



CENTRE FOR SECURITY COOPERATION
DIALOGUE AND COOPERATION DIVISION

April 2009

**Seminar on
“SEE at the Gates of the EU. Enhancing Integration Processes”**

After Action Report

Zagreb, 3rd April 2009

The Seminar “SEE at the gates of the EU - Enhancing Integration Processes” was held in RACVIAC –Centre for Security Cooperation during the period of 1st – 3rd April 2009.



Family photo

The purpose of the seminar was to assist the integration process of SEE countries into EU by enabling exchange of views and lessons learned. The seminar gathered participants from candidate and potential candidate countries for the accession to the EU, representing relevant ministries and agencies at lower decision-making or adviser level, having knowledge and experience in the field of the integration process.

The seminar was conducted in 2 days and it included three sessions, which were followed by questions and answers that encouraged the participants to exchange views and experience in the integration process and to discuss the integration issues openly.

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The participants and lecturers were representatives from seven countries and seven organizations, namely: Albania (2), Bosnia and Herzegovina (3), Croatia (3), the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia¹ (4), Moldova (3), Serbia (3), Montenegro (1), Turkey (1), NATO HQ in Sarajevo (1), University of Zagreb (4), European Commission DG Enlargement (1), European Commission Delegation to HR and BA (2), RCC- Regional Cooperation Council Liaison Office in Brussels (1), European Institute of Romania (1), European Institute Foundation in Bulgaria (1), Institute for International Relations in Zagreb (1), Faculty of Political Science in Belgrade (1), and University of Ljubljana (1),

Seminar Opening

In his opening speech, Ambassador Nedžad HADŽIMUSIĆ, Director of RACVIAC, expressed his warm welcome to all the participants.



Opening Session

From right to left; Mr. Sorin STERIE, Ambassador Nedžad HADŽIMUSIĆ, Mr. Stergios VARVAROUSSIS

¹ Turkey recognizes the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name

Ambassador pointed out that over the past two years the SEE countries had moved closer to the EU and that the region should move forward as rapidly as possible with political and economic reform, reconciliation among peoples and progress towards EU membership.

Plenary Session

The participants focused on three main issues: processes towards EU membership, lessons learned and challenges on the road to EU, and progress made and the way ahead of candidate and potential candidate countries.

In the first session, moderated by Colonel Ömer Faruk BASTÚRK, the keynote speaker was *Mr. Stergios VARVAROUSSIS*. He pointed out three main elements of the current context within which the EU enlargement policy is currently situated: the global financial crisis, the Lisbon Treaty ratification, and the Georgian crisis combined with the EU Eastern Partnership.

The speaker stressed that the enlargement continues and he also highlighted the main aspects of the EU policy for the South-Eastern European (SEE) countries and Turkey, presenting the various pillars of the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP), including regional cooperation as an essential element of the progress of SEE countries towards the EU. In this regard he stressed the importance of local ownership and the role played by the SEECP and the Regional Cooperation Council, as well as other regional initiatives and structures.

Mr. Sorin STERIE, Senior Political Advisor of the RCC Liaison Office in Brussels, pointed out the Stabilisation and Association Agreements (SAAs) which are the main form of contractual relationship between the EU and each SEE country and the EU perspective which remains the essential prerequisite

for the stability, reconciliation and the future of the Western Balkans.

PhD Vladimir PREBILIČ stressed that Lisbon treaty had been defined, and that its changes and future implementation in EU would not alter basic nature of EU, but it would introduce major institutional innovations, which would make EU stronger and enable the countries to improve in all aspects on the way to EU.

In the second session moderated by Colonel Ömer Faruk BASTÚRK, *PhD Mladen STANIČIĆ* presented the challenges for each individual country and underlined that regional cooperation and regional ownership is crucial in giving impetus on the way to EU.

Mrs. Juliana NIKOLOVA pointed out that the lack of political will to continue the enlargement process in turn reduced the support among the citizens of SEE countries for the often difficult reforms necessary for meeting the membership requirements. She said that reforms on the road to EU had to be completed, not only promised. Otherwise they might be late.



From right to left; Mrs Juliana NIKOLOVA, PhD Gabriela DRAGAN

PhD Gabriela DRAGAN said that the road to the European Union means achieving progress both in terms of reform (economic and political) and accession negotiations. She said the negotiation process requires careful and meticulous preparation in terms of institutional structures and staff.

In the third session moderated by Mr. Stergios VARVAROUSSIS, Mrs Nilgun Arisan ERALP presented the long history of EU-Turkey relations, the framework and procedures of the accession negotiations of Turkey and their current state of play. She overviewed the achievements of Turkish



From right to left; Mrs Nilgun Arisan ERALP, Mrs Lara SCARPITTA

government in implementing the necessary reforms, as well as the major challenges Turkey is facing at the moment, in particular the need to increase the pace of reforms necessary in order to meet the conditions for EU accession.

*vision without
implementation is
hallucination*

Mr Erol AKDAG underlined the fact that Croatia's accession negotiations entered a decisive stage and that the EU presented a conditional "roadmap" to give further rigour and spine to Croatia's preparations. He said that if Croatia met all the conditions, it would be possible to reach the final stage of the accession negotiations by the end of 2009 or some time later.

Mr Zoran POPOV, explained that the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia¹ achieved candidate status three years ago and since then it had made good progress in judicial and police reform, and that it continues to implement the Ohrid Agreement that should transform the country into a democratic multi-ethnic society.

However, these good results were overshadowed by lack of progress concerning the political criteria. He said the EC progress report on the country is "fair, strict and objective". He stressed that after the Presidential elections the country was expecting to receive a date for opening of negotiations.

Mrs Lara SCARPITTA pointed out that Bosnia and Herzegovina made some progress in the last months and that a slow but steady process of stabilization is taking place following the signature of the SAA in June 2008. However, she underlined the fact that the political leadership of the country needed to achieve the degree of political consensus that had delivered progress on EU integration elsewhere in the region. She expressed the hope that 2009 would be a year of renewed responsibility in Bosnia and Herzegovina.



Plenary Session - Participants

Mr Milisav RASPOPOVIC referred to the independence of Montenegro achieved in 2006, followed by the adoption of a new constitution. Since then the country made good progress on key EU reforms, and signed and implemented its Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the EU, which is the gateway to candidate status. In December 2008 the country submitted its EU membership application. Although he recognised that much more work was needed, especially on the rule of law and institution building, he stressed that the country was now expecting the signal from the EU

Council so that the Commission could start preparing its Opinion on this application. He added that Montenegrin administration was already preparing for the EC Questionnaire.

In her comprehensive presentation, *Mrs Tanja MISČEVIĆ* pointed out the major steps in Serbia's path towards the EU, the EU policy framework and the responses of Serbia, as well as the current situation, in particular the government's decision to unilaterally implement the Interim Agreement / Stabilisation and Association Agreement. She gave concrete examples showing the country's determination to accelerate its European future.

The Moderator gave some information regarding Albania's steady progress on reform in recent years, including the economic field. Albania signed its Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the EU in 2006, and it entered into force on 1 April 2009. Therefore the country was looking ahead to the next stage of its European journey. However, many challenges remain, not least in fighting organised crime and corruption and in ensuring the conduct of 2009 elections in accordance with international standards.

Mrs Liliana GUTAN outlined the active participation of Moldova in numerous regional initiatives and structures (including the Chairmanship of SEECF), and underlined the political will of the Moldovan authorities to see the country's European vocation recognised by the EU.

SUMMARY/CONCLUSIONS

The seminars provided a successful platform to discuss challenges, lessons learned and the achievements of the SEE countries, as well as to generate fresh ideas in order to enhance the progress towards the EU.

The contribution of members of EC DG Enlargement and advisers from regional

countries proved to be outstanding in creating healthy discussion climate.

The speakers and audience expressed their content with the significant progress countries had already achieved. These efforts were praised and the expression was extended that the region should go ahead as rapidly as possible with political and economic reform, reconciliation among peoples and progress towards the EU.

All panellists assessed the three sessions as very successful and useful. They also recommended to the co-organizers to continue with similar activities in the future.

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