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- AIIS hosts the Foreign Policy Forum lecture **‘Visegrad Group- A model for Regional Cooperation’** with HE Bronislava Tomášová Ambassador of the Czech republic to Albania, Read more in “Our events”, pg 3.
- AIIS Deputy Director travels to Serbia to participate in the Belgrade Security Forum, Read more in “Other activities and contributions”, pg 3.
- AIIS is always enriching its team. Read more about the people who have joined us in “Welcome on board!”, pg 3.
- Calling on experts and authors to contribute with Academic papers for our international conference next year **“Albania 25 years after communism, Rebuilding state and society”**, read more in “Call for Papers”, pg 4.

Aiis Albanian Institute for International Studies

Address: “Anton Zako Cajupi”, Nr. 20/5, Tiranë, Albania

Tel: +355 444 000 84 Fax +355 444 000 85

E-mail: aiis@aiis-albania.org; Web: www.aiis-albania.org

Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Albanian-Institute-for-International-Studies/512354502128050>

Twitter: @AIIS_Albania

AIIS Newsletter

5 / October 2015

Highlight

“Albania and Kosovo in quest of a common future”



“This Policy Paper was prepared in the context of the joint Albanian Institute for International Studies (AIIS), Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) project: “Albania and Kosovo - In quest of a Common Future”. Its

first chapter deals with the historical dimension of the relations between Albania and Kosovo. During their history Kosovo and Albania have been isolated for more than four decades and this has caused deep

divisions in economic, political and societal terms, which still persist today. After the independence of Kosovo in 2008, one can speak for the first time in history of

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relations between two separate and sovereign Albanian dominated states. As such, these relations are experiencing a new evolving economic and political dimension.

The official political vision expressed by the governments and the mainstream politicians in both Albania and Kosovo is closely linked to the global and regional political and geostrategic developments. Currently, the most relevant political actors in both countries have expressed their willingness to respect the international recognized borders. Although, according to different polls, a substantial part of the population in Kosovo and Albania is in favor of the unification, this issue is and will likely remain limited to the patriotic rhetoric, since both countries are heavily dependent on international actors, which are strongly against any reshaping of the borders in the region. On the other hand, the integration in the European Union continues to be for both countries the best perspective for the prosperity of their economies and societies. In this respect, both governments have aligned all their domestic and foreign policies according to the EU political framework. The pace of the EU integration process, especially in the case of Kosovo will be decisive for the further consolidation of the democracies of both countries and for the improvement of their mutual relations.

Political and diplomatic cooperation has been at large limited to lobbying activities for the international recognition of Kosovo's independence. Since the declaration of Kosovo's independence, Albania has been very active in this process by invoking this issue in different high level meetings. European integration is another area, where both countries are cooperating. Albania, which has more experience and expertise in this area, especially with regard to the translation and approximation of the *acquis communautaire*, is offering its assistance to the European



integration institutions of Kosovo. There are also some steps forward in terms of diplomatic cooperation, whereas both countries have agreed to joint consular services in a number of cases.

Economic relations between the two countries have been strengthened as a result of more than eight economic agreements. The strategic partnership agreement signed on January 2014 emphasis on the need for an "integrated" market. Both governments have expressed their will to strengthen their economic ties. However, legal barriers and the slow implementation of the signed agreements continue to hamper economic relations. Economic cooperation might be boosted only through common policies that will promote sustainable economic growth in both sides of the border. In this respect, energy is a crucial area for the further enhancement of trade volume and interaction between the economies of Kosovo and Albania. Common projects in energy infrastructure would contribute to the establishment of a common energy market as a promoter to economic cooperation in both sides of the border.

Albania and Kosovo have become important trade partners. However, the overall trade volume of about 160 million euros (2013) indicates that both countries need to make more efforts to strengthen their commercial ties. Further, free trade has been inhibited due to a series of frictions of technical nature that have seriously challenged the

good relations between the two countries. Albanian authorities have been blocking pharmaceutical products and wheat flour from Kosovo since these products didn't comply with the Albanian food and pharmaceutical standards. High customs tariffs were another reason why exports of potatoes from Kosovo were often blocked in the border. On the other hand, due to the same grounds Kosovar authorities imposed their own restrictions to imports from Albania such as: Milk, Cement, etc.

Trade frictions were the subject of many meetings between high authorities from both countries and there is some progress especially in terms of aligning standards concerning food and agricultural products. However, differences in administrative, fiscal and trade legislation continue to cause various obstacles to the mutual trade relations.

Culture is the area where cooperation is still in its initial stages. The Agreement for Strategic Partnership between Albania and Kosovo, in its fourth pillar determines the main important areas of cultural cooperation and in this regard both countries have agreed to common cultural calendars for 2014 and 2015. Furthermore, cultural institutions in Albania and Kosovo have established long-standing ties with each other contributing thus to the creation of a common cultural dimension. In this respect, private actors have resulted to be far more

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successful than state institutions. Albanian and Kosovar artists, singers, writers have found their own ways to access a unified cultural market. However, both cultures are still isolated and both governments face the difficult challenge to create a common cultural “Albanosphere”, between Kosovo and Albania.

In the media sector, cooperation has been reached between public media outlets (RTK-Kosovo and RTSH-Albania) and audiovisual media regulators. As in the case of culture, communication between the most relevant media actors, especially with regard to printed media, is insufficient, although cooperation between private TV stations has signed some encouraging steps forward. In general, media platforms are separate and concentrated to the singular markets of Kosovo and Albania. A common action plan and strategy for the establishment of a new Albania-Kosovo media partnership could help to change the situation.

In respect to education, Kosovo and Albania have been mainly focused on common school curricula and the standardization of school textbooks. Especially during the last common joint meeting between the governments of the Republic of Albania and the Republic of Kosovo, held on 23rd of March 2015, cooperation has been expanded to Higher Education and scientific research, joint teaching of Albanian language in the Diaspora and joint professional training of Teachers. Educational systems in both Albania and Kosovo suffer from similar problems, but until now few common efforts have been undertaken to address these issues. The constitution of a unified Science Academy would facilitate the establishment of a common educational system and would further enable a common normative evolution of the Albanian language in both sides of the border.

For more information please contact dsulcebe@aiis-albania.org

WELCOME ON BOARD:



Lutjona Luta Assistant Researcher: Lutjona Luta holds a bachelor degree in Political Science from University of Tirana. She is currently graduating from the Joint Interdisciplinary Master in South East European Studies, University of Belgrade. She was granted Basileus V scholarship for her mobility semester at University of Zagreb, winter semester 2014. Lutjona has successfully completed a six-month internship at the Albanian Embassy in Zagreb. Apart from her academic commitment, she has been active in various local NGOs and international seminars, mainly focused on human rights, regional cooperation, reconciliation and peace-building processes. Her fields of interest vary from political parties, democratization, societies in transition, South Eastern Europe and the EU enlargement.



Sara Kelmendi Intern/Research assistant. Sara Kelmendi has graduated from the University of Tirana in French Language, Literature and Civilization but she also speaks English and German as well. Her knowledge in foreign languages has allowed her to get involved in various translation projects and in the education sector. She has recently joined the AIIS team after having worked as an administrative assistant for a company involved in the tourism sector.

OUR EVENTS:



- “ Visegrad Group - Model for Regional Cooperation ” was the Foreign Policy Forum that AIIS hosted together with the Embassy of the Czech republic in Albania. HE Bronislava Tomasova spoke to the audience about the significance of the Visegrad cooperation, its collaboration possibilities with the Western Balkans such as scholarship and joint projects funding. She also mentioned some of the ambitions of the presidency of her own country and made available several sources of information for the audience members interested to know more.

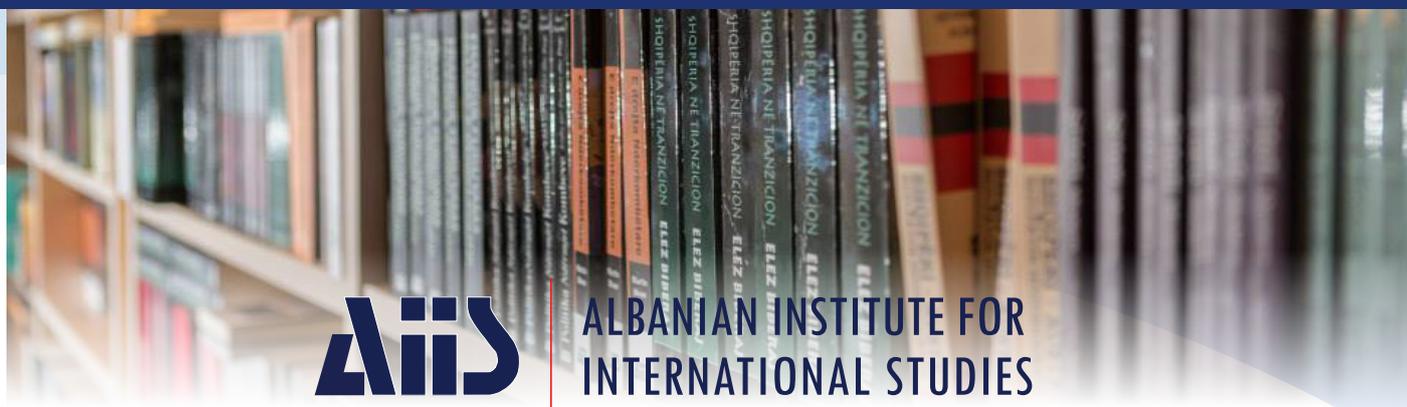
OTHER ACTIVITIES AND CONTRIBUTIONS:

- Alba Cela took part in Belgrade Security Forum held on September 29-October 2. Cela took part in the discussion of the first day Academic Event 'Does Europe need a foreign policy' as well as in the panel (session 4) "Countering the Tide of Radicalization: In Search of a Comprehensive Response "

- AIIS Associate Researcher Enri Hide took

part in the 31st Workshop of the PFP Consortium Study Group "Regional Stability in South East Europe" on "Violent Extremism in the Western Balkans" held in Belgrade on 27-29 September 2015. Hide presented some findings of the AIIS report on the relevant issues in Albania and answered experts' questions on the new developments.

CALL FOR ACADEMIC PAPERS: Albania 25 years after communism, Rebuilding state and society



A quarter of a century ago, Albanians rose to overthrow a brutal dictatorship under the slogan "We want Albania to be like the rest of Europe!" A quarter of a century later, Albania has barely managed to gain the official EU candidate status after long and repetitive attempts. One could argue that despite recent progress, Albania remains one of the laggards of EU integration and of transition in general. The challenges of building a full democracy, a functional market economy and of achieving the major milestone of becoming an EU member state remain difficult for the country and pace of progress uneven.

The 25th anniversary of the European dream of Albania constitutes an important moment of reflection regarding the status of the European project in Albania and the ways in which to further it. It is in the contexts of this critical juncture that AIIS proposes to engage the academic community, political decision makers, civil society representatives, the media and the opinion makers in an overall analysis of what has happened and what needs to happen still to complete the path of Europeanization.

It is equally important to contextualize the case of Albania with the developments of transition, post-communist state development as well as European integration progress in the region, as well as bring in relevant comparisons from countries in Eastern and Central Europe.

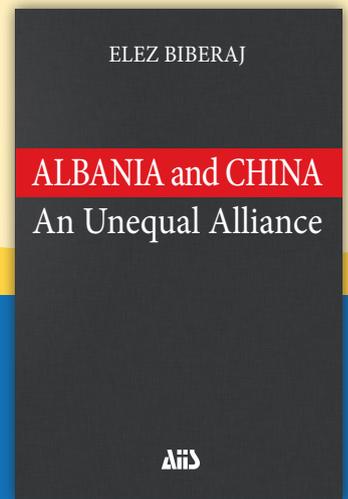
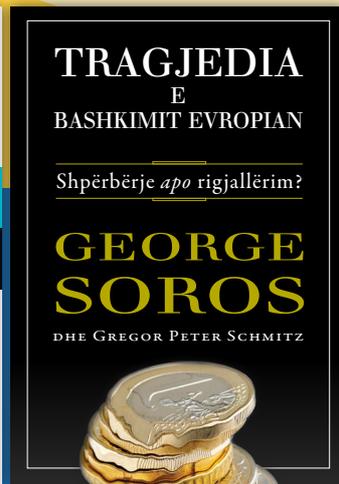
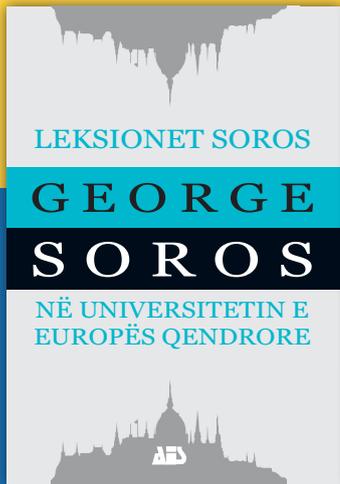
Therefore, the Albanian Institute for International Studies (AIIS) calls upon all interested scholars, experts, and analysts to contribute with their research and academic papers to the theoretical and practical examination of the transition and European integration dynamics of Albania in particular but also of the Western Balkans and the wider Central and Eastern Europe.

Suggested topics (non exhaustive list)

- **State building in post communist Albania**
- **Market economy challenges during transition**
- **State-society relations and modernization of social relations**
- **Post communist transition and European integration**
- **Comparative post communist experiences from the Balkans and Central -Eastern Europe**
- **Dealing with the past in Albania: lustration and internal reconciliation**
- **Regional reconciliation and the dynamics of regional cooperation**
- **Challenges of Foreign policy in transition**
- **Progress on human rights in Albania: balance of 25 years**

Please send all relevant documents and inquiries
l.lula@aiis-albania.org

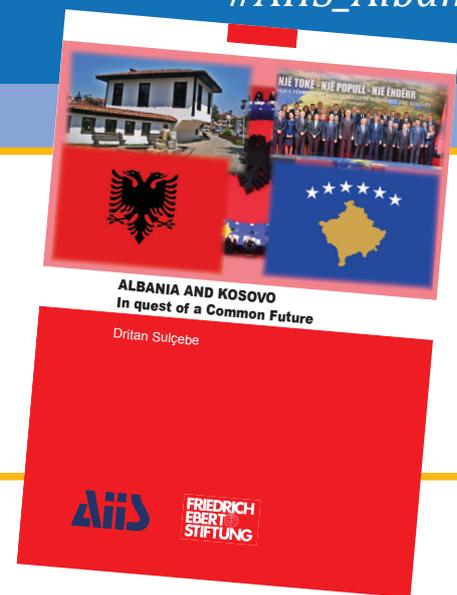
AIIS New Publications



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Research and publications

Albania and Kosova in quest of a common future



Our magazine Europa latest issue:

'Europa' magazine is an novel and pioneering publication targeting Albanian readers with the aim of encouraging a new, involving and critical approach to European integration, providing more space to promotion of European values including arts and culture as well as featuring thoughtful analysis on current developments within the EU. The magazine promotes critical thinking, open debate and provides the reader with a fresh perspective on both current events and more general trends. For subscriptions, inquiries and advertising please contact aiis@aiis-albania.org

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