

SIXTH FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME FOR RESEARCH, INNOVATION AND DEMONSTRATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION



I N T E R N A T I O N A L C O N F E R E N C E

ADAPTING TO INTEGRATION IN AN ENLARGED EUROPEAN UNION

Sofia, 31st May – 1st June 2007
Grand Hotel “Sofia”, “Sofia” Hall

organized by the Bulgarian European Community Studies Association (BECSA)

R a t i o n a l e

The overall objective of this conference is to valorize transnational European research in the sphere of social sciences carried out under the Framework Programmes of the EU or in other formats. Following a bottom-up approach, its thematic field – European integration – reflects demands coming from the Bulgarian research community expressed via a targeted questionnaire released in 2006.

The subject area is approached from two angles: How do major actors respond to EU integration? How do selected policies adapt to it? Departing from these two questions forming the foci of the thematic blocs, the conference aims to embrace a vast number of specific inter-connected topics through the prism of ‘adaptation to Europe’ / ‘EU impact’. The organisers’ choice has been guided by the imperative to upgrade and further enhance the results of trans-European research and to strengthen research networks across Europe working in the field of EU-oriented studies.

The conference will be one of the first academic events following Bulgaria’s accession to the EU.

The thematic coverage of blocs and sub-blocs, as described below, aims at presenting a broad and exhaustive formulation of the respective problematic. The final design of each sub-bloc, taking into account feedback from speakers and discussants, will narrow down the focus and sharpen the debate on relevant topics.

THEMATIC BLOC “A”
ADAPTING THE ENLARGED UNION TO THE CITIZEN

The first thematic bloc will consider the ‘Europeanisation’ problematics from the perspective of actors involved in the integration process. Specific topics will bring insight into the possibilities offered to European citizens for participation in governance, both seen as a voter and as a ‘driving force’ of civil society organizations, and will reflect on the prospects of a ‘European public sphere’.

Sub-bloc A-1: The citizen and the dynamics of European political representation

Citizens’ participation in the political process faces serious challenges at both national and European level. Thus this sub-bloc will focus on the behaviour of citizens as “European voters” in an attempt to draw conclusions and outline trends about the possibilities for strengthening / or the risks for undermining legitimacy at the supranational level of decision-making.

Suggested topics:

- Electoral participation in the multi-level governance (MLG) system. Turnout results, tendencies and expectations. How to explain/interpret different patterns of participation/abstention within the MLG system?
- Citizens in European Parliament elections – what kind of participation? How to explain the turnout results? Is there a “happy scenario” for the EP elections’ turnout results? EP elections in “old” and “new” member states: are there any differences (results’ analysis)? The impact of EP elections on the domestic scene(s).
- Are EP elections European? Do we have “electoral apathy” at EU level? Where can we situate EP elections within the multi-level governance system? Are EP elections (still) “second order” elections, and is the opposite (that they become “first order” elections) possible?
- Political representation at national and EU level and civil society: What kind of political representation for civil society?
- Is a truly European system of political representation possible?

Sub-bloc A-2: The evolving role of civil society in European governance

For lack of a “Brussels government” proper, the EU has evolved towards a system of multi-level governance, in which civil society plays an essential role. This sub-bloc will focus on the degree and/or the ways, in which organised civil society has been a factor in the establishment of a specific European governance, and/or it has itself been influenced by Europeanisation.

Suggested topics:

- The centrality of civil society in the transition from government to governance in a multi-level setting – how fast and how effective is this transition across levels of governance, across policy sectors, and across (national) political cultures?

- What kind of civil society actorness at EU (supranational) level? Citizens’ and civil society participation and representation in EU governance: formulation and implementation stages; Society participation and EU integration development;
- How does civil society involvement take place – the structure and functions of the institutional settings of participation, degree of institutionalization (versus informality) of interaction, allocation of competences, rules of inclusion/exclusion of civil society actors across levels and policy fields, etc.
- The impact of civil society on agenda-setting at EU, national and/or sub-national levels: interaction with representative institutions, addressees and forms of influence, channels for political pressure from social movements, etc.
- Accountability and legitimacy problems of EU governance – can organized civil society propose (a) solution(s)?

Sub-bloc A-3: Towards a European public sphere???

The development of a particular supranational governance system at EU level raises the question about its legitimacy and accountability. The EU “democratic deficit” seems not only an academically constructed notion but also a political problem impeding the process of European integration. A seemingly natural solution to overcome the “democratic deficit” problem, the appearance and development of a specific EU public sphere is facing some (unexpected) challenges.

Suggested topics:

- The EU political system and EU/national public sphere(s): Is there a remedy for the “democratic deficit” disease? Is there a connection between the EU’s “democratic deficit” and “public sphere deficit”?
- Patterns/models of interaction between an EU public sphere and national public spheres? Can we speak about a truly EU public sphere or simply a bunch of national ones? Is the national public sphere still dominant? The Europeanisation process and national public spheres. Do national public spheres function at the EU level and how? Is it possible to resolve EU accountability and legitimacy issues through national public spheres?
- EU institutions’ accountability and legitimacy and the EU public arena: Are EU decision-making structures publicly inclusive?
- Is an EU public sphere possible without the development of an European identity?

THEMATIC BLOC “B”
ADAPTING KEY POLICIES IN THE ENLARGED UNION

The second thematic bloc will focus on selected EU policies and the ‘Europeanisation’ of policy making in the respective fields. Regional policy, foreign policy, as well as external and internal security have been chosen not only because they have been the object of research in a number of FP projects so far, but also because of their special significance for Bulgaria as a new EU member state.

Sub-bloc B-1: Towards an “Internal Security Regime” in the enlarged Union???

The “Justice and Home Affairs” field has witnessed probably the most complex process of Europeanisation since the 1990s both in terms of policy content (the development and implementation of policy responses to risks and threats to internal security and public order) and in terms of actors’ involvement and institutional and legal setup. This panel will explore the degree and effectiveness of such adaptation to EU integration.

Suggested topics:

- Europeanisation of the internal security problematique: growth and complexity of legal instruments (including ‘soft law’) and increased institutional pluralism spanning national and EU level (from Schengen to the Treaty of Prum); the development of the ‘area of freedom, security and justice’ in the enlarged EU-27; evaluation of the contribution of (selected) EU member states in the field of JHA in the formation of an ‘internal security regime’
- Externalisation of internal security: re-conceptualisation of traditional internal security threats and adaptation of internal and external policies countering them; the formation of a ‘security continuum’ and its criticism; the external (inter-national and extra-EU) dimensions of internal security and the need for (and successes and/or failures in) coordination between internal (1st-pillar JHA integration and 3rd-pillar cooperation) and external security policies (CFSP/ESDP) at national and EU level
- Internal security issues at sub-national levels (regional, urban, district, etc.): security threats and risks in urbanized societies in the context of globalization and individualisation, interaction between public, private and civil society actors in providing public safety at levels close to the citizen, impact of public policies at regional, national and/or European level in the field of internal security

Sub-bloc B-2: Challenges to Europeanisation in Foreign Policy and Security

The EU’s role of an ever more significant player on the world scene has produced important shifts in its foreign and external security policy. This sub-bloc will concentrate debate on some aspects of adaptation of these policies to the overall EU integration process.

Suggested topics:

- The securitization of European foreign policy: what impact at EU and national level on policy substance (e.g. changes in security doctrine) and instruments?
- What policy options in the enlarged EU’s immediate neighbourhood (the pre-accession process in the Western Balkans and the European Neighbourhood Policy)? A case for de-securitising Wider Europe? A case for communautarising foreign policy?
- National and supra-national actors in European security policy: what (current and future) institutional responses to the EU’s role of security provider and global player? What solutions to the dilemma between leadership and coherence in European foreign and security policy?
- Merger/overlap between external and internal security issues – what lessons from EU experience and what tendencies in the enlarged Union?

Sub-bloc B-3: Adjustments in the EU’s and Member States’ Regional Policies

EU regional policy was set up as an instrument for the transformation of member states and regions, which are “lagging behind” in its institutional, economic and social development. But the opportunities for accelerated modernization that this EU policy offers have been used by member states in a different way. This panel has to outline the patterns of “institutional behavior” demonstrated by different member states during the process of national adaptation to EU cohesion policy model. It will seek an answer to the

question how main structural funds recipient countries have transformed its institutional and legal system following cohesion policy guidelines. Have these transformations been significant or only “cosmetic”?

Suggested topics:

- Legal adjustment and institutional adaptation of governance structures in “old” and “new” member states as a result of the EU cohesion policy impact;
- Centralization and regionalization: the role of central government in the process of institutional adaptation;
- EU cohesion policy and national regional policies and practices, or how to modernize through Europeanisation?
- Between efficiency and participation: the role of the European Commission in the process of member states’ institutional adaptation to EU regional policy;
- The participation of non-state actors in the process of national regional policy development and implementation.

For more information about the conference, please, contact Krassimir Nikolov at BECSA, tel.: (+359.2) 8716595; fax: (+359.2)9793026; email: becsa@becsa.org.

General information about the ESSHRA project is available on its web site: <http://esshra.tubitak.gov.tr/> or on BECSA’s web site: www.becsa.org