

Serbia debates its European future

In less than three weeks, Serbia, EU and international community's representatives gathered twice together with civil society organizations, universities and media and discussed country's European future.

The first event was annual conference organized by the Serbian *European Integration Office* (SEIO) and the *Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence* (BFPE) on the November, 6-7 in Serbia's capital. Opened by Serbia's Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremic's speech, the conference showed that EU integration may become an issue of national consensus. Jeremic and other state representatives expressed support to local civil society and acknowledged their role in EU integration, referring to the process as a natural space for state and non-state actors' cooperation. Sonja Licht, BFPE's Director and prominent civil society leader stressed that their intention is to organize the conference every year until Serbia joins the EU.

Pierre Mirel, the Director General of the EC's DG Enlargement, or Eduard Kukan, former Slovak Minister of Foreign Affairs and UN's Special Envoy to the Balkans were present with other speakers. Mr. Kukan focused his speech on regional cooperation and stressed its importance for Slovakia and currently for the Western Balkans.

The second event, which took place in Belgrade on the November, 24, was a public debate of the European Parliament's delegation entitled *Serbia on EU path*. Doris Pack, Chairwoman of the EP's Delegation for relations with the countries of south-east Europe, stressed during the debate that gaining candidate status is not an automatic "green light" for EU membership and is beginning of genuine integration process.

Sources: Pontis Foundation, Medija Centar, B92

Controversial del Ponte's book in Serbian

The former Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) Carla del Ponte waited to see her book *The Hunt: Me and War Criminals* translated into Serbian. The book – which unveils her work and problems during her mandate – was introduced on the November, 25 in Belgrade.

Filip Svarm, journalist from the weekly Vreme took part in the presentation. According to him, the book says a lot about "the war and its impacts, as well as people who led it".

With more than 300 pages, del Ponte's book triggered sensation immediately when it was published – in Serbia as well as on international level. Among other, Carla del Ponte claims that during and after the Kosovo war in 1999 Serbian civilians were tortured and kidnapped to be object of an organ-harvesting. Serbian B92 visited Albania and prepared a throughout coverage of the affair.

In her book, Del Ponte also concludes that responsibility for not capturing remaining war crime suspects – Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic – lies both on Serbia as well as the international community.

Source: B92

Bulgarian nationalists condition EU membership of its neighbours

Serbia and Macedonia cannot join the EU, unless it will return Bulgaria territories captured in the First World War. It is claimed by the Bulgarian nationalists from Ataka party, which has its representative also in the European Parliament.

The party which received 8% of votes in 2005 elections wants back Serbian towns Dimitrovgrad and Bosilegrad, and the Macedonian Strumica. These were among territories lost by Bulgaria in 1919 when the Treaty of Neuilly was signed. The treaty is referred to as *Second National Catastrophe* in Bulgaria.

Analysts agree that the rhetoric is part of an election campaign before parliamentary elections in 2009. Ataka remains on the third place in opinion polls and nationalistic statements may help them to maximize its results.

Source: BalkanInsight.com