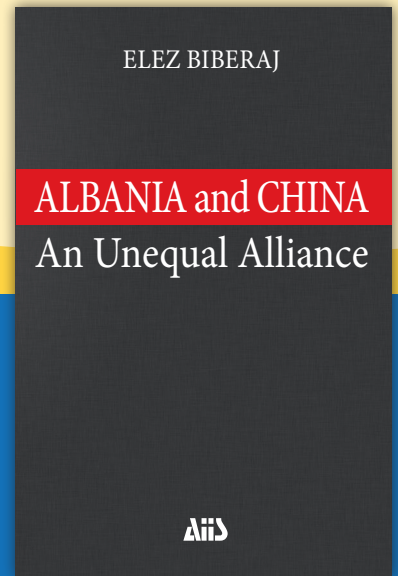
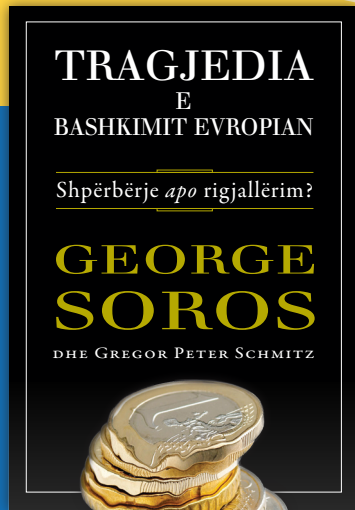
Selected papers will be presented in an international academic conference in Tirana in November of 2015. All expenses related to the participation of speakers shall be met by organizers. All selected papers will be published by AIIS in a bilingual volume (Albanian and English) right before the conference in November of 2015 and the publication will be distributed during the event.

Deadlines:

- Abstract should be sent by March 29, 2015.
- First draft should be sent by August 1, 2015.
- Final paper: September 30, 2015

Please send all relevant documents and inquiries ebutka@aiis-albania.org

AIIS New Publications



Research and publications

Albert Rakipi *“The EU in the Balkans. De-securitization through integration”, NATO Defense College Foundation: Rome, December 2014.*



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 aiis@aiis-albania.org

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