

S P E E C H

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.

RECHTSSTAATSPROGRAMM
SÜDOSTEUROPA
THORSTEN GEISLER

July 2013

www.kas.de/rspsoe
www.kas.de

INTERNATIONAL SUMMER SCHOOL SARAJEVO 2013: "INSTITUTIONAL REFORM IN THE LIGHT OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION IN COUNTRIES OF SOUTH EAST EUROPE"

OPENING SPEECH, SARAJEVO, July 17, 2013

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you to the International Summer School 2013 on behalf of the Rule of Law Program South East Europe of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation.

It is the 7th edition of this summer school and I would like to express my profound thanks to our partner organization PRAVNIK with which we co-organize and host this event.

I wish to congratulate the 27 successful applicants who will participate in this event. You were chosen from more than 160 applications because of your outstanding qualities and because we are convinced that you will valuably contribute to the success of this event.

You come from many different countries such as Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria Croatia, Czech Republic, Greece, Italy, Macedonia, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Switzerland, Turkey, and the USA.

It is always interesting and beneficial to exchange views and opinions with students from other countries and I am convinced that you will enjoy the international atmosphere of this summer school.

Please permit me to provide you with some information on the Konrad-Adenauer-

Foundation in general and the Rule of Law Program South East Europe in particular. (...)

Almost a quarter of a century ago socialism collapsed in Europe and the countries in South East Europe changed their political and economic system. In most countries the revolution was a peaceful one but in Romania there were bloody fights and more than 1,000 people lost their lives. A complicated and complex process of transformation started in all the affected countries and in Ex-Yugoslavia this process was overshadowed by war. There were ten days of war in Slovenia in 1991, the war between Serbia and Croatia lasted from 1991 to 1995, the war in Bosnia from 1992 to 1995, the Kosovo War took place in 1999, and the civil unrest in Macedonia in 2001. During these wars more than 100,000 men and women lost their lives, many more were wounded, up to 50,000 women were raped and 2.2 million people were forced to flee their homes. The terrible term of "ethnic cleansing" dates back to this period. When the violence had stopped, many wounds had to heal, a process that takes time and has not yet come to an end.

Other countries were not affected by war but had different problems. There parts of the old elites quickly changed their political colour, remained in political power and very often successfully tried to use the economic

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

**RECHTSSTAATSPROGRAMM
SÜDOSTEUROPA**

THORSTEN GEISSLER

Juli 2013

www.kas.de/rspsoe

www.kas.de

transformation for their personal benefit. There was no political class that was both democratic and politically experienced, an independent judiciary had never existed. The conditions for a successful and quick transformation were extremely unfavourable.

However, new democratic constitutions were written, the substantive and procedural law was revised, new curricula were written at schools and universities, and institutions were set up. I do not only mean democratically elected parliaments or reformed courts or public prosecutions, I am also talking about Anti-Corruption Authorities, Ombudsmen, Offices for Data Protection, Integrity Authorities, and Anti-Discrimination Boards to give just a few examples. It was the European Union that demanded these institutions to be set up and as there was a common will in the South East European countries to join EU, therefore these countries complied.

If the topic of this year's ISSS is "Institutional Reform in the Light of European Integration in Countries of South East Europe", it is because a critical assessment of these institutions will come to the conclusion that they provide very different results. Some work admirably well, others are problematic, and some exist only "sur le papier" as the French say. This is because it is much easier to set up an institution than to make it work properly. Firstly, you need a political will that they do a good job and not just the intention to impress the European Union. Then you need good laws that regulate their competencies and proceedings, you need good organization, adequate manning and funding. And you have to cope with another problem which is actually a global one but affects South East Europe in a severe way, I am talking about corruption.

Institutional reform therefore is necessary and I am optimistic that beyond profound analysis well-reasoned and convincing proposals for such reforms will be generated.

This is important because in the in the Copenhagen criteria and in the Thessaloniki Strategy which was passed ten years ago,

the EU reiterated its unequivocal support to the European perspective of the Western Balkan countries but it also clearly stated that European standards must be adopted by these countries especially when it comes to protecting the values of democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human and minority rights, principles that can only prevail if institutions work properly.

The EU in the Thessaloniki declaration also condemned extremism, terrorism and violence, be it ethnically, politically or criminally motivated.

Extremism, terrorism and violence lead to human sacrifice and suffering, you will learn more about this when you will talk to people who witnessed the war in the nineties of the past century.

In five summer days in 1995 some 8,000 Muslim men and boys were killed by Bosnian Serb forces- the massacre of Srebrenica. A few weeks ago another 400 victims were reburied at the Potocari memorial centre, a forest of 6,066 white marble and wooden gravestones. The ceremony was watched by thousands of mourners and one of them was 62 year old Ramiza Siljkovic, who kneeling by two freshly-dug graves for the remains of her two sons said: "I feel like I'm losing them again today. Only a handful of their bones were recovered from two mass graves."

And do not let us forget that the longest siege in modern warfare took place in Sarajevo. It started on 5th April 1992 and lasted until the 29th February 1996. During this 44 month siege snipers and mortars fired from the hills surrounding the city, 11,541 people lost their lives among them 1,500 children. Do not miss out to visit the Memorial for the Children killed during the siege, it will definitely touch your heart.

Serbian President Tomislav Nikolic found the right words when on the 25th April this year when he said that he was kneeling down and seeking forgiveness for Srebrenica.

We cannot change the past but we have a common responsibility for the future. If de-

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

**RECHTSSTAATSPROGRAMM
SÜDOSTEUROPA**

THORSTEN GEISSLER

Juli 2013

www.kas.de/rspsoe

www.kas.de

mocracy, the rule of law and the respect for human and minority rights go hand in hand, terrible acts like the ones committed in this part of Europe will never happen again.

This is why it is important that young people like you, future leaders in your country gather in this city to discuss which lessons must be learned from the past. Some of you come from countries that were at war not that long ago. It is your responsibility to promote the right values, tolerance and respect for minorities and the uncompromising will to solve conflicts peacefully being some of them.

Our partner organizations and the Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation are both happy and proud to provide the venue for such discussions that will hopefully also lead to close and sustainable friendship.

Let me once again welcome you very warmly. Let's all together make the International Summer School Sarajevo a big success.