

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The project **Challenges and Prospects of EU Integration in South Eastern Europe** intends to assure continuity of research, teaching, debate and reflection in the field of European integration started in Transilvania University of Brasov in 2006 with the Jean Monnet Chair Project (2006-1860/001-001), continued with two Jean Monnet Modules (2007-1501/001-001 and 2009-3238/001-001), Information and Research Activities (2009-294/001-001) and Ad Personam Jean Monnet Chair (2012-2525/001-001). All the existing European disciplines introduced by these projects will continue to be taught within the proposed Centre of Excellence.

The main objective is to promote innovative contributions to the study of the contemporary developments towards a deeper EU integration in Southeastern Europe, taking into consideration that this region brought a new European landscape, with significant economic, political and cultural heterogeneity and sometimes with the aspect of a multi-speed integration process. The goal is to identify and discuss the variables that have a decisive influence on the European path of the envisaged states. In the expanding European political space, the variables of territory (including center-periphery structures, intra-regional commonality and shared domestic characteristics) and temporality (time of accession, what integration implied at the time of joining, phases of European integration) will be attentively analyzed for this group of countries.

With its multidisciplinary perspective, the project aims at stimulating synergies between economic, political and juridical EU studies and at creating joint transnational activities and relationships with academic institutions from Southern and Eastern Europe. The different experiences with the Europeanization could be shared by common cross-national activities. In the general Europeanization debate, the project aims at rethinking the convergence issues in these states and their specific response to European policy demands.

The present project can build on strong and lasting collaboration ties with University of Piraeus, University of Athens, University of Cyprus, University of Nicosia, New Bulgarian University, Alexandru Ioan Cuza University and the respective Jean Monnet Chair holders. A networking with Jean Monnet Centres of Excellence from the region is intended to be assured, including EU countries Centres (University of Nicosia, University of Athens, University of Piraeus, University of Malta – Institute for European Studies) and European Institute of Istanbul.

The economic and political evolutions dealt with in the project will mainly benefit the contributions of academics from Romania, Bulgaria, Greece and Cyprus, but the events will also involve other countries of the region, even EU candidates and potential candidates, like Turkey, Serbia and Republic of Moldova.

The main outcomes of the project will consist of new teaching programmes in weekly seminars, in a Summer school and in the European Institute of Istanbul, in high quality deliverables such as a volume published at London School of Economics and Political Science (collecting the best contributions of an International Conference), Proceedings published at Cambridge Scholars Publishing (result of a Workshop involving academics, media and non-governmental organizations) and a book published by Transilvania University Publishing House. A study visit in Brussels will serve students as a practical component of their academic training. Civil society groups will be systematically included in the activities of the Centre of Excellence. Contact to civil society and practitioners is greatly facilitated by the fact that the Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence will be located in Brasov, the second large city of Romania, with an impressive touristic potential.

The creation of a sustainable network of scholars, policy makers and civil society experts from South Eastern European countries is also an expected result of the project. We intend to position Transilvania University on the global academic map for European studies, allowing it to interact with elite institutions, academics and practitioners.

The project will include young academics not yet involved in Jean Monnet projects, but very active and enthusiastic in carrying activities like the project website, Newsletters and new teaching.

After all, the role of this Center of Excellence is to raise awareness that European studies are of crucial importance in the analyzed countries, with their strategic positions at the Southern and Eastern border of the European Union – real gates for entering the EU space.