

NEWSLETTER

CONFERENCE "MIGREC H2020 project dissemination meeting"

On March 7th, 2023, the Department of Political Science and International Relations organized the meeting with MIGREC H2020 project dissemination. Presentation of the MIGREC project by Dr. Panagiotis Paschalidis Adjunct Lecturer at the Department of Communication and Digital Media at the University of Western Macedonia.

MIGREC presents the specificity of being the first H2020 project in the field of human and social sciences which is headed by a Serbian institution. It is a capacity building program, and it has been implemented in a very ambitious and meticulous fashion. In this meeting, several of its key aspects were presented and discussed.

The discussion covered the implementation of MIGREC as a project, practices that it should apply with a view to improving its sustainability prospects, and its research interests and policy assessment particularly from the perspective of the Western Balkans.



Open Forum: “What do European University Alliances add to internationalization?” with Prof. Dr. Florian J. Schweigert



On May 11, 2023, the Department of Political Science and International Relations held an open forum on the topic “What do European University Alliances add to internationalization?” with the special guest Prof. Dr. Florian J. Schweigert, who serves as vice President for the Internationalization and Fundraising speaker of the EDUC Alliance.

The forum aimed at presenting and explaining some overview and insights on how cooperation among European universities functions, and how both member and non-member states from the EU can benefit from this cooperation. Prof. Dr. Schweigert went on explaining the main targets these university alliances aim to achieve: the first, is promoting common European values and strengthening European identity by educating a new generation of Europeans able to work together across borders; and the second, is increasing the quality and competitiveness of the European education, research and innovation landscape. Therefore, young European students will not only be able to meet and overcome current challenges of their region, but also global ones.

The EDUC alliance works on the establishment of a novel, in-depth quality of transnational cooperation that works towards systemic, structural and sustainable change in the participating (and other) universities. Through creating new mobility formats, this alliance can establish knowledge transfer between regional ecosystems and academia. “In this way, not only a strong research and innovation dimension is created, but also a road of lifelong learning for all involved in the process” states Prof. Dr. Schweigert.



"Work and Study" fair 2023, with the Ministry of Education and Sports

Epoka University participated in the Work and Study Fair 2023. Professors and staff from the Political Science and International Relations department took part as well in different cities like Shkoder, Elbasan, Vlore, and Tirana. The aim is to promote the departments of Epoka and to guide high school students in their academic path. The Work & Study Fair is an excellent opportunity for all matura students and potential master applicants to discover more about study programs and campus life at Epoka University.



Call for applications for the Erasmus+ Exchange Program FALL term

The International Relations Office informed all the students interested to apply for the exchange programs during the Fall semester 2023-2024 Academic Year. Based on the current academic offer the students of Political Science and International Relations are strongly encouraged to participate in the following universities: University of Tartu in Estonia, Hochschule Fulda, University of Applied Sciences in Germany, Europa-Universität of Flensburg in Germany and University of International Studies in Rome. The Department of Political Science and International Relations has announced and notified respective students on May 3, 2023, for two scholarship opportunities offered by the University of Foreigners of Perugia for the enrolment period of 2023-2024.



Conferences at the Center for Openness and Dialogue (COD)



In the period March-May 2023 Political Science and International Relations bachelor and master students took part in several open forums organized by the Center for Openness and Dialogue in the Prime Ministry of Albania. Some of the topics discussed were "Albania and its path towards EU integration" discussed by Mr. Alexis Hupin and "The youth and negotiations with EU" discussed by Ms. Albana Kociu. The aim of these forums was to explain the process of integration of Albania towards EU, challenges and dynamics related to the process.

Exploring career opportunities in diplomatic mission and development programs in Albania, with Ms. Inva Nela and Ms. Anisa Berisha

On June 6th, 2023, Department of Political Science and International Relations welcomed two former Epoka graduate students from the department of Political Science and International Relations Ms. Anisa Berisha Business & Project Management Consultant and Ms. Inva Nela Project Officer for Conflict, Security and Stability Fund at the British Embassy.

They both explained to Law and Political Science students their career path, challenges and what they have learned up until their successful careers. They gave advice on what areas would be more suitable for students of these studies, as well as how to succeed in job applications.

They emphasized the importance of working with one's abilities and values, and that of a strong self-esteem. These two examples served as inspiration for our students.



"The credibility of 2023 local elections in Albania" Debate

On Thursday, April 20, 2023, the Department of Political Science and International Relations organized a debate on "The credibility of 2023 local elections in Albania." The activity was held in the framework of the "Parties, Elections, and Policy-making" course lectured by Dr. Aldo Bumçi and it gathered students from the three years of Bachelor's. The main aim of the debate was to keep the students engaged and informed on a current topic belonging to the country's domestic affairs and help them enhance their debating skills while interacting with one another. The debate consisted of a 70 minutes session through which the participants grouped in two opposing sides shared their well-constructed arguments and counterarguments. Each party displayed good preparatory work, and strong commitment.

<https://pir.epoka.edu.al/news-the-credibility-of-2023-local-elections-in-albania-debate-6266.html>



Erasmus+ Mobility Exchanges of the academic staff

Throughout the months of April and May professors of the department of Political Science and International Relations participated in some mobility exchanges in partnering universities of Epoka University. These study visits were beneficial for both sides, as they served as cooperation and a transfer system of ideas, new notions, styles of teaching, research and such. In the Erasmus+ training mobility framework between the Beira Interior University (UBI) in Covilha, Portugal, and Epoka University, Mr. Ervin Sulika, Administrator of the Faculty of Law and Social Sciences visited the partner institution during April 3-7, 2023. During May 1-5, 2023, Dr. Reina Shehi, Dr. Jubjana Vila, Dr. Avdi Smajlaj and Prof. Assoc. Dr. Lisen Bashkurti participated in a mobility exchange in the University of Tartu in Estonia, partner of Epoka University and ranked as having one of the best faculties of Political Science.



"How to publish in renowned international social science journals?" workshop with Prof. L. Marvin Overby

On June 1st, 2023, the department of Political Science and International Relations held a graduate workshop with Prof. Overby, as part of his visit at Epoka University. Prof. Overby was welcomed by PhD students as well as Master's students. Prof. Assoc. Dr. Salih Ozcan, alongside Dr. Niuton Mulleti opened the discussion with a welcoming speech. Prof. Overby discussed in the form of a conversation with the students regarding their experience and knowledge on research, publishing on journals and finishing book chapters. He emphasized the importance of writing a good, well-put and straight to the point abstract. The professor urged the students to take examples from the structures and writing styles of journal articles. "Write something professional everyday" stated Prof. Overby in finishing his valuable discussion.



Jean Monnet International Conference: The Legitimacy of New Regionalism in the European Integration Process

On May 4-5, 2023 the Department of Political Science and International Relations, academic staff and its graduate students participated in the Jean Monnet International Conference on the subject entitled "The Legitimacy of New Regionalism in the European Integration Process", which was organized by the University of Oradea in Romania. The aim of this conference was to identify and provide solutions, processes and elements that embody EU values and facilitate policy making at the EU level, with the goal of fostering a system that not only empowers citizens but also promotes governance and openness at the local level. This International conference was comprised of multiple panels, where each one was characterized of specific topics, this in turn gave the floor for professors and graduate students to present their topics.

The opening of the conference began with the scientific debates and it's started with the scientific debates, after the session ended, it gave the floor to the panels.

On the third panel titled "The role of public policies and civil initiatives in the European integration process" Dr. Jubiana Vila, Head of the center for European Studies at Epoka University, alongside with the graduate student Iris Buciqi presented their topic "Civil Society Organizations and Regional Collaboration in Western Balkans".

In the fifth panel titled "Management of interethnic relations and community security in the European integration process", Dr. Reina Zenelai, Head of the Department for Political Science and International Relations at Epoka University, alongside with the graduate student Dragana Kurti presented the topic "Dynamics of Regionalism in Western Balkans: A quest for Regional Identity". On the third panel titled "The role of public policies and civil initiatives in the European integration process" Dr. Jubiana Vila, Head of the center for European Studies at Epoka University, alongside with the graduate student Iris Buciqi presented their topic "Civil Society Organizations and Regional Collaboration in Western Balkans".

On the same panel graduate students of Epoka University, Shysti Bushati and Ingrid Melani Presented their topics which were titled "A shift in IR approach after Ukraine war: Remilitarization of Europe, an interpretation through the realist lens" and "How are populism and Euroscepticism linked with left and right ideologies? The case of FIDESZ and Podemos."

The Legitimacy of New Regionalism in the European Integration Process

CEEPUS Lecture: "Hungary as an alternative role model? Domestic politics, the EU, and external relations", with Dr. Christina Griessler



On May 31, 2023, the Department of Political Science and International Relations at held a CEEPUS lecture at Epoka University with the topic "Hungary as an alternative role model? Domestic politics, the EU, and external relations", which was presented by Dr. Christina Griessler, Chair of Comparative Politics, Andrassy Universitt Budapest, Hungary. This lecture was followed by Dr. Reina Zenelaj, head of the Department of Political Sciences and International, Dr. Avdi Smajljaj, M.Sc. Dea Bashkurti and Mr. Aldo Bumci, Member of the Parliament of the Republic of Albania.



Dr. Christina began by giving a brief historical overview of Hungary after World War II until the collapse of communism, and the transitional period of the country. Dr. Christina also mentioned the process of transition and the challenges with the current political and populist regime under the leadership of Viktor Orbn and his party FIDESZ from 2010 and 2023. The focus in this particular time was the problems created by FIDESZ, such as the abuse of the electoral systems, constant changes in the constitution, restrictions of civil society, decrease of the rule of law, media centralization. She mentioned how Orbn's rhetoric and narratives frame Hungary as a populist democracy, furthermore mentioning Hungary's critical stance on stricter EU conditionality and the rule of law. Dr. Christina concluded by stating the critic's remarks on how Hungary's democratic system has been weakened, impacting check and balances and targeting NGOs focused on the rule of law.

“Constitutions and the constitutional amendment process” with Prof. L. Marvin Overby

On May 30, 2023, the department of Law and the department of Political Science and International Relations welcomed Prof. L. Marvin Overby, PhD, Director of the School of Public Affairs of Pennsylvania State University. Prof. Overby held an open discussion regarding the US Constitution, its functions, amendments and history, while also not lacking a comprehensive understanding of other constitutions, such as the Albanian or the Indian one.

Prof. Overby went on explaining how the US constitution was formed and how it remains a core stone of the American modern state. He mentioned how, interestingly, the US constitution is one of the shortest written constitutions. Another important point mentioned was the abundance of changed constitutions in the last 20 years, 800 national ones, which, according to the professor, poses challenges regarding the legitimacy of such foundations.

Prof. Overby mentioned that, despite the US constitution serving as a blueprint, perhaps it is not the most adequate model to be followed, due to issues it has regarding full faith and credit, assumption of debt or ratification.

Secondly, Prof. Overby, held a discussion on the process of amendment. There exists an impressive array of different amendment processes: some countries set high bars and pose difficulties for changes, and some set low bars. High bars pertain on supermajorities, or vetoes, and low bars on simple majorities. Prof Overby highlighted the advantages and disadvantages of amendments, as well as the stakeholders who are involved in the process.



Public Panel: "The Western Balkans on the Road to the European Union" by the Center for European Studies



On June 1st, 2023, the Center for European Studies organized the Public Panel "The Western Balkans on the Road to the European Union." The event was organized within the framework of the Jean Monnet Module Project "EU Integration of Western Balkans: Patterns and Issues" (WB-EU Path Module) led by EPOKA University and co-funded by the Erasmus+ Program of the EU. The panel aimed to bring together academics and policymakers to discuss and share their perspectives on the Western Balkan countries' EU integration dynamics, issues, and challenges, with a particular focus on the EU integration path of Albania and Serbia.



Chaired by Dr. Jubjana Vila, leader of the WB-EUPath Jean Monnet Module, the panel included Assoc. Prof. Dr. Lisen Bashkurti, Dean of the Faculty of Law and Social Sciences at EPOKA University; Dr. Ivana Radic Milosavljevic, member of the Faculty of Political Sciences at the University of Belgrade; Mr. Aldo Bumçi, a former member of the Parliament of the Republic of Albania; Dr. Christina Griessler, Chair of Comparative Politics at Andrásy Universität Budapest; and Prof. L. Marvin Overby, Director of the School of Public Affairs at Penn State Harrisburg.

<https://www.epoka.edu.al/news-wb-eupath-jean-monnet-module-1st-public-panel-the-western-balkans-on-the-road-to-the-european-union-6336.html>

2nd Graduate Seminar by the Center for European Studies : "Serbia's EU Integration Issues and Challenges", with Dr. Ivana Radic Milosavljevic

On 2nd June, 2023, the Department of Political Science and International Relations organized within the framework of the Jean Monnet Module Project "EU integration of Western Balkans: Patterns and Issues" a seminar titled "Serbia's Issues and Challenges", which was presented by Dr. Ivana Radic Milosavljevic, of the Faculty of Political Sciences from the University of Belgrade, Serbia. This seminar was followed by Dr. Jubjana Vila, Head of the Center for European Studies and Dr. Mirela Alhasani, as well as the graduate students of Epoka University.

Dr. Ivana began a short historical introduction from Serbia's conflict at the end of the nineties, then she proceeded by giving a more detailed elaboration on the country's pursuit of EU accession and its contemporary political climate, on also stressing the issues and challenges that the country is currently facing. Dr. Ivana mentioned how Serbia is actively pursuing EU membership, progress has been made, including the opening of negotiations and adoption of new methodologies.

However, she mentioned that there are a number of obstacles or challenges that Serbia has to resolve, such as its critical stance on Kosovo's independence, trouble with the war crimes committed during the Milosevic era to include also the difficulties extraditing war crime suspects. Dr. Ivana added that other problematic aspects such as the rule of law and public opinion's negative perception of the EU are also key issues that the country must address.

And lastly Dr. Ivana concluded by saying that overcoming these difficulties and garnering more support are critical to Serbia's successful path toward EU membership.



COURSES IN BACHELOR IN POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

FIRST YEAR

First Semester

PIR 111 Introduction to Political Science
PIR 133 Political and Diplomatic History
LAW 105 Introduction to Law
PIR 103 Introduction to Political Sociology
BAF 101 Introduction to Economy
ENG 109 Developing Reading and Writing Skills

Second Semester

LAW 116 Constitutional Law
PIR 104 Key Themes in Political Thought
PIR 122 Politics and History of Balkans
PIR 130 International Relations: Theories, Concepts, and Debates
PIR 124 Comparative Politics
ENG 104 Advanced English

SECOND YEAR

Third Semester

PIR 201 Research Methods in Social Sciences
PIR 271 Government and Politics in Albania
PIR 225 International Organizations
PIR 203 Politics and Institutions in the EU
PIR 227 Diplomatic Correspondence
XXX Elective I (Foreign Language)

Fourth Semester

PIR 220 Democracy and Democratization
PIR 212 Information, Technology and Political Power
PIR 202 Modern Political Thought
PIR 208 Political Psychology
PIR 206 Parties, Elections and Policy Making
XXX Elective I (Foreign Language)

Elective courses

PIR 242 Turkish II
PIR 244 German II
PIR 246 Italian II
PIR 248 French II

THIRD YEAR

Fifth Semester

PIR 351 Politics of Human Rights
PIR 361 Public Policy Making and Analysis
PIR 333 Foreign Policy Analysis
PIR 309 Professional Practice
XXX Elective I
XXX Elective II

Elective Courses

BUS 335 Human Resources Management
PIR 303 Political Leadership
PIR 305 Environmental Politics
PIR 317 Politics of Inequality
PIR 341 EU Law
PIR 339 Political Communication
PIR 337 Regional Development and Governance

Sixth Semester

PIR 300/PIR 316 Graduation Thesis / Final Comprehensive Exam
PIR 330 International Security
PIR 362 Public Administration in Democratic States
XXX Elective I
XXX Elective II

Elective courses

PIR 336 Crisis Analysis and Management
LAW 304 Public International Law
PIR 366 State and Local Government
PIR 340 Global Governance
PIR 310 Political Behavior
PIR 368 Populism
PIR 342 International Terrorism & Threat Perception
PIR 370 History of European Integration

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