



Crises, Conflict, and Reconciliation in the Western Balkans

Changing Orders Research Programme at Andrassy University Budapest

Date: 30 October 2025

Venue: Andrassy University Budapest (AUB), Andrassy Hall

For years, the Balkan region has been associated with war and conflict. The term “powder keg” is still used as a term to describe the region, thereby reinforcing the image of a region of prevailing instabilities and insecurities in the Balkans. What has been overlooked, however, is the fact that life in the post-Yugoslav countries has resumed, it is overall peaceful, and societies are pragmatically addressing everyday problems despite the difficult political contexts. The Western Balkan societies are examples of peaceful co-existence and day-to-day reconciliation.

In the context of the EU accession process, the countries of the Western Balkans were encouraged by the EU to address the legacies of the wars in the 1990s and to resolve existing bilateral conflicts. The EU’s priority is to stabilise the region and to ensure that the ongoing conflicts are not imported in the EU. Political leaders, in particular, were urged to comply with the principles of good neighbourly relations and to work toward bilateral dispute settlement agreements. However, the neighbouring EU states are less motivated to solve the bilateral disputes with the Western Balkan candidate countries, consequently, blocking any progress of the enlargement process. Political uncertainty and crises in the neighbourhood affect other states in the region.

In recent years, reconciliation on a political level has experienced setbacks. This development has been accompanied by a weakening of the EU’s commitment to EU enlargement, further contributing to a neglect of implementing reconciliation initiatives. Nevertheless, reconciliation remains a horizontal condition for the Western Balkan countries within the EU accession process. While success on the political level is unfortunately scarce, civil society organisations have been committed for years to facilitate reconciliation in the region. These groups have increased the pressure on governments and work closely with international organisations, despite the often-difficult task of addressing the facts of the past, deconstructing the current polarising political narratives, and bringing people of different backgrounds together to improve personal relationships.

This conference will analyse the reasons behind political crises and conflicts in the countries of the Western Balkans and their immediate neighbourhood, explore various approaches to reconciliation, and provide insights into the actual work of civil society organisations in facilitating peacebuilding and reconciliation in the region. Moreover, another aim of the conference is to assess what external and local support is required to assist civil society organisations to continue their work and the EU’s role in facilitating reconciliation in the region.



Programme

09:00 – 09:30	Registration
09:30- 09:45	Welcome speech, Rector Prof. Zoltán Tibor Pállinger
09:45- 10:00	Introduction of Conference Theme, Christina E. Griessler (AUB/netPOL)
10:00 – 10:30	Nemanja Džuverović, Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Belgrade <i>Three Years On: What Measuring Peace Reveals about the Western Balkans "Balkan Peace Index (MIND Project)"</i>
10:30 - 11:00	Coffee Break
11:00 – 12:30	1. Panel: Political Crises? Western Balkans and its EU-Neighbours Chair: Ana-Gabriela Pantea, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj Napoca Anna Krasteva, New Bulgarian University <i>Post-Democratic Crises vs Contestatory Citizenship: Balkan Perspectives</i> Nenad Markovikj, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje <i>North Macedonia between the anvil and the hammer - cyclical leverage traps, impossible choices and systemic crises</i> Dušan Janjić, Forum for Ethnic Relations <i>Belgrade Serbia's Crisis: Way Out and Impacts on Neighbours</i>
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch Break
13:30 – 15:00	2. Panel: Identifying, Analysing and Addressing Conflict Issues in the Region Chair: Christopher Jakob Walsch, Corvinus University, Budapest Haris Lokvancic, SwissPeace <i>Elusive Reconciliation: The Role of Political Paralysis, Revisionism and Divisive Narratives (in Bosnia and Herzegovina)</i> Frauke M. Seebass, Carl-Lutz Fellow, AUB/netPOL <i>Lessons learned from the EU-facilitated dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo</i> Lura Pollozhani, University of Graz, Centre for South East European Studies <i>Majoritarian Blindness & Institutional Design: Minority Rights in N. Macedonia</i>



15:00 – 15:30 Coffee break

15:30 – 17:00 **3. Panel: Reconciliation – Concept, Meaning and Practice**

Chair: Frauke M. Seebass, Carl-Lutz Fellow, AUB/netPOL

Ana Milosevic, University of Leuven

When memory fails: Memorialisation and the inefficiency of Transitional Justice

Daniela Ingruber, Institut für Strategieanalyse (Institute for Strategy Analysis, ISA)

Towards a Culture of Dialogue

Laura Kromják, ELTE University

*Towards an Understanding of Breaking the Cycle: Experiences of
Intergenerational Trauma in Second-Generation Bosnian Americans*

17:00– 17:30 Coffee break

17:30 – 19:00 **Roundtable: Civil Society Organisations**

Chair: Christina Griessler (AUB/netPOL)

Marko Milosavljević, Youth Initiative for Human Rights

*Challenges and opportunities for reconciliation during political crisis in Serbia
2024/25*

Natalija Havelka, Centar za Mir, Centre for Peace, Nonviolence and Human
Rights– Osijek

Memory, Truth, and Justice: Foundations of the Reconciliation Process

Emina Mušija, Humanity in Action BiH

*Building knowledge, resilience, and community in support of reconciliation
among youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina*

19:00 End of conference