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JEAN MONNET MODULE EUinCEE

Report of the international hybrid workshop

“I BALCANI OCCIDENTALI NEL PROCESSO DI ADESIONE ALL’UNIONE EUROPEA: ISTITUZIONI, PARTITI E SOCIETÀ”

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On May 3, 2022, the international hybrid workshop “I Balcani occidentali nel processo di adesione all’Unione europea: istituzioni, partiti e società” (The Western Balkans in the process of accession to the EU: institutions, parties and society) was held at the University of Trieste, campus of Gorizia, within the initiatives of the Jean Monnet Module “The Rule of Law in the new EU Member States” (EUinCEE). It was organized by Professor Serena Baldin, EUinCEE Academic Coordinator and Module Leader, and by Professor Elisabetta De Giorgi (University of Trieste).

The event was carried out by the Department of Political and Social Sciences of the University of Trieste, with the support of the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union, and under the patronage of: Municipality of Gorizia, Friuli Venezia Giulia journalists Association, Informest, Deina APS, students’ associations ASSID and MFE Gorizia.

The workshop began with the welcome addresses by professor Diego Abenante, coordinator of the Diplomacy and International studies’ bachelor degree in Gorizia; Chiara Gatta, representative of the municipality of Gorizia for the University; and professor Serena Baldin, EUinCEE Academic Coordinator and Module Leader. The workshop was attended by over 100 people.



The workshop aimed at pointing out the situation of the Western Balkans today in order to understand which point had reached the negotiations for these countries to join the

European Union, and to underline the peculiarities of these *loci*.

The first speaker was professor Francesco Deana, lecturer of European Law at the University of Udine. At the beginning, he asserted his two objectives of his speech: the first one was to describe the history and the essential points of the process of accession of Western Balkans; the second one was to evaluate the state of this process nowadays. He explained that the process, which started enthusiastically in 1999, had its ups and downs, and after Brexit, its importance was brought back. However, several promises were not respected, and this aspect can foster other countries, like Russia and China, which want to control this crucial area.

The second speaker was Irena Fiket, Professor at the University of Belgrade (Serbia).



In her speech, she gave a 360-degrees view of the Serbian political panorama, and she gave some interesting points about the elections in 2022. Professor Fiket highlighted the Serbian situation from 2000, when democracy rose in the country. Since that year, the process of democratization continued with several improvements, but in 2012 the progressive party, led by Vucic, brought the country back by deleting the opposition and controlling the media. Now, after the 2022 elections, the opposition came back, and some social movements arose, a signal that something is changing.

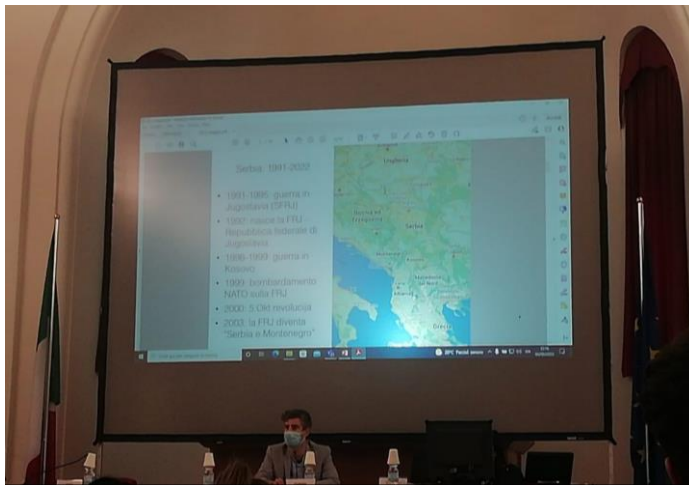
Dr. Pasquale Viola, post-doctoral researcher at the University of Bologna, presented his research “Greening the Balkans”, addressing the Europeanisation of the climatic and environmental agenda of Western Balkans, with a focus on Serbia.



His dissertation started with a keyword: transformative. This term is usually translated in Italian as “transizione”, but transformative implies a positive change, that in the Italian translation gets lost. Clarifying that point, he quoted the Sofia Declaration in 2018, and

from that point he centered the analysis on climate action plans in the Balkans (above all in Serbia), linking them with the Green Deal and the Paris Agreement of 2015.

The fourth speaker was Giovanni Vale, a journalist currently working as correspondent in



Zagreb (Croatia). He presented his work, titled “The Serbian society divided between the EU and Russia”. He started by pointing out a threatening signal coming from Serbia: this Balkan country is the only one in Europe that saw, in its streets, some protests in favor of Russia for the Ukrainian War. That

is because Serbia has always been near to Russia, above all from a cultural point of view. However, Russia's image in Serbia is often manipulated and distorted, creating an alluring idea of Russia, meanwhile the biggest part of financial aid comes from the EU. Thus, it is necessary to equilibrate the balance, to insist on democracy in this country, and avoid the “stabilocracy”.

The following speech was given by Ivan Curzolo, director of Informest. His intervention pointed out the regional experiences of European territorial cooperation in Western Balkans. Informest was created in 1991, in a period of huge changes in Europe, in order to foster internationalization. He focused on two main projects, the IPA project (now at its third edition), and the FATE project, “from army to entrepreneurship”, both now active in the Balkans to create an active growth in this area and make a positive impact in people’s lives.

Last but not least, Francesca Poli, of Deina APS, presented a programme, “Promemoria_Balcani”, which aims at educating to European Citizenship. This project started from Trieste, and they usually organize trips to Bosnia-Herzegovina in order to reflect on the building of the enemy myth, and to build an aware and strong European conscience.

This workshop was certainly an excellent occasion to focus on this strategic area of Europe, and a key moment of in-depth analysis of relationships between European Union and Western Balkans.