

Conference Agenda

Session

Virtual Panel 103: Enlargement & Integration in the EU

Time: Monday, 11/Sept/2023: 10:00am - 11:30am

Virtual location: Zoom: Panels 03 [🔗](#)

Session Chair: Doris Malaj, Institute of European Studies, University of Tirana

Presentations

Contested Rule of Law Promotion: EU Norms' Selective Adoption and Its Impact On Civil Society Strategies in Georgia

Ana Andguladze

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Over the past decades, Georgia has made significant advancements in harmonizing its legislation with the EU *acquis*. Yet, in June 2022, the European Council decided to grant Georgia only the European perspective, while Ukraine and Moldova received candidate status. These developments have given rise to contestation in the country where political elites – as the literature on Europeanization have revealed – resort mainly to 'symbolic compliance' or 'selective adoption' of the EU norms in general, and with regard to the rule of law area in particular. While scholars of EU studies have sought to explore the many facets of top-down and bottom-up Europeanization, the aim of this paper is to go a step further and to shed light on the effects of selective adoption of EU norms on civil society. How do civil society actors deal with symbolic compliance or selective Europeanization? The paper seeks to analyze civil society actors' strategies in promoting the rule of law by focusing on Georgia's judicial reforms from 2012-2022. The selected time frame represents an important period of shifting opportunity structures provided by the change in the regime (2012) and the deepening of European integration (since 2014), culminating in Georgia receiving a European perspective. The paper traces the civil society actors' mobilization and engagement strategies through four judiciary reform 'waves' that have been implemented throughout past ten years. It also sheds light on a less explored area of internal dynamics within the coalitions of the civil society actors working on the rule of law and European integration. The empirical analysis draws from semi-structured interviews as well as from the content analysis of 136 statements of Georgian CSOs' *Coalition for an Independent and Transparent Judiciary*.

At the Forefront of Integration: Albanian Generation Erasmus Impact and Perspectives

Juliana Gjinko

University of Tirana, Albania

The European Union continues to offer increased support for International Credit Mobility programs. How and to what extent have Albanian HEIs managed to benefit from the mobility funds in this last decade?

Albanian students belong to a generation exposed to European culture and identity from afar, usually through the mediation of Albanian political debates regarding the progress of the integration process. Those who choose to be included in the Erasmus exchange programs undertake a brand new experience due to the fact that the cultural and educational system differences between our country and the host countries are much greater than those between the EU member states. For this reason as well, supporting and encouraging them should be the goal of Albanian HEIs, at all levels. The added value of an Erasmus experience is personal – life, academic, cultural, and linguistic, but not only. In the case of a country that aims to integrate into the European Union, they are the connecting and strengthening bridge of the European identity of the Albanian society to which they belong. In the future, in addition to encouraging and supporting these exchanges, real studies should be undertaken on the multidimensional impact that these experiences have on the Erasmus generations of Albanian students. This paper aims to present a quantitative and qualitative analysis of Albania's participation in Erasmus + exchange programs, since 2014 when Albania has become a member partner of the program. The analysis deals with the progress of exchanges and projects over the years and presents a comparison between the inclusion of the Western Balkans Region in EU Higher Education Programs. Also, some recommendations are put forward on how Albanian HEIs may try to use more effectively the opportunities provided by European programs and projects in support of higher education.

Heritage Diplomacy: Towards Mitigating Bilateral Identity Disputes In The Western Balkans Within the EU Accession Framework Through Inclusive Intangible Culture Research and Safeguarding

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Contribution of Anthropology to European studies is typically defined by the study of Europe's cultural diversity, the formation of a specific European identity, or the active strengthening of national identities against the European one, as well as numerous specific topics characteristic of specific European regions. But there is another way in which Anthropology can improve the multidisciplinary approach to European integrations - awareness of the role that cultural heritage can play in cultural diplomacy, especially in the new genre of "heritage diplomacy". With the many political bilateral disputes in the Western Balkans based on cultural heritage, our collective research focuses on the role that heritage sciences, particularly Ethnology, which is part of Anthropology in the Western Balkans, can play in the process of mitigating existing or preventing future conflicts based on collective identity. We are focusing on Serbian intangible cultural heritage in cases where Serbs are an ethnic and religious minority, but we believe that the model we are developing can be applied in many other cases where heritage disputes play an important role in political dynamics. This study builds on previous studies on bilateral conditionality in the EU enlargement process by arguing that culturalized conditionality should be mitigated by heritage diplomacy based on inclusive research and safeguarding. Our model creates a space for humanities to collaborate with European studies in their search for new ways to impact enlargement policy and contribute to academic debate on conditionality.

Is The EU Permacrisis A Not-to-Waste Momentum With Regards To The EU Policymaking?"

Doris Malaj, Elena Polo

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Based on many recent analyses, the EU is lately facing a situation of a permacrisis, which relates to an extended period of instability and insecurity. It is also evidenced that this situation is primarily due to both the enlargement fatigue and the so-called crisis fatigue, the latter as a result of facing a series of interrelated and cross-sectorial crisis, in different policy areas. Additionally, many experts have discussed on the EU ability in evolving itself handling both the crisis management and the enlargement progress, given the EU institutions and efforts to undertake necessary steps and design and implement policy measures.

Objective of this paper is to assess to what extent the permacrisis has affected the reactive policymaking processes in terms of enriched policy instruments and mechanisms. A special focus will be given to two crisis (namely the pandemic and the war) and to a particular policy, that of EU enlargement. For this purpose, a qualitative analysis is conducted with secondary data from many sources, here including key reports on the EU level policy instruments, policy events as well as the rhetoric review of the progress reports delivered to the WB countries.

We argue that the EU used this moment of exceptional crisis to re-evaluate its policies and jump-start its stagnant enlargement process, responding to new realities in times of permacrisis.

Results of the analysis show that recently the EU has shown a higher reaction behavior, with higher flexibility and a more pro-active approach, as EU presented unexpected determination and unity and strengthened their actorness by overcoming their nation-first reflex. With direct focus on the enlargement, we also argue that while the pandemic negatively influenced the EU integration process by playing the role of a decelerator, indeed the Ukraine war can be considered as an accelerator and catalyst for further EU widening and deepening.

Frustrated Enlargement: Serbia's Differentiated Integration Into the European Union

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After nine years of negotiations (since January 2014), 14 years since the start of the application of the Interim Trade Agreement (January 2009) and almost 20 years since the EU Thessaloniki summit (June 2003) that had opened the EU membership perspective for Balkan states, Serbia is still around half of the way on its formal integration process. The longevity of the process makes it at least semi-permanent, as it is not a mere process to be finished but a state of affairs on its own. The process has brought stronger and comprehensive economic ties, higher levels of fulfilment of four freedoms (free movement of people, goods, services and capital) and different degrees of Serbia's administrative adjustment across the state spectrum. But thus far, the process has failed to deliver consistent positive transformative change to the wider society. It is marred by the fragmented and lacklustre administrative and judicial reform, strong authoritarian political tendencies and state capture. Politically, the EU side has let its enlargement policy lose importance and credibility, despite some attempts to revitalize it (EU Commission's strategy for the Western Balkans of 2018, revised enlargement methodology of 2020, and the EU-Western Balkans summit declaration of October 2021). Granting the candidate status to Ukraine and Moldova, in light of the ongoing Russian war on Ukraine will have (still ambiguous) effects on the enlargement process on its own. The war has also considerably widened the gap between Serbia's foreign policy choices and those of the EU and other candidate states, thus creating new and salient friction points.

The EU is in an early stage of its own attempt at reform after the Conference on the Future of Europe, while grappling with its perceived global role, security and reach after the waves of the COVID-19 pandemic, and security and economic fallout of the war on Ukraine. The prolonged incompleteness of Serbia's integration into the EU and the lack of EU's clear vision of *finalité politique* offer us a dynamic and complex environment of overlapped strategies, policies and societal effects for analysis.

The contribution will use the model of differentiated integration – of a candidate country – to highlight a specificity of Serbia's current standing in the process of EU enlargement as a confluence of a number of factors, domestic and external.