
Breaking Down or Re-building the Walls

International Conference

Bertinoro, 16 September 2016

The international Conference, “Breaking Down or Re-building the Walls” Migration Crisis, Refugees and Security in Southeastern Europe” took place on September 16th, 2016. Scholars and young researchers from Greece, Slovenia, Croatia and Italy gathered together at the University Residential Centre of Bertinoro to reflect upon new analytical approaches to the complex dynamics enacted in Europe by the so-called ‘Migration Crisis’. Especially, it was the South-East European area that faced the most serious challenges, following the rise of the Western Balkan migration route in 2015. The event, that counted on the participation of several internationally renowned speakers, was organized by the Istituto per l’Europa Centro Orientale e Balcanica, the Central European Initiative and the Department of Political and Social Sciences of the University of Bologna. The different perspectives offered by the invited researchers framed the complex situation exactly through the lens of Southeastern Europe.

The opening was devoted to the discussion of the global challenges which characterize the phenomenon at the core of the debate. Sen. Lodovico Sonego (President of the Italian Parliamentary Committee of the CEI) and prof. Stefano Bianchini (University of Bologna) introduced the main questions at stake in the aftermath of the crisis. The morning session was devoted to the study of the political and cultural dynamics involving the refugee crisis and security issues during the last years, in an attempt to understand the transformation of the complex dynamics in drawing national (and all-European) borders from a South-East European perspective. Viktor Koska (University of Zagreb), Dimitris Skleparis (ELIAMEP) and Neža Kogovšek Šalamon (Peace Institute, Slovenia) focused on the contradictions of the migration policies implemented by the different political actors who were involved in the rise of the ‘Balkan Route’ or, the ‘corridor of convenience’, as suggested by Kogovšek Šalamon in her presentation.

Interesting remarks were drawn by Anna Krasteva (New Bulgarian University), Sotiris Vadoros (University of the Peloponnese) and Veronika Bajt (Peace Institute, Slovenia) in the afternoon session. Their papers were devoted to discussion of the political outcomes of the crisis in the emergence of far right-extremism in South-East Europe (i.e. practices involving politics of new born fear and the manipulated representation of the 'others', which have been enacted by far right political groups in the area).

An interesting moment of reflection was inspired by the final session. Asim Mujkić (University of Sarajevo) and prof. Bianchini introduced new interpretive paths towards a possible solution of the contradictory situation experienced by the EU in the last years. The final debate gave rise to a fruitful reflection, opening the way to future collaborations and joint projects.