Belgrade, 26th May 2012.

THE FUTURE OF EUROPE IS IN DEEPER INTEGRATION

The solution for the EU crisis is in deeper integration and going toward confederation, and in the end – federation, said Mr. Vladimir Pavicevic, the president of the Research Forum of the European Movement in Serbia during the public discussion “The Future of Europe – A View from the Balkans”, organized in Belgrade Media Centre on May 23rd, where new policy paper of the Research Forum of the EMinS’ “The Future of Europe – A View” was presented.

The discussion was committed to the changes within the European Union system and implications of the euro crisis on the further EU integration process. Intention is to stress importance of the active public participation in the Western Balkan Region in the debate on these important issues.

Mr Vladimir Pavicevic, author and the president of the Research Forum said that in this way “we would like to influence the public space in Serbia to become more polemic on the topics that are wider than our domestic public space. Precisely, this space should include discussions on the changes on the European continent, especially in the EU caused by the crisis that the EU is facing. The second aim is to promote and advocate the idea of deepening of the Accession Process”, he said.

“The solution for the EU crisis is in deeper integration and going toward confederation, and in the end – federation. One can say this is too much optimistic view, but the Research Forum states that, based on the previous experience in the European Integration process, this is the best solution in order to fight of the crisis. This also includes additional statement that the future of the Balkans countries is in this kind of confederation of the EU”, Mr Pavicevic said.

The rest of participants in the discussion, which was organized within the framework of this year’s Europe Day celebration, supported by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Serbia, presented their views on this issue.
Speaking of the institutional crisis with which the EU is facing, as well as the enlargement policy, the Croatian ambassador in Belgrade, H.E. Mr Željko Kupresak said that in the region of the Western Balkan counties, there are no indications of common policies in the region, because the mentioning of these ideas immediately cause the fears of renewal of the old Yugoslavia or the hegemony of some states in the region. "Each country built its own roads separately and connect only if they coincide by chance," said the Ambassador of Croatia. He said that the Balkans should learn from the so-called EU macro regional cooperation programs, such as the European Strategy for the Baltic region, to promote cooperation in the region.

Encouraging the debate on the European Union, whether in terms of specific or general topics, is welcome in this region, said Mr Dusko Lopandic, Assistant to Foreign Minister for European Integration of Republic of Serbia.

"The crisis in the EU is not only an institutional crisis. This is the crisis that should be viewed from a broader perspective of the crisis of the world economic system. There are now re-opened questions of efficiency and rationality in the EU, especially when making key decisions of the Council. This is a new type of crisis for the EU - it cannot be only a laboratory for experiments of ultra-liberalism, which EU became though the process of deregulation. It cannot survive only with its members thinking only of their national agendas rather than on joint projects, and finally, the EU cannot survive without a new strategy concerning the development and cooperation. However, it is essential that we know that Europe will certainly evolve", Mr Lopandic said.

Mr. Miroslav Prokopijević, senior research fellow at the Institute for European Studies, with a less optimistic view on the outcome of the crisis, said that the current crisis is different from most previous ones, and that there is a real danger of the disintegration of the euro zone and the collapse of European integration.

"At least three things would have to be addressed to maintain the European integration. First is to see who will pay the accumulated debts and how to maintain fiscal discipline. Here, the suggestion is that the primary deficit should not be more than 0.5 per cent. But this is not enough, even though Germany is somehow able to verbally accept it, but the acceptance though the regulations in other Eurozone members is pending. However, I am not sure about this option, because the current deficit limit of 3 per cent was exceeded 34 times in the period of 10 years since 1999 by 2009, without a single penalty. Finally, the goal is to restore the competitiveness of the country", Mr Prokopijević suggested.

However, Mr Michael Ehrke, director of the Regional Office of The Friedrich Ebert Foundation, said that the economically most successful countries of the EU, like Germany, Austria and the Scandinavian countries, are also the country with a strong social dimension,
and that the competitiveness can contribute to economic prosperity, but “we should have in mind that that is not only important”.

“In the EU the problem is not fiscal – the problem is in trade which suffer from the enormous imbalance. So, if this is not the fiscal crisis, than the fiscal union is not a solution. We need an economic government which regulates everything that determines competitiveness and trade. We need fiscal union, but we need even more a social union”, Mr. Ehrke concluded.

Referring to the idea of federalization of the Europe, Ehrke said that some countries, like France and Great Britain would never allow that to happen.

During the discussion it could be heard that the EU crisis should not be only discussed in terms of economic concepts, because it is a creation, a system that has cultural, values and moral dimension.

“The Future of Europe – A Vies” is the seventh policy paper of the Research Forum, a policy research-analytic unit of the European Movement in Serbia where different issues of the Serbian EU integration process are subjected to in-depth and evidence-based critical research followed by relevant outputs in the form of alternative policy papers (proposals) for improved, effective and efficient reform performance and governance in particular areas within European Integration process.