

PREFACE

You are holding in your hands the book of papers from the 4th International Scientific Conference of the European Studies Department at the Faculty of Philosophy of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, which took place on 11–12 May 2017, in Sofia, in the EU House, under the title Rethinking the European Union?. The holding of the conference and the publishing of the conference proceedings was accomplished with the support of the project “Jean Monnet Center of Excellence for Teaching and Research on the Europeanization of the Countries of South-Eastern Europe (2016–2019)”, which is co-funded by Erasmus+ Programme. The team of the project expresses its gratitude further to the European Commission Representation in Bulgaria for kindly hosting the event, as well as to Hanns Seidel Foundation for their support in organizing the forum.

A key priority of the project “Jean Monnet Center of Excellence for Teaching and Research on the Europeanization of the Countries of South-Eastern Europe” is the strengthening of the international partnership in the field of European Studies. This is of special relevance in order to secure the supra-national comparability of the research results at European level. Further to that, the existence of such an international forum is a very important stimulus for research excellence of the young researchers at the Department of European Studies.

The speakers at the international conference were professors at the Sofia University, other Bulgarian universities, as well as universities from Germany, Ireland, Romania, Macedonia, Serbia, and Turkey. The audience of the conference was composed of professors and assistants, university students, researches, civil society organisations, professional groups and the general public.

The first impact of the conference is to stimulate the debates in South East Europe about the developments in the European Union and the region. The purpose was to discuss topics that are on the Agenda of the EU and the region, as well as to provide proposals for solutions for the current problems. Another targeted impact was to establish new professional links and networks among academics and professionals from the region and to sustain the existing ones. The conference provided opportunities for them to meet and plan further common initiatives. A third impact is expected through the publication of the conference papers and findings. This conference publication will provide the opportunity the texts to be used in different academic and teaching programmes, as well as to stimulate further research in that area.

The conference was organised in round tables, which gave the opportunity for a more active debate and exchange of ideas between the panelists and the audience. The five sections of the book correspond to the five round tables in which the lecturers and the researchers presented their papers: “Rethinking the European Union?”, “Recent Developments in the European Union – the Way Forward”, “Bulgaria and Romania – Ten Years in the European Union?”, “Enlargement, Association and Good Neighbourhood Policy” and “From Trade and Investment to European Identity”.

We wish you a pleasant reading!