

Fifth annual international conference on European integration

'Europe after the Lisbon Treaty'

20 May 2010

NARRATIVE REPORT

The Fifth annual international conference on European integration entitled 'Europe after the Lisbon Treaty' was held on 20 May 2010 at Hotel Arka in Skopje. The conference was organised by the University American College Skopje in partnership with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Macedonia.

Both Mr. Nikola Todorov, Minister of Education and Science in the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, and the Deputy Head of Mission on behalf of Mr. Jose Manuel Paz Agueras, Ambassador of Spain to Macedonia, spoke at the opening of the conference. The audience was also addressed by Dr. Gaspar Biro, Rector of the University American College Skopje, and Dr. Heinz Bongartz, Resident Representative of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Macedonia.

Dr. Franz Lothar Altmann, Professor for intercultural Relations at Bucarest State University, and Vladimir Gligorov, Professor at the Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies, had introductory lectures. Among the participants were another thirty scholars and professionals in the fields of law, international relations, economics, politics and social sciences from several countries, including Russia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Netherlands, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Turkey, and Albania.

Continuing the successful tradition established over the past four years, our intention this time was to open a debate on various aspects of the last major European treaty that was adopted by the member states of the European Union in December of 2009. The EU Lisbon Treaty completed the efforts to implement the necessary institutional reforms. Our expectations were that prominent experts and scholars from the country and abroad will offer their insights on the internal and external implications of the Lisbon Treaty which, in fact, traces the common future of the countries in Europe. The conference provided two main sessions: the first one, "Law, international relations and diplomacy", and the second one, "Economy, energy, environmental protection and social sciences".

The 2010 conference was an important effort to assess the changes that the Lisbon Treaty introduces, as well as the prospects of the European Union following its adoption.

Academic Track I: Law, International Relations, Diplomacy

The institutional novelties introduced by the Treaty of Lisbon and their effect on the EU

In surveying the new situation of the EU following the adoptions of the Lisbon Treaty the participants agreed that the Lisbon Treaty is a step forward toward strengthening the institutional capacity of the EU. It has successfully addressed the EU backlog following the failure of the 'Constitution for Europe' and also the institutional discomfort resulting from the last wave of enlargement. Its legal setup seemingly meets the structural/institutional requirements of an enlarged Union and prepares its political capacity for the

challenges of 21st century global politics. Using different disciplinary and theoretical lenses, several conferees chronicled the changes introduced by the Lisbon Treaty. These are:

- The introduction of a more consolidated normative structure by the Lisbon Treaty, including an institutional framework to project globally EU's normative power.
- The institutional reform introduced through the Lisbon Treaty and its impact on the redistribution of powers between different EU institutions, as well as on the general political environment in Brussels.
- The improved institutional accommodation of EU's 27 member states and the 'open door' policy for further enlargement.
- The improved efficiency of the decision-making process and the role of the European Council to take formal "decisions" and "identify the strategic interests and objectives of the Union".
- The introduction of new positions such as the President of the Council and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.
- The linkages between the issue of [post] national sovereignty and the prospects for effectiveness of the European Union Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) after the Lisbon Treaty.

The EU Common Foreign and Security Policy after the Lisbon Treaty

In building the capacity for more streamlined, efficient and effective EU Foreign policy, the participants observed the improved prospects for better 'actorness' and flexibility of the EU after the Lisbon Treaty. In terms of both, the Lisbon Treaty's stronger integrationist character introduces a number of innovations and flexible mechanisms for more effectively integrated policies. As mentioned above, these are the strengthened role of the High Representative, her/his supporting European External Action Service [EEAS] and also the introduction of the post of permanent President of the European Council. In terms of the CFSP flexibility, the Lisbon Treaty introduces the principles of Enhanced Cooperation, Permanent Structured Cooperation and the possibility to entrust the implementation of a task to a group of Member States. However, it is not clear whether this means a more efficient and effective EU in general terms. Some discussants were more optimistic claiming that Lisbon Treaty's framework provides the missing mechanisms for more coherent and autonomous EU foreign policy which combined with EU's normative appeal will certainly provide for more effective global role for the Union. Others however remained skeptical. The fact that the EU Council remains the bastion for defining EU's strategic interests and the unanimity principle as a rule for its decision-making procedures were counterfactuals illustrated in this regard.

The Lisbon Treaty and the EU CFSP towards the Balkans

The debate had also an empirical swing over the region of the Balkans. A birthplace of the CFSP, the Balkans in the nineties tested the EU potentials for FP action. The failure to do that, mainly due to institutional and political reasons, served as an impetus for improving the capacities and prospects of the CFSP. Gradually, as participants observed, it resulted in improved and essentially important role of the EU in Balkans seen through EU's civilian and normative appeal. In this context, the Lisbon Treaty further strengthens the perspective for more active and effective role of the EU in the Balkans and also leaves the door open for membership of this region in the EU. Yet, it was concluded that the requirements of this

process, as well as the normative conditions for the Balkans to join the EU have increased and go beyond the scope of the so-called Copenhagen criteria.

Last but not least, the participants observed the case of the Republic of Macedonia. Using the concept of multi-vector foreign policy some analyzed the foreign policy of the Republic of Macedonia and its strive for fully-fledged membership in the EU as a compensation for its substantial “traditional deficit” of power. It was noted that some characteristics of the foreign policy of the country have deviated from the traditional patterns of the so-called double integration agenda [EU, NATO] but also that Macedonia has no other alternatives on this way.

Academic Track II: Economy, Energy, Environment, Social Sciences

Participants at the academic track on economics have found a high level of common interest and a strong sense of fellowship, coupled with a willingness to discuss even the most difficult issues associated with the Treaty of Lisbon. They had the challenge to discuss the economic challenges that Europe faced before and after the ratification of the Lisbon treaty.

The participants discussed the climate and energy policies in light of the Lisbon Treaty. Special focus was given on the driving forces and global challenges for creating a common approach in the energy field. The session was enforced by a genuine Russian perspective on the EU-Russia energy dialogue and the future cooperation in the PCA framework. In addition, the influence of the Treaty of Lisbon on the Russian energy policy was discussed. The discussion was extended on the trans-boundary pollution damage which accelerated the need for common European measures for the protection and improvement of the environment. In this sense the Treaty of Lisbon makes one significant change – in addition to the previous objective of preserving the environment, the Treaty of Lisbon highlights the importance of advancing and improving the environment. However, the participants agreed that the issue of developing new instruments to support energy efficiency should be addressed in future.

How can the post Lisbon EU use its power to coordinate the activities of the member states in addressing the financial, economic and social consequences? Recommendation were made in terms of ensuring that the economic framework will provide access to financial and risk capital, promotion of entrepreneurship and the design of the coordinated strategy between member states for responding to a recession.

The discussion o the assessment of the Macedonian export performance as a function of the economic performance of its main trading partners, suggested the strong influence of the EU economy and that CEFTA countries are eager to trade with the EU and between themselves. In addition, Macedonia’s trade benefits from the Lisbon treaty and the possibilities for further integration were discussed. In this context two important issues were raised: first, the implications of Treaty of Lisbon on the Common Commercial Policy and the investment policy in the EU, and second, does the Treaty of Lisbon increase the tendency for the EU to use trade policy as an instrument in the pursuit of other external policy objectives.

The session also addressed the inter-governmental nature of social policy in decision and the decision making process in this area. Some concerns were raised in terms of the coordination of the member states’ social polices. This was contributed by a discussion on whether the Macedonian experience in conflict resolution can serve as a basis to develop a model that contributes to the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural code of conduct? The attention was redirected to the social clause of the Treaty of Lisbon that aims at developing the EU as the most competitive and knowledge based economy. The academic track

was enriched by a new discussion on the research that investigated and compared job satisfaction and motivation in three countries in different stages of their EU integration (Macedonia, Kosovo and Bulgaria) and in three sectors (business sector, public administration and NGO). The participants debated on the need for further research on the determinants for diversities in the levels of job satisfaction and job motivation.

Furthermore, one of the questions that were raised is whether or not global marketing strategies are applicable for the EU market after the Lisbon treaty. Recommendations were given on the basis of relevant research findings that investigated the opinions of the business community in Macedonia on their opinions whether the Treaty of Lisbon will affect their marketing communication in the EU.

In the context of the Western Balkans the EU plays a reform-driving role: it affects the development of this group of countries, especially in terms of mediation and conflict resolution; second role that the EU plays is its use as a framework which helps these countries with models of governance and policy options. This raised the issues of the impact of the Treaty of Lisbon on the maturing and forming of accession conditions for the Western Balkans? Europeanization as a process was discussed in this context.

The last but not least topic addressed at this academic track, was motivated by the question: Before knowing how we are perceived, we should know who we are? Specifically this referred to building EU identity using brand management. Can we look and see EU as a brand? The participants argued that we should. The problem is that EU institutions lack knowledge in the field, associate it with advertising stories and they do not perceive the EU as an entity that should be properly managed. Building this EU identity contributes to the image, communication activities and reputation on the global level.

Through a series of academic debates, arguments and discussion on the issue of Europe after the Lisbon treaty, the participants of the economic track concluded with the question that was posted in the beginning: Isn't the Treaty of Lisbon, which was identified as a reform agreement, in a serious need of a reform?

Summary

The aim of the conference was to deliberate on the future of the EU after the Treaty of Lisbon. The adoption of this act has raised hopes as well as concerns as to whether the EU will emerge as a stronger, more cohesive and more effective player, both inwardly and outwardly. In this regard, the debate was illustrated by variety of concepts, theoretical perspectives as well as empirical studies that reflected upon these issues. The conference recognized the Lisbon Treaty's fundamental value in the structure of 21st century Europe and its role in the globalized world. The Treaty in this context has introduced a variety of actors and mechanisms which enhance the prospects of the EU and its CFSP. Notably, the extent to which a delicate balance of interests and visions between these common actors and the EU member states is found regarding sovereignty will determine the integrative and policy relevance of the Lisbon Treaty. This is best seen in the case of the Balkans. As the further integration of the region is more or less an interest of all EU members than the post-Lisbon CFSP can play leading role in these processes. Conforming to this, the baroness Ashton has recently given impetus to this process. Speaking in a normative, but hopefully not idealistic, fashion, she stressed: "the Balkans is the birthplace of EU foreign policy. More than anywhere else, it is where we cannot afford to fail".

(Prepared by Dr. Stevo Pendarovski)