



INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
AND HUMANITIES
SKOPJE



respublica



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AVENUES OF COOPERATION CONFERENCE

TOWARD A REIMAGINED REGIONAL BELONGING

Skopje, 3-4 December 2021

Museum of Contemporary Art in Skopje / The Library of ISSHS



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The Balkan Trust
for Democracy

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AVENUES OF COOPERATION CONFERENCE:
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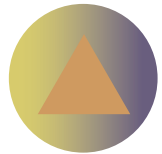


About the
AVENUES OF COOPERATION

Since December 2020, North Macedonia's accession process has been blocked by Bulgaria's opposition to it, which results from its dissatisfaction with the implementation of the bilateral agreement of good neighbourly relations that the two countries signed in 2017. Bulgaria's framework position adopted by virtually all parties in its national assembly indicates however where the issue lies: in the "shared history." In the public discourse in both countries respectively there has been continuing confrontation between high-ranking officials on both sides about historical figures and periods as to whom they belong to and how they should be interpreted. Paradoxically, the Agreement that vouched for recognition of a shared history has become the source of division.

Cultural conflicts involving nation-building narratives, such as the Macedonian-Bulgarian dispute undoubtedly is, could be solved in terms of contemporary politics and its means of addressing issues of cultural conflicts rather than in terms of mere historiography. Considering the implementation of the agreement is in a stalemate coming down to the lack of progress of the multidisciplinary bilateral commission on establishing facts of shared history due to the pressure of the public in each of the respective countries issuing from highly exacerbated (nationalist) polarization, the project will aim to address this paralysis of bilateral communication by promulgating depolarization of the public discussion, involving intellectuals of third yet informed and concerned countries, by way of discussing possible solutions, breaking taboos regarding the history, and building a model narrative that might serve as a blueprint for the solution of the dispute itself.

Thus, building on the experience of the Visegrad countries and how they treat their misunderstandings about history and cultural heritage, but also the insight derived from the solution to the dispute between North Macedonia and Greece, the Avenues of Cooperation conference seeks to, on the one hand to offer a model of resolving identity disputes, with the focus on the Macedonian-Bulgarian conflict, but also involve CSOs/expert organizations to help pave the ground for a constructive discussion and creation of a wider European dialogue, on the other. This will be achieved through an open debate to sensitize the public, but also through policy analyses to prescribe possible solutions.





AGENDA
Day 1

- 3 December 2021 -

[09.30] Registration

[09.45]

Opening Address: Katerina Kolozova,
Senior Researcher/Full Professor, ISSH-Skopje:
“A region beyond the EU/nonEU divide”

[10.00-10.45]

Keynote talk: Costas Douzinas,
Professor at Birkbeck University in London and President of the Nicos Poulantzas Institute in Athens

Title: The Greek road to Prespa/es: Ideology, Politics, Critique
Q&A: [10.35-10.45]

[10.45-11.30]

Keynote Talk: Spasimir Domaradzki,
Ass. Professor at University of Warsaw and member of the editorial board of the
Res Publica Nova

Title: Poland’s reconciliation efforts – lessons (un)learned
Q&A: [11.20-11.30]

[11.30-12.00] Coffee break

12.00-12.45

Keynote talk: Gábor Egry,

Director at the Institute of Political History-Budapest

Title: Finding a new place in history? The potential role of historical revisionism in reconciling nations

Q&A and Closing remarks: [12.45-13.00]

[13.30-14.30] Lunch break

[15.00-17.30]

Closed workshop (venue: ISSHS Library)

Panel and a Workshop

Chair: **Michal Vit**

Presenters:

Dimitar Bechev, Stefan Detchev and Katerina Kolozova

Topic: Preliminary findings of the ongoing research and possible policy solutions (competing variants), combined with interactive workshop with the other speakers at the event.

Dinner for speakers at 19.30 (Location to be confirmed)



ABSTRACTS

Costas Douzinas

The Greek Road to Prespa/es: Ideology, Politics, Critique

A key feature of the “Macedonian” controversy was the confrontation of two imaginary constructions about the name, history, language and consciousness of two peoples which supported an ideology of empty signifiers. Prespa uses tools that critical theory has developed to address domestic multiculturalism: dignity, mutual recognition and the polysemic character of language. It creates a unique international standard that could be applied to other difficult disputes. How did we arrive at such a ground-breaking agreement? This talk examines the ideological construction of the problem in Greece and the steps taken at the political, cultural and scientific levels to confront and defeat an ideology of essences. It was an important victory and the swan song of the first ever radical left government in Europe.



ABSTRACTS

Spasimir Domaradzki **Poland's Reconciliation Efforts – Lessons (Un)learned**

History is pivotal to the sense of community and the process of nation building. While it is a source of inspiration and unification, its interpretations and narrations are not immune to manipulation in pursuit of political goals. The aim of this speech is to explore the necessary wider context for the pursuit of historical reconciliation. While Poland's example provides inspiring examples for practical steps towards reconciliation and is a textbook example of the Polish-German rapprochement after the Cold War, it is grounded in a constellation of additional factors beyond the countries' reconciliation efforts. Uncovering the interconnected nature of the wide set of political, economic and social priorities can serve as food for thought for encouraging a wider discussion around the existing basis for North Macedonian – Bulgarian reconciliation.

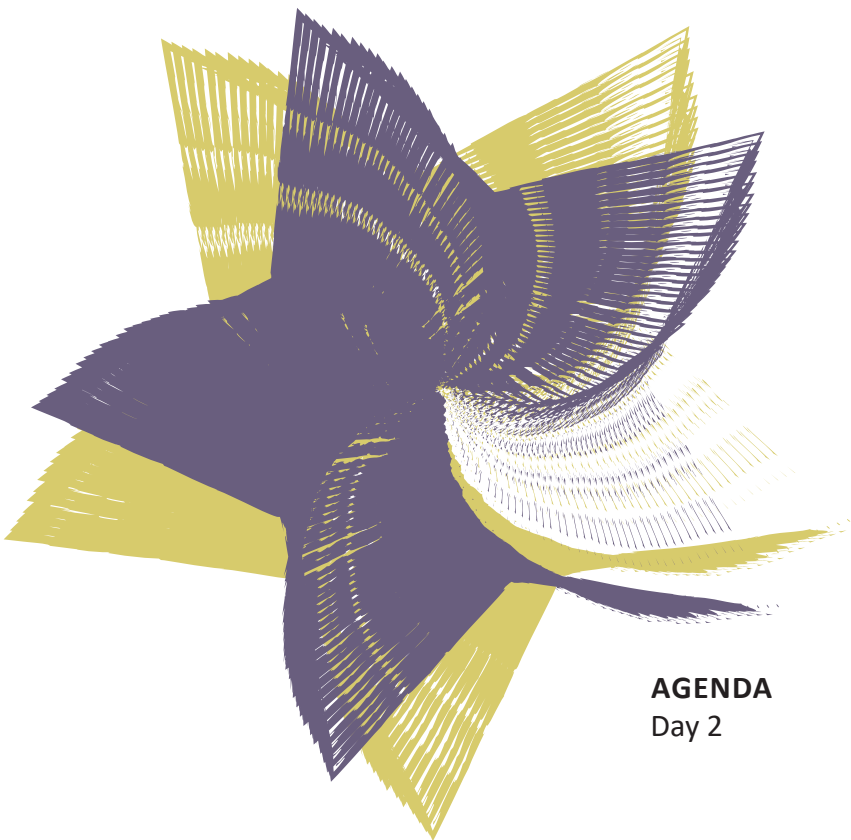


ABSTRACTS

Gábor Egry
**Finding a New Place in History? The Potential Role
of Historical Revisionism in Reconciling Nations**

Historical reconciliation is often taken as primarily the result of political will and design. It is true that without the conscious implementation of a new historical narrative in key institutional structures that the social attitudes connected with history will not change significantly. However, key examples of successful historical reconciliation suggest that success is often preceded by a process of revising history, not just in terms of the perspective, but its methodological and theoretical foundations too. Overlooking this lesson is often the reason why alignment of unrevised national narratives falls short of the intended effects, despite the good intentions.

In this talk I will use examples from Hungary, and its neighbors, to highlight why historical reconciliation needs historical revisionism, but also the problems it generates in regards to changing social attitudes. Finally, I will risk some speculation, based on the recent historiographical turn concerning Late Ottoman history and what it could offer North Macedonia.



AGENDA
Day 2

- 4 December 2021 -

[10.00-10.45]

Keynote talk: Michal Vit,

*Professor at Metropolitan University Prague and a Senior fellow and
Director of the Institute of Modern Development in Prague*

**Title: Reclaiming Identity? Catching up with New Realities
in CEE and SEE Europe**

Q&A: [10.35-10.45]

[10.45-11.30]

Keynote Talk: Marta Szpala,

*Senior Fellow in the Centre for Eastern Studies in Warsaw and
Coordinator of the Think Tank Forum during the Polish presidency in the
Berlin Process.*

**Title: Polish-German Reconciliation Lessons
for the North Macedonia and Poland**

Q&A: [11.20-11.30]

[11.30-12.00] Coffee break

12.00-12.45

Plenary discussion on the topics tackled in the keynote talks

of the first and the second day,
as well as feedback from first workshop.

Format: audience's feedback is invited.

[12.45-13.00] Closing remarks

[13.30-14.30] Lunch break

[15.00-17.30]

Closed workshop (venue: ISSHS Library)

Panel and a Workshop

Chair: **Ljupco Petkovski**

Speakers:

Ljupco Petkovski, Stefan Detchev and Katerina Kolozova

“Questions of methodology of analysis and its ‘translation’ into policy solutions,”

combined with interactive workshop with the other speakers at the event.

Dinner for speakers [19.30] (Location to be confirmed)



ABSTRACTS

Michal Vit
Reclaiming Identity?
Catching up with New Realities in CEE and SEE Europe

Long lasting, or rather, never-ending transformation processes have been translated in the region of Central and East/South Europe into more than 100 years of transformation of the perception of identity on both the national and regional level. The erosion of the Habsburg and Ottoman empires and its implications for aims of constitute nations in the region, founding of new national states after 1945 has driven a need of creating/shaping new elements of belonging based on ethnic rather than social foundings. This has developed a need to discover social, cultural, and political conditions after 1918 and 1945 on the regional level that executed the creation of institutions of newly founded states in the context of divergent tendencies on national and regional level.

This process has been in some ways sped up after the 1945 hand in hand with the unprecedented resettling of people in the wider region. Reshaping of boundaries, creating new forms of statehood, neglecting historically existing local and regional specificities has led to diminishing the role of post Habsburg and Ottoman driven cross border cooperation and also new forms

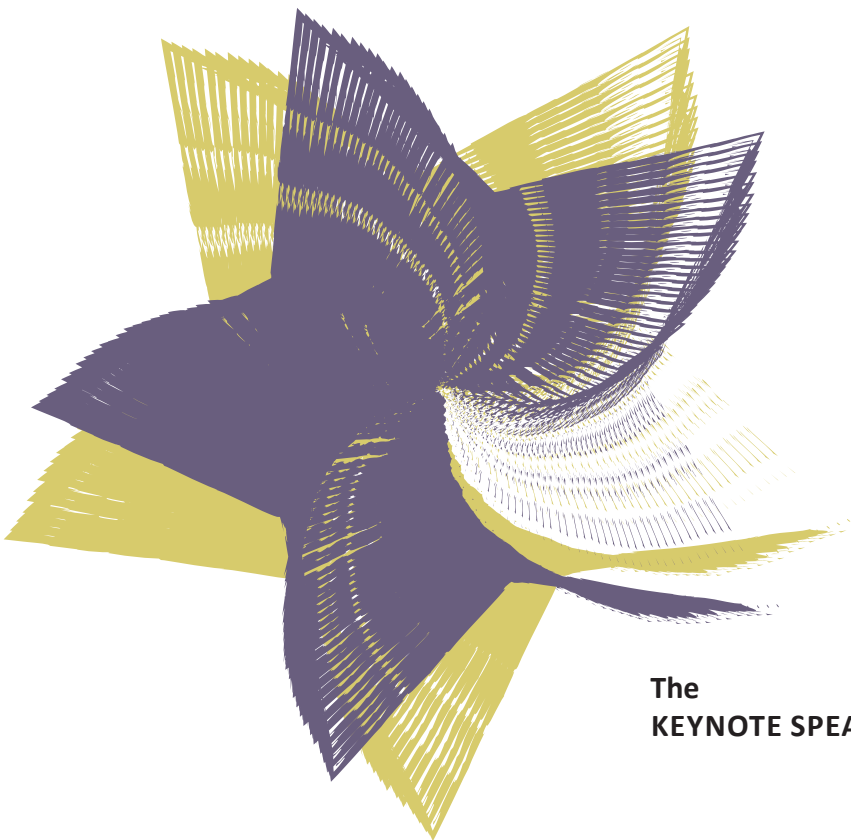
of shaping of identity on national and regional level. This process has resulted in new forms of nationalism and need of expressing national and regional identities in the post 1990 period. Due to the fact that countries of the region have been busy with economic and geopolitical transformation in the post 1990 period, the identity as well as the understanding of regionalism has been moved to a different track. This, among others, caused to some extent wild explosions of different means of need of identity expression, either in political terms, or in culture. On the national level, it has been connected with rediscovered identity building, or even new forms of nationalism.



ABSTRACTS

Marta Szpala
Polish-German Reconciliation Lessons
for North Macedonia and Poland

In 2021, Poland and Germany marked the 30th anniversary of the Polish-German Treaty of Good Neighborship and Friendly Cooperation signed on 17 June 1991. This was a decisive step towards the rapprochement of the two traditionally antagonistic countries and marked a new era in their relations. Although the current German-Polish relations are not free from tensions and full reconciliation between Poland and Germany hasn't been achieved, the results of the reconciliation process in the case of Poland and Germany are evident. The aim of the intervention is to look at the relation between North Macedonia and Bulgaria in the light of the German-Polish reconciliation. I will present the historical overview of the German-Polish reconciliation and describe the circumstances of the process. I will try to reflect on how different actors, perceptions, tools, mechanisms, and institutions influenced the outcomes and oscillations in dealing with the past. Based on this I will offer some recommendations for Bulgaria and North Macedonia.



**The
KEYNOTE SPEAKERS**



Costas Douzinas studied at the University of Athens (LLB), the London School of Economics (LLM, PhD) and the University of Strasbourg. He joined Birkbeck in 1992 to help set up the Department of Law where he taught Public Law and Jurisprudence until his retirement. He was Head of the Department of Law, Dean of Humanities and Pro-Vice Master International Relations. In 2003, Costas established the Birkbeck Institute for the Humanities which he directed until 2015. In that year he was elected a Member of Hellenic Parliament and President of the Parliamentary Standing Committee for National Defense and Foreign Relations where he oversaw the historic agreement between Greece and North Macedonia. Costas is a managing editor of Law and Critique and of the publishing house Birkbeck Law Press. He is the President of the Institute Nikos Poulantzas.

Spasimir Domaradzki Ph.D. – assistant professor, Department of European Law and Institutions, Faculty of Political Science and International Studies, University of Warsaw. Member of the editorial board of Res Publica Nova. Visegrad Insight Senior Fellow. Wilbur Fellow at the Russell Kirk Center in Mecosta, Michigan and Catholic University in America in 2008 and the Sofia University Center for Excellence in 2010 and research fellow at IREF 2014-2015. Member of the Ideas Lab team at the Chancellery of the President of Republic of Poland 2013-2014. Member of Team Europe Poland. His research interests concentrate on Central and Eastern Europe with particular emphasis on the questions of political transformation, historical policy, human rights, European integration and transatlantic relations.

Gábor Egyr is a historian, holding a PhD from ELTE, Budapest, senior research fellow and director general at the Institute of Political History, Budapest. His research focuses on nationalism, everyday ethnicity and the politics of identity in modern Eastern European history. He has been a visiting fellow at NEC-IAS, Bucharest, Imre Kertész Kolleg, Jena, CREES, Stanford University, IOS Regensburg. His latest book *Etnicitás, identitás, politika: Magyar kisebbségek nacionalizmus és regionalizmus között Romániában és Csehszlovákiában 1918–1944* [Ethnicity, Identity, Politics. Hungarian Minorities between Nationalism and Regionalism in Romania and Czechoslovakia 1918–1944], shortlisted for the Felczak-Wereszycki Prize of the Polish Historical Association, analysed everyday ethnicity in the interwar period and how it was related to politics of identity. He authored articles published in East Central Europe, Hungarian Historical Review, Historie Otázky Problémy, Slavic Review. His current position is Principal Investigator of the ERC Consolidator Project NEPOSTRANS (Negotiating post-imperial transitions: from remobilization to nation-state consolidation: A comparative study of local and regional transitions in post-Habsburg East and Central Europe) that compares transitions from Austria-Hungary to the successor states in the wake of WWI at the local level.

Michal Vit is an Assistant Professor at the Metropolitan University Prague. He obtained his doctorate in 2017. Previously he was associated with the Institute for European Policy (IEP), Berlin and EUROPEUM, Prague. He underwent research fellowships at University of Konstanz and University of Vienna, South East European University (MK). He cooperates as consultant with international organizations, such as OSCE.

Marta Szpala is a Senior Fellow in the Centre for Eastern Studies in Warsaw. Coordinator of the Think Tank Forum during the Polish presidency in the Berlin Process. Author and editor of publications on political and economic transformation of the Balkans states. Participated in numerous international research projects as main coordinator of the project Current state of stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina - co-financed by the International Visegrad Fund (2015 -2016), researcher in the project „European integration in the Western Balkans: Can the Visegrad Group countries serve as role models?” (2015) and „V4 - Backing the Advocacy Strategy for the European Integration of the Western Balkans”. Visiting lecturer at the University of Warsaw and the College of Europe in Natolin. Writes about the Balkans for Polish Weekly Tygodnik Powszechny.



The **INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES, SKOPJE (ISSHS)** is a nonprofit research organization in applied social and humanities studies focusing mainly on multi-issue policy studies. It holds the status of a scientific institution in the fields of social sciences and humanities accorded by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Macedonia (Decision nr. 30). It is also an accredited graduate school offering MA level programs in multi-issue policy studies, cultural studies and gender studies. The Institute holds an Erasmus+ charter of Higher Education Institutions in Europe. Its core activities consist in multi-issue policy studies and policy related advocacy and training, coupled with basic research in the social sciences and humanities. Making findings visible and putting them into function that can contribute to positive changes in society is attached to that of policy research: data driven advocacy and awareness raising are part of every policy research activity we undertake. We also provide consultancy and act as multi-issue policy studies think tank.

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