



EURO-ATLANTIC INTEGRATION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS: NOT WITHOUT ITS ALTERNATIVES?

Tuesday, 10 July 2018, 17.15 - 18.45

Grand Hall, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana

Panel discussion organised by the MUN Slovenia Club (MUNSC), the Bled Strategic Forum (BSF) and the Centre for European Perspective (CEP) as part of the 2018 edition of the MUNSC Salient youth conference.

Speakers:

Ambassador Paolo Trichilo, Ambassador of the Republic of Italy in Slovenia

Mr Peter Grk, National Coordinator for the Western Balkans, BSF Secretary General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia

Ms Jelka Klemenc, DCAF Slovenia

After more than two decades of attempts on the part of the European Union to help stabilise the Western Balkans and gradually integrate it into its political and economic community the results are mixed. While there is no denying the fact that some immense steps have been made, a list of systemic challenges seems to have remained more or less unchanged over the years.

What has changed, however, is the wider geopolitical context in which the Western Balkans policy complex is embedded. Across a range of issue areas relations between the East and the West have deteriorated, with Cold War analogies featuring ever more frequently both in lay and expert deliberations. Given the importance of stability and prosperity in the Western Balkans for the security of the wider European continent, it can hardly be expected that the region will remain unaffected by wider power struggles.

In this context the concluding remarks of the new EU strategy for the Western Balkans, recently adopted by the European Commission, come across as especially revealing:

"Most fundamentally, leaders in the region must leave no doubt as to their strategic orientation and commitment. It is they that ultimately must assume responsibility for making this historical opportunity a reality." ([European Commission 2018](#))

Yet what if, at least from the perspective of some regional stakeholders, the 'historical opportunity' of further Euro-Atlantic integration is not without its alternatives?

This will be the guiding question for a panel discussion that is set to proceed in two parts. The first part will focus on the potential existence of alternatives to Euro-Atlantic integration in the Western Balkans and ways to accommodate them into our current deliberations about the region. In the second part the discussion will shift towards the implications that potential alternatives could hold for future EU policies concerning this region, both at the political level as well as in the day-to-day activities of people working on the ground.

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Kindly invited!