



## **Tenth Annual International Conference on European Integration**

### **“European Integration – New Prospects”**

**Skopje, 21 May 2015**

#### **Narrative Report**

University American College Skopje (UACS) in cooperation with the Foundation Friedrich Ebert in Macedonia organized the Tenth annual International conference on European integration titled “European Integration – New Prospects”, which was held at hotel Holiday Inn in Skopje on 21 May 2015.

At the official opening of the conference, the auditorium was addressed by Dr. Fatmir Besimi, Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs in the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, Dr. Christine D. Althausser, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to Macedonia, and Nita Starova, Representative of Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, office in Macedonia. Official speaker at the opening of the conference was: Prof. Jeremy Cripps, PhD, Professor at University of Findlay, Ohio and UACS Professor *Honoris Causa*, who presented his views on celebrating European diversity through interpretations in religion, language, culture and education. The audience was also addressed by Dr. Ivan Dodovski, UACS Assistant Professor and Chairperson of the Conference Organizing Committee.

The goal of this year’s international conference on European Integrations was to take an in-depth look into the state of affairs concerning the vital layers of the European project. This conference especially was seeking to explore new and alternative prospects of European integration from a critical and forward looking perspective - one that goes beyond the stalemate in the internal debate and the controversies over the future enlargement. As a host institution, UACS aimed to emphasize that academia can catalyze an adequate response to the challenges of re-establishing the European Union as a role model not only for the nations on the continent. Based on the previous nine years of experience in organizing academic conferences, we managed to create an atmosphere of intense dialogue on the common European future.

About 150 scholars, guests, professionals, students and participants from 6 countries gathered to exchange ideas regarding the topics of political science, law, education, architecture, economy, business and information technology. Ten academic papers were presented, divided into two working sessions.

**The first working session** was moderated by Ivan Dodovski, PhD; the rapporteur from the session was Ana Tomovska Misoska, PhD. Ivan Dodovski gave the introductory remarks for the session. Five papers were presented in the first conference session. The first speaker was Prof. Robert Hudson who presented the research paper entitled: *Current Dilemmas Confronting European Security*. The paper discusses the role of Russia on the European security agenda and the influence of the Eastern partnership. What has been highlighted in this paper was the comprehensive overview of different theories on the idea of peaceful Europe during the Cold War. Prof. Hudson stressed that the EU should be grateful for its current shape to Gorbachev and Russia. Still, referring to the works of Giddens, he has also highlighted that Ukraine opened another chapter and old Cold War issues, facing us with a period of the 'end of the end of Cold War'.

The second paper, titled *Current Situation with the Illegal Immigration in the Balkans*, was presented by Prof. Ljupco Stevkovski and Prof. Dushko Stojanovski. The paper analyzed the situation of illegal immigration in the Balkan countries, pointing to Macedonia as a transit zone/country, and as a part of the regional and European project for fighting illegal immigration. The paper presented amounts of euros as costs for immigrants to be able to transit certain countries in order to arrive to their desirable country of arrival. It called for more collaborative actions by all European countries and especially more investment to be made in human and technical resources; however, the solution to the huge number of illegal immigrants is the investment in peace in the Middle East.

The third paper, titled *Cross Border Cooperation in Europe: Empirical Experiences and Practices*, was presented by Prof. Marina Andeva, coauthored by Prof. Daniele Del Bianco. The paper explained the complex process of cross-border cooperation and its many used terms in the context of the Council of Europe and the European Union. It introduced the concept of re-centralization of border areas as an opportunity for cross-border cooperation actions and local development of small border areas. The paper also presented some results of a comprehensive research carried out by the Institute for International Sociology of Gorizia in Italy under the auspices of the Council of Europe and also the recently development online platform called EDEN as operative tool for CBC actors.

The fourth paper, titled *European Standards and Principles in the Law on Mediation in the Republic of Macedonia in view of European Directive 2008/52/EC on Cross Border Mediation*, was

presented by Prof. Jasmina Dimitrieva, coauthored by Prof. Kimo Chavdar and Prof. Zoran Sapurik. The paper highlighted the importance of the mediation process as an alternative dispute resolution method which is cost-effective, fastest and less formal. Data presented in the paper point out that there is a lack of trust for this method, despite the many best practices in Europe of its implementation (example given of Italy and the UK). Lessons and recommendations for the Republic of Macedonia go in the direction of introducing mandatory encouragement for mediation process.

*Multilingualism and Monolingualism in the Institutions of the European Union* was the last paper presented in the first session of the conference. Prof. Zlat Milovanovic presented the paper addressing the audience via skype. The paper once again introduced the issue of multilingualism in Europe (also previously introduced during the keynote speech of Prof. Jeremy Cripps). The paper highlighted that the EU policy on languages is based on multilingualism and there is still a need for searching an ideal solution for a universal official language. The paper reminded that many languages have international English words used on everyday basis giving an argument that the English language is to be the one official language in the EU. Questions were raised about the consequences of a UK referendum to leave the EU and about the Scottish language 'replacing' English after a possible succession from United Kingdom; also, how we can solve the bilingualism used in the International Procedural law; and if perhaps the Latin language should be re-introduced as a language to be studied in all levels of education across Europe.

**The second working session**, was moderated by Ivan Dodovski, PhD; the rapporteur from the session was by Miodraga Stefanovska, PhD. Four papers were presented in the second conference session.

The first speaker was Prof. Stevo Pendarovski who presented the research paper titled: *The promise of E-democracy and the internet: Myths about digital agoras?* (coauthored by Prof. Veno Pachovski and Prof. Marko Andonov). The paper discusses the role of the digital component of democracy. It offers a comprehensive presentation of the e-voting and internet voting practices throughout the world in order to demonstrate the presence of the political, digital and social concerns in the relevant debates which result in a weakened trust in the new voting system. Prof. Pendarovski presented the findings of a small scale research done among young people in order to assess their views on internet voting in Macedonia. Finally, Prof. Pendarovski encouraged the further academic debated and research that could contribute to the improved understanding of the unavoidable digital component of democracy.

The second speaker in the session was Prof. Irena Bojadzieva who presented the paper: *EU citizen's engagement initiative and digital platforms for open policy making in Finland, the United Kingdom and Republic of Macedonia* (coauthored by Prof. Ganka Cvetanova and Prof. Veno Pachovski). The goal of the paper was to evaluate the digital platform for engagement of citizens in the open policy making process in the Republic of Macedonia compared to Finland and the UK. The paper evaluates the standpoint of the governments by analyzing three main components: legal basis; reforms in the public sector and presence and usage of tools that enable the citizen's engagement and civil society reflections. The results indicate that the three countries demonstrate a strong commitment to the open policy making process and have contributed to the establishment of such processes through the adoption and implementation of relevant legal instruments. However the findings also suggest that Finland leaves the leadership of open-policy making in the hands of the civil society. At the end the speaker provided suggestions on how to improve these initiatives and overcome obstacles in the process of open policy making.

The third paper discussed the topic of e-inclusion, in particular the digital divide and ICT acceptance among elderly people in Macedonia compared to Bulgaria and Romania. As the group of people aged 55 and older is increasing the issue of their access to the internet is becoming more interesting. In fact, the statistics show that this group constitutes the majority in the non-users group not just in Macedonia, but in the EU as well. This paper presents the lessons learned from Romania and Bulgaria, which successfully decreased the number of senior non users, and provides recommendations for the Macedonian case.

The final paper from the second working session was presented by Prof. Krum Efremov (coauthored by Dr Jasmina Nestoroska and Prof. Ilijana Petrovska). The research gravitated around the topic of the SEE 2020 strategy with special focus on the integrated growth pillar. This strategy is concerned with promoting deeper regional trade and investment, with policies that are transparent and non-discriminative. The main research question of the paper was the level of implementation of trade and investment targets in SEE in increasing the intra-regional trade by over 140% and overall FDI inflow by 160%. For this purpose the research uses a comparative statistical analysis of data published in national reports and scientific articles. It provides relevant recommendations and contributions for the academic and policymaking auditorium.