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Index

2022, n. 2

MONOGRAPHIC ISSUE

“EU-Western Balkans Cooperation on Justice and Home Affairs: Systems, Tools and Procedures to Strengthen Security Towards the EU Accession Process”

PREFACE

Teresa Russo, Anna Oriolo, Gaspare Dalia

6

ESSAYS

Maria Eugenia Bartoloni

La natura sui generis della Politica Europea di Vicinato: un “contenitore” di competenze

9

Marcella Cometti

Il ruolo dell’Agenzia dell’Unione Europea per l’Asilo nel processo di allargamento ai Balcani occidentali. Tra l’esternalizzazione del diritto di asilo e supporto alla procedura di adesione

24

Elena Crespo Navarro

La respuesta de la Unión europea frente a las consecuencias migratorias de la agresión rusa a Ucrania

44

Sara Dal Monico

The Principle of Solidarity and Integration in the EU: The Challenge of Western Balkans

68

Leticia Fontestad Portalés

La digitalización del auxilio judicial mutuo en Iberoamérica: Iber@

88

Kamilla Galicz

Verso l’Unione europea: il progresso della normativa serba in materia di asilo

100

Heliona Miço

The Right to Education of Asylum Seekers and Refugees. The Reflection of International Instruments and Standards in Albanian Legislation

115

Massimo Panebianco

Governance di sicurezza e difesa nel conflitto russo-ucraino 2022

127

Francesco Spera

The Rule of Law as a Fundamental Value of the European Union Identity in the Western Balkans: State of Play and Potential Challenges

134

EPILOGUE

Teresa Russo

*Some Conclusions Concerning Key Elements of the Future of EU-Western
Balkans Cooperation on Justice and Home Affairs*

153

Preface

This monographic issue, entitled *EU-Western Balkans Cooperation on Justice and Home Affairs: Systems, Tools and Procedures to Strengthen Security Towards the EU Accession Process*, of the Journal *EUWEB Legal Essays. Global & International Perspectives* wants to mark the conclusion of the scientific activities of the *Jean Monnet Module EU-Western Balkans Cooperation on Justice and Home Affairs* (EUWEB). Selected for financing by the European Commission for the period 2019-2022, the EUWEB Module offered a specialization course on the EU Cooperation on Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) with the Western Balkans in the view of their accession to the Union. At the end of these activities, the present monographic issue is particularly interested in fostering scientific reflections and giving visibility to the work carried out by the research group of the EUWEB Legal Observatory in the transversal reading of the challenges of enlargement to the Western Balkans, related to border control, the influx of migrants, the fight against transnational crime and the tools of police and judicial cooperation in the current international scenario.

The future of the Western Balkans in the European Union depends on the linked perspectives of integration and security that result from the policy-making choices and the political and legal instruments adopted at international, European, and national level to reinforce reform efforts and bring tangible progress. The Western Balkans' accession to the EU is so strictly connected with the security to the extent that it requires these countries for more guarantees according to EU-oriented reforms and projects. Several times, the European Commission has confirmed the European future of the Balkan region as a geostrategic investment in a stable, strong and united Europe based on common values in compliance with the EU principles of the rule of law, justice, democracy and respect for fundamental rights. On Tuesday, July 19, 2022, the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, announced the opening of accession negotiations with North Macedonia and Albania. This is a long-overdue step forward for the EU's enlargement policy while further possible enlargements are being discussed and other States achieve EU candidate status. On 23-24 June 2022, the European Council decided to grant the status of candidate country to Ukraine and to the Republic of Moldova, as well as it declared to be ready to grant the status of candidate country to Georgia once the priorities specified in the Commission's opinion on Georgia's membership application have been addressed.

After all the planned activities and thanks to the participation of distinguished speakers and experts in the field, the Third and final edition of the EUWEB Module ended. This edition consisted of 58 hours of training courses distributed in eight study days from March to May 2022 in blended mode, both in presence and on the 'Microsoft Teams' online platform to reach a wider audience beyond the immediate participants and achieve the highest possible impact of activities carried out.

Therefore, this monographic issue includes the contributions of some of the several scholars and experts who answered to the call for submission launched on May 2022 concerning the domains of EU neighborhood policy and enlargement process (**Bartoloni, Dal Monico, Galicz, Spera**), migration and asylum management (**Cometti**), even in the perspective of the war in Ukraine (**Crespo Navarro, Panebianco**) and human rights (**Miço**), judicial and police cooperation (**Fontestad Portales**).

We worked hard to carry out our programme despite the COVID-19 emergency ensuring an innovative and multidisciplinary approach in the EU legal studies to promote excellence in the teaching of EU issues related to immigration, the fight against transnational crime, police and judicial cooperation and the protection of fundamental rights with the Western Balkans, bringing them closer to the Union. We are very delighted with the results achieved. The Third edition of the EUWEB Module has been attended by more than 100 participants including Italian, Albanian, North Macedonian and foreign students of law, economics, political science, graduates, Ph.D. candidates, lawyers, candidate lawyers, law enforcement officials, civil servants and members of civil society.

All the participants were invited to submit a final paper on the topics of the EUWEB Module and the five best, selected by the Commission including the Module's Teaching Members, have been discussed during the EUWEB Final Ceremony of 28 July 2022 (**Carabotta, Dhaim, Lettieri, Roshi, Sorgente**) and are now published on the Module website in the section of EUWEB didactic materials. Two of them (**Dhaim, Lettieri**) received a special mention.

We are grateful to all those who took part in this Third and final edition of the EUWEB Module both as students and speakers. Special thanks go to the members of the Secretariat (**Aloia, Annunziata, De Chiara, Dhaim, Ferrara**) and young researchers of the Legal Observatory (**Busillo, Vannata**) who worked hard.

We will continue to work diligently to improve our research and do better. Thank you!

31 July 2022


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