

International Institute for Peace

The International Institute for Peace (IIP) is an international and non-governmental organization (NGO and INGO), with consultative status at ECOSOC and UNESCO:

The IIP pursues the objective of contributing to the maintenance and strengthening of peace through its research activities and as a platform to promote non-violent conflict resolution in different areas of the world and to a wide range of people.



INTERNATIONAL
INSTITUTE FOR
PEACE

Annual Report 2019



About the IIP

The International Institute for Peace (IIP) is an international, non-governmental organization (NGO) with headquarters in Vienna. The IIP has consultative status to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) and to the United Nations Organization for Education, Science, Culture and Communication (UNESCO). It operates on the basis of Austrian law as a non-profit association.

The IIP exists since 1956 and was re-founded by the former president Erwin Lanc in 1989. The current president is Dr. Hannes Swoboda.

The IIP aims at conducting peace research but is also intended to function as a platform to promote non-violent conflict resolution in different areas of the world and to a wide range of people – scholars, military staff and civil society but also to students and people who are interested into topics concerning peace and peaceful approaches to existing conflicts.

Work relating to requirements and conditions for sustainable peace is wide-ranging and investigates the subject from many angles. In order to meet those challenges, the IIP is collaborating with various national and international institutions and organisations. The IIP – alone or in cooperation - organizes lectures, conferences and symposia on issues which are dealing with peace and/or peaceful conflict-resolutions. Research projects in cooperation with Austrian and international experts as well as with leading scholars also provide findings in the fields of economy, society and peaceful conflict resolution to governments and international organizations. The IIP is also publishing articles and books on relevant topics.

In recent years the work of the institute has been focused on developments in the Black Sea Region, the MENA region, the development of an EU-Foreign and Security Policy, International Security, Non-Proliferation, but also – on a smaller range – on specific topics in Latin America and Africa. Special attention is also drawn to the future development of NATO and OSCE as well as the integration of Brazil, Russia, India and China into a new world order, without the use of violence.

Members of the board of the IIP are Hannes Swoboda, Stephanie Fenkart, Angela Kane, Klaus von Dohnanyi, Grigory Lokshin, Anton Giulio de Robertis, Leopold Specht and Vivien Schmidt.

We thank our honorary members, honorary president Erwin Lanc and honorary member Max Schmidt for their long-lasting cooperation and affiliation with the institute.



PREFACE

Hannes Swoboda, President

The year 2019 once again highlighted the busy schedule of activities of the International Institute for Peace. Alone and in cooperation with other relevant institutes, the IIP dealt with a variety of issues.

Given the ongoing crisis in the Middle East, we focused specifically on the possibilities of overcoming the differences and antagonisms in the region. One highlight was a discussion we co-organized with Israeli and Palestinian delegates who were eager to speak with Austrians and specifically with Austrian Jews. As recent developments do not indicate an improvement in Israeli-Palestinian relations, we will strive to continue the project. The so-called peace-plan of President Trump did not really address human rights issues, especially on the Palestinian side. We believe that peace can openly be achieved on the basis of respect for the human rights of all. All external and regional actors should respect this general principle and should not prioritize their power games over respect for human rights.



As for Europe's other neighbor, Africa remains high on our agenda. We see this young continent not so much as a threat but rather as a strong future partner concerning economic development, balanced migration, the fight against terrorism, and the promotion of peace and social justice. One of our most fruitful projects continues to be the "Young Generation for the New Balkans" initiative, which also published the "Vision 2030" report this year. We aim to continue these activities, especially under the Croatian and German presidencies of the EU. It is the citizens of the Western Balkan countries themselves who must be at the center of considerations over how and when these countries might join the EU. Before joining, the national governments still have the obligation – with the support of the EU – to fulfill the minimum aspirations of their citizens. In particular, young people must be given the chance to obtain a decent job and living conditions that allow them to stay in their countries. Migration should still remain a possibility in order to enrich individual capacities and both the countries of immigration and emigration. A critical view of the EU's Foreign and Security Policy was the subject of the first Vienna Peace and Security Talks organized together with the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, the Karl Renner Institute, the Scientific Cluster for Polemology and Legal Ethics at the University of Vienna, and the Austrian National Defence Academy. We want to continue this endeavor in order to gather additional inputs into what the new Commission President van der Leyen has called the new global role of Europe. In this respect, the traditional attention of the IIP on the issue of disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction will be as strong as ever.

In general, the IIP extended its international and European outreach. But the center of our activities remains serving as an attractive platform for dialogue and expert-based discussions. We remain non-partisan but do not hide our deep conviction that democratic values, open-minded discussion, and respect for opposing views are essential conditions for peace.

I want to thank in particular our director Stephanie Fenkart, our vice president Angela Kane, our research assistant Marylia Hushcha, and all our interns who have worked with enormous engagement. Heinz Gärtner, a member of the scientific board, also played an especially active role with his valuable international connections.



PREFACE

Stephanie Fenkart, Director

It is with great pleasure that we present you with the annual report of our activities in 2019. Throughout this year, we have worked intensively on a wide range of topics dealing with peaceful conflict-resolution, non-proliferation, and disarmament. These include developments in the confrontation between the US and Iran and implications for the JCPOA, developments in our neighboring regions, especially the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe, relations between the East and the West and implications for European security, the security situation on the Korean Peninsula, the role of migration, the rise of China, the possibility for a new peace process in Israel and Palestine, and the situation in the Middle East in relation to Europe.



As an institute, we strive to function as an interface between not only think tankers, diplomats, and politicians but also scientists, civil society organizations, activists, and practitioners. We aim to bring the most current topics to the table and discuss in an open and transparent manner in search of solutions that can benefit all parties – through understanding each other’s arguments, engaging in dialogue, discussing with the general public, informing politicians and diplomats, seeking compromises, and developing a common understanding – in order to ensure that everyone profits from peaceful conflict-resolution in the short and long term, while not neglecting the importance of emotions and personal experiences. All stories must be told.

In numerous public discussions, background talks, workshops, conferences, exhibitions, seminars, and summer schools, we engaged participants from all around the world to share their experiences, areas of expertise, hopes, concerns, and suggestions for how to foster a sustainable and prosperous peace and take the necessary steps toward its realization.

It goes without saying that this would not have been possible without the extraordinary work of our team and our cooperation partners, which range from think tanks, universities, international and regional organizations, and political academies to the countless individuals who contributed their efforts, skills, and time to the belief that committing to peace is not only possible but also necessary.

Specifically, I would like to thank our project assistants – Flavio, Mélanie, Gina, and Joy – who have supported the work of the IIP through interning with professionalism, flexibility, endurance, and humor. My special thanks also go to the IIP team – President Hannes Swoboda, Vice-President Angela Kane, Advisory Board Member Heinz Gärtner, and Research Assistant Marylia Hushcha – for their consistent support, engagement, professionalism, and activism. I also would like to thank our executive board and advisory board as well as all cooperation partners in the last years and in the years to come.

An institute like ours alone will not be able to create a free, prosperous, peaceful, and equal world for everyone, but we believe that all the little actions add up and that each small step has the potential to positively impact the well-being of people all around the world.





Annual Report 2019



Table of Contents

New Developments in the South Caucasus and the Role of Russia	13
5 th Arts4Peace Africa Forum	14
Vienna Process Conference 2019: Russia and the EU: Dialogue through Business and Civil Society Channels	15
A Future for the INF Treaty?	16
Peace Wanted Alive: the Israeli-Palestinian Dilemma	17
Young Generation for the New Balkans 2030: Prishtina, Skopje, Belgrade	18
Frankreichs Außenpolitik unter Macron	20
3 rd Pan-African Youth Conference	21
Rücktritt vom Fortschritt: Warum der Rechtspopulismus den Feminismus bekämpft?	22
Elections in Ukraine: An Unpredictable Competition?	23
Expert Seminar on Korea	24
Conflicts in the Post-Soviet Space Revisited	25
Migration: Realitäten und Perspektiven Präsentation und Diskussion	26
Geopolitics of European Security in the South Caucasus and Ukraine	27
Europa hat die Wahl! Welche Werte wollen wir leben?	28
Belarus: Current Trends and Future Scenarios	29
Moralities of Warfare 2019: Morality and Collective Action in War Theory	30
Guatemala vor den Wahlen: Zwischen Korruption und Demokratie	31
China in the International System	32
Contested Sovereignties, Contested Global Orders? Understanding the New Geopolitics of Eurasia	33
Return of Geopolitics	35
Co-Managing International Crises: Judgments and Justifications	36
Darkest Hour? Churchill Myth-Making and the Great Brexit Fiasco	37
Presidential Elections in Afghanistan: About the Future of a War-Torn Country	38
Was ist aus Österreichs Nahostpolitik geworden?	39
International Neighbourhood Symposium	40
Whither the Left in Europe?	41
Austrian Foreign Policy and Neutrality	42
DOC Working Group on Crisis in Ukraine	43
36. Sommerakademie – Emotionen im Konflikt: Emanzipation in Zeiten von Ressentiment	44

Außenpolitisches Quartett – Das Atomabkommen mit dem Iran vor dem Aus? Bilanz und Ausblick nach vier Jahren JCPOA	45
29 th Economic Forum	46
1 st Vienna Peace and Security Talks 2019 – A New Start for the EU Foreign Policy	47
Visit to Belgrade	50
Israeli Elections, an Israeli-Palestinian Peace Deal and Mounting Israeli-Iranian Tensions: New Dynamics or More of the Same?	52
Young Generations for the New Western Balkans 2030: Berlin	53
Hungary: Current Trends and Future Scenarios	55
Talk with Elizabeth Spehar: United Nations: Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus	56
Sunniten gegen Schiiten: Zur Konstruktion eines Glaubenskrieges	57
Minsk Dialogue Forum: European Security – Stepping Back from the Brink	58
Young Generations for the New Western Balkans 2030: Paris	59
Coping with reality on the ground in Ukraine: Talk with OSCE Chief Monitor Amb. Ertuğrul Apakan	61
Middle East WMD-Free Zone: the View from Egypt	62
Korean Peninsula: Current Trends and Future Scenarios	63
Belarus at a Crossroads: Opting for Deeper Integration or Neutrality	64
Political Youth Symposium Austria & Belarus	65
Lyrik Lesung der Autorin Yirgalem Fisseha Mebrahtu	66
Redefining South Eastern Europe security agenda – Importance of NATO and Euro-Atlantic values	67
Partners for Peace: Sharing Palestinian and Israeli Visions for Peace and a Two State Solution with European Stakeholders	68
Malerei und Poesie: Vier Jahrzehnte zwischen den Welten	70
Netzwerk für Friedens- und Konfliktforschung in Österreich	71
Young Generations for the New Western Balkans 2030: Brussels	72
Eighth EU Non- Proliferation and Disarmament Conference	74
The Year 2019	75
Annex 1: 1 st Vienna Peace & Security Talks	76
Annex 2: Young Generations for the New Western Balkans: Vision 2030	81



January 16th **New Developments in the South Caucasus and the Role of Russia**

Venue	International Institute for Peace Möllwaldplatz 5/2, 1040 Vienna
Moderation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hannes Swoboda, President of the IIP, former MEP
Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leila Alieva, CARA/IFK-Fellow, Vienna, Senior Common Room member of St. Antony's College, Oxford University • Alexandra Dienes, Research Associate, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung
Format	Panel discussion

Despite the persistence of many unresolved conflicts in the Caucasus, the speakers highlighted the decline in global attention directed toward the region. To address future challenges and opportunities, the panelists emphasized the recent “velvet revolution” in Armenia and a generational change in mindsets. They also discussed the complicated role of international actors, such as the US, NATO, and the EU. However, the two speakers did not share the same opinion on conflict resolution. A disagreement ensued when Leila Alieva suggested three different strategies on how to end the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, mainly by highlighting the involvement of external actors. Conversely, Alexandra Dienes criticized possible external cooperation as a means to end the conflict and underlined the role of the OSCE.



January 23rd–27th

5th Arts4Peace Africa Forum

Venue	International Conference Centre of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) Menelik II Avenue, P.O. Box 3001, Addis-Ababa, Ethiopia
Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peaceau.org • African Artists Peace Initiative
Format	Panel discussion, workshops, round tables

The Fifth Arts4Peace Africa Annual Forum, titled ‘Rethinking and Acting On The Situations And Needs of Refugees And Returnees In Africa,’ provided a platform for critical discourse in relation to migration and refugees. During this four-day forum, different panel discussions, presentations, and workshops were organized in order to discuss new strategies to resolve the ongoing refugee and migrant crisis. As a part of this international forum, Director of the IIP Stephanie Fenkart held a presentation on ‘Building Sustainable Peace and Livelihoods; Youth and the Migration Crises.’ Fenkart highlighted the importance of focusing on youth and gave several recommendations on how the situation for youth might be improved, including by promoting gender equality. In addition, she concentrated on the respective roles of the European Union and the African Union in relation to the refugee crisis. Towards the end of her presentation, she elaborated on one example concerning the increased number of refugees in Uganda.



February 4th **Vienna Process Conference 2019: Russia and the EU: Dialogue through Business and Civil Society Channels**

Venue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lehar Hall, Vienna City Hall Friedrich-Schmidt-Platz 1, 1010 Vienna • Raiffeisen Bank International Am Stadtpark 9, 1030 Wien
Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International Centre for Advanced and Comparative EU-Russia Research Vienna (ICEUR) • Raiffeisen Bank International • City of Vienna
Format	Panel discussions

The 8th Vienna Process Conference offered an opportunity not only to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the International Centre for Advanced and Comparative EU-Russia Research Vienna (ICEUR) but also to discuss new possibilities to restart a dialogue between Russia and the EU. The two-day conference included one big reception on February 4th and three panel discussions on February 5th. The first panel discussion focused on the current economic situation of Russia, whose GDP grew by 2,3%. Although this number exceeded the government's expectations, many panelists questioned the reliability of these statistics. However, the panelists underscored the financial changes made since President Vladimir Putin's reelection in 2018, including new investments into gold and the accumulation of resources. Another primary topic covered by the panelists was the issue of energy, which is of critical interest for the EU, as European countries receive most of their gas, oil, coal, and uranium supplies from Russia. In relation to energy, the panelists discussed the Nordstream 2 project and its respective pros and cons. During a second panel discussion, the speakers turned toward the state of Russia's civil society. The panelists highlighted in particular the current divisions within Russian civil society. Although numerous NGOs exist in Russia, they are not always independent. Many of these NGOs do not act as autonomous actors but instead represent the interests of the state. The existing independent NGOs often face restrictions and limitations on their actions. However, panelists also highlighted the development of a new form of civil society in Russia that is informal and non-state oriented. The third and final panel discussion concentrated on investigative media, and panelists underlined the interlinkage between investigative media and civil society. Investigative journalism must strive to be provocative in order to win the attention of the population, as most media in Russia primarily support the government's line. As one of Russia's biggest investigative newspapers, *The Insider* plays an important role in Russian society. Nevertheless, this newspaper is dependent on foreign sponsors and is registered in Riga. Furthermore, most of Russia's investigative journalists do not live in Russia, and thus critical news coverage is largely circumscribed.

February 11th A Future for the INF Treaty?

Venue	International Institute for Peace Möllwaldplatz 5/3, 1040 Vienna
Moderation	Stephanie Fenkart , Director of the IIP
Welcome speech	Hannes Swoboda , President of the IIP, former MEP
Panelists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mikhail Ulyanov, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the International Organizations in Vienna • Angela Kane, former UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and the Vice President of IIP • Heinz Gärtner, University of Vienna, IIP • Cynthia Plath, Deputy Permanent Representative to the U.S. Delegation to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva
Format	Panel discussion

During this public discussion on the future of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, panelists addressed the consequences of a possible collapse in the regional arms control regime and the current state of global security. This event was organized after the US announced that it would withdraw from the major bilateral arms control agreement with Russia. Different opinions and views clashed during this session. While the US blames Russia for violating the agreement, Russia also accuses the US of breaking the treaty. Accusations and criticism on both sides constituted the main topics of conversation. Moreover, the questions of how the treaty could be saved and whether it should be saved were contested. The possibility of elaborating a multilateral treaty was raised, but ultimately this discussion served to highlight the lack of political will on either side to save the treaty.



February 15th-22nd Peace Wanted Alive: the Israeli-Palestinian Dilemma

Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hannes Swoboda, President of the IIP, former MEP • Stephanie Fenkart, Director of the IIP • Gudrun Kramer, Director of the Austrian Study Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution in Schlaining, Austria • Wilfred Graf, Director of the Kehlman Institute for International Conflict Resolution • Various experts, politicians and civil society representatives from Israel and Palestine
Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Austrian Study Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution in Schlaining, Austria • Kehlman Institute for International Conflict Resolution
Format	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study Trip

In the middle of February, the IIP organized a trip to Israel and Palestine in collaboration with the Austrian Study Center for Peace and Conflict Resolution and the Kehlman Institute for International Conflict Resolution. The goal of this trip was to get a picture of the current situation and developments in the region and perhaps contribute to the potential elaboration of the peace process. This long-lasting conflict consists, among other things, of disagreements over several border issues, the status of Jerusalem, refugee rights, and safety concerns. Although these topics serve as an obstacle to peace, the main barrier for the peace process lies in identification and a sense of belonging. Both sides have suffered from injustices, but both have also engaged in violence. The concept of two states within a shared homeland appears to be the most appropriate solution for the conflict, but its implementation remains far from reality. Compromises on both sides would be necessary for a lasting peace, but, for the time being, neither side is willing to give in.



March 11th-13th Young Generation for the New Balkans 2030: Prishtina, Skopje, Belgrade

Venue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FES office Pashko Vasa 23, 10000 Prishtina, Kosovo • Impact Hub Makedonska 21, Beograd 11103, Serbia
Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IIP • Austrian Institute for International Affairs (oiip) • Karl-Renner Institut • Admovere • Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES)
Format	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seminars • Workshops • Public discussions • Public panel discussions • Meetings



The initiative *Young Generations for the new Balkans 2030: Towards Alternative Horizons* aims to highlight the voice of young people concerning current problems and challenges in the Western Balkans. In cooperation with local and international partners, the current situation in the region was the main topic of discussion. By organizing different panels, public talks, workshops, and seminars, this initiative seeks to analyze key challenges and provide possible ideas for change in the future. After two successful meetings in Vienna in 2018, the initiative grew in 2019 after hosting different meetings in various European capitals. In March 2019, the IIP held a three-day conference in three different Western Balkan capitals: Prishtina, Skopje, and Belgrade. Many seminars, workshops, panel discussions, and meetings with diverse politicians and political activists were organized in order to elaborate possible courses of action for change.



March 18th

Frankreichs Außenpolitik unter Macron

Venue	International Institute for Peace Möllwaldplatz 5/2 1040 Vienna
Participant	Johannes M. Becker , political scientist and peace researcher
Cooperation	INTERNATIONAL
Format	Talk

In cooperation with the magazine *International*, the IIP hosted an event on French foreign policy under the presidency of Emmanuel Macron. The event featured a discussion by Johannes Becker, political scientist and peace researcher, on the current foreign policy direction and contemporary challenges faced by Macron.



March 23rd-27th

3rd Pan-African Youth Conference

Venue	Banjul, the Gambia
Organizer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Gambia National Youth Council • AYC Secretariat
Speaker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stephanie Fenkart, director IIP
Format	Conference, workshop

In March 2019, Director of the IIP Stephanie Fenkart was invited to participate in the 3rd PanAfrican Youth Conference in The Gambia. The conference was titled *The Future Is Now; Youth are not Too Young to Lead*. These meetings offered a platform for interaction between young people. Through this, young people – and especially women and children – should be inspired and encouraged to raise their voices. Fenkart was the spotlight speaker during the session *Migration and Development*. She gave several reasons why politics should concentrate more on the interests of young people, including their untapped potential as a source of creativity. Fenkart not only suggested several recommendations in order to finally improve the situation of young people, including by advocating best practices, but also gave concrete proposals on what the community can do. It is important to finally challenge the current narratives and establish new ones. Towards the end of her presentation, she highlighted the importance of most robust cooperation between the European Union and the African Union.



March 27th Rücktritt vom Fortschritt: Warum der Rechtspopulismus den Feminismus bekämpft?

Venue	International Institute for Peace Möllwaldplatz 5/2 1040 Vienna
Welcome Speech	Stephanie Fenkart , Director of the IIP
Moderation	Gina Butros , IIP
Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ulrike Lunacek, former vice-president at EU-parliament • Judith Goetz, University of Vienna • Hannes Swoboda, President of the IIP, former MEP • Schifte Hashemi, Frauenvolksbegehren Wien
Format	Panel discussion

This panel discussion highlighted the increasing opposition to feminism stemming from right-wing populist actors. Repeatedly, the ideologies between right-wing populism and anti-feminism are combined, as shown for example in the current discussion about the importance of Gender Studies in Hungary. Anti-feminism is considered to be heterogenic, as it has the ability to unite various groups. By creating a common enemy and developing a joint goal, namely the re-naturalisation of traditional gender roles, a new bond between different parties is taking place. During this discussion, the ethnicization of women's rights was underlined. Equal rights and equality between the genders is consistently to be a Western concept, while patriarchy and oppression are associated with migration. At the end of the discussion, the panelists emphasized the grave threat to democracy emanating from antifeminism.



March 28th Elections in Ukraine: An Unpredictable Competition?

Venue	Karl-Renner Institut Karl-Popper-Str. 8 1100 Vienna
Welcome Speech	Gerhard Marchl , Karl-Renner-Institut, Vienna
Moderation	Jutta Sommerbauer , Journalist at „Die Presse“
Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alexander Dubowy, Centre for Eurasian Studies at the University of Vienna • Nadiia Koval, Foreign Policy Council “Ukrainian Prism” • Johannes Leitner, Head of the Competence Center for Black Sea Region Studies, Vienna • Alena Lunyova, Human Rights Center, Kiev • Hannes Swoboda, President of the IIP, former MEP
Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IIP • Universität Wien • Fachhochschule des BFI Wien • Competence Center for Black Sea Region Studies • Renner Institut
Format	Panel discussion

This panel discussion was held in light of the upcoming elections in Ukraine on March 31st and April 21st. The discussion therefore served not only as a platform to review the five-year presidency of Petro Poroshenko but also as a stage to discuss possible outcomes of the elections. The panelists noted the unpredictability of the elections, which complicates accurate predicting. Three major issues, namely the pro-European foreign policy, the relationship with Russia, and the differing ideas for reforms repeatedly emerged during the election campaign. Another topic discussed during the panel discussion was the human rights situation in Ukraine. In this context, censorship on TV channels for information and the self-censorship of journalists among other things were highlighted. In conclusion, Ukraine was described as a captured state, as its power and wealth are concentrated among a small elite.



April 2nd

Expert Seminar on Korea

Venue	International Institute for Peace Möllwaldplatz 5/2 1040 Vienna
Welcome Speech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hannes Swoboda, President of the IIP, former MEP • Heinz Gärtner, Advisory Board, IIP
Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sung Ki-Young, Senior researcher, Institute for National Security Strategy (INSS) • Jo Dongho, President of INSS • Ahn Zeno, Senior Research Fellow of INSS • Sung Ki-Young, Senior Research Fellow of INSS • Park Bora, Research Fellow of INSS • Kim Ey Soo, Senior Research Fellow of INSS • Seong Kyoungjin, Senior Research Fellow of INSS • Shin Sungho, Research Fellow of INSS
Cooperation	Institute for National Security Strategy, Seoul
Format	Expert seminar

The conflict between North Korea and South Korea has been characterized by numerous points of contention. This seminar provided a platform for dialogue between different experts in order to elaborate a possible peace process and reconciliation in the region. Among other things, the speakers highlighted new dynamics in the dialogue between North Korea and South Korea. For example, within the past year, North Korea participated in the Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, and numerous high-level delegates were exchanged. In relation to inter-Korean cooperation, the panelists highlighted the possibility for 7-Party-Talks in the future. Furthermore, the pros and cons of the Korean peninsula becoming officially neutral were discussed. By primarily discussing the Trump-Kim Summit, a possible Kim-Moon Summit, and the hope of denuclearization, the seminar provided a platform to review not only inter-Korean relations but also the peninsula's relationship with the West.



April 4th

Conflicts in the Post-Soviet Space Revisited

Venue	International Institute for Peace Möllwaldplatz 5/2 1040 Vienna
Moderation	Angela Kane , Vice-President of the IIP, former UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs
Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alexander Dubowy, Scientific Coordinator, Research Center for Eurasian Studies, University of Vienna, Scientific Director, Institute for Security Policy • Alexander Iskandaryan, Director, Caucasus Institute Yerevan • Sergey Markedonov, Leading Researcher, Center for Euro-Atlantic Security, MGIMO, Institute for International Studies
Cooperation	Forschungsstelle für Eurasische Studie der Universität Wien (EURAS)
Format	Panel discussion

The collapse of the Soviet Union caused a radical change in international politics. While several former Warsaw Pact countries in Eastern Europe decided to follow the path of integration with the West, other former Soviet republics are still struggling to settle ongoing debates about their security and political preferences. In many former republics of the Soviet Union, new challenges emerged, including separatist movements and ethno-political conflicts. During this panel discussion, the speakers reviewed ongoing issues in the Post-Soviet space. The talk chiefly highlighted the role of external and international actors, concentrating in particular on Russia's foreign policy strategy. Contemporary developments and trends were also discussed.



April 9th

Migration: Realitäten und Perspektiven Präsentation und Diskussion

Venue	International Institute for Peace Möllwaldplatz 5/2 1040 Vienna
Moderation	Stephanie Fenkart , Director of the IIP
Speaker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Max Haller, sociologist • Melita Sunjic, UNHCR-expert • Hannes Swoboda, President of the IIP, former MEP
Cooperation	Painter Gaby Matzner, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Transcultural Campaigning
Format	Discussion and finissage

The finissage of Gaby Matzner was accompanied by a discussion about migration, concentrating on different perspectives and realities. The so-called wave of refugees has since 2015 consistently served as a source for disagreements and discussions in local and international forums. Even though migration is a global phenomenon, a negative association with migration is spreading across the EU. During this discussion, the speakers not only discussed stereotypes and prejudices about refugees and asylum-seekers in Europe, but they also analyzed plans and the expectations of the international community in order to solve the global “refugee crisis.”



April 11th-14th

Geopolitics of European Security in the South Caucasus and Ukraine

Venue	Berlin
Format	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop • Panel discussion • Discussions
Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PfP Consortium of Defense Academies and Security Studies Institutes, Garmisch-Partenkirchen • Austrian National Defence Academy, Vienna • Directorate General for Security Policy at the Austrian Ministry of Defence, Vienna • Dialogue of Civilizations Research Institute, Berlin • The European Geopolitical Forum, Brussels • Security Governance Group, Kitchener

Director of the IIP Stephanie Fenkart was invited to participate in a workshop organized by PfP Consortium of Defense Academies and Security Studies Institutes, the Austrian National Defence Academy, the Directorate General for Security Policy at the Austrian Ministry of Defence, the Dialogue of Civilizations Research Institute, and the Security Governance Group. By participating in various discussions and workshops, the current developments in the South Caucasus were analyzed, and recommendations for further actions were reviewed. This workshop aimed to not only underline the interests and actions of different nations in this region but also to examine the role of various non-state actors. Three different panel discussions, namely “External Actors in Perspective,” “Adapting to Outside Pressure,” and “The Way Ahead for Geopolitical Competition in the South Caucasus and Ukraine,” were organized in order to gather a multitude of perspectives and recommendations.



May 2nd
Europa hat die Wahl! Welche Werte wollen wir leben?

Venue	International Institute for Peace Möllwaldplatz 5/2 1040 Vienna
Welcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stephanie Fenkart, Director of the IIP • Annemarie Schlack, director, Amnesty International
Moderation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hannes Swoboda, President of the IIP, former MEP
Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christoph Wiederkehr, chairman, NEOS, Vienna • Ewa Dzedzic, federal councilor, candidate EU-elections, Green • Evelyn Regner, MEP, SPÖ • Johannes Voggenhuber, leading candidate EU-elections, Liste JETZT
Cooperation	Amnesty International
Format	Panel discussion

As the European elections approached, the IIP organized a panel discussion with the leading candidates and their respective representatives in cooperation with Amnesty International. During this discussion, the value of human rights, the preservation of the liberal democracy, and the nature of future collaboration between different member states were discussed. The discussion highlighted the potential of individuals to participate in the decisions taken by the European Union. As the elections of the European Parliament are the only elections where citizens have a direct influence on developments in the EU, voters will themselves decide in which direction the EU is heading over the next five years. During the panel, different positions, perspectives, and recommendations were presented and promoted.



May 7th Belarus: Current Trends and Future Scenarios

Venue	International Institute for Peace Möllwaldplatz 5/2 1040 Vienna
Speaker	Artyom Shraibman , political editor at the independent news portal TUT.BY
Cooperation	Karl-Renner Institut
Format	Background talk

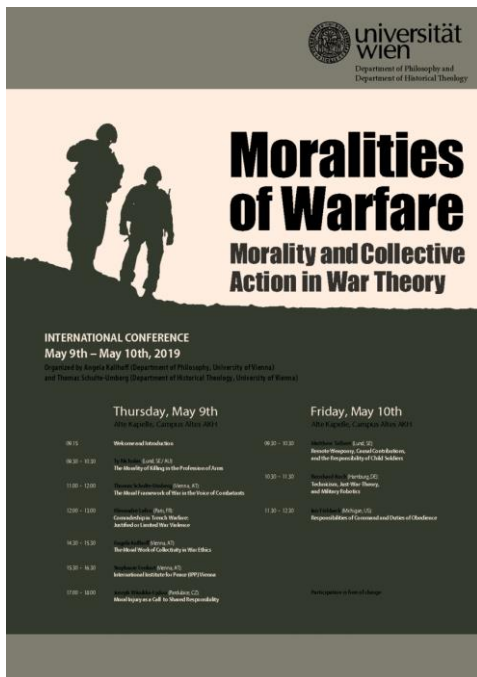
This background talk concentrated on three different subjects: the internal situation in Belarus, the relationship of the country with the EU and the West in general, and Belarus-Russia relations. Although Belarus is an authoritarian regime, it is debatable if it is still appropriate to consider the nation as the last dictatorship in Europe. The major problems in Belarus are non-competitive elections, electoral fraud, suppression of media freedom, and lack of engagement of civil society. Although Belarusian authorities restrict the emergence of a significant opposition and curtail media freedom, the state does not exercise total control over the society, as people are still free to travel and join opposition groups, among other things. Especially since the outbreak of the Ukrainian conflict, Belarus is increasingly viewed as a guarantor of stability in the region. This opening of a platform for dialogue between different parties has also led to a rapprochement with the West over the last year. However, it is still a very slow process, which is primarily indicated by a lack of clarity and political will on both sides. The most important aspect of Belarus' foreign policy remains its relationship with Russia. By declaring itself neutral in the conflict with Ukraine, Belarus is moving in a different direction from Russia. Although relations with Russia are currently tense, Russia is asking for deeper integration, considering a single currency and a single taxation system. During this background talk, the concept of neutrality as a possibility for Belarus' future was discussed.



May 9th-10th Moralities of Warfare 2019: Morality and Collective Action in War Theory

Venue	Alte Kapelle am Campus der Universität Wien Spitalgasse 2-4 / Hof 2.8 1090 Wien
Organizer	University of Vienna, Department of Philosophy and Department of Historical Theology
Format	Conference, presentations

During this conference, discussants analyzed the concept of morality during war. Director of the IIP Stephanie Fenkart was invited to present activities of the IIP which serve as an example of methods for non-violent conflict resolution.



May 12th **Guatemala vor den Wahlen: Zwischen Korruption und Demokratie**

Venue	International Institute for Peace Möllwaldplatz 5/2 1040 Vienna
Moderation	Stephanie Fenkart , Director of the IIP
Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eva Kalny, University of Hannover, Institut für Didaktik und Demokratie • Georg Grünberg, ethnologist, University of Vienna
Cooperation	Österreichischen Lateinamerika-Institut

In light of the approaching elections in Guatemala in June 2019, the IIP hosted a public discussion to analyze and understand the current situation in the country. Only weeks before the elections, it was still unsure if all the 27 parties were eligible to run for elections. Many high-ranking politicians were accused of corruption and drug-related campaign financing. The panelist discussed organized crime, endemic violence, the weak state of the rule of law, and corruption. All these problems have a major impact on the population. The majority of the Guatemala's population is therefore suffering from precarious living conditions, and the country struggles with a lack of democratic structures, leading to high levels of emigration.



May 16th

China in the International System

Venue	International Institute for Peace, Möllwaldplatz 5/2 1040 Vienna
Moderation	Heinz Gärtner , IIP; professor, Institute for Political Sciences University of Vienna
Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pascal Abb, senior researcher, Austrian Study Center for Peace and Conflict Resolution (ASPR) • Hannes Swoboda, President of the IIP, former MEP • Waltraut Urban, economist and analyst • Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, professor, Institute of Chinese Studies, University of Vienna • Tang Xiaomin, project manager, Saferworld China
Format	Panel discussion

The panelist underlined the two contradicting images of China in the West. On the one hand, China is often considered to be a peaceful superpower with a sole interest in economic growth, given that it is not spreading its political and ideological system around the world. On the other hand, the superpower is constantly building new military bases and sending military troops across the world. As China is one of the major global players, it aims to increase its relations with the rest of the world, for example through the Belt and Road Initiative. China is often considered to be one of the fastest developing countries in the world, but many researchers, politicians, and activists criticize the infrastructure programs for ignoring environmental issues and being overpriced and often non-transparent. During the panel discussion, participants addressed the difficult situation between China and the West. In particular, the relation between China and the EU is marked by imbalances. While China is an authoritarian regime, the EU is based on democratic values. China prefers bilateralism, while the EU prefers multilateralism. Furthermore, there is a mutual suspicion between China and the US. China is concerned about maintain its one-party system, while the US is worried about the growing economic influence of China. At the end of the discussion, the panelists highlighted that a clash of civilizations can be excluded. If a conflict should erupt, it will be based on strategic or economic interests, not because of cultural issues.



May 20th **Contested Sovereignties, Contested Global Orders? Understanding the New Geopolitics of Eurasia**

Venue	International Institute for Peace Möllwaldplatz 5/2 1040 Vienna
Welcome Speech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stephanie Fenkart, Director of the IIP • Luiza Bialasiewicz, political geographer; professor at the European Governance at the University of Amsterdam, co-director of the Amsterdam Center for European Studies • Heinz Gärtner, IIP; professor, Institute for Political Sciences University of Vienna
Moderation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kit Rickard, University College, London • Hannes Swoboda, President of the IIP, former MEP • Yauheni Preiherman, Minsk Dialogue • Alexander Dubowy, ISP; University of Vienna
Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adrian Hyde Price, University of Gothenburg • Jan Willem Honig, Kings College, London • John O'Loughlin, University of Colorado, Boulder • Veit Bachmann, University of Bonn • Abdolreza Farajirad, University of Science and Research and Strategic Council on Foreign Relations, Teheran) • Heinz Gärtner, IIP; University of Vienna • Kristin Bakke, University College, London • Yulia Nikitina, Moscow State Institute of International Relations, Moscow • Vladimir Kolossov, Laboratory of Geopolitical Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow
Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen (IWM) • Institute for Security Policy (ISP) • Amsterdam Centre for European Studies (ACES)
Format	Panel discussion, workshop

This conference included many experts from various backgrounds in order to discuss the relevance of geopolitics today. The concept of geopolitics often has a negative connotation, as for example in Germany, where geopolitics is usually associated with Nazi Germany. The basic meaning of geopolitics is, however, that geography shapes international relations, and geopolitics is therefore often compared to territoriality. On the one hand, the importance of geopolitics seems to have diminished because of new technologies, digitalization, transnational companies, globalization, transportation, and communication, which have greatly impacted the initial concept of territoriality. On the other hand, territory is still relevant in contemporary politics, as shown, for example, by the annexation of Crimea in 2014. Nevertheless, Russia is not the only nation with geopolitical aspirations. Other regions, such as the strait of Hormuz, the Chabahar Port, or the port of Gwadar, have significant geopolitical relevance. Geopolitics and globalization therefore seem to coexist. The speakers also elaborated the role the European Union in geopolitics. Scholars have characterized the US as the producer and defender of Western values, whereas Europe is considered as a mere follower. However, Europe uses different mechanisms, especially soft power, in order to influence other regions in the world. For a long period, Europe's integration project was regarded with admiration, but during recent years this admiration has been overshadowed by internal challenges, including Brexit and the rise of right-wing parties. Although geopolitics seems to have lost its former importance, many countries and regions still pursue geopolitical goals.



May 20th

Return of Geopolitics

Venue	Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen, library Spittelauer Lände 3 1090 Vienna
Welcome Speech	Hannes Swoboda , President of the IIP, former MEP
Moderation	Luiza Bialasiewicz , political geographer; professor at the European Governance at the University of Amsterdam, co-director of the Amsterdam Center for European Studies
Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ivan Krastev, chairman of the Center for Liberal Strategies Sofia, Permanent Fellow at the IWM • Gwendolyn Sasse, director of the Center for East European and International Studies (ZOiS) in Berlin; professor of Comparative Politics at the Department of Politics and International Relations and at the School of Interdisciplinary Area Studies at the University of Oxford • Gerard Toal, political geographer; professor of Government and International Affairs at Virginia Tech
Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amsterdam Center for European Studies (ACES) • Institute for Human Sciences
Format	Panel discussion

During this panel discussion, the speakers elaborated on the return of geopolitics to world affairs. Over recent years, geopolitical considerations have been shaping the relationships between states. In particular, geopolitical vocabulary, such as spheres of influence or balance of power, is currently resurfacing in the media and in political discourse. Although the terminology used nowadays is similar to that used during the Cold War, the reality is that geopolitics today is no longer the same.



May 23rd **Co-Managing International Crises: Judgments and Justifications**

Venue	Diplomatische Akademie Wien, Festsaal Favoritenstrasse 15a 1040 Vienna
Welcome Speech	Emil Brix , Director, Vienna School of International Studies
Moderation	Werner Neudeck , chair of the Academic Board, Vienna School of International Studies
Participant	Markus Kornprobst , professor of International Relations, Vienna School of International Studies
Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cambridge University Press • Diplomatische Akademie Wien • Austrian Institute for European and Security Policy
Format	Book presentation

Markus Kornprobst presented his newly published book *Co-Managing International Crises: Judgements and Justifications*, highlighting, among other things, the role of the European Union in international affairs. Kornprobst elaborated a new model by which he analyses the actions undertaken by France, Germany, and the UK in order to respond to various crises in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Iraq, and Kosovo.

June 3rd Darkest Hour? Churchill Myth-Making and the Great Brexit Fiasco

Venue	International Institute for Peace Möllwaldplatz 5/2 1040 Vienna
Welcome	Hannes Swoboda , President of the IIP, former MEP
Moderation	Marylia Hushcha , IIP
Participant	Robert Knight , University College London
Cooperation	Sir Peter Ustinov Institute
Format	Lecture

During this panel discussion, Robert Knight highlighted important reasons for the Brexit fiasco by analyzing, among other things, a scene from the movie *Darkest Hour*. Up to the present day, the long-standing mythmaking about World War II and the idealization of Prime Minister Winston Churchill led to political fantasies about the United Kingdom. He explained that Churchill's *Dunkirk Speech* about not surrendering against Nazi Germany is used by people favoring Brexit to show that the UK can go in another direction than the rest of the European continent. Knight offered three explanations to explain why the myth of Great Britain remains so powerful among British society. First, the belief in Great Britain is supported by the idea that optimism and willpower can overcome anything. Second, many Brexit politicians do not sufficiently consider the potential damage of their actions, as they assume that there will be no hard feelings against the UK. Among these politicians, a view of the UK as an altruistic project to engage with former colonies and other European member states often prevails. Lastly, Brexit supporters diffuse an illusion of national harmony, which encourages people to think that the UK does not need its membership in the European Union.



June 11th Presidential Elections in Afghanistan: About the Future of a War-Torn Country

Venue	International Institute for Peace Möllwaldplatz 5/2 1040 Vienna
Moderation	Hannes Swoboda , President of the IIP, former MEP
Participant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farouq Azam, former Minister of Education and Minister of Refugees of Afghanistan, Chairman Movement for Peaceful Transformation of Afghanistan • Zerka Malyar, founder and Chairman of GURAF (Association Supporting the rights of Afghan Women and Children), lawyer and councilor in the Austrian Ministry of Defense, former federal prosecutor in Afghanistan
Format	Panel discussion

After a further postponement of the elections in Afghanistan from April to September 2019, the IIP held a panel discussion about the current perspectives and chances in the war-torn country. Initially, hope spread across the region as the US and the Taliban discussed a draft framework about future possibilities for a peace process in Afghanistan. However, the current security situation, human rights violations, lack of women's rights, and difficult relationship between the Taliban and the government are only some of the prevailing issues in the country and the main topics of the elections. The panelists discussed, among other things, possible outcomes and feasible developments after the elections. They highlighted the current weak state of governmental forces and regretted the seeming inability of leaders to contribute to an improvement in the state of law.



June 18th
Was ist aus Österreichs Nahostpolitik geworden?

Venue	International Institute for Peace Möllwaldplatz 5/2 1040 Vienna
Moderation	Fritz Edlinger , secretary general at Gesellschaft für Österreichisch-Arabische Beziehungen“
Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Erwin Lanc, former minister under Bruno Kreisky, former president of IIP • Johnny Bunzl, political scientist, Middle East expert
Cooperation	Zeitschrift INTERNATIONAL
Format	Panel discussion

In light of the 40-year jubilee of the magazine INTERNATIONAL, two experts and eyewitnesses discussed the development and transformation of Austria's Middle East policy. The end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s were marked by Bruno Kreisky's policy of mutual respect and recognition of international legal standards. This policy has changed over the last two years. In particular, the refugee crisis and the questionable process of coming to terms with the past of the last Austrian government led to a transformation of Austria's Middle East policy.

June 18th-23rd

International Neighbourhood Symposium

Venue	Hellenic Foundation for Culture, Odessa Branch 20 Krasny Pereulok Odessa
Format	Conference

In June 2019, Director of the IIP Stephanie Fenkart was invited to participate in a conference on *Addressing the Challenges in Europe and its Neighbourhoods* in Odessa. During this conference, Fenkart served as a panelist in a session titled *The Regional Order in the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean*, where she focused on the current situation in Israel and Palestine. After briefly explaining the historical background of the conflict, she addressed current challenges and problems in the region. Towards the end of the session, Fenkart presented different solutions, such as a two-state solution or a binational state.



June 25th Whither the Left in Europe?

Venue	International Institute for Peace Möllwaldplatz 5/2 1040 Vienna
Moderation	Gabriele Matzner , Austrian diplomat and journalist
Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chantal Mouffe, Belgian-British political scientist, activist and author • Nikolaus Kowall, political economist, activist, publicist, currently teaching at the Vienna University of Applied Sciences
Cooperation	Zeitschrift INTERNATIONAL
Format	Panel discussion

During the founding year of the magazine INTERNATIONAL in 1979, the SPÖ under Bruno Kreisky obtained an absolute majority in the parliamentary elections. After this huge success, the votes for the SPÖ have constantly diminished. A general decline of votes for leftist parties across Europe has become increasingly visible. In some countries, such as Germany, it seems as if green parties are taking over the role of former left-wing parties, while leftist parties are almost extinct in former communist countries. During this panel discussion, the two speakers elaborated possible reasons for this decline and addressed the rise of right-wing populism in Europe.



July 2nd Austrian Foreign Policy and Neutrality

Venue	International Institute for Peace Möllwaldplatz 5/2 1040 Vienna
Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hannes Swoboda, President of the IIP, former MEP • Fred Tanner, Senior Advisor, Conflict Prevention Center, OSCE • Hakan Akbulut, Scientific Assistant, Department of Political Science, Technical University Kaiserslautern
Format	Seminar

As part of an excursion to Vienna from Kaiserslautern, Hakan Akbulut coordinated a lecture on Austrian foreign policy and neutrality at the IIP. The delegation was composed of a group of students, members of the working group, and officers from the Bundeswehr.



July 8th **DOC Working Group on Crisis in Ukraine**

Venue	DOC RI Französische Straße 23 Berlin 10117
Organization	DOC Research Institute
Format	Study Group

Director of the IIP Stephanie Fenkart was invited to a working group on the crisis in Ukraine taking place Berlin. During this study group, the discussion focused on the current situation of the crisis as well as the respective roles of the EU, Ukraine, Russia, and the US. Fenkart gave a lecture titled *The EU: A Dependent Global Player?* After a brief introduction about the framework of the conflict and the return of geopolitics, she explained the main challenges for the relationship between the EU, Ukraine, and Russia, evidenced by the mutual lack of trust. Furthermore, she addressed the current domestic and international challenges for the EU as an independent actor. After discussing the rise of nationalism and the growing fear of globalization currently taking hold in the West, Fenkart explained why the EU is still an important actor in the Ukrainian conflict. In particular, she underlined the geographic proximity of the conflict and the state of diplomacy in the EU as primary instruments to act as a key mediator in the crisis.



**July 10th-14th 36. Sommerakademie – Emotionen im Konflikt:
Emanzipation in Zeiten von Ressentiment**

Venue	Burg Schlaining
Organization	ASPR, CPDC, IIP, others
Format	Summer School

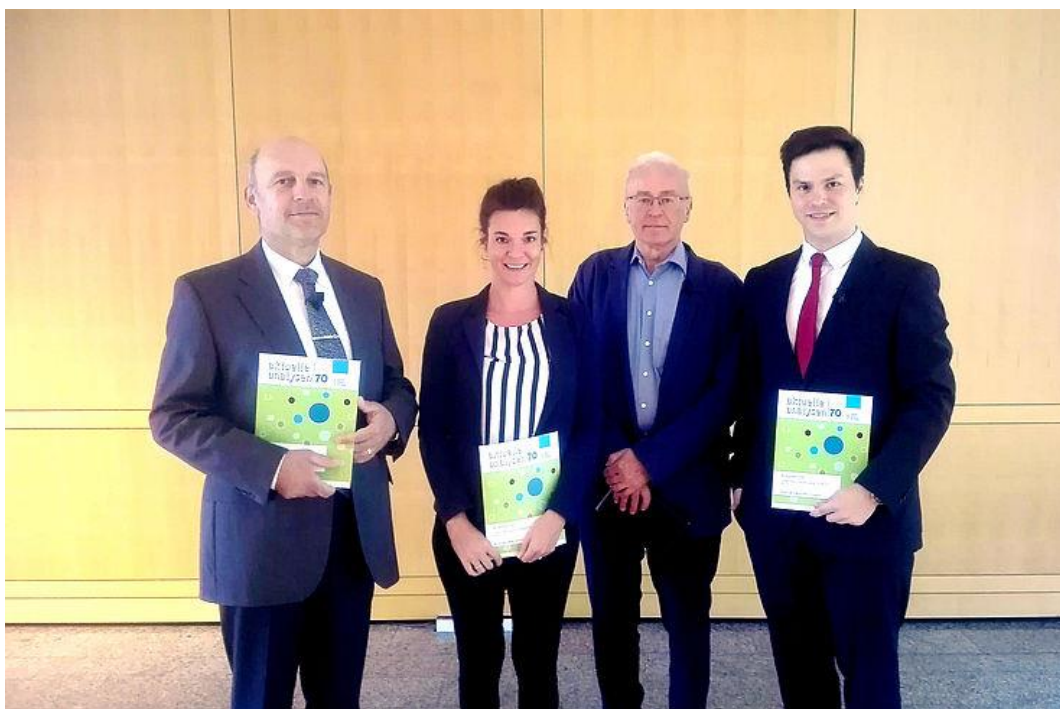
In July 2019 the Austrian Study Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution (ASPR) in cooperation with the IIP and many other institutions and organizations organized a summer school in Schlaining. The school featured different presentations, talks, and fishbowl discussions focusing on emotions in politics and social conflicts. The IIP is very supportive of such projects, and thus President of the IIP Hannes Swoboda held a speech during the closing ceremony and served as moderator for a round table with different representatives from politics, the media, and civil society.

July 15th

Außenpolitisches Quartett – Das Atomabkommen mit dem Iran vor dem Aus? Bilanz und Ausblick nach vier Jahren JCPOA

Venue	Konferenzzentrum München der Hanns-Seidel-Stiftung Lazarettstraße 33 80636 München
Moderation	Stephanie Fenkart , Director of the IIP
Panelists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heinz Gärtner, professor, University of Vienna; advisory board, IIP • Reinhard Meier-Walser, Hanns-Seidel-Stiftung • Wahid H. Tabatabai, consultant
Organization	Hanns Seidel Stiftung
Format	Panel discussion

During this panel discussion in Munich, the participants discussed the internal developments and foreign policy in Iran since the ratification of the nuclear agreement in 2015. After the ratification of this deal, according to which Iran must reduce its nuclear enrichment program in return for the lifting of international sanctions, tensions between Iran and the West seemed to decrease. However, the US abandoned the agreement and imposed new sanctions on Iran. As tensions once again begin to increase, a small incident could lead to a military confrontation between the two countries. The panelists not only discussed past and current developments but also elaborated possible strategies in order to de-escalate the conflict.



September 3rd-5th 29th Economic Forum

Venue	Krynica
Organization	Economic Forum
Format	Panel discussions, workshops

In September 2019, President of the IIP Hannes Swoboda was invited to the largest conference in Central and Eastern Europe with over 4000 participants from different fields, including from politics, economics, medicine, and civil society. The conference concentrated on fifteen main topics, including „State & Reform,” „International and European Politics,” „World Trade,” „Energy and Environmental Policies,” „Business & Management,” „Digitalization,” and „Regional Cooperation.” Swoboda was invited to participate in the debate *Should Enlargement Policy Be Back on EU Agenda?* He shared the floor with, Pavlo Klimkin, Cyril Svoboda, Ivanna Klymush Tsintsadze, and Tanja Miscevic.



September 8th-9th

1st Vienna Peace and Security Talks 2019 – A New Start for the EU Foreign Policy?

Venue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sky Lounge Oskar-Morgenstern-Platz 1 1090 Vienna • National Defence Academy, Sala Terrena Stiftgasse 2a 1070 Vienna
Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christian Berger, Head of Delegation of the European Union to Turkey • Irina Bolgova, Associate professor in the Department of Applied Analysis at Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO) • Tarja Cronberg, SIPRI, Distinguished Associate Fellow • Erich Csitkovits, Lieutenant General, Commandant of the National Defence Academy • Alexander Dubowy, Senior Researcher, Scientific Cluster for Polemology and Legal Ethics (University of Vienna National Defence Academy); Scientific Director, Institute for Security Policy (ISP) • Vedran Dzihic, Senior Researcher at the Austrian Institute for International Affairs (oiip) • Stephanie Fenkart, Director of the IIP • Heinz Gärtner, Lecturer at the Department of Political Science at the University of Vienna, Political Analyst IIP • Cengiz Günay, Vice Director of the Austrian Institute for International Affairs (oiip) • Isabelle Ioannides, Europe's Futures Fellow at the Institute for Human Sciences / ERSTE Foundation and Senior Associate Researcher at the Institute for European Studies, Free University of Brussels (VUB) • Mykola Kapitonenko, Associate Professor at the Institute of International Relations of Kyiv National Taras Shevchenko University • Nicole Koenig, Deputy Director at the Jacques Delors Institute Berlin • Reinhard Krumm, Head of FES Regional Office for Cooperation and Peace in Europe (ROCPE), Vienna • Maria Maltschnig, Director of the Karl-Renner-Institut, Vienna • Gerhard Marchl, Karl-Renner-Institut, Department of European Politics

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thomas Mayr-Harting, Managing Director for Europe and Central Asia in the European External Action Service • Sami Nader, Director of the Levant Institute for Strategic Affairs (LISA), Beirut • Eva Nowotny, Former Austrian Ambassador to France, UK, and the USA • Clarisse Pasztory, Head of the EU Liaison Office in Erbil, Iraq • Andreas Schieder, Member of the European Parliament, Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament, SPÖ • Hans Dietmar Schweisgut, Ambassador ret. of the European Union to the People's Republic of China and Mongolia, Free University of Brussels (VUB) • Christian Stadler, Head of the Scientific Cluster for Polemology and Legal Ethics (University of Vienna National Defence Academy); Member of the Expert Council for Integration at the Austrian Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs • Nicolas Stockhammer, Senior Researcher at the Scientific Cluster for Polemology and Legal Ethics (University of Vienna National Defence Academy) • Hannes Swoboda, President of the IIP and of the Sir Peter Ustinov Institute for Prejudice Research and Prevention; former MEP • Jolanta Szymańska, Migration and European affairs expert, Polish Institute on International Affairs, PISM • Douglas Wake, Senior Expert in the Strategic Policy Support Unit (SPSU) in the Office of the OSCE Secretary General • Simon Weiss, FES Regional Office for Cooperation and Peace in Europe (ROCPE), Vienna • Katharina Wieser, Head of the Department for Eastern Europe, South Caucasia, Central Asia, EU Eastern Neighbourhood Policy, Eastern Partnership in the Austrian Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs
Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friedrich Ebert Stiftung • Renner Institut • Scientific Cluster for Polemology and Legal Ethics, University of Vienna • Austrian National Defence Academy
Format	Workshop, panel discussion



The European Union is presently facing many new insecurities, including the rivalry between NATO and Russia, the crisis in Ukraine, the US withdrawal from the INF treaty, increasing criticism of multilateralism, and conflicts in the European neighborhood. Resultingly, the EU needs a common foreign and security policy. The main problem, however, is the inner discord within the EU, which prevents it from taking common action. During this two-day conference, the panelists discussed different possibilities to increase the EU's global influence. By gaining influence, the EU could contribute more to conflict resolution in its immediate neighborhood. During this 1st Peace and Security Talks, different workshops focused on conflicts in the Middle East, transatlantic relations, and the European Eastern Neighborhood. The conference ended with a public panel discussion, which addressed a possible restart for the EU's foreign policy.



September 10th-11th Visit to Belgrade

Venue	Belgrade
Format	Study trip, meetings, Hannes Swoboda and Stephanie Fenkart

In September 2019, President of the IIP Hannes Swoboda and Director of the IIP Stephanie Fenkart organized a study trip to Serbia in order to analyze the current political situation in the country. They had the opportunity to meet several members from different political parties, civil society, and various media outlets. Both noted the absence of fair electoral competition and the intimidation of opposition politicians. This trip showed how reliant Serbia is on the EU in order to establish a full democratic political system.

“After a visit in Belgrade and talks with different representatives of several political parties (ranging from opposition to government), representatives from Civil Society and media we regrettably have to affirm that the political situation in Serbia is very fragile, delicate and deteriorating. The announced boycott of many opposition parties is a result of the political pressures of the Progressive Party under the leadership of President Aleksandar Vučić to prevent a lively opposition. Harassments and intimidation of followers of the opposition and especially of the very few mayors are systemic, the strong control of the media allows no fair party competition and election essentially for a functioning parliamentary democracy. This appalling political attitude from the side of the government has been confirmed by representatives of the civil society and the media. Their efforts to promote a fruitful dialogue have been confronted with the lack of readiness of the government to implement decisive reforms concerning the election board, the board supervising the electronic media and the fight against corruption.

The EU was, in the past, too much concentrated on expecting from the leadership of President Vučić to “deliver” on Kosovo. However, we cannot see any readiness to develop and implement a realistic and conciliatory strategy on the side of the President and government – irrespective of some similar negative approaches from the Kosovo side. In addition, the Serb government is also contributing actively to a decrease the regional cooperation and reconciliation efforts on the basis of an unhealthy nationalism – especially in pre-election times.

This situation could become worse with the nomination of the former minister of justice of the Viktor Orbán government as EU Commissioner for enlargement. The nomination is a slap into the face of all those who fight inside the countries of the Western Balkans for true democracy and rule of law, especially the vivid civil society.

We expect from all political entities in Europe to demand a different policy of the EU Commission and the Council which is supporting all those who are fighting for European principles and values. Soft attitudes towards those who are systematically violating these principles and values must stop. In addition, there are many good reasons to challenge the nomination of the new Commissioner for enlargement.

Serbia is currently fighting for its “democratic air” and the EU should be a strong partner for those who are willing to transform the country.”





September 12th

Israeli Elections, an Israeli-Palestinian Peace Deal and Mounting Israeli-Iranian Tensions: New Dynamics or More of the Same?

Venue	International Institute for Peace Möllwaldplatz 5/2 1040 Vienna
Welcome Speech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hannes Swoboda, President of the IIP, former MEP • Gudrun Kramer, director of ASPR
Moderation	Stephanie Fenkart , Director of the IIP
Panelist	Ofer Zalzburg , Senior Analyst at the International Crisis Group
Cooperation	ASPR
Format	Panel discussion

In light of the upcoming Israeli elections in September 2019, the IIP held a public panel discussion with Ofer Zalzburg, Senior Analyst at the International Crisis Group. Zalzburg talked about current developments in Israel and its neighboring states, highlighting the recent corruption charges against long-standing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Netanyahu's continued rule has hindered the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. After the US moved its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, the elaboration of a peace process has become more and more distant. In addition, panelists discussed the role of international actors in the conflict, including the US, the EU, Saudi Arabia, and Iran.



September 15th-17th **Young Generations for the New Western Balkans 2030: Berlin**

Venue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NH Hotel Berlin Friedrichstraße 96 10117 Berlin • Austrian Embassy Stauffenbergerstraße 1 10785 • Federal Chancellery Willy-Brandt-Straße 1 10557 Berlin • Friedrich Ebert Foundation Hiroshimastraße 18 10785 Berlin • Federal Foreign Office Werderscher Markt 1 10117 Berlin
Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Austrian Institute for International Affairs (oiip) • Austrian Embassy Berlin • Renner Institut • European Stability Initiative (ESI)
Format	Workshop, expert round tables

Within the framework of the Western Balkan initiative, a group of young experts and activists from the region visited Berlin in order call attention to current problems and issues in the region. During a series of meetings with different institutions, they sought to promote alternatives to the status quo and contribute to a better future for the region. After an internal meeting, the group visited the Federal Chancellery, where they met with Matthias Lüttenberg, Head of the Directorate for Eastern, Central, South Eastern Europe, South Caucasus, and Central Asia. Furthermore, they had meetings at the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Berlin and in the Federal Foreign Office, where they spoke with Susanne Schütz, Head of the Office of the Director for South-Eastern Europe, Turkey, and the EFTA States. During these meetings, the participants addressed the rise of authoritarian populism, the strained relations between the various countries, and the increasing corruption in the region.



September 23rd

Hungary: Current Trends and Future Scenarios

Venue	International Institute for Peace Möllwaldplatz 5/2 1040 Vienna
Moderator	Hannes Swoboda , President of the IIP, former MEP
Speaker	Petér Krekó , social psychologist, political scientist, executive director of Political Capital
Format	Background talk

During this background talk, Petér Krekó addressed recent political developments in Hungary. Hungary is marked by illiberal politics, populism, disinformation, fake news, and conspiracy theories, which all contribute to an increase in Russian influence in European politics. The event participants discussed which strategies might be used in order to counter this evolution.



October 3rd

Talk with Elizabeth Spehar: United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus

Venue	International Institute for Peace Möllwaldplatz 5/2 1040 Vienna
Welcome	Hannes Swoboda , President of the IIP, former MEP
Moderation	Angela Kane , Vice-President of the IIP
Participant	Elizabeth Spehar , Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) in Cyprus and Head of UNFICYP
Format	Panel discussion

Peacekeeping missions continue to be one of the most important tools of the UN in order to contribute to peace and security in conflict-ridden areas. Elizabeth Spehar addressed not only the achievements of peacekeeping missions but also key challenges for these missions. After a brief historical overview about the origins and evolution of peacekeeping missions, the talk focused on current challenges, including the increased number of missions operating in places with a high number of civilians and charges of misconduct and misbehavior against some peacekeepers. Although today's peacekeeping missions face different challenges, the importance of the new initiative *Action for Peacekeeping (A4P)* was highlighted. Towards the end, the panel discussion concentrated on the ongoing peacekeeping mission in Cyprus, which was deployed in 1964. After 55 years of conflict between the Greek and Turkish Cypriots, the mission remains in place, and the primary objective of elaborating a long-lasting solution has not yet been achieved. Finally, Spehar pointed out some relevant achievements of several UN peacekeeping missions, including its missions in the Central African Republic and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.



October 4th

Sunniten gegen Schiiten: Zur Konstruktion eines Glaubenskrieges

Venue	International Institute for Peace Möllwaldplatz 5/2 1040 Vienna
Welcome	Hannes Swoboda , President of the IIP, former MEP
Moderation	Fritz Edlinger , secretary general Society for Austro-Arab Relations
Participant	Tyma Kraitt , author
Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Society for Austro-Arab Relations • Promedia Verlag
Format	Book presentation

Tyma Kraitt presented her newly-published book *Sunniten gegen Schiiten: Zur Konstruktion eines Glaubenskrieges*, discussing the important historical conditions responsible for the formation of the chief religious schism within Islam. Given that the Middle East is often characterized by conflict, this religious division is often misused as an explanation for every confrontation in the region. After explaining the origins of the conflict, Kraitt underlined important differences between the two denominations. Moreover, she addressed the ongoing confessional war between Iran and Saudi Arabia in order to demonstrate the increasing politicization of the conflict between Sunnis and Shiites. Kraitt also discussed selected ideas and subjects from her book, such as the evolution of Wahhabism and the development of civil society in the region. With this book, the author argues that not all conflicts in the Middle East are a result of the conflict between the two religious denominations.



October 7th-8th

Minsk Dialogue Forum: European Security – Stepping Back from the Brink

Venue	Minsk
Organizer	Minsk Dialogue Council on International Relations
Format	Conference

In October 2019, Heinz Gärtner, Stephanie Fenkart, and Marylia Hushcha participated in the two-day conference Minsk Dialogue Forum in Belarus. This conference focused on recent European security issues, including the collapse of the INF Treaty and the new arms race. Gärtner, a member of the IIP's advisory board, was a panelist during the session *How helpful is the Cold War experience of rapprochement for European security today?*



October 9th-11th
**Young Generations for the New Western Balkans
 2030: Paris**

Venue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assemblée nationale 126 Rue de l'Université, 75325 Paris • Présidence de la République Salon Rouge 23 avenue de Marigny, 75008 Paris • Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères 130, rue de l'Université, 75007 Paris • Fondation Jean-Jaurès 12 Cité Malesherbes, 75009 Paris • EuropaNova – Action pour une Europe Politique 64 bis, avenue de New York, 75016 Paris
Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Austrian Institute for International Affairs (oiip) • Karl-Renner Institut • Fondation Jean Jaurès
Format	Meetings, expert round tables, panel discussion

One month after the visit to Berlin, the Western Balkan initiative travelled to Paris in order to further spread their hopes for change in the region among EU actors. The group of young experts from all six countries of the Western Balkans gathered in Paris, where they visited the French National Assembly and had a meeting with Arthur Delaporte, Chief of Cabinet of Valérie Rabault, and Marietta Karamanli, a Socialist Party Deputy to the National Assembly. After an informal lunch with Rabault, President of the Socialist Party in the National Assembly, the group met with Alexandre Adam, the Conseiller Europe Adjoint. In a further meeting at the French Ministry for European and Foreign Affairs, the group engaged in a discussion about current challenges for the EU integration of the Western Balkans with different politicians, including Bernard Chappedelaine, Thomas Bertin, Martial Adam, Violette Rolin, Lénor Gux, and Madeleine Courant. During a public panel discussion, they discussed the current problems, challenges, and perspectives for further developments in the region. The panel consisted of four participants from the Western Balkan initiative: Adi Cerimagic, Gentiola Madhi, Agnesa Qerimi, and Stefani Spirovska. The three-day conference ended with a meeting at EuropaNova, an initiative of young Europeans desiring a stronger political, economic, and social Europe.



October 14th

Coping with reality on the ground in Ukraine: Talk with OSCE Chief Monitor Amb. Ertuğrul Apakan

Venue	International Institute for Peace Möllwaldplatz 5/2 1040 Vienna
Welcome	Stephanie Fenkart , Director of the IIP
Moderation	Angela Kane , Vice-President of the IIP, former UN High Representative on Disarmament Affairs
Participant	Ambassador Ertuğrul Apakan , former Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine
Format	Panel discussion

In response to the conflict in Ukraine in 2014, the Ukrainian government requested the establishment of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM). The main function of this impartial actor on the ground is to provide stabilization in the region through monitoring and reporting as well as serving as a platform for dialogue and negotiations. After serving for five years as Chief Monitor, Ambassador Apakan shared his insights and experiences during this panel discussion. He highlighted the changed nature of the conflict, the heavy militarization on both sides, the different ceasefire agreements, including Minsk II, and the battle for Donetsk Airport. The conflict in Ukraine is by no means a frozen conflict, and the important work of the SMM must continue. The SMM to Ukraine only serve as a platform for dialogue but it also proposed local solutions in order to improve the everyday life of civilians living in the area of the conflict. OSCE Monitoring Missions are important instruments to avoid further escalations of the crisis.



October 16th

Middle East WMD-Free Zone: the View from Egypt

Venue	International Institute for Peace Möllwaldplatz 5/2 1040 Vienna
Moderation	Angela Kane , Vice-President of the IIP, former UN High Representative on Disarmament Affairs
Participant	Ambassador Dr. Mahmoud Karem , former Ambassador, Former Chair of the League of Arab States' committee on the establishment of a Zone Free of Weapons Of Mass destruction, Commissioner, Egyptian National Council for Human Rights (NCHR), Head International Relations Committee, Board Member NATO Defense College Foundation (NDCF) Rome, Director, Egypt and ME Centre, British University Egypt (BUE), Special Advisor for the University for Foreign Relations, Board Member Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs (ECFA).
Format	Background talk

Given the upcoming conference on the Middle East Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone (MEWMDFZ) in November in New York, the IIP held a background talk addressing the issue of establishing a MEWMDFZ and its role in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons review process. The conference in New York is an Egyptian initiative with the aim of creating a new platform for dialogue and negotiations open to all the affected parties.



October 30th

Korean Peninsula: Current Trends and Future Scenarios

Venue	International Institute for Peace Möllwaldplatz 5/2 1040 Vienna
Welcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stephanie Fenkart, Director of the IIP • Heinz Gärtner, advisory board, IIP; professor University of Vienna
Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shin Byeongiu, Institute for Peace and Unification Studies, Senior Researcher Fellow • Kim Jisun, Institute for Peace and Unification Studies, Researcher Fellow • Giwon Han, Institute for Peace and Unification Studies, Researcher Fellow
Format	Background talk

During this background talk, Korean and European experts shared their thoughts on the current situation and possible developments on the Korean peninsula. They addressed the strained relations between North Korea and South Korea, and they also analyzed the role of the Korean peninsula on a global level. The peninsula's denuclearization and the possibility of the two countries becoming neutral were some of the main themes of discussion.



November 4th

Belarus at a Crossroads: Opting for Deeper Integration or Neutrality?

Venue	International Institute for Peace Möllwaldplatz 5/2 1040 Vienna
Welcome	Hannes Swoboda , President of the IIP, former MEP
Moderation	Marylia Hushcha , research assistant, IIP
Participant	Artyom Shraibman , political analyst, Sense Analytics
Format	Panel discussion

A week before Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko's visit to Vienna, the IIP held a public talk with Artyom Shraibman. Although Belarus is considered to be an authoritarian regime, in which genuine political opposition is absent and media freedom is consistently repressed, the country seems to care increasingly about its image in the West. Belarus is playing a new role in the region, with Minsk serving as an important platform for dialogue between various actors. While the relationship between Belarus and the West seems to improve, some tensions have arisen between Belarus and Russia, including Russia's latest tax reform. The discussion also turned to the likely transition of power. Although Lukashenko has already announced that he aims to conduct a constitutional reform and prepare the country for his successor, the current president will most likely retain some control mechanisms. Belarus could serve as an important bridge between the East and the West, but its levels of transparency, rule of law, and LGBTQ rights, among other issues, serve as stumbling blocks for the time being.



November 5th**Political Youth Symposium Austria & Belarus**

Venue	International Institute for Peace Möllwaldplatz 5/2 1040 Vienna
Cooperation	BRSM
Format	Round table discussion

One day after its public event on Belarus, the IIP organized a roundtable discussion for Belarusian and Austrian youth. During this meeting, discussants had the opportunity to exchange views about the political systems in both countries, their relationship with each other, environmental issues, youth policy, and the integration towards the EU and the Eurasian region. Furthermore, they discussed the potential of Belarus as a neutral state.





November 7th

Lyrik Lesung der Autorin Yirgalem Fisseha Mebrahtu

Venue	International Institute for Peace Möllwaldplatz 5/2 1040 Vienna
Speaker	Yirgalem Fisseha Mebrahtu , poet, author, journalist
Organizer	PEN-Club

The PEN-Club organized a reading by the Eritrean author Yirgalem Fisseha Mebrahtu in collaboration with the IIP. From 2009 to 2015, Yirgalem Fisseha Mebrahtu was in a military prison in Eritrea. In 2018, she fled Eritrea and entered *Writer-in-Exile* program in Munich. Her reading was accompanied by music.

November 14th-17th **Redefining South Eastern Europe security agenda – Importance of NATO and Euro-Atlantic values**

Venue	Velika, Požega-Slavonija County, Croatia
Organizer	The Atlantic Council of Croatia
Format	Workshops, round table discussions, ...

In November 2019, Director of the IIP Stephanie Fenkart was invited to a three-day conference in Croatia, which focused on South-Eastern Europe's security agenda. During a session called *Aspects of tighter cooperation between NATO and EU Common Security and Defence Policy*, Fenkart presented the European approach towards enlargement by concentrating on current challenges and prospects. Europe today is characterized by international and domestic divisions, including Brexit and the rise of right-wing populism. Fenkart highlighted the importance of integrating the Western Balkans in the EU by underlining that Europe is more than just its western half.



November 25th-27th **Partners for Peace: Sharing Palestinian and Israeli Visions for Peace and a Two State Solution with European Stakeholders**

Venue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International Institute for Peace Möllwaldplatz 5/2 1040 Vienna • Palestinian Representative Office in Vienna Josefsgasse 5/1/7 1080 Vienna • Ban Ki-moon Centre for Global Citizens • Grüner Klub im Rathaus • Austrian Foreign Ministry Minoritenplatz 8 1010 Vienna • Rathaus Friedrich-Schmidt-Platz 1 1010 Vienna
Cooperation	Austrian Study Center for Peace and Conflict Resolution (ASPR)
Format	Background talk, round table discussions, panel discussion



A delegation consisting of politicians and activists from Israel and Palestine gathered in Vienna to engage with different Austrian stakeholders, government officials, and civil society groups. Their objective was to diffuse a vision and message for peace by highlighting the two-state solution. After an internal meeting, the delegation met with Dr. Loïc Simonet, OSCE Senior External Co-operation Officer at the Office of the Secretary General. The OSCE was presented, and the participants discussed the possible implementation of a similar concept in the Middle East. Following this meeting, the delegation was invited to the Palestinian Representative Office in Vienna, where Ambassador Salah Abdel Shafi spoke about the Palestinian diaspora in Vienna. On November 26th, the IIP held a roundtable with Austrian stakeholders from Jewish civil society groups, the Austrian diplomatic community, the media, non-governmental organizations, and academia. This meeting served as a platform to exchange feelings of disappointment, hopes, and visions for a better future in the region. After this informal roundtable, the delegation held a meeting with Dr. Heinz Fischer, Co-Chairman of the Ban Ki-moon Centre for Global Citizens and former Federal President of the Republic of Austria. This meeting was followed by a discussion at the Office of the Green Party in Vienna's City Hall. In the evening, four participants from Israel and Palestine presented their personal visions and some of the outcomes of the last meetings during a public panel discussion. On the last day, the delegation had two final meetings. The first one was at the Austrian Foreign Ministry with Ambassador Dr. Thomas Nader, Head of Department for the Near and Middle East, Southern European Neighbourhood Policy, and Middle East peace processes, and the second one was with Ernst Woller, President of Vienna's provincial parliament. This three-day conference served as a great opportunity for all participants to share insights about struggles in the region and discuss different approaches for a solution.



November 28th **Malerei und Poesie: Vier Jahrzehnte zwischen den Welten**

Venue	International Institute for Peace Möllwaldplatz 5/2 1040 Vienna
Welcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heinz Gärtner, advisory board, IIP; professor University of Vienna • Espérance-François Bulayumi, general secretary aa-informationshaus
Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mitra Shahmoradi, artist and writer • Hamidreya Ojaghi, musician
Organizer	aa-informationshaus
Format	Reading accompanied by music

On November 28th, Mitra Shahmoradi held a reading at the IIP in which she presented her poems in German and Farsi. The reading was accompanied by a musician playing the Iranian daf.



November 29th-30th Netzwerk für Friedens- und Konfliktforschung in Österreich

Venue	Burg Schlaining Rochusplatz 1 Burg Schlaining 7461 Stadtschlaining
Organizer	Austrian Study Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution (ASPR)
Format	Network Meeting Peace and Conflict Research

At the end of November, Director of the IIP Stephanie Fenkart participated in a two-day conference in Stadtschlaining. This meeting served as an opportunity not only to share ideas and positions about peace and conflict resolutions but also to receive information about new technologies, methods, and projects.



December 11th-12th **Young Generations for the New Western Balkans
2030: Brussels**

Venue	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• European Parliament Rue de Trèves 3, 1050 Ixelles, Brussels• European Commission, DG NEAR Rue de la Loi 15, 1000 Brussels
Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Austrian Institute for International Affairs (oiip)• Renner Institut
Format	Meetings, expert round tables



After the visits to Prishtina, Belgrade, Skopje, Berlin, and Paris, the IIP organized a business trip to Brussels. The objective of this visit was to present the newly published policy paper *Young Generations for the New Balkans: Vision 2030 Towards Alternative Horizons*. The group of young activists had their first meeting with the Serbian opposition, which by coincidence had a meeting in the European Parliament on exactly the same day. This meeting was followed by a roundtable discussion with different MEPs from the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats, including Tonino Picula, Andreas Schieder, Bettina Vollath, and Isabel Santos. The next day, the group met with Colin Wolfe, Head of Unit for Western Balkans Regional Cooperation and Programmes in DG NEAR, and with Albert Sese Ballart, who works for DG NEAR EAC (Education, Culture, Youth). The visit to Brussels underlined that 2020 will open new opportunities to discuss the integration process, particularly through Croatia's presidency of the EU. The young experts explained the current situation and problems in the region, and they also offered concrete proposals for the EU and the separate countries to improve the situation in the region.



December 13th

Eighth EU Non- Proliferation and Disarmament Conference

Venue	Brussels
Format	Conference

President of the IIP Hannes Swoboda participated at the Eighth EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Conference. This conference brought together different actors from civil society and the diplomatic community in order to discuss future global security. The conference highlighted the critical situation of non-proliferation and disarmament in the current moment.





The Year 2019

The International Institute for Peace (IIP) concluded a very successful and eventful year, and we wish to thank everyone who participated in one form or another. We would like to extend a big thank you to all of our panelists, experts, activists, collaborators, and – of course – our wonderful subscribers and event participants. In 2019, we further expanded the geographic reach and frequency of our events and topics. The IIP organized or participated in 55 different events and provided participants with engaging discussions and lectures. Although the IIP currently focuses primarily on the Western Balkans, Ukraine & Russia, Middle East, non-Proliferation and European Security, the Institute also offered a diverse coverage of conflicts and regions around the world. To name a few topics addressed this year, we discussed international security, the European Union, the relations between East and West, setbacks in arms control but also feminist and gender issues, right-wing populism and new developments in Latin America. Another key aim of the IIP is to combine art and politics. By offering a diverse selection of book presentations, exhibitions, and vernissages, the Institute seeks to attract a broad range of participants. At the beginning of 2020, we are excited for the opportunities and challenges of yet another year. We look forward to more opportunities for exchange and exciting discussions, and we hope to welcome many of you at our events in the upcoming year.

ANNEX 1

The following recommendations are the outcome of the “1st Vienna Peace & Security Talks” held on September 9th, 2019 in Vienna. Around 30 experts from Austria, Germany, Poland, Russia, Ukraine, USA, Lebanon and Cyprus discussed the future of a common EU Foreign & Security Policy. The talks have been organized by the International Institute for Peace (IIP), the Karl-Renner Institut, the FES Regional Office for Cooperation and Peace in Europe and the University of Vienna.

1st Vienna Peace & Security Talks

The European security order that was established after the end of the Cold War is under threat. The rivalry between NATO and Russia has reached an unprecedented level. Not least as a consequence of the annexation of Crimea and the ongoing military conflict in Donbass, Russia is perceived as an aggressor, in particular by Central and Eastern European states. The EU and the Russian Federation have imposed sanctions on each other. In addition, the termination of the INF treaty is likely to enhance a new weapons technology race by nuclear powers.

In the eyes of many Europeans, the USA under Donald Trump have become a factor of insecurity. His criticism of NATO, EU, and multilateralism in general led to increased calls for more European independency, also in security policy matters.

Even more worrying is the situation in Europe’s southern and south-eastern neighbourhood. The challenges and conflicts are almost countless, such as the collapse of Libya, the civil war in Syria, the war in Yemen, the permanent threat of escalation between Israel and the Hamas, and the danger of war in the Persian Gulf.

All these developments clearly illustrate that the EU sorely needs a real common foreign and security policy. Until now, however, the EU has often not been able to speak with one voice in many foreign policy matters, due to the conflicting interests of the member states and due to a lack of strategic conceptions. The result is that, e.g. in the Middle East, European interests are not sufficiently preserved.

The EU must formulate a clear and concise strategy for its relationship with its neighbors which goes beyond resilience and which includes what the EU can offer best, a vision which builds upon democracy, freedom, peace, (economic) cooperation and common principles.

Such a policy must be neither only value-oriented nor only led by interests. The EU must not refrain from expressing openly and vocally concerns about violations of human rights. Yet, these concerns must not prevent the EU from enhancing political, economic and environmental interests and needs.

General Recommendations:

- **Vision:** The EU must formulate a clear and concise strategy for its relationship with the countries in its neighborhood, which goes beyond resilience and which includes what the EU can offer best, namely a vision which builds upon democracy, freedom, peace, (economic) cooperation and common principles. Rivalries can be transformed into cooperation and defense of common interests – this can be made visible by demonstrating its own evolutionary history.

- **Comprehensive Approach:** The EU must combine all its external competences and capacities including trade, development and sustainability policies towards a more streamlined and efficient strategy towards its neighbors.
- **Efficiency:** The EU does not need more defense spending but more efficiency through closer cooperation between member countries and between the EU and NATO. Importantly, the EU always has to give priority to the civil and preventive side of its external policies. Exactly for this reason, the EU must also speak to adversaries and invite them to accompany the European peace project.
- **Inclusiveness:** The EU must overcome internal differences and clear the way for a forward-looking peace policy in Europe, inviting all European countries to contribute to security and stability.
- **Goal oriented:** Maintaining and – in case of conflict – restoring peace is the supreme aim of the EU project. Military and police engagement always have to serve that purpose. Therefore, the EU needs a clear peace-oriented security doctrine.
- **Contextualization:** It is vital not to promote universal solutions for different contexts, but to understand the complexities of various historical, political and societal experiences of the specific countries. Differentiations which are well-founded in different conditions and situations are necessary to achieve the targets set by the EU.

Eastern Partnership (EaP) and Russia

The EU has a clear security interest – internally and externally – in bringing its Eastern neighbors closer to the EU. The EU but also its neighboring partners profit from stronger economic relations which also strengthen the acceptance of EU norms. Long term effects of close cooperation can be steps towards democratization, more transparency, security and prosperity.

However, the EU needs to respect and understand the different geo-political orientations of some of the Eastern Partnership countries. This is especially the case with Armenia and Belarus but also with Moldova who have unique historical, economic and societal relations e.g. with Russia.

Steps of integration into EU areas of competence should be envisaged for the willing EaP partners without insisting on exclusiveness of these relations. Advantages of additional steps of cooperation and even integration have to be supported by evidence. Convincing skeptical governments and, very importantly, citizens by winning the arguments through deep and comprehensive explanations of the benefits which come with cooperation is key.

Concerning Russia, the sanctions on the one hand and the five Mogherini principles for a possible dialogue on the other hand, constitute EU's Russia policy, which has still a remarkable unanimous backing. However, the EU cannot accept the aggressive actions in Eastern Ukraine as well as the unlawful annexation of Crimea. Thus, it is important to keep up channels of (diplomatic) dialogue in order to make progressive steps towards a relaxation of the poisonous relations between the two states. The recent exchange of prisoners and the withdrawal of forces at Stanitsia Luhanska are important steps which should in the long run lead to a full implementation of the Minsk Agreements.

Recommendations:

- Convincing governments and citizens by comprehensive explanations and public diplomacy of the benefits which come with a closer cooperation with the EU, while simultaneously not insisting on exclusiveness of relations.
- The EU needs to understand the specific contexts manifested through historic experiences, composition of population, economic and societal ties and experiences with the West and the East.
- The EU should initiate a discussion on European Cooperative Security, including states of the EU, the Eastern Partnership countries and Russia - irrespective of wide differences in the design of European security.
- The EU should use its diplomatic tools in the region to keep up channels for dialogue between the conflicting parties (Ukraine and Russia) in order to introduce a policy of détente.

Transatlantic relations

European governments should in general find a way to resist extraterritorial – secondary – sanctions that harm European interests. Altogether, the Iran nuclear deal is a litmus test of multilateralism; of whether the EU can act independently in defending its political and economic interests.

Donald Trump's and his administration's attitude towards the EU is characterized by a sense of superiority and prejudice. While the EU should express clearly its discontent with such attitude, this must not prevent cooperation wherever it is possible.

EU's military expenditure does not necessarily have to rise so that the Union plays a more pronounced military role in defense matters. The EU via its member states is already a military heavyweight of its own, with their total military expenditures being the size of Russia, Brazil, India and China combined.

Recommendations:

- The EU must stick to its multilateral track in international agreements and to its commitments (JCPOA) in order to stay credible, while it must still cooperate with the US wherever it serves the common interests.
- Considering that the EU, via its member states, already is a big military power, the EU does not have to raise its military expenditure in order to secure its defense. Focus must be set on the civil and preventive options and military as well as police engagement must serve the purpose of maintaining and – if necessary – restoring peace.
- The EU needs to be united in its policies towards China and accept it as a partner, ally and rival at the same time. This must not prevent criticism when it comes to abuses of principal human rights. As the US are not seeking a common China policy, the EU must act by defending its own interests.

Middle East

It would be fatal to abandon this neighborhood of the EU, leaving it to the often-disastrous interventions by others. It would be equally wrong to look for unconditional allies (e.g. Saudi Arabia) in the region without taking into account their behavior and policies towards their neighbors. The EU must recognize the threats of instability and even state collapse in the region as well as increasing

poverty and sectarian tensions that can fuel the re-emergence of ISIS as a territorial entity. Even though the EU must defend the JCPOA, it has also to express its grave concerns about the expansionist policies of Iran in the Middle East region. In this respect, the EU has to understand the anxieties in Israel about attacks from Iranian and Hezbollah forces. However, the EU has to affirm that the neglect of the justified Palestinian interests is not acceptable, and neither is further annexation of the Palestinian land.

The EU must prevent further unilateral Turkish incursion in Northern Syria in fighting against the Kurdish population. Nonetheless, the Kurdish groups must be ready to help to restore peace in finding a modus vivendi with Turkey. The EU must argue for peace in Yemen and request the Houthis, Saudis and Emirates to enter into serious peace talks. The EU must also express its clear support for democratic movements in the Horn of Africa.

Concerning Turkey, the EU should express its deep regret that Turkey is more and more leaving the track of accession to the EU and is distancing itself from NATO. However, the EU must understand Turkey's interest in reducing the burden of refugees from Syria and its intention to build safe zones close to its borders. The EU should have put clear conditions to its support for safe zones, as any military intervention bears the danger of creating additional insecurity if it is not well organized and monitored. That, naturally, needs stronger EU engagement in preserving the fragile peace and not leaving it to the uncertain US policies.

The EU has to recognize that Russia became an important actor in the Middle East after its intervention in Syria which led to direct Russian influence within the Assad regime and the Syrian army. The EU should enter into a serious dialogue with Russia about possible cooperation in reconstructing Syria, recognizing that few investors would venture into Syria anytime soon, since the economy is dominated by warlords and large parts of the infrastructure are shattered.

The EU has to recognize that non-engagement is not cost-free and conclude that it cannot afford to be passive. It should transfer its knowledge and experience of building up an organization for dealing with different approaches in a peaceful way and constructing a union of states and citizens.

EU needs to understand that non-engagement will backfire at European security and prosperity through rise of extremism and international terrorism, huge migration influx and lack of energy security.

Recommendations:

- The EU should offer talks with Russia about fields of cooperation in the reconstruction of Syria, recognizing the fact that Russia already is a main actor in the region which managed to come to terms with Turkey, Iran and Syria.
- With many diplomatic representatives, the EU 28 (27) needs to use these resources to support stability and to clear the ground for future investments of European companies which are desperately needed for the reconstruction of Syria.
- Parallel to upholding the Iran nuclear deal, a broader, comprehensive arms-control agreement is necessary that would address other tracks, like conventional weapons, and include more states.
- EU and Military: the EU's priority should be given to political solutions, but the EU should be aware and prepared to specific military interventions like securing of borders and safe zones. Additional activities like training of military and police, as well as demining, are helping to safeguard security. In this respect, close cooperation with NATO and UN is necessary.

- In case of creation of safe zones for the return of refugees to countries with ongoing conflicts, the EU must insist on a multilateral organized approach. Unilateral actions always bear the danger of new insecurities, as it is the case with the current Turkish intervention in Northern Syria.
- In the area of humanitarian assistance, the EU can foster unknown concepts in the region, like SOS Children's Village for children in need.

Western Balkans

It is crucial for the credibility of the EU as a normative power that it sticks to its promises from 2003 concerning a future membership of the Western Balkan Six countries (Serbia, Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo). While their full accession is unrealistic any time soon, a step-by-step integration through new benchmarks, e.g. participation as observers in decision making processes in the EU Council and Parliament, should be established. This could serve as incentives for necessary reforms and better regional cooperation.

Close monitoring and implementation of democratic principles, rule of law and human rights, as well as the fight against corruption, must play a much more decisive role than before in the new European Commission's assessment of the Western Balkans' integration progress, considering that this region will form a part of the EU. These principles are at the core of the European project and lack of their implementation will backfire to the EU taking into account the geographical proximity, emigration and close cooperation that already exists.

Recommendations:

- It is of high importance that the EU maintains its credibility by sticking to the EU integration of the Western Balkans Six through focusing on benchmarks rather than on timetables as well as by step-by-step integration, like participation as observers in decision making processes in the EU Council and Parliament.
- The EU needs to tackle internal issues like democratic principles, rule of law, media freedom and international human rights equally with other regional and/or external concerns (status of Kosovo, relation between Serbia and Croatia, etc.).
- The EU needs to present better its successes and should put more effort in enhancing visibility of the work already done in the region.

Young Generations for the New Balkans

Vision 2030

Towards Alternative Horizons

December 2019

VISION 2030: CONCRETE PROPOSALS

- All six countries of the Western Balkans have a perspective of joining the EU as full members and this perspective should not be taken away but made more credible and tangible. The Western Balkans, politicians and civil society, should be invited to take part in the up-coming discussion on the **Conference on the Future of Europe**.
- In order to remain relevant in the Western Balkans, the EU needs to boost its offer to the region. Therefore, it should consider steps towards **sectoral integration** of the region into the EU.
- Existing mechanisms to recognize and support financially **citizens' initiatives**, as well as **independent and investigative media** should be further extended and new ones should be created. The EU should therefore increase its support for the Western Balkans through, for example, the European Endowment for Democracy. EU officials should be more vocal and critical of the authoritarian tendencies.
- Countries in the region should comprehensively reform their **electoral systems** in order to bring them in line with the European standards. Initiatives to strengthen the role of parliaments could be considered, such as support for the work of the secretariats and their transparency.
- Western Balkan countries should speed up their **fight against corruption and organized crime**. The EU ought to consider setting a clear date (2023) for full alignment with the EU acquis and best practices in the areas of public procurement and state aid. Furthermore, the European Commission should explore venues for the EU Court of Auditors to engage with the Western Balkans.
- In order to boost entrepreneurship and youth employment, introduction of **Youth Guarantees** should be considered, with a particular targeting of the least developed regions where interventions are urgently needed. Furthermore, vocational education and training needs to be extended and streamlined.
- **Education systems** should be reformed in such a way so that education institutions in the region provide applicable knowledge that also corresponds to the regional labour market needs. One aspect of such a reform should address student skills assessed in the OECD's PISA study. Education systems should be designed to encourage independent research, new ideas and creativity, thereby helping young people take responsibility for

themselves and their countries and start shaping their respective societies as early as possible.

- The European Commission should develop and offer to all Western Balkan countries a clear roadmap to adopt all the EU environmental legislation and standards and include the Western Balkans in the “**European Green Deal**”. The governments in the region should incorporate the entire EU environmental acquis in their respective legislations by 2030. In return, the Commission should provide necessary feedback, as well as financial and technical support. All six Western Balkan countries should be invited to take part in the EU’s **system to tackle natural disasters (rescEU)** that is fully financed by the EU. In return, the Commission should request development and implementation of the national prevention and preparedness strategies that are in line with the EU’s best practice.
- The Western Balkan societies and authorities should engage in *bona fide* cooperation aimed at **bringing justice for all victims** of the 1990s wars. The EU should be explicit and consistent in insisting on the development of adequate local judicial capacities; it should support and, when necessary, facilitate processes of regional cooperation around humanitarian issues and criminal matters; and it should openly politically support initiatives from civil society, such as RECOM, that aim at achieving progress in the area of justice and reconciliation.
- All Western Balkan states should adopt youth policies, youth action programs, and youth strategies. Information about national and **regional youth mobility programs** should be made more accessible to the youth, in particular to socially and economically vulnerable people. Youth mobility also needs to be tackled through mutual recognition of diplomas.
- Further investment in strengthening the **Regional Youth Cooperation Office** should be a strategic short-term goal, whereas in the longer run, it is crucial to deepen cooperation among the youth, in culture, sports, and through art platforms. University exchanges among students and academic staff are crucial to link higher education institutions within the region.
- Western Balkans states should further work on enhancing **cooperation in infrastructure and economic cooperation**. They should align their actions on **digitalization** and **cyber security** with the EU and work towards removing economic

barriers. The end goal of these efforts would be the creation of a regional economic area that is in line with the EU standards.

- The Western Balkans governments, along with the specialized agencies and with the assistance of the EU counterparts, should commit to a comprehensive mid-to-long term **continuous research and analysis of regional migration dynamics**. They should also explore all the aspects of the emigration from the region, along with the possible incentives for citizens to return to their home countries. Research results would directly feed into the future policies and facilitate development of the region. Effective policies that promote **circular migration** can simplify and foster the progress of the region. Moreover, emigration should be part of any high-level EU-Western Balkans agenda. The governments of the Western Balkans should look for complementary policies within the EU and introduce a set of new policies, thus opening opportunities for their citizens that circular migration can potentially offer.
- **‘Sticks and carrots’** of the integration process should be spread along the whole way and not be left until its very end. This will make more visible to the public in the region whether their governments are indeed delivering on the promises. It will also establish specific linkage between individual reforms/policies and rewards (or lack thereof) from the EU.
- **Benchmarks** for measuring progress must be specified by the EU in order to prevent ‘ticking boxes’ on paper with no real changes in the lives of the citizens.
- **Transparency** is crucial throughout the process. **Civil society** should be meaningfully included in all sorts of debates and consultations during the policy formulation and implementation as well as throughout the European integration process. It is also important for the EU to intensify its contacts with experts from the region to be able to receive independent from the government assessments of the situation on the ground.
- The discussion initiated by France to adapt the **methodology of the enlargement process**, even though welcome, should not mislead by creating an impression that the methodology itself is the main obstacle. The democratic situation in Hungary and Poland would be the same, regardless of the methodology. The most important issue to address is the **lack of political will** of the governing parties to deliver responsibly on their commitments.
- **Regional cooperation** must be fostered. The Croatian EU presidency and its focus on the Western Balkans can become an important step in this regard, considering that



Croatia already is an EU member. In this context, it would be helpful also to get Slovenia more involved in the process - another EU member and neighbor of the region.

- The European Union and the regional governments should jointly look into the ways how to involve **Western Balkans diaspora** in efforts to improve life in their region of origin. Mapping of diasporas in Europe, their organization, set skills and interests would be useful for understanding their potential role in the development of the Western Balkans.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Caught in a vicious circle between old-fashioned backwards oriented politics and nationalisms on the one hand, and lack of economic, educational and social perspectives on the other, young generations in the Balkans seem to be losing patience. Whenever possible, they emigrate to the West in search for a better life. UN agencies and experts speak about a massive demographic revolution in Eastern and Southeastern Europe that is changing society more than a majority of developments in the past. Meanwhile, democracies in the region are vulnerable and the EU integration process is not delivering fast results. 2018 was frequently described as the “Year of Hope” for EU enlargement and for a better future for the Balkans. The EU Commission presented a new enlargement strategy, only to be followed by the Balkans Summit in May 2018. As the country holding the EU presidency in the second half of 2018, Austria worked towards keeping the region a high priority on the EU agenda. Without opening of accession talks with North Macedonia and Albania, as well as without granting Kosovo citizens visa-free travel to the Schengen zone, the question remains whether enthusiasm for EU enlargement can be restored. Pressured by the looming democratic and socio-economic crisis, as well as the return to the region of a geopolitical power struggle, it is obvious that a new momentum for enlargement and overall political and socio-economic development is much needed. Western Balkans societies are in dire need of alternatives and progressive engagement and action.

Our initiative/series *Young Generations for the new Balkans 2030: Towards Alternative Horizons* sets the spotlight on youth, their progressive stances and hopes for the future. Together with local and international partners, we discuss the overall socio-political situation in the Western Balkans and, EU and NATO integration through workshops, seminars, panel discussions and policy recommendations. This is done in order to understand the reality on the ground and to set trends for a positive future of our neighbouring region. The project is a

common initiative, led by European and regional institutes. It features stakeholders, activists, and young people from the region and the EU.

We brought our ideas to EU capitals, visiting Vienna, The Hague, Berlin, Paris and Brussels. We also went to the Western Balkans, talking to experts, politicians, diplomats and general public in Belgrade, Pristina and Skopje. We took ideas, energy and the network from our individual daily work and streamlined it into a unified initiative that has seen discussions, expert interviews and articles produced as a result. This paper represents an attempt to summarize all that energy and ideas we have collected throughout the last two years.

WELCOME TO 2030

Welcome to the European Western Balkans! That could possibly be the shortest introductory sum-up of the present paper, which sublimes all hopes, distant horizons and shivery dreams for 2030 in one. Notwithstanding desirable outcome, the current EU prospects seem remote and misty, while the situation in the region is rather gloomy than glittery.

At first glance, if one was to describe a young person in any of the Western Balkan Six at the moment, their fears, hopes and preferences are congruent. Surprisingly, according to the latest Youth Study published by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, the young generation in the nowadays Balkans seems to be optimistic, mobile and well-connected which is not the most intuitive description.¹ Furthermore, young people are more concerned about economic prospects, education quality and environment than the national identity, ever-looming war prospects, or political and security instability. Yet, in stark contrast to these findings stands the fact that Balkans youth leans towards the strong, autocratic leader, as they are distrustful towards political parties, governments and institutions in general. Finally, the young generation vigorously supports the EU membership of the region.

What these data tell us is that after decades of wars, isolation, mass atrocities and omnipresent hatred towards the ‘others’, the youth in the Western Balkans wants to see more concrete action which will have a palpable result on the ground. Despite the latent insecurity and lack of substantial and sincere debate about the legacy of Yugoslav wars (1991-2001), the youth in that part of the European southeast desires to move forward. Indeed, there is a growing need for a

¹Friedrich Ebert Foundation, “Youth Study Southeast Europe 2018/2019”, 2019. <https://www.fes-soe.org/features/youth-studies/>

deep and comprehensive transformation of the region tackling the areas stretching from education and economic development to environmental and social issues.

A series of debates, reflections and exchanges among young professionals and experts from the region within the scope of this project has demonstrated that the youth in the region has capacity and need to be an integral part to any debate, both at the regional and European levels. The youth's contribution is both indispensable and meaningful, as it sheds a new light on the upcoming decade and brings fresh ideas for the volatile region.

This publication comes out at a moment when two non-papers on the future of the European Union and the Western Balkans are floating around.

The first non-paper is the French non-paper on the future of EU enlargement towards the Western Balkans. It is noteworthy that this non-paper reaffirms the full EU membership perspective of the region, as well as its basic principle of 'more for more' and focus on the rule of law. However, adoption of all ideas from the non-paper would not contribute to a more effective process that brings benefits for the EU and the region.

The second non-paper is a French-German one on a Conference on the Future of Europe from 2020 to 2022 and guiding principles of the Conference, which should be focused on EU policies, including a possible change of EU treaties, and institutional issues. It is to be welcomed that the EU wants to discuss its future in a process that should lead to concrete changes and decisions on the EU. Since the future of the Western Balkans is closely linked to the future of the EU, both politicians and the civil society from the region should be included in activities and debates. They should be given a fair chance to argue and present their interests and vision.

The youth's vision for 2030 is the European Western Balkans. Furthermore, 'European' is understood not solely in institutional but equally in value-based terms. Thus, fairer and just societies which embrace and cherish all differences and are members of the European Union is the overarching vision of the Western Balkans in 2030. For that to happen in ten years from now, the Western Balkans should become part of the European programs and common initiatives already today. Rome was not built in one day, nor will the 'Balkan 2030 vision' be realized immediately. The youth requires concrete actions, policies and support in order to finally break the vicious circle of non-reforms and non-progressing. Liberal democracy, youth employment, reconciliation programs and fight against climate change need to be dealt with as of today in order not to remain just a far-flung prospect.



This paper offers a list of effective, clear-cut, policy-oriented recommendations which blaze the trail for the European engagement with the young generation of the Western Balkans. It paves the way for a reinvigorated and substantial commitment that ensures a more prosperous, EU-oriented vision of the region in the coming decade.

1. LIBERAL DEMOCRACIES WITH ENGAGED CITIZENS

Vision: By 2030, the Western Balkans are the interconnected space with market economies and liberal democracies based on the rule of law. Institutions in each of the six countries are strong, independent and professional. The understanding of the civic engagement has developed in a direction where citizens are aware of their civil rights and power of civic initiatives. They are also conscious about the need to protect free media and independent institutions, as those make the democratic societies stronger and sustainable.

Today, fragile democracies in the Western Balkans are under attack. The process of democratic elections has been compromised through direct interference of the governments in power, there is misuse of public funds, judiciary and security services are politicized, corruption in the institutions is omnipresent, and citizens' awareness about the possibility of political change in the elections is low. Our societies are deeply divided and fragile, institutions are captured and political instability is pervasive.

Furthermore, media are under pressure and politicians use hate speech against all those with a different opinion, from journalists and civil society representatives to political opposition. Delegitimized by the authorities with the help of pro-regime media, the opposition is targeted as the enemy of the state acting on behalf of foreign interests.

In order for the 2030 vision to turn into reality, the key change that needs to happen is for political elites and citizens to become aware that they are the owners of the reform and institution-building processes that also lead to EU membership. This is why it would be important to create and increase funding mechanisms to recognise and support initiatives of citizens, their activism, as well as independent and investigative media. The EU has already lent substantial support to grassroots initiatives and investigative and free media in the Western Balkans which, however, should be further increased, for example through the European Endowment for Democracy.

If the EU wants to remain relevant in the Western Balkans, it will need to boost its offer for the region. It could consider steps in the direction of gradual integration of the region into the EU, as it was done through the Energy Community and the Transport Community. This should be used to insist on bringing to the EU level the fight against corruption and improvements in areas such as public procurement and state aid.

Furthermore, the EU should be more open and critical of the authoritarian tendencies in each of the countries in the region. This should help civil society and free media to create an

environment for dialogue, reduction of tensions (which render the outcomes of democratic processes unfair) and even fair competition in the election race.

Countries in the region should as a matter of priority work on introducing changes to their electoral systems that create an environment in which the process is brought in line with the EU and international standards. Such a change would see members of the parliaments less estranged from their voters and therefore able to better represent the interests of citizens, rather than serve their personal and party interests.

2. ECONOMIES THAT DELIVER TO (YOUNG) CITIZENS

Vision: By 2030, the Western Balkans have reached equal participation of youth in the employment, while active labour market measures are targeting the employment increase and contribute to the schemes which support young entrepreneurs.

Today, considerable gaps in labour market participation and school-to-work transition have not been adequately addressed in the Western Balkans. The youth unemployment rate in the region is among the highest in Europe, varying from around 25 percent in Serbia to almost 55.4 percent in Kosovo. Meanwhile, the percentage of youth in the category known as NEET (people who are not in education, employment, or training) is rising. Thus, young people and recent graduates are not well integrated into the labour market and their employment level is still below the region's potential.

The direct linkage with the issue of youth unemployment is the continuing trend of brain drain, including young people with particular skillsets. Given the negative demographic trends, it risks aggravating labour shortages in the future. Hence, unless something is undertaken urgently, the region will put in jeopardy the proper functioning of the public sector and service deliveries.

Very high unemployment among young people aged 18-24 (31 percent in 2018), including university graduates, points to a problem in aligning the education and training system with the needs of the labour market and a weak business environment that is still significantly underdeveloped to generate employment. Overall, young people seem to lack necessary skills to find work. Skills mismatch also hinders a more sustained labour market expansion. The 2018 PISA test results were far below the OECD average. They show that a large proportion of young people do not have the basic skills to enter the labour market, in addition to other reasons such as low mobility, unattractive wages and working conditions. The latest tracer studies on

vocational education and training (VET) and higher education graduates show that young people are rarely well-matched to the jobs they hold early in their career.

Furthermore, new opportunities for job creation are scarce and localized, while labour mobility both within the countries and overall inside the region is low. If the Western Balkans governments intend to change negative trends in emigration, substantial work must be done to facilitate labour mobility within the region. Along with the labour mobility, favourable conditions for starting a business are essential. Young start-uppers and entrepreneurs face complicated procedures due to unharmonized regulations. Active measures, such as the abolition of numerous para-fiscal fees and charges emanating from overlapping administrations, would encourage young entrepreneurs to start their business in the Western Balkans.

There are also significant disincentives to work in the region. One such problem are the relatively high social security contribution rates that create high tax wedge on low-wage earnings. In addition, social expenditure is largely concentrated on categorical benefits and pensions, with limited investments in human capital. Another pressing issue is the high level of informal economy, whose share in total employment is significant (for instance, around 30 percent in Bosnia and Herzegovina). Informality has numerous adverse effects. It creates unfair competition for formal businesses, limiting their opportunities for expansion and further investments in their development, innovation and productivity. According to surveys, competitors' informal activity is seen as the major obstacle to doing business in the region.

Tackling high youth unemployment should be a national priority for all Western Balkans Six. The first and most urgent measure should be the introduction of Youth Guarantees with priority for the most underdeveloped regions. The Youth Guarantee includes activities to reach out to non-registered NEETs in their direct environment and to connect them to individual services such as counselling, mediation and training. Some 100,000 young people (aged 15-29) are expected to benefit from the Youth Guarantee in the most underdeveloped parts of the Western Balkans. Furthermore, transferable skills should be tackled. In order to conduct a successful school-to-work transition, the youth in the region needs a set of transferable skills to be acquired during their primary education.

Training programs should be fundamental in addressing employment gaps and high levels of unemployment. With the contribution of employers and national employment agencies, this

could increase the level of entrepreneurial skills and economic literacy. Furthermore, VET needs to be extended and streamlined.

Supporting the legislative/regulatory and institutional framework for integration into the regional market would finally contribute to higher mobility and youth employability throughout the region. While the focus should be on creating a single space where ideas, people and capital can flow, it will substantially open the path to creation of new and better-paid jobs.

3. EDUCATION THAT PROVIDES BASIS FOR A STABLE LIFE

Vision: By 2030, the Western Balkans Six have reformed their education systems in a way that they shape, connect and keep young people in touch with the real life and that they provide further development opportunities. This is best seen through sharp and continuous improvements of the PISA ranking of these countries. Furthermore, the education systems enable knowledge transfer about democratic values, civic rights and liberties, critical thinking skills, and understanding of individual responsibility and teamwork.

Today, access to education is not a challenge in the region, but access to quality education is considered a privilege. The education system fails to support young people and countries find themselves at the bottom of the international PISA ranking. Western Balkans students do not understand sufficiently what they read and learn to use it in practice and are barely functionally literate. The educational system leaves about four years of studying without any particular effect on the students, meaning that even though the first 11.8 years of schooling are mandatory, effective gain from the education is reached only after 6.8 years of schooling.²

Recently, some positive changes in the region could be observed in North Macedonia regarding changes in the civic education curricula. Until a couple of years ago, students were taught to obey the government and the rules, to be humble to whatever is provided to them by the state system. Today, curricula are more supportive and provide a surrounding that motivates the students to learn and explore the boundaries of their civic rights. Nevertheless, regionally speaking, critical thinking remains a skill not accounted for in formal education. In addition,

² The World Bank, “If FYR Macedonia Acts Now, Children Born Today Could Be Healthier, Wealthier, More Productive”, October 2018. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2018/10/11/if-macedonia-acts-now-children-born-today-could-be-healthier-wealthier-more-productive>

youth participation both at school and local levels is dependent upon the good will of the schools in most of the Western Balkan countries. There is no systematically secured support for this process. This leaves young people out of social processes on daily basis, especially out of the policy creation and decision-making processes.

The first thing that needs to be properly addressed in the education systems in the region is the consecutive passing from one to another education level without using the knowledge in practice and getting familiarized with the labour market before finishing university. Numbers say that one quarter of university students in North Macedonia fake their obligatory work practice while studying, and, unfortunately, this is valid also for the other countries of the region.³ This is partially due to the lack of preparedness, but also lack of connectivity between the academic curricula, labour market's needs and the private sector in particular. It is disappointing that even though above 90 percent of the young people participate in higher education, they grade it with a low 2.62 on a scale from 1-5. In accordance with this, they are also not satisfied with the skills they get from the education system and how they match with the demands of the private sector and labour market.⁴

When considering the education system and social surrounding of young people in the Western Balkan countries in general, it is important to look at their social capital. Currently, the rate of youth unemployment in North Macedonia is significantly higher, equalling 47 percent (dropping only 2 percent from 2015 -2019), than in the neighbouring Albania where it stands at about 22 percent (latest figures of first semester of 2019). A common feature in both countries is a significant number of young people that have never been to cinema or theatre. While national sources of information regarding the brain drain are virtually non-existent, we can rely on the alarming data from the recent World Bank report (2019) that states that already 500,000 people have left Macedonia, most of them young, well-educated and well-qualified. Having this insight, one can conclude that there is a need to increase the support for young people from within the education system, but also from their surrounding so that they can find ways for civic activism and participation in the labour market.

Instead of being a repetitive and rather theoretical experience, the education system in the region needs to be adjusted, upgraded, and aligned with European best practices, so that it is in accordance with the social context in which young generations grow. Instead of putting the

³ Youth Educational Forum Research on Student Practice, 2016

⁴ Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, "Youth Study North Macedonia 2018/2019", 2018.

students in a passive listening position in the classrooms, we must support their independent research, ideas and creativity so that they start shaping their respective societies as early as possible. The education system should be supportive of students, encouraging, instead of suppressing, their critical opinions and demands, preparing them for the life that comes. Education should not be seen as a goal in itself but rather as an empowering mechanism for social changes. Lastly, learning from peers across countries must become a common practice in the region as it is in the European Union. Instead of study visits that often become an eye opening experience about where and how young people live nowadays (and thus to an extent contribute to the brain drain from the region), learning from peers needs to become a sustainable educational practice and a positive model for cooperation and development of the region.

4. SOCIETIES THAT PROTECT THEIR ENVIRONMENT

Vision: By 2030, all Western Balkans countries are fully in line with the EU environmental standards. As a result, the number of premature deaths caused by exposure to air pollution is brought down to the EU average. The region’s ability to react to natural disasters is enhanced and fully integrated with the EU. The environmental agenda for the Western Balkans – financially and technically supported by the EU – contributes to the economic growth and creation of jobs. The European Commission extends the “European Green Deal” to include the Western Balkans.

Without breathing the oxygen, humans cannot survive long. Often, however, breathing can also cause human death through exposure to air pollutants, such as fine particular matter (PM_{2.5}).⁵ In the EU, only in 2015, this fine particular matter caused 391,000 premature deaths. Air pollution is also a major health hazard for people in the Western Balkans. According to data of the World Health Organization (WHO), quoted in the Guardian, half of Europe’s ten-most-polluted cities are in the Western Balkans.⁶ In 2015, exposure to PM_{2.5} alone was estimated by the European Environment Agency (EEA) to have caused more than 25,000 premature deaths in the Western Balkans (WB6).⁷ This means that on every 100,000 people in the Balkans 137

⁵ US Environmental Protection Agency, “Particulate Matter (PM) Pollution”, 2019.
<https://www.epa.gov/pm-pollution/particulate-matter-pm-basics>

⁶ The Guardian, “Pant by numbers: the cities with the most dangerous air – listed”, 13 February 2017.
<https://www.theguardian.com/cities/datablog/2017/feb/13/most-polluted-cities-world-listed-region>

⁷ European Environmental Agency, “EEA Report No 12/2018”, 2018.
<https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/air-quality-in-europe-2018>

have died prematurely because of fine particular matter alone. This is two times more than in the EU28 (77) and six times more than in Ireland (24).

In order to improve the environmental situation in the Western Balkan countries, the region will need to have credible analysis of the current situation. In 2018, the EEA has for the first time included all Western Balkan states in its “Air quality in Europe report.”⁸ The report provided information on concentrations of air pollutants at country level and allowed for a credible comparison with the rest of the EU. Such credible data is essential and should continue to be provided.

Furthermore, the European Commission should offer to all countries in the region a clear roadmap to all the EU environmental legislation and standards. The governments should commit themselves to adopt and implement the entire EU environmental acquis by 2030. In return, the Commission should provide necessary feedback, as well as financial and technical support.

At a time when the European continent is confronted with more complex and frequent natural disasters, the capacity of the Western Balkan countries to respond is far below that of the EU. Many natural disasters in this decade – such as floods in May 2014 – showed lack of effective cross-border cooperation among the Western Balkan countries as well as with their EU neighbours. Due to the geographic position, these disasters affect not just the region but the EU as well.

All six Western Balkan countries should be invited to take part in the EU system to tackle natural disasters (resceEU). Recently established, it is fully financed by the EU and assists countries “in responding to disasters, when national capacities are overwhelmed.”⁹ In the same way as for the EU member states, the Commission should also provide support for “the adaptation, repair, transport and operation costs of their existing resources.” In return, the Commission should request from the Western Balkans Six to develop and implement national prevention and preparedness strategies.

The new European Green Deal announced by the Commission President in December 2019 pledges to make the EU climate neutral by 2050. This plan is commendable but should include and be extended to the Western Balkans. The Western Balkans are in the immediate

⁸ European Environmental Agency, “EEA Report No 12/2018”, 2018.

<https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/air-quality-in-europe-2018>

⁹ European Commission, “resceEU: a new European system to tackle natural disasters”, November 2017.

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/news/resceu-new-european-system-tackle-natural-disasters-2017-nov-23-0_en

geographical proximity to the EU. As climate change knows no borders, the environmental situation in this region should be of immediate concern to the EU.

5. WITH A SHARED COMMITMENT TO JUSTICE FOR VICTIMS

Vision: By 2030, the Balkans is a peaceful region of democratic and open societies. It is built on a shared rejection of ethnic nationalism, a common appreciation of every human life, and a shared commitment to justice for every victim.

Over the past several years, regional cooperation among the countries of former Yugoslavia regarding prosecution of war crimes has been stagnating or even deteriorating. On the national level, there is a somewhat consistent progress observed in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the Prosecution office continues active operation, even against mid- and high-ranking officials, and in Kosovo with the establishment of the Kosovo Specialist Chambers and Specialist Prosecutor's Office. However, in other countries, local judiciaries are demonstrating both the signs of political pressure and of inability to adequately prosecute persons responsible for war crimes. Croatia has seen significant regress in this process after becoming a member state of the EU, after the pressure of EU accession negotiations faded. Serbia, to date, has failed to prosecute high-ranking officials. Both countries engage less and less in regional cooperation, for example, in exchange of information and evidence.

These developments, or the lack thereof, are coupled with the denial and relativization from the top levels of governments, each providing exclusive, one-sided narratives that reject facts established at the ICTY and other courts to date. Such interpretations are exerting severe pressure on regional cooperation. Even humanitarian processes, such as locating and identifying missing persons, are heavily burdened by these verbal conflicts.

The EU is in a problematic situation when it comes to transitional justice processes in the Balkans, although they are supposed to be a key part of the acquis and accession negotiations. The fact that Croatia became a member — without accepting the findings of the ICTY, without following-up on them at the level of local judiciary, without significant investments in regional cooperation in criminal matters, without building sufficient capacity on a national level to enable its judicial system to adequately prosecute persons responsible for war crimes — makes it hard but even more necessary to be clear about the expectations from other countries. There is a clear sense that the countries in the region do not see the potential for benevolent

cooperation in establishment of justice. This is due to widespread identification with and glorification of war criminals. This demonstrates that the nationalist ideology still reigns in the Balkans.

Unfortunately, this is in accordance with nationalistic trends in many EU member states and beyond the EU. Some EU representatives are ready to accept the violations of basic fundamental rights – like media freedom – in order to achieve political aims. One example is the negotiations between Serbia and Kosovo, which led to neglecting of unacceptable domestic political developments in both countries. Liberal forces in the EU and its member states as well as the Western Balkan countries must fight together against a revisionist tendency among the political elites. The European project can only be successful if recognition of one own's crimes and reconciliation with former enemies are going hand in hand.

At the same time, no democratic nation can exist without a viable system that helps it to build a system of accountability. A functional, independent and unbiased justice system is a *conditio sine qua non* of a democratic state. And in the Balkans, the ability to effectively prosecute war crimes, alongside the ability to prosecute (political) corruption, is the indicator of how (under)developed, (un)biased and (in)dependent a judicial system is. Differently put, former Yugoslav nations will never be stable and peaceful democracies if significant investments are not made to strengthen their justice systems and enable them to prosecute those responsible for the most heinous violations of human rights and humanitarian law.

As for reconciliation, it simply cannot be forged on the basis of denial and evasion of responsibility. It cannot be forged if each side sees pain only in their own victims, if each side finds excuses for inexcusable crimes committed by those who wore their flag. There will only be a possibility of reconciliation when there is a recognition of humanity in the 'other'.

In order to remedy the current situation, the Balkan societies and leaders must acknowledge the injustices, regardless of who they were committed by, and engage in bona fide cooperation aimed at bringing justice for all victims. The EU, on the other hand, should be explicit and consistent in insisting on the development of sufficient local judicial capacities; should support and, when necessary, facilitate processes of regional cooperation around humanitarian issues and criminal matters; and should openly politically support initiatives from civil society, such as RECOM, that aim at achieving progress in the area of justice and reconciliation.

6. EMPOWERED YOUTH THAT COOPERATES

Vision: By 2030, programs and instruments to empower youth of all genders have expanded significantly. This is achieved through youth mobility programs to facilitate young people’s participation in decision-making processes on local, national and regional levels.

Today, young people of the Western Balkans face a lot of challenges in their countries, starting from high unemployment rates, low-quality education, lack of conducive environment for volunteering and participation in different activities outside the region. This is due to the visa issues, migration and different social-economic inequalities. There is also a lack of opportunities for young people to become part of decision-making processes and have a say in policymaking, even when it comes to processes that concern young people directly, such as the education system. Considering that education should be tailored to the needs of the youth, excluding them from consultations on reform processes contributes to their lack of motivation to be active participants in their societies.¹⁰

Fortunately, some initiatives to encourage regional cooperation and youth mobility have already been undertaken. There is a decision to increase youth mobility by doubling Erasmus+ funding. The Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) as an independently functioning institutional mechanism was founded by six participating countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia) with an aim to increase youth exchanges through promoting reconciliation, trust and cooperation.

To improve the status of the youth, more can be done, however. Governments should create possibilities and conditions for young people to address their needs notwithstanding the field of interest. To achieve that, each of the respective Western Balkan countries should address the position of the youth in the broader society by adopting youth policies, youth action programs and youth strategies. In this respect, most of the Western Balkan countries, except North Macedonia and Albania, have passed a law on the youth. However, one should always monitor the quality of its implementation. Furthermore, continuous support should be given to young people with regard to their mobility in order to raise their participation on the national level as well. Youth mobility also needs to be tackled from the perspective of mutual recognition of diplomas.

¹⁰ Civil Society and Youth Engagement in the Western Balkans, “Policy Brief 05/19”, 2019.

In order to identify the challenges and overcome future problems related to youth cooperation, Western Balkan countries should survey the young people themselves. It is necessary to gain an input from those youths people who have been part of various mobility programs or other platforms. This would help understand the benefits but also drawbacks of those programs and to improve their quality.

Young people lack information about youth cooperation opportunities. It is essential to make this information more accessible to youth in innovative and creative ways. Mobility programs should be made more accessible to people from socio-economically vulnerable backgrounds as well. Moreover, financial issues are another obstacle that prevents youngsters from becoming mobile. In this regard, donors and institutions should address the programs that they already support or find a better formula that could make them more inclusive. For example, support to educational mobility incentives and more scholarships should be given.

Further legislative and institutional frameworks in the area of mobility would have a significant impact on strengthening youth cooperation. A well-implemented framework will provide support to local and national mobility programs as well.

7. MIGRATION WITH BENEFITS

Vision: By 2030, all Western Balkan states have introduced EU comparable policies on emigration and circular migration. The *formal circular migration programs* in the Western Balkans attract the region's diaspora that only a decade earlier was a single untapped potential and global asset for the region.

Today, one of the biggest challenges for the Western Balkans is the large number of people leaving their countries every year in pursuit of a better life. According to the recent Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) survey in the Western Balkans, nearly one in two respondents contemplated looking for a job abroad. Every year, thousands depart from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Croatia (EU member state) – among them, many highly educated. The scope of this emigration is best understood when compared to worldwide trends. While overall the share of sourced population in countries that are living overseas is only about 3 percent, in the Western Balkans, it is 31,2 percent. Evidently, such mass emigration has a severe impact on the public sector (health care primary, as well as higher education, science, public administration); however, what remains untold is that emigration also brings much necessary vigour, human capital exchange, transfer of know-how and so much more.

The evidence shows that many emigrants would be willing to contribute to their home country – in some cases, even return for a certain period or permanently, given that conditions back home improve, primarily socio-economic but also political. Circular migration schemes are rare and often overlook the real potential that diaspora can generate. Western Balkans lacks systematic evidence about emigrants, their skills sets, locations, preferences, competences and agendas. But the available data shows that the returning emigrant commands a 7 percent premium in salary relative to people with similar qualifications and experience who have never lived abroad.

Emigrants from the Western Balkans tend to work hard and are well regarded by both employers and their host country, possess invaluable qualifications that make them instrumental for the labour market and economy back home. If Western Balkans policies were even partially designed to attract people back home, offering meaningful incentives and decent opportunities, in the short run, the region would be able to rebuild valuable communities. Currently, there is very little understanding of where to look for answers on emigration.

Engaging with diaspora is critical not only to help consolidate the regional economic outlook, bring the latest cutting-edge technologies into the region and deepen know-how, but even more importantly it can profoundly challenge current political narratives and help to bring about much-needed energy and change. Questions like “What are the experiences of the emigrants?” “Under which conditions would they consider returning to the region?” and, ultimately, “What policies could bring a meaningful change in the medium term?” need to be answered. Credible research and chronic lack of solid data on emigration is one of the key impediments to any sound policies or future roadmaps on emigration and circular migration.

To overcome such limitations, the Western Balkans governments, along with its specialized agencies and with an assistance of the EU counterparts must commit to a comprehensive mid-to long-term continuous research and analysis and explore all the aspects of the emigration and possibilities to attract their citizens back. Research results will directly feed into the future policies and facilitate development of the region.

Effective policies that promote the circular migration can simplify and foster the progress of the region. Moreover, emigration must be part of any high-level EU - Western Balkans agenda and the governments of the Western Balkans must look for complementary policies within the EU and introduce a set of new policies, thus opening opportunities for their citizens.

8. INTERCONNECTED REGION

On the eve of 2030, during the EU-Western Balkans Summit, all six Western Balkan countries are launching the “*Balkaneum*”, a regional office that will represent the interests of the Western Balkans within the EU. Cooperation among the countries in the region is gradually being rooted in socio-political and economic spheres. The political elites are now convinced that regional cooperation indeed is a rightful method for solving bilateral issues and for reaching agreements in the most notorious open issues. It also does not require the heavy involvement of external actors in the process. This regional cooperation is not in contradiction to a common European perspective. On the contrary, it helps to build a stronger European Union.

The aftermath of the Prespa Agreement – despite all hurdles – had a positive spill-over effect. Its impact was extensively reflected on the Kosovo–Serbia EU facilitated dialogue, paving the way for the Comprehensive Normalization Agreement that is to be reached at the end of 2020. Both parties have since been committed to the effective implementation with the external assistance provided by the EU. Solving the political dispute between Kosovo and Serbia served as an initial step to overcome the challenges of cooperation between Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Moreover, the five EU non-recognizers have gradually reconsidered their approach toward Kosovo. This also unlocked the EU perspective for the country, enabling it to catch up with others in the region.

Cooperation between the six Western Balkan countries is now an essential element serving as a driving force toward stability in the region, good neighbourly relations replaced nationalism discourse and intolerance, thus paving the way for wider societal development within the region. The new constellation and removed obstacle within the region have created a favourable atmosphere in which all countries committed to working jointly with the EU to strategically pursue the goal of EU membership through multi-frontal proactive and mutual support.

With the bilateral disputes out of picture, the long lasting “stabilitocracy” deeply imbedded in the relations between EU and the Western Balkans countries became irrelevant. Free from populism and nationalism, all six countries committed to working together in delivering tangible results in Chapter 23 and 24 by joining efforts in the fight against corruption and organized crime in the region. This would mark the last round of reforms before closing these chapters to further proceed completing the EU membership process.

The improvement of rule of law with focus on transparency, accountability, and effectiveness, followed up by regional cooperation contributed to creating a solid environment for economic development. Furthermore, it attracted foreign direct investment – mainly from the EU, thus

making the Western Balkans a competitive region in Europe. By 2030, all countries in the region are trading freely with each other, thus impacting positively trade between the region and the EU. Countries are actively working on breaking the last barriers hindering regional cooperation, such as infrastructure projects on transportation. Further, they are jointly co-funding – with the help of the EU – the railway linking Pristina and Belgrade, thereby connecting the entire region with the EU.

With improved freedom of movement, people to people communication also increases. Mobility of students and workers made the region attractive for the young people, but it also started to stimulate brain-gain. All government are working on further strengthening the “Balkanus” scholarship and exchange program for the students studying in all Western Balkans. Many joint projects are ongoing, aiming to positively contribute to this new Western Balkans Six reality.

As it stands today, it is important for the countries in the region to understand that regional cooperation should be enhanced for the benefits of the six Western Balkans and their citizens and not to be used as a tool to please Brussels, nor as another ‘tick-in-the-box’ in the EU integration. The leaders ought to understand that even after joining the Union, the Balkans will remain a region within the Union – similarly to the Visegrad Four – and as such, it is important to strengthen regional cooperation prior to entering the EU.

The political elites of the region must understand that solving all open bilateral disputes is the key to the success of the region and individual countries particularly. Following the example of Greece and North Macedonia, it is crucial that countries take full ownership in solving bilateral disputes with support from the EU throughout the process. They should further work on enhancing economic and infrastructure cooperation. The connectivity agenda should remain as a top priority for all Western Balkan countries, including transport, energy, digitalization and mobility, and be recognized as the crucial element behind regional development. As such, all six Western Balkan countries should invest and generate funds to support connectivity agenda, while seeking support from the EU to make this a Pan-European agenda. The Berlin Process is a necessary forum for fostering regional cooperation. All countries should use this high-level platform to keep political ties solid within the region and with the EU, but also to further improve regional cooperation in terms of infrastructure. In line with this, countries should proactively work on removing economic barriers and jointly contributing to the creation of a regional economic area.

Investments in the youth education and exchanges are required. They would gradually establish the already missed connections among young generations in the Balkans. In addition, further investment in strengthening the RYCO will be a strategic short-term goal, whereas in the longer run, it is crucial to deepen cooperation among youth, in culture, sports, and art platforms. University exchanges between students and academic staff are significant as they link higher education institutions within the region as well. There is a need to further support free and independent civil society sector (including NGOs, think-tank community and experts) in all countries and to solidify cooperation among already existing civil society networks. Moreover, the EU should be invited to continue supporting the civil society sector in the region as a way to ensure transparent, accountable, and effective political process.

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In this project, young people from all six Western Balkans states participated in meetings, brainstorming sessions and public events we have organized. This paper was drafted by some of them and reflects parts of discussions led and ideas that emerged since the project started.

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