

ANU European Studies Graduate Workshop

Researching the EU: Critical Perspectives for Critical Times

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Title: The Potential and Limitations of the European Union in promoting Gender Equality and Sustainable Peace within EU candidate states: the case of the Republic of Macedonia.

Abstract:

This presentation distinguishes gender equality as one of the key elements of sustainable peace. Indeed, substantial literature sheds light to the fact that societies with higher level of gender equality are less prone to violence and inter-state conflict. The Republic of Macedonia is post-communist and post-conflict society that remains divided along ethnic lines. However, over the past two decades the European Union has exercised significant influence over the country and has played a critical role in supporting democratic processes and meaningful inter-ethnic tolerance and collaboration. The aspiration to become member of the EU, further reinforced with Macedonian candidate status since 2006, has urged governments to undertake extensive transformation in order to harmonize the national legislative and institutional framework with the one of EU member states.

In this presentation, I will focus on EU's role in promoting gender equality in Macedonia. Gender equality is integral part of the EU agenda. Consequently, EU has been actively engaged with enforcing gender equality legislation and policy-making within member and candidate states. Since guaranteeing gender equality and equal opportunity has been established as a pre-condition to join the union, Macedonia has done a substantial progress in establishing normative and institutional framework to promote gender equality. This presentation will analyze the legislative and institutional changes and achievements in the field of gender equality. By doing so, I will make an effort to estimate the efficiency of EU gender equality policies in the context of EU enlargement.

I argue that despite remarkable progress in establishing "de jure" equality in Macedonia, the current efforts have not resulted in meaningful or "de facto" equality between men and women in the country. Therefore, I will analyze the gaps and limitations of the EU policies to move beyond equality "on paper" and promote significant transformations in terms of gender roles and equal distribution of power and resources in the society.

I am going to demonstrate that the progressive legislation has not been very effective in deconstructing the patriarchal matrix of the society. In addition, the patriarchal values promoted by the current conservative and nationalist political leaders often create absurd situations and huge gaps between official policies and discourses.

This presentation adopts critical lenses and aims at identifying EU's limitations as gender equality promotes in Europe. It opens a discussion on how can EU's potential be enhanced and how can meaningful equality between men and women in every aspect of the society, both in the private and public domain, be guaranteed.

Key words: European Union, Macedonia, candidate, gender equality, legislation