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CENTER FOR EUROPEAN INTEGRATION STRATEGIES

BACKGROUND DOCUMENT

11 FEBRUARY 2006



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CEIS BACKGROUND DOCUMENT

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The Center for European Integration Strategies (CEIS) was set up in late 2005 to continue some of the work undertaken by the Association Bosnia and Herzegovina 2005. The Association had been established on 17 September 2003 to facilitate policy research in preparation of a high-profile international conference on Bosnia and Herzegovina held in Geneva on 20-21 October 2005. With the successful organization of the conference (which was attended by over 400 analysts, academics, policy-makers, diplomats, and journalists) and the forthcoming publication of a book containing chapters on key dimensions of post-war development in the country, the Association fulfilled its aims and was dissolved in December 2005.

The Association's Executive Council decided to launch the CEIS as a think tank to follow up on the work initiated by the Association and to implement the conclusions of the Geneva conference as well as of a seminar held in Vienna on 18 November 2005, focusing on EU integration processes and the regional dimension in the Western Balkans. The CEIS pursues its mission through offices in Geneva, Vienna and Sarajevo and an international network of scholars and analysts.

1. Framework

The CEIS is registered according to local regulations in Switzerland (Geneva), Austria (Vienna) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (Sarajevo). CEIS' Board of directors consists of: Christophe Solioz, executive director (Geneva); Vedran Dzihic, director of the Austrian branch (Vienna); Senad Slatina, director of the Bosnian branch (Sarajevo); and T. K. Vogel, senior editor (Freiburg in Breisgau).

The Senior Advisory Board and Scientific Council are directly involved in bringing CEIS briefs and policy recommendations to the attention of political and economic decision-makers in the region and around the world.



The core mission of the CEIS is to monitor, analyze, and advise on processes of state-building, democratization, regional cooperation, and European integration in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the countries of the Western Balkans.

In its work CEIS will rely on a network of academics, analysts, and journalists that its predecessor organization has established and fostered in past years. Their professional knowledge and expertise will be respected, reflected, maintained and further developed through the future activities of the CEIS.

3. Activities

CEIS activities include, but are not limited to:

- **Publishing** of analytical and investigative briefings on political, economic, social, human rights and other trend-setting issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the wider region.
- **Fostering** public dialogue through round tables, conferences, and other public debates on important developments in the society.
- **Training** political and other analysts, especially those involved in local government, on European integration processes and the functioning of European institutions.
- **Supporting** the work of emerging voices in the region, especially as it relates to the interests of the CEIS.
- **Promoting** local ownership in policy processes and policy research in the region.

In addition to its public work, CEIS will establish friendly relations with various stakeholders in Balkan affairs and offer them specific analytical briefings on demand or whenever it is deemed necessary by the CEIS.

The focus of the CEIS' advisory work will be the incoming EU presidency; the CEIS will advocate with the incoming Presidency for proactive regional and EU integration strategies.

4. Outputs

4.1. Monthly policy briefs

Policy briefs (typically between 3 and 5 pages long) will be professionally researched (typically by CEIS staff). They provide succinct analysis of specific problems identified by CEIS and indicate short and long-term solutions that fully reflect the official viewpoint of the CEIS. The CEIS will produce at least two public policy briefs a month – one on general political developments and one on security-related issues. These policy briefs will be prepared to provide succinct analysis and offer short and long-term solutions to the problems identified.

The need for policy briefs from the Balkans is evident. Local media are frequently dealing in speculation based on unreliable data provided by murky police or intelligence sources, often with particular political agendas. Many research institutes from abroad take such information for granted, believing that media have double-checked and corroborated it from multiple sources. As a result there are frequently cases



where even authoritative think tanks and other policy institutes put forth recommendations that do not correspond to real needs on the ground.

Other organizations also deal with these topics. Most international organizations operating in the region have some sort of internal capacity to monitor security issues. Local media are obsessed with some of these topics but routinely present them in a biased and sensationalist fashion. What is lacking are reliable, international policy research organizations on the ground committed to nonpartisan, professional analysis. Most respected think tanks that had a field presence in the past have left the Balkans and moved to more recent conflict areas.

CEIS aspires to fill that gap. CEIS researchers will consult all relevant sources of information – media, direct stakeholders, domestic and international security sources, prominent politicians, and all other relevant information providers. All information gathered will be vigorously scrutinized and synthesized in a final presentation. CEIS will combine a rigorous academic approach to research with a practical and hard-nosed policy orientation in the final presentation of its analyses. Prior to publication briefs will be distributed to a limited group of experts outside CEIS for their comments, which will then be reflected in the final product.

4.2. Working papers

Working papers (typically around 10 pages long) will be written by members of the Senior Advisory Board and the Scientific Council, senior figures with an in-depth knowledge of the topics of interest to the CEIS. Working papers cover the extended discussion on European integration themes as they relate to the entire region, including country-specific as well as cross-cutting issues. While working papers will be more in-depth than policy briefs, they will also be policy-oriented and generally contain an executive summary and recommendations.

4.3. Next Step in the Balkans - Vienna public debates

The CEIS aims to become a forum for the development of proactive, pragmatic, and realistic solutions to the dilemmas of state-building, democratization, and European integration in the Western Balkans. Particularly in regard to the Austrian EU Presidency there is a need for a public forum to review, discuss, and advise on EU and Austrian strategies towards the Western Balkans.

In order to raise the awareness among the Austrian public of the Western Balkans and foster public dialogue between experts, politicians, academics, journalists, students, and the Austrian and the EU public in general, the CEIS will organize a series of debates in Vienna focusing on key controversial issues in the Western Balkans. Broad media activities in Austria will accompany these events in order to achieve high visibility and dissemination of findings.

Starting with the public presentation (together with the London School of Economics and the Vienna-based Renner Institute) of the final results of the November 2005 Vienna seminar on 25 January 2006, the CEIS will hold around ten public debates throughout the year, in a roughly monthly schedule. In March the question of the Bosnian constitution will be on the CEIS agenda, followed by a debate about the EU integration process of Croatia in April, and the final status of Kosovo in May. In June, the CEIS will publicly present and discuss a background working paper on the achievements of the Austrian EU Presidency and produce a set of policy proposals for the Finnish and the German EU Presidencies.



4.4. EU Presidency seminars

The Vienna Seminar organized on 18 November 2005 together with the London School of Economics anticipates and illustrates the CEIS's strategy. The focus on the new incoming EU Presidency appears as the appropriate framework to help develop and advocate for proactive regional and EU integration strategies. With this seminar, the CEIS initiates a series of strategic working meetings on integration processes in the Western Balkans that will serve as a forum to review, discuss, and advise on policy towards these countries. Immediately prior to Finland's and Germany's assumption of the EU presidency, the CEIS proposes to hold seminars to produce a set of policy proposals that would allow the EU under their respective presidencies to strengthen its approach towards the Western Balkans. The intention is also to bridge the Austrian, Finnish, and German Presidency in order to enhance the coherence of the EU's approach.

The Austrian, Finnish, and German EU Presidency will mark a crossroads for the Western Balkans. Austria has already decided to make the Balkans a focus of its presidency; Finland will be directly involved through former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari; and Germany will continue its engagement in the region, for the first time also by having a German High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Christian Schwarz-Schilling. Considering that Ahtisaari's team includes two senior Austrian diplomats, this almost constitutes a virtual troika.

4.5. Outreach

Broad media activities – including a professional homepage (<http://www.ceis-eu.org>) and articles in newspapers, magazines, and journals – will be undertaken in order to influence public opinion both in the region and within the EU. Typically, the CEIS briefs will be published on its web site and will aggressively promote their conclusions through media outreach and lobbying efforts in the region's political and diplomatic community. The CEIS also aims to place opinion piece in leading international newspapers such as the International Herald Tribune, Libération, Le Temps, Die Presse, Der Standard or the Neue Zürcher Zeitung.

As the CEIS field presence grows the number of outputs will increase. The CEIS aspires to become a major think tank in the region that will produce qualitative policy advice not only for local stake-holders but also for decision-makers in European capitals.

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