



Newsletter February 2005

MA EUROPEAN INTEGRATION STUDY TRIP TO LEUVEN (6-11 FEBRUARY 2005) GIVES STUDENTS FIRST HAND EXPERIENCE OF EU POLICY-MAKING PROCESS

As usual, the MA European Integration study trip to Leuven took place during the inter-semester break. Professor Eddie Moxon-Browne (CEUROS) and Ms Nuala Corr (Programme Coordinator at the Institute in Leuven) designed the programme.

The trip was led by Alina Georgescu and Deirdre Kelleher, both doctoral research scholars attached to CEUROS.

The base for the study trip was again the Louvain Institute for European Affairs located in the medieval university city of Leuven, and only 30 minutes from Brussels. The study trip gives students an opportunity to establish potentially fruitful contacts with policy-makers in the EU institutions, and this is beneficial not only for their dissertation research, but also for seeking employment later. Limerick MA EI graduates are eagerly sought after in Brussels, and elsewhere, due to the broadly interdisciplinary nature of the programme, which was one of the first ever established in Western Europe. This year, for the first time, the study trip included a visit to a "think tank" in Brussels, and the European Investment Bank in Luxembourg. The students' own frank impressions of various facets of the study trip programme are reproduced below:

EU relations with the Western Balkan countries

The session took the form of an introductory presentation followed by a discussion. In the course of the session it became clear that all the countries in question (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, FYROM, and Serbia and Montenegro) are potential candidates. Their geographical position and security concerns pre-determine them to become a part of the EU. However, prior to an accession they must fulfill all of the Copenhagen criteria. Remarkably, all the countries have serious problems with the establishment of democratic institutions and respect for minorities. In 1999, the EU started a multi-lateral process with those countries: Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP). In essence, it resembles European Agreements, but several new obligations are included. These include; adherence to international obligations, cooperation with the Hague tribunal, a clampdown on organised crime, and the development of regional cooperation. Albania is still negotiating the SAP. There are problems with insufficient democratic elections, the rule of law and organised crime. BiH struggles with its own governing structures that make the government extremely slow to act and react, and prone to pressure from nationalist groups. Croatia has already opened accession negotiations. Yet, its government faces criticism for reluctant cooperation with The Hague. Serbia and Montenegro may not sustain the federation, just like BiH. Its record, poor on all the Copenhagen criteria, is further complicated by unclear prospects for Kosovo. FYROM struggles with internal ethnic tensions and a weak rule of law. All the other countries in the region closely observe the Croatian case. If the EU accepted Croatia without fulfilling her obligations to the tribunal in The Hague or any other criterion, the other countries will certainly demand equal treatment. The EU must carefully balance its political and security concerns and interests in the region.

Michal Mravinac

The Visit to the European Parliament in Brussels

Our day got off to an inauspicious start. It was raining and we were late. After we were rushed through security, without being checked, we met up with the other half of our tour group, a party

from Trinity College, who were also staying at the Irish College. We were quickly ushered into a medium sized conference room and the talk began with the minimum of delay. Mr. John Fordham gave what was a somewhat basic overview of the workings of the “travelling expense account” that is the bi-locational Parliament. He was particularly scathing about the role of Luxembourg in both their part in running it, and, what he saw as their “vast overrepresentation” within the Parliament itself. There was a brief breakdown of the sexes of the MEPs of the various Member States (the southern Med having a shockingly one sided show of male dominance) and then a short talk about the various committees. The fact that MEPs sit in the house along political lines and not by country was touched on, as were the major power blocs. Because of time constraints we did not get a tour of the main chamber, and only afforded a fleeting glimpse after the EU-US relations talk had concluded.

It was a pity that we did not get to see more of the building, or for that matter get to hear more from Mr. Fordham. He was forthright and critical without being overly cynical.

John Kearney

Serbanescu – Romania and the EU

I was looking forward to Mr. Serbanescu's lecture, because I expected that he would offer us an informed and frank view into the workings of the accession process. Instead, Mr. Serbanescu chose to offer us an introductory lecture about neoliberal economics, extolling the virtues of Romania's cooperation with IMF and emphasising the need for restrictive budgetary and monetary policies to curb inflation and get public finances under control. To make his lecture more interesting Mr. Serbanescu provided some statistical data about the successes of Romanian privatisation and liberalisation processes, their greatest prize being – of course – the Romanian oil industry, which was sold to an Austrian-led consortium of European companies. When asked how these policies affected the social security system and investment into health and education, Mr. Serbanescu responded with arguments that could be taken from any economics textbook, saying that the beneficial effects of these policies were to be judged in the long term and that for these policies to succeed, some short-term sacrifices were necessary. Although he emphasised the contribution Romania makes with its 500 soldiers to the peace-keeping role of NATO (sic!) in Iraq, he did not explain how this deployment affected the government's budgetary balance. In general, Mr. Serbanescu put much more emphasis on the presentation of Romania as a country with solid free-market credentials and historical links with Europe that justify its place in the EU, rather than delving into intricacies of the accession process. This resulted in a more or less uninteresting lecture, where the gaps were filled with obscure statistical data, thereby robbing the listeners of a chance to get a clearer grasp of what it means to negotiate with the EU.

Marko Vukovic

EU-Turkey

Relations

(Mr. Martin Harvey, Head of the Turkey Team of the European Commission)

Turkey first applied for EU-membership in 1987 and got applicant status at the Helsinki summit in 1999. At the summit in Brussels, in December 2004, the European Union Council decided to start negotiations with Turkey.

Turkey is one of the EU's oldest trading partners with an association agreement dating from 1963, which since 1996, includes a customs union. Mr Harvey underlined that this customs union is part of the privileged partnership status. A status, which is not clearly defined by the European Union. Mr Harvey admitted that the customs union does not work perfectly and that a lot of things need to be improved.

The timing of Turkey's entry is not clear. Mr Harvey said that he believes that the negotiations will last at least 10 to 12 years. It is still not clear, if Turkey will become a member of the EU, perhaps at the end of the negotiations Turkey will prefer a privileged partnership. It may be that Turkey will not want to do all the necessary, like accepting the 'acquis communautaire'. Today however,

Turkey does not accept a privileged partnership, today its goal is for full membership. It needs negotiations to implement necessary, but unpopular reforms. The negotiations are a kind of modernisation process. The year 2004, for example, was the first year that Turkey spent more money on education than on the military. In the last two years Turkey has implemented a lot of new legislature to respond to some of the EU's concerns. A problem for the accession of Turkey is the unsolved Cyprus problem. This problem has to be solved before the autumn of 2005. That is to say, before the start of the negotiations. Another major problem is the area of human rights in Turkey, especially those of the Kurdish minority. Turkey has to be able to ensure the rights of the minorities. A key point of the negotiations will be the cultural aspect. Both the EU and Turkey want to promote a cultural dialogue in the civil societies. Aspects of this dialogue will be the encouragement of the uniting of European and Turkish regions and bodies, and the cooperation between universities in Research and Development. This dialogue is important in order to prepare the Turkish people for EU-membership, and in order to assure those sceptical members of European society.

Nathalie Beck

Visit to the European Investment Bank in Luxembourg

On Wednesday, 9th February, the group of MA EI students departed from Leuven on a journey to the European Investment Bank in Luxembourg. After a short sight seeing trip of Luxembourg, we arrived at the European Investment Bank. Mr. Adam McDonagh, from the Press and Communications Office, gave us a presentation of the EIB. We were given the opportunity to visit the EIB and sit in the chamber where important decisions of the institutions are made. An hour-long presentation was given on the EIB's role and activities. The major role of the EIB is to finance investment projects contributing to the balanced development of the Union. The presentation on the role of the EIB was informative, which included descriptions of its background, activities, tasks, aims and future plans. Moreover, we were given information about the possibilities and qualifications for future internships and work in the institution. In addition to some basic information of the work and tasks of the EIB, we were also given some practical information on how much money has been provided for investments and supported projects such as research, development and innovations, in recent years in the European Union. Moreover, we were also given information about the supporting of the EU's external aid in non-member countries, and the EIB's current operational priorities, and its 'i2i programme' for the purpose of objectives set under the Lisbon Strategy. The visit to the EIB was overall a good insight into the institution. It broadened our knowledge of this particular institution, which is of a great importance in its support of EU policy priorities.

Sabina Jaušovec

Visit to Centre for European Policy Studies (Mr. Marco Incerti)

Mr Incerti provided general background information about the Centre of European Policy Studies in terms of its organisation, objectives and successes. He spoke about how the Centre is an autonomous policy research body that is committed to cultivating coherent and reliable policy data that can play a significant role in facilitating the resolution of the difficulties that Europe encounters today. He highlighted that the institute is subsidised by membership fees, foundation grants, conferences fees, publication sales, and also from the financial contributions given by EU institutions and national organisations. Mr Incerti sees the primary objective of the Centre as being the maintenance of complete impartiality in the establishment of a forum for vigorous debate amongst all the concerned participants of the EU policy-making process. He also noted that the Centre seeks to maintain a consistent output of publications and public gatherings that aim to foster an interactive web of consultation amongst those involved in the European policy process ranging from business actors

to policy researchers. Mr Incerti proudly stressed the successes of the institute by referring to the high standard of research that the Centre provides with an international staff of currently thirty researchers drawn from fifteen countries. He also noted the success of the Centre in maintaining freedom from external bias or undue influence in compiling its research reports. The keen awareness of the Centre to shifting policy patterns in the EU was also recognised during Mr Incerti's speech.

Niall Keane

EU-US

Relations

Mr. Wilfred Schneider

Mr Schneider, who works in the DG for External Affairs in the Commission, spoke at length about EU –US relations. Both countries have united together against terrorist threats, organised crime and other global issues. They pursue the goal of ensuring that all enjoy the freedoms of liberty and justice.

The relationship between the transatlantic allies may be viewed in political and economic terms. The former may be further divided into bilateral relations and multilateral relations. Bilateral relations refer to fundamental problems that affect both of them. Mr. Schneider gave several examples of such problems; these included environmental problems, The Kyoto protocol, and The International Criminal Court. Multilateral relations tend to refer to economic agreements that are undertaken by both countries, but that also involve other international actors. Mr. Schneider also spoke about the level of awareness about Europe in the United States. Overall this is quite poor. As one travels stateside the level increases and decreases dramatically. Those who face the Asian coast tend to be disinterested, and those in the centre are equally unaware. The last issue addressed by Mr. Schneider was the issue of Iraq. Following on from this topic, he spoke about the EU's successful record in diplomatic affairs. He believes that the US should look at the EU as experienced diplomatic, and take lessons from their success. In conclusion, I found the talk to be very interesting and insightful, and showed how the Commission dealt with EU – US relations.

Caroline Cusack

SOME RECENT PUBLICATIONS...

Dr. Barrie Wharton, a member of the Management Committee of the Centre for European Studies and current course director of the B.A. in European Studies, recently published an article entitled "Between Arab brothers and Islamist foes; the evolution of the contemporary Islamist movement in Libya" in the international refereed journal, The Journal of Libyan Studies. Based in Oxford University, the journal is the global benchmark in its field and amongst its international advisory board; it counts renowned experts on Arab and Middle Eastern Affairs such as Prof. Dirk Vandewalle, Prof. Lisa Anderson and Prof. Mansour O. El-Kikhia. The article, which builds on Wharton's writings on Egyptian Islamism and in general, on Middle Eastern and North African affairs, investigates the trajectory of the Islamist movement in Col. Qaddafi's Libya and how it challenges his regime. From a comparative perspective, the article analyses how Islamism has become a political force across the Middle East and North Africa and how Col. Qaddafi, acutely aware of its strength, has followed a deliberate policy of islamising his own regime through a twin-track policy of co-opting Islamist policies yet matching these policies with fierce repression of organised Islamist opposition groups. The article draws on the author's considerable fieldwork in the region and examines how real the threat is in Libya of an Algerian-type scenario with the Islamist position taking de facto power and the breakdown of civil society or whether a post-Qaddafi Libya may opt for a Tunisian solution. The article has been widely commented upon in the international and Arab press and elements of its findings provide much of the basis for the author's arguments in his forthcoming book, Colonels and Preachers: Egyptian Islamism and Libya, to be published by I.B. Tauris. The author has also been invited to give several public lectures based on

aspects of the article by bodies such as the Egyptian Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies and the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy at the University of Athens.

Dr. Barrie Wharton

Dr Neil Robinson recently published a book entitled *Russia: A State of Uncertainty*. Over the last one hundred years, Russia has undergone a succession of failed projects of state construction – from Tsarist modernization to Soviet state socialism to liberal democratic market capitalism. This book introduces these vastly different projects and explains their failure in order to illuminate the common problems of balancing social and economic transformation with political stability that Russia's rulers have faced during the twentieth century. *Russia: A State of Uncertainty* traces Russia's complex historical development in the last century, as well as its place in the contemporary international system. Providing up to date information on Russian political developments, including the elections of 1999 and 2000, Robinson assesses the chances of future projects of political and economic reconstruction. Written in a clear and accessible way, this book has proved to be an invaluable text for students learning about Russia and for anyone interested in the state and history of Russia.

Edward Moxon-Browne

FORTHCOMING CEUROS SEMINAR PROBES EQUALITY IN THE EU

Professor Jo Shaw, Salvesen Professor of European Institutions at the University of Edinburgh, will speak on the topic of equality under EU constitutional law on Tuesday 8 March in room ER0009 at 1600. Prior to taking up the Salvesen Chair in Edinburgh, Jo was Professor of Law at the universities of Manchester and Leeds. She has been Scholar in Residence at Harvard, and Senior Research Fellow at the Federal Trust. She is currently the Chair of the University Association for Contemporary European Studies (UACES) whose annual conference will be held at Limerick in September 2006. Her teaching and research focus on EU citizenship, the EU institutions, and draft constitution, especially from a socio-legal and interdisciplinary perspective. Her seminar will have a broad appeal to lawyers, political scientists, and sociologists; and all those interested in current constitutional debates within the EU. The seminar is also a contribution by CEUROS to International Womens Day and should be of interest to Womens Studies students. The seminar will be chaired by Professor Alex Warleigh who has himself published widely in cognate areas of research.