

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?

Solidarity within the region and beyond

Date: Tuesday, 16 June 2020
Time: 5:00 pm
Venue: Zoom link will be sent to registered participants
Registration: <https://www.iipvienna.com/registration/>



Panelists:

- ADNAN CERIMAGIC, Analyst at European Stability Initiative, Berlin; member of the IIP Advisory Board
- DAFINA PEĆI, Secretary General of the National Youth Congress of Albania, Regional Youth Cooperation Office of Albania (RYCO)
- SAMIR BEHARIC, Trainee at the European Parliament

Moderation:

- ANJA JOKIC, National Youth Council of Serbia

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 third discussion in the series on June 16th will look at how intraregional cooperation has been affected by the pandemic. One might have assumed that a common crisis of such a scale would result in an expression of solidarity among the countries in the region as happened during the floods in 2014. However, the Western Balkans seem to be more disconnected than united and have focused more on their respective national situations during the crisis. This impact on regional dynamics is also relevant for the region's relations with the EU and the integration process.

The panelists will address issues including EU-Western Balkans relations during the pandemic, the European Union's work in the region, as well as regional governments' activities. Specifically, the panel will discuss cases and areas for regional cooperation in which states could share best practices and improve policy responses, such as in education and the forced digitalization. Given the opportunities for cooperation provided by the crisis, the most crucial question remains how the Western Balkans can avoid going back to the 'normal' from before the pandemic and how public disappointment with the handling of the situation might be translated into action towards positive changes.

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

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

9 June 2020: State of human rights, media freedoms and civil liberties during the pandemic

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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