

## **European Ideas Network, EIN, Summer University in Bucharest, Romania, 22-24 September 2011**

EIN Policy Round Table on

### **The Balkan Region: in the Path towards the EU**

Chairwoman: **Doris Pack**, MEP, Member of the EPP Group in the European Parliament, Chairwoman of the EP Committee on 'Culture and Education', Member of the Joint Parliamentary Committee EU-Croatia, Member of the Interparliamentary Delegation for Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo.

Guest speakers were:

**Simon Busuttil**, MEP, Member of the EPP Group in the European Parliament, Coordinator for the EP Committee on 'Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs'

**Monica Macovei**, MEP, Member of the EPP Group in the European Parliament, Chair of the Delegation to the EU-Moldova Parliamentary Cooperation Committee

**Bogdan Aurescu**, State Secretary for European Affairs, Romania

Panelists were:

**Ivan Hodac**, General Secretary. ACEA

**Dietmar Halper**, Director, Political Academy, Austrian People Party

**(Ognyan Minchev**, Professor, Sofia University, Bulgaria)

Rapporteur was:

**Staffan Jerneck**, Director, Director of Corporate Relations, CEPS, Rapporteur of the EIN Working Group 8.

The Chairwoman handled the proceeding in a very efficient way and speakers and panelist made short and concrete presentations containing key messages. The audience contributed many questions and comments that were dealt with constructively by speakers and panelists. The discussion was very lively and informative. The meeting came to a close before the allotted time frame was reached!

The following issues were elaborated and seen to be of particular importance.

1. There was a strong agreement that it is essential to have put in place the **judiciary**. It is not only a question of having a formal legal system but in particular that it is in operation and **implemented**. A judiciary without practical implementation is no real judiciary. Support should be given to build up the judiciary in the Balkan countries. The adoption of a judiciary goes with different speeds in the countries in the region. A functioning judiciary will make it possible for a country to adopt and adjust to the EU legal system. Reforms and capacity building and increased cooperation are important ways to fight organised crime that cooperates across borders in the region.
- 2.
3. EU made **Visa liberalisation** possible for the Balkan countries, but this facility has, however, been severely abused and used without responsibility. A serious example of this malfunctioning is the large number of mainly Serbs that applied for asylum in Belgium, Germany and Sweden. This detrimental development led to limitations in the liberalisation of the visa procedure. A functioning system must be built on mutual trust.

4. The EU can generate **peace, security and political stability** in the region. The prospects of a closer cooperation with the EU should be seen as a driver for change, which is a prerequisite for further development and contacts between the EU and the Balkan countries. There should be **prospects of cooperation** for the Balkan region so necessary improvements can be undertaken.
5. There is a lack of political “**ownership**” and **brand of the region** and improvements go slowly. There has recently been a detrimental political development when political parties in countries are fighting one another in stead of contributing to institutional building and development of the political and legal systems.
5. The good example of **Croatia** – which most probably will become the 28th member of the EU 1 July 2013 - should be studied as a illustrative example of how a country can improve, modernise and adopt necessary changes to become fit for EU membership. It could be the useful guide for all the Balkan countries that are aspiring to get closer relationship with the EU.
6. **Foreign direct investments** will be an important driver for modernisation and development. The possibility of becoming part of the single market will increase investment flows and stimulate supply of goods. International business could be the lever for transition to market economy and economic growth and development. Successful companies will attract more business.
7. **Education and training** are particularly vital in increasing the competitiveness of the economies and facilitate the transition to market economy. A more qualified labour force will be attractive for potential investors from the EU.
8. There seem to be both a **European fatigue** as well as a **fatigue in the Balkans** visavis a closer cooperation and a rapprochement between the parties. Such an attitude could be detrimental to further cooperation between the parties. One should not only consider the cost of enlargement but also the cost of non-enlargement.
9. The EPP group will continue to support the development of the region. We need a regional strategy for the Balkans to get closer to the EU.

**Staffan Jerneck**