

INVITATION

The International Institute for Peace (IIP), in collaboration with the Austrian Institute for International Affairs, Karl Renner Institute, cordially invite you to an online discussion on the topic:

Post-Covid or Post-Democracy Balkans?

State of human rights, media freedoms, and civil liberties
during the pandemic

Date: Tuesday, 9 June 2020
Time: 5:00 pm
Venue: Zoom link will be sent to registered participants
Registration: <https://www.iipvienna.com/registration/>



Panelists:

- VUK VELEBIT, independent political analyst, specializing in relations between Serbia, the EU, and Russia
- STEFANI SPIROVSKA, President of Youth Educational Forum in Skopje, North Macedonia
- MARIO MAŽIĆ, Founding Partner at Europe&Southeast in Petrinja, Croatia, and Program Advisor at PeaceNexus Foundation in Switzerland
- AGNESA QERIMI, Program Manager at Foundation Shtatëmbëdhjetë in Prishtina, Kosovo

Moderation:

- SENADA ŠELO ŠABIC, Senior Scientific Associate in the Institute for Development and International Relations in Zagreb, Croatia

Content:

As the world slowly starts to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, new challenges have begun to surface. In the Western Balkans, aside from direct consequences for the health and economic sectors, concerns are rising over political turmoil in the region, the further weakening of democratic institutions, the suppression of protests and political opposition, and restrictions and violations of civil and political rights. Will the period after the pandemic trigger a democratic rollback in the region? What will it mean for regional cooperation in the Western Balkans and EU integration? What might its impact be on human rights, civil society, the media, and young people across the region?

To answer these and other pressing questions, we have launched a series of online discussions titled *Post-COVID or Post-Democracy Balkans?* taking place over the coming weeks. Each discussion will feature a panel of young experts from the region who will cover issues such as political instability, human rights and media freedom, challenges for civil society, prospects for education, and more. The discussions will take place within the framework of our initiative 'Young Generations for the Western Balkans 2030,' jointly run with the Karl-Renner Institut and the Austrian Institute for International Affairs.

The second discussion in the series on June 9th will explore the impact of the pandemic on the situation of human rights, media freedoms, and civil liberties in the Western Balkan countries. Protests against the government in Serbia, for example, have brought attention to the government's harsh lockdown measures and threats to civil liberties. This discussion will seek to highlight how the region's governments have responded to the pandemic by curtailing various freedoms and to what degree these limitations have been abused or might be extended into the future. The panelists will address the following questions: What are the most significant challenges for human rights, media freedoms, and civil liberties in the region today? What tools might be used to protect these rights? How has the crisis impacted NGOs, and what is their capacity to protect?

Other discussions in the series *Post-Covid or Post-Democracy Balkans?* include:

2 June 2020: Political turmoil in Albania, Kosovo and Serbia

16 June 2020: Solidarity during the corona crisis within the region and beyond.

23 June 2020: Discussion with Goran Svilanovic, former Foreign Minister of Serbia

The Discussion will be held in English.

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www.iipvienna.com/events

as well as on Facebook
www.facebook.com/IIPVIENNA

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