

## PREFACE

*It is a pleasure for us to present to you the conference proceedings with the reports of the Fifth International Conference of the European Studies Department at the Faculty of Philosophy of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, the Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence, with the support of Erasmus+ Programme.*

*The Conference took place on 31<sup>st</sup> May – 1<sup>st</sup> June 2018 in Sofia under the title “United We Stand Strong”.*

*Holding an annual international conference has turned into a wonderful tradition of the department which has been developing and improving. The event has been accomplished thanks to the support of “Hanns Seidel” Foundation and the kind hosting of the Representation of the European Commission in Bulgaria.*

*On 1<sup>st</sup> January 2018 Bulgaria took up the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union in a complex and dynamic period, in which important decisions had to be taken. Our country strived for achieving its goals as a rotating president through three easily remembered approaches. They cover the three most important areas, on which the future of the European Union depends, as they have already become popular in the Bulgarian society – “the three Cs”: consensus, competitiveness and cohesion. The competitiveness is defining for the economic prosperity of the citizens, the cohesion is a prerequisite for a socially stable European Union, and the consensus is necessary for the unity and progress of our union. We should not forget also the fourth “C” – culture, because it is this that distinguishes Europe as a criterion for civilization.*

*The main objective of the Conference was to present innovative solutions of the problems and challenges the EU is facing and to contribute to the discussions on the priorities of the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union.*

*What future should we choose for Europe, how should we continue together, what decisions should we take, what concrete steps should we make in order to be united and strong? These were only some of the questions to which university lecturers, experts and students were searching for an answer in the discussions. In the fifth edition of the conference the presentations were organised as round tables, which gave the opportunity for a*

*livelier debate and exchange of ideas between the panelists and the rest of the participants.*

*Among the participants in the conference were lecturers from leading universities in Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Hungary, Romania, Montenegro, Turkey, Macedonia and Bulgaria.*

*The four sections in the conference proceedings correspond to the four round tables within which the lecturers and researchers presented their reports: “The Future of the European Union and the Young People – Economic Growth and Social Cohesion?”, “European Perspective for the Western Balkans”, “Security and Stability in a United Europe”, and last but not least, “The Lessons Learnt: Enlargement, Communication, Rotating Presidency”.*

*We wish you a pleasant reading!*