Long on policies but short on politics, the EU needs a breath of fresh air

By Loukas Tsoukalis

Europe’s political class is rethinking the fundamentals of integration. Among these basics is the nature of democracy in the EU. Until recently, EU integration has been an elitist affair relying on a broadly permissive consensus of citizens. This was itself propped up by non-partisan cross-party consensus on the integration’s principles and objectives. The EU’s latercomers presented some exceptions to this; nonetheless, the permissive consensus survived so long as European integration was widely perceived to be delivering the economic goods, and more intangibly, peace, and so long as the effects of integration remained limited.

Over the years, the EU’s expanding membership and policy outreach has accentuated its internal diversity, while also increasing the weight of EU-level decisions on citizens’ everyday lives. This trend has recently accelerated. The single currency and enlargement radically changed the scene and were never properly debated in the public sphere nor adequately justified to Europe’s voters. Today, there is a wide gap between policy and politics at the European level. The EU produces much policy, but little politics. This has recently accelerated. The single currency and enlargement radically changed the scene and were never properly debated in the public sphere nor adequately justified to Europe’s voters.

The EU’s major failure lies here; perhaps because there is still no elected office at European level that is attractive enough to bring forward the best talent. Our politicians will then have to recognize this reality and deal with it promptly intergovernmental nature of EU politics.

European politicians may eventually seriously discuss ways they could collectively attempt the managing and shaping of integration. At national level, the debate is being largely held in Europe’s World (Spring 2007) www.europesworld.org/
The Mine Ban Convention: A Decade On

Athens, 14 February 2007

On the occasion of the Mine Ban Treaty’s 10th anniversary, the Embassies of Australia, Canada, and Norway in Athens organised in co-operation with the Hellenic Aid, the Norwegian People’s Aid, and ELIAMEP a panel discussion The Mine Ban Convention: A Decade On. The panel consisted of Mr. Nergaard, Director of the Norwegian People’s Aid Mine Action Unit; Major Promponas of the Ministry of Defense; Dr. Papadakis, an orthopedic surgeon with experience in immigrant landmine victims on the border with Turkey; Mr. Kappopoulos, journalist; and ELIAMEP’s Director General, Dr. Thanos Dokos.

All panelists agreed that the Treaty demonstrates an indisputable success story. Nevertheless, although public and political awareness have been raised through the emergence of think-tanks, improved methodologies, and impact assessment treatments, the lack of a feasible ‘plan of action’ on a global level remains.

It was argued that anti-personnel mines do not function independently. They are a symptom of regional instability and irresponsible behaviour on the mine-producing countries’ part. This results in a large number of war casualties being attributable to small weapons, such as landmines, which nonetheless, create high velocity injuries (landmine projectiles have twice the velocity of a bullet). Moreover, the effects of this instability in far away mine-affected territories may hit home faster than one would assume, given today’s rapidly globalizing world. As a result, anti-personnel mines constitute both a national and an international security problem.

In the discussion that followed with more than 120 diplomats, representatives from the media and civil society who attended this event, there was a wide consensus that regardless of how much pressure the international community applies to mine-producing countries, it is still difficult to keep an eye on insurgents and war lords. “A land mine is a perfect soldier: ever courageous, never sleeps, never misses.” Although considerable policy-level changes need to be made, they should also be accompanied by a substantial change of mentality.

Public discussion organized by ELIAMEP on Higher Education in Greece

Athens, 31 January 2007

Following the publication of ELIAMEP’s Policy Paper on “Higher Education in Greece in the New European and International Environment”, a follow-up public discussion between representatives of the academic community was organised on the autonomy of the Greek Universities.

Professor Andreas Karmanos, secretary-general of the Ministry of Education and former Rector at the Agricultural University of Athens opened the discussion on the current status of Greek Universities. He proposed ways through which universities’ autonomy, a necessary prerequisite for academic freedom, may be improved. For example, through the establishment of a 4-year academic development programme based on a strategic plan drawn up by the institutions and a revision of internal administrative processes and election procedures.

Professor Christos Kittas, Rector at the National & Kapodistrian University of Athens, stressed the need to ensure a wide consensus on any reform or change of the tertiary educational system. He also pointed to the need for a new legal framework that will limit the state’s role to a supervisory one, particularly as regards academic, administrative, and financial matters, while ensuring transparency and accountability.

The need to reform the state universities, particularly before moving ahead with any sort of legal provisions regarding the establishment of private universities, was the focal point of Professor Nikos Alivizatos’, of the Law Faculty of the National & Kapodistrian University of Athens, presentation. He concentrated on the constitutional changes that are required in order to move ahead with the reform of Greek higher education.

Professor Socrates Katsikas, former Rector of the University of the Aegean, also argued in favour of increased autonomy for state universities for reasons of transparency, accountability, competitiveness and time expediency. He further argued that this was necessary in order to respond to the wider challenges of education being faced across the EU (cf. the Bologna process).

Professor Lefteris Papagianakis, former Vice-Rector at the National Technical University of Athens, noted that a constitutional revision was not a precondition for educational reform. Rather, he focused on the need to increase public funding and conduct regular evaluations and assessments of all academic staff.

The public discussion that followed between academics, students and representatives of the press, was coordinated by Professor Loukas Tsoukalas of the National & Kapodistrian University of Athens and President of ELIAMEP.
Dr. Daniel Faas, currently Marie Curie Intra European Fellow at ELIAMEP has been nominated by Cambridge University for the prestigious British Educational Research Association Annual Award for the best thesis in Education written at a UK University 2006. His thesis focuses on the political identities of the national majorities and minority Turkish communities in English and German secondary schools.

New ELIAMEP Policy Paper:

The European Constitution after (a period of) reflection

Following the rejection of the Constitutional Treaty by France and the Netherlands, it is rather unlikely that the ratification procedure will continue. However, the European Union remains in urgent need of institutional reform.

ELIAMEP’s new Policy Paper PP07.08 “The European Constitution after (a period of) reflection” offers an analysis of the reasons that led to the rejection of the treaty. Moreover, it provides a comparative examination of the alternative scenarios which have been put forward by European politicians and policy-makers so far.

This policy paper also proposes a ‘second-best’ plan that should primarily focus on the Amsterdam and Nice leftovers.

The paper is authored by Dr. Nikos Koutsiaras, Senior Research Fellow at ELIAMEP, with the research support of Anna Vallianatou and Elli Siapkidou.

The text is available in Greek only at www.eliamep.gr

Second Meeting of the MIGSYS Research Project

The second meeting of the MIGSYS project on “Immigrants, policies and migration systems: An ethnographic comparative approach” was held in Athens [23 - 24 February]

The migration experiences of Polish immigrants in Greece and Germany, Ukrainian immigrants in Hungary and Italy, Moroccan immigrants in Spain and Turkish immigrants in the UK and the Netherlands were discussed in order to identify factors that may influence a migrant’s decision to migrate to a particular country. Migrant networks, availability of information, specific national policies of the receiving countries were examined in this context.

In addition, the migration experiences of Mexican migrants in Canada and in the USA were examined from this perspective as well.

The MIGSYS project has now entered its third, concluding phase. This phase will include a comparative analysis of these migration systems. The comparative findings will be published on ELIAMEP’s website over the summer.

MIGSYS is funded by the International Metropolis Network & the Population, Migration & Environment Organisation.

Recent ELIAMEP Publications

OP.06.03 When size and diversity do not really matter: the dismal political economy of social and labour market policy coordination in the EU by Nikos Koutsiaras

PN06.08 The adaptation of Information Technology (IT) and the revolution in Military Affairs, into the new conceptual approach in the way of fighting by Konstantinos Kyprios


ELIAMEP Training Seminar

ELIAMEP organised a three-day training seminar for officers of the Hellenic Armed Forces between 12-14 February 2007. The seminar was held in Xanthi, Greece and concentrated on Greece, Turkey and the European Union.

Other news at ELIAMEP

Dr. Daniel Faas, currently Marie Curie Intra European Fellow at ELIAMEP has been nominated by Cambridge University for the prestigious British Educational Research Association Annual Award for the best thesis in Education written at a UK University 2006. His thesis focuses on the political identities of the national majorities and minority Turkish communities in English and German secondary schools.
**JOIN ELIAMEP'S INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERSHIP**

Since 2004, ELIAMEP’s Institutional Partnership programme has created a wide network of institutional members. Private sector entities, diplomatic representations in Greece, business associations and other institutions, have provided the Foundation with financial assistance that has supported our research work and our activities.

A new call is being launched for 2007 aiming at the renewal of this partnership and at encouraging the participation of new members in this network.

With an annual subscription we offer our institutional partners periodic briefings on our work as well as privileged access to the wide variety of events we organise. Our wish is to encourage a more inter-active relationship through an open network of institutional members.

If you are interested in becoming a member of ELIAMEP’s institutional partnership network please contact Ms. Christianna Karageorgopoulou, Development Coordinator, ELIAMEP [tel: (+30) 210 7257 125 or christianna@eliamep.gr]

**ELIAMEP thanks its Institutional Partners for their continuing support:**


---

**HALKI INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR 2007: Re-defining security in SEE and the Middle East: Searching for new tools to address regional security problems**

12-17 September 2007, Halki
Organised in cooperation with the Balkan Trust for Democracy in Belgrade and the Arab Reform Initiative (ARI) and supported by the Hellenic Aid, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the German Marshall Fund of the United States

This year’s Halki International Seminars will focus on the role of the transatlantic institutions in helping local stakeholders address security challenges in the Middle East and in Southeastern Europe.

Good governance, human rights, humanitarian intervention, relations between Islam & Christianity and migration trends and challenges will be among the core focal points.

Discussions will also concentrate on two functional issues that cut across geographic regions: energy security and security sector reform while the ‘mutual education’ dimension of the workshop will concentrate on the relationship between religious sensitivities and the democratic right of free expression.

The seminar format, as is always the case with our annual Halki International Seminars, will be highly interactive and will include break-out working groups and roundtable discussions, as well as a simulation exercise.

**Call for Participants**

Applications are welcome from policy-makers, academics, journalists, diplomats, members of parliament and young researchers (post docs and PhD candidates)

Please complete the Halki Application Form and email it to halki@eliamep.gr

**Call for Papers**

Papers are invited from researchers (particularly from post-docs and PhD candidates in an advanced stage of their research) that focus on the following areas:

◊ Security issues in the regions examined (Western Balkans, Black Sea, Mediterranean – Middle East)
◊ Migration as a security concern
◊ Good governance, democracy and human rights
◊ Security sector reform
◊ Dialogues of religions and civilizations
◊ Climate change
◊ Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction

Interested applicants should:

◊ send a proposal abstract (300 words)
◊ and fill in the Halki Application Form and send it to halki@eliamep.gr

The Halki Application Form can be downloaded from www.eliamep.gr.

**Deadline for applications & for proposal abstracts:**

30 April 2007

Selected papers will be presented during the seminar and will be published as part of ELIAMEP’s webpublications.

The organisers will cover the following costs: seminar participation fee, accommodation and subsistence. No travel expenses will be covered; however, there will be travel grants for some applicants.