



Seventh Annual International Conference on European Integration

'Europe 2020: Towards Innovative and Inclusive Union'

Skopje, 17 May 2012

Narrative Report

University American College Skopje (UACS) in cooperation with the Foundation Friedrich Ebert in Macedonia organized the Seventh annual International conference on European integration entitled "Europe 2020: Towards Innovative and Inclusive Union", which was held at Holiday Inn hotel in Skopje on 17 May 2012.

At the official opening of the conference, the auditorium was addressed by Mr. Nikola Poposki, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Macedonia and H.E. Mr. Jean Claude Schlumberger, Ambassador of France to Macedonia. Official speakers at the opening of the conference were: Dr. Matthias Kollatz-Ahnen, former Vice-president of the European Investment Bank (EIB) and Dr. Corina Stratulat from the European Policy Centre in Brussels. The audience was also addressed by Dr. Heinz Bongartz, Official representative of the Foundation Friedrich Ebert in Macedonia and Dr. Ivan Dodovski, UACS Assistant Professor and Chairman of the Organizing Committee.

The goal of this year's international conference on European Integration was to analyze the different components of European political and institutional architecture in search for sustainable solutions to the current fundamental challenges of the European Union. The issues are particularly important at a time when the European Union takes series of important policy measures. Based on the previous six years of experience in organizing academic conferences, we managed to create an atmosphere of intense dialogue on common European future.

About 40 scholars and professionals from 13 countries gathered to exchange ideas about the latest European trends and offer views on many challenges in areas from politics, economics, and business to culture and education. Twenty academic papers were presented, divided into two parallel sessions.

The first academic track, “Inclusive Union: Political, Social and Cultural Aspects”, was moderated by Robert Hudson, a full-time Professor at University of Derby, UK. David McGaffey, adjunct Professor at Holy Names University Oakland, USA, gave the opening remarks and Miodraga Stefanovska, UACS Assistant Professor, was the rapporteur of the session. Presenters opened topics from EU citizenship, EU replacement, and EU framework to minority issues, literature, gender issues and poverty.

The first paper in the session was presented by Zlat Milovanovic. It deals with the issue of European citizenship at the time of crises. The paper discusses EU citizenship, its importance and its future. It highlights people should not only think about saving the common currency, but also about the strategies to revive European citizenship. The conclusion was that EU citizenship should be enlarged so that citizens from candidate countries may become EU citizens before the countries become members, or even retain their EU citizenship even in case the member state leaves the EU.

Stevo Pendarovski moved the discussion to the possibility of replacing the EU. His main question was: “Are there any Eastern alternatives to the European Union?” He depicted the genesis, background and interests of several international organizations and initiatives, and emphasized their structural flaws and weaknesses in comparison to the European Union, especially in the area of political and cultural values.

Mihail Stojanoski discusses the new institute called Permanent Structured Cooperation that was introduced in the EU framework with the Lisbon Reform Treaty. The presentation gave an insight to the essence of the institute and the challenges related to its implementation. In addition, it highlighted its effects on the NATO alliance and its impact on candidate countries like Macedonia.

Kathrina Crepaz opened a discussion on the EU approach to minority issues. As it is known, the EU made protection of minorities a part of its Copenhagen accession criteria which created a gap between the old and new members and candidate countries. While older member states were often very neglectful regarding the minority protection policies, the new members and candidate countries were under pressure to change their approach in order not to endanger their accession. For illustrating the research hypothesis, the paper draws on the examples from Greece and Croatia (an old and a new candidate country).

The parliament is a stronghold of democracy and a key representative institution of the political system. However, can the work of parliaments improve and become a place for representation of EU citizens in modern democracies? The paper of Olimpija Hristova raised this issue of vital importance, especially since many indicators point to the democratic deficit in the European countries. The paper presents a comparative study of particular findings in the work of the Swiss and the Macedonian Parliament regarding their increased importance as democratic institution, calling attention to the lessons that Macedonia can draw from the Swiss practices for improvement of institutional capacities.

Sonja Stojmenska-Elzeser opened the issue of possibilities of teaching European Literature. The main points of this interesting discussion were the theoretical and practical problems of observing European literature as a whole, based on the principles of inclusion, transculturality and overcoming the eurocentricity.

Maja Gerovska-Mitev presented a paper on implications of EU 2020 targets and indicators on social inclusion and poverty in Macedonia. The paper has two main aims. First, by providing comparative data

on poverty and social exclusion in the EU member and candidate countries based on Europe 2020 indicators, it strives to show the differences in poverty rates. Second, by applying the Europe 2020 estimations of poverty and social exclusion in Macedonia, it attempts to show differences in poverty rates.

Branko Boskovic introduced the topic of reconfiguration of gender relations in today's society. This paper aimed at answering the question on how gender in the labor force of the EU is reflected on the family life and lifestyle. For this purpose, the past and present role of women was discussed as well as how restructuring of this role affected the independence, family and lifestyle in the EU.

The last presentation was given by Oliver Treidler, who discussed the question why Europe 2020 is likely to be as unsuccessful as the Lisbon Strategy. A comparative analysis of the two strategies was presented. The analysis of key-documents and publications showed that policy content and implementation mechanism of Europe 2020 closely resemble those of the Lisbon Strategy. Furthermore, the paper identified the main shortcomings of the Lisbon Strategy and analyzed whether Europe 2020 constitutes an adequate remedy.

The second academic track, "Economy, Business and Innovation in the Time of Crisis", covered EU economy and business issues. The session was moderated by Jeremy Cripps, a full-time Professor at American University in Bulgaria. The opening remarks were given by Dr. Marjan Petreski, UACS Research Vice-Dean and Chairman of the UACS Research Committee. He stressed the current situation in the European Union, GDP growth forecasts, debt crises and unemployment as main current issues in the European Union.

The first presenter, Tome Nenovski, raised the question: "Is the European Union going to survive or not?", and presented the reality of the crises within the European Monetary Union. Nenovski presented two possible solutions. The first proposal is the political unification that is not possible in a short-term period. The second option is regional grouping and creating a Balkan Economic Union. This would result in higher competitiveness.

The second presenter, Zoran Sapuric, stressed the importance of institutional transformation and the Treaty of Fiscal Stability, as opportunities for fiscal consolidation.

Jovan Pejkovski presented the need for inclusive growth and social cohesion in the EU, increasing the rate of employment through education, research and innovativeness for creating new investors and entrepreneurs.

Dimce Lazarevski presented the results of the research in the pension system comparison in Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Macedonia, showing that the theory replacement rate in Poland and Macedonia will decline.

Jeremy Cripps and Kevin Feeney presented their research about the consequences of sovereign debt default, offering four possible consequences as lost national reputation, exclusion of some national companies, higher costs, strikes, corruption activities, and impact on politics.

Ilijana Petrovska's presentation related to intrinsic and pro-social motivation factors for creativity at advertising agencies, providing a rationale for need of higher intrinsic motivation in Macedonian advertising agencies.

Evica Delova-Jolevska presented the banking system in Macedonia and the expectations for bank consolidations, possible need for intermediation and different range of services.

Elena Makrevska noted the low level of the EU competitiveness and compared it with other countries in the region and the USA. She summarized the need for knowledge-based economy.

Sasa Raletic presented a research paper on the EU funded programs Erasmus Mundus, Tempus Education project and compared the data for Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia. She stressed the need for networking among educational institutions.

Makedonka Dimitrova presented a paper on the motivators for entrepreneurs in Macedonia and Slovenia. The conclusion was the need for better inclusion of entrepreneurial skills in the educational program.

This conference was a big success as it raised very important questions for the future of Europe, some of which will be the topic of the 8th International Conference on European Integration organized annually by University American College Skopje.

It is worth mentioning that the 2012 conference was the first one to be streamed live, having more than 250 visitors following the program on the internet, on top of as many present at the conference venue.