

# Project presentation

## Security policy in the Western Balkan countries

The Western Balkan countries have experienced a positive development in security policy since the wars of the 1990s. But the past still casts dark shadows.

All of the countries in the region have built stronger democratic institutions. The police, secret services and armed forces have all been reformed. In order to learn about the security policy situation in the region, young, independent social scientists from Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Albania and Kosovo take part in the research project *'Security Transitions in the Western Balkan countries – From Conflict Zone to Security Community?'*, which is led by the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI). The project is primarily intended to strengthen social science research on regional security policy in the Western Balkan countries. It is a goal that the West Balkan partners shall account for 90% of the research.

### Security community

'Cooperation on security is a precondition for peace and stability in the Western Balkan countries. If the leaders of the seven countries in the region participate in joint institutions and their thinking on security is relatively similar, this will be a crucial contribution to peace efforts in the region,' says Iver Neumann of NUPI, who is head of the project. Neumann emphasises that, even though the security policy processes have developed in the right direction, there are great variations from country to country and from sector to sector.

The researchers will endeavour to find out what has been the driving force for peace and security up until now, and what can advance these efforts in the future. Pointing out challenges and obstacles is equally important.

Karsten Friis, Senior Advisor at NUPI and project participant, says that a lot of the work involves helping to build a network between political researchers in the different countries.

'The Norwegian participants' contribution will be a theoretical and methodological framework. We will also provide administrative assistance and other forms of support for the research. But it will be up to the researchers in the Balkan countries to choose a research case,' Friis says.



The town of Vukovar saw some of the most brutal fighting between Croats and Serbs in the 1990s. Today, much has changed for the better in terms of security policy in the Western Balkan countries. How can this process be advanced? (Illustration photo: Shutterstock)

### Young social scientists

Most of the researchers the project has established contact with in the Western Balkan countries are young social scientists. Several of them are attached to independent think tanks.

'There are many independent NGOs and think tanks in these countries that bring together young people with an interest in political analysis,' Friis says. – 'These small, independent analysis environments offer exciting opportunities, while the traditional universities are often fairly conservative institutions in terms of political research,' he says. The Belgrade Center for Security Policy (BCSP) is an example of this kind of environment. It is an independent think tank that is highly thought of in academic circles, according to Friis. Part of the administrative work in the project will take place at the BCSP.

The research project will publish reports and books about security policy in the Western Balkan countries in addition to organising seminars and workshops.





## Partners

- › Centre for Civil-Military Relations, Serbia
- › Analytica, Macedonia
- › Centre for Democracy and Human Rights (CEDEM), Montenegro
- › Centre for Security Studies (CSS), Bosnia and Herzegovina
- › Institute for International Relations (IMO), Croatia
- › Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM), Albania
- › Kosovar Centre for Security Studies (KCSS), Kosovo

Street life in Sarajevo. Deep-seated disagreement persists between the ethnic groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina. (Illustration photograph: Shutterstock)

▶▶▶ 'In this way, we will also attempt to contribute to establishing closer contact between security policy researchers in the Western Balkan countries', Friis says.

### The EU acts like a magnet

The EU is the big magnet – or carrot on a stick – in relation to the reform processes in the West Balkan countries. There would hardly have been the same enthusiasm for reform without the hope of EU membership as motivation. Since the wars in the Balkans, the EU has been an active adviser in many of the reform processes. But as regards defence reforms, NATO has been the external party that has contributed most.

The goal of attaining both EU and NATO membership enjoys strong support in all the West Balkan countries. It is only in Serbia that some groups question membership of NATO.

### Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo

The NUPI researchers who took the initiative for this research project believe it is particularly important to study professions in order to understand security policy in the this region. What, for example, is the role of two professions, police officers and border police forces?

Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo are the two countries where the security policy situation is most unclear. There is deep-seated disagreement between ethnic groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina about the fundamental structure of the state, and there is even disagreement about the very right of the state to exist. In this kind

of situation, reforming the security services is exceptionally challenging. Kosovo is struggling because of lack of recognition from Serbia and the UN Security Council, and the instability this results in. Macedonia is also facing major challenges. Here, the conflict is between the majority population of ethnic Macedonians and the large Albanian minority. Macedonia is also engaged in an ongoing dispute with Greece over the choice of the name for the country. The reform challenges in Albania, Montenegro, Serbia and Croatia are largely the same as those facing other former authoritarian regimes, even though the past also casts some shadows here.

The goal of the projects in the NORGLOBAL programme that focus on the Western Balkan countries is to address relevant challenges at the national and regional level, illuminating questions that are important in relation to sustainable economic development and to institutional and democratic reforms that can advance the countries' Euro-Atlantic integration process.

## The NORGLOBAL-program

NORGLOBAL shall strengthen Norwegian research on and with the South. It includes Povpeace, Cgiar, Women- and gender research, Globalisation of the environment-, energy- and Climate research, Econpop, Western Balkan and The networks. New research related to development might be placed under NORGLOBAL

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#### Publisher

© The Research Council of Norway  
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#### Layout

www.melkeveien.no  
January 2012

#### Text

Bård Amundsen  
Jakobsen & Amundsen skrivebyrå  
Tel: + 47 66 99 10 82  
www.joga.no

Translation: Allegro