B—BUG

19 – 22
June
2025

No. 149
+ 150

Sarajevo

3 Program

7 Knowledge Partner

8 Speakers

20 Information

Thu 19/6

Hotel Courtyard by Marriott

Morning and afternoon:
Individual arrival, Check-in at BBUG desk

Bus transfer for passengers arriving with LH 1544 and bus transfer for passengers arriving with OS 757

15:00 Welcome Coffee

16:00 Welcome and Ouverture (Sky Lounge)
Michael Schwarz, Managing Director, BBUG

Beate Ando, Senior Manager Programs and Alumni, BBUG

16:45 Speed Networking

18:00 Sarajevo 360°
"Where are we?" Bus tour and Orientation in Sarajevo

20:15 Dinner
Toplik, Vuka Karadžića 250, 71123 Sarajevo

22:30 Return to the hotel

Fri 20/6

Central Bosnia

6:30 Individual breakfast in the hotel

8:00 Morning Walk to National Museum of Bosnia and Hercegovina

8:30 "Why Bosnia? What this country can tell us about the future of Europe"
Adnan Ćerimagić, Senior Analyst, European Stability Initiative (ESI)

Darja Softic Kadenic, Cantonal Minister, Sarajevo

10:00 Group Input

10:30 Departure by bus to Central Bosnia

11:30 Memorial Site Ahmići

Continued
Fri 20/6

13:00 Lunch
Hari, Donja čaršija bb, Travnik 72270

13:30 Travnik: Peaceful cohabitation

14:30 Departure to Fojnica

16:00 Presentation and Conversation on Central Bosnia
"From peace to war to peace - The Franciscan heritage"
Kristof Bender, Senior Analyst, European Stability Initiative (ESI)

Fra Mirko Majdanzic, Franciscan Monastery of the Holy Spirit, Fojnica

17:00 Visit of Museum of the Monastery of Fojnica

17:45 Transfer to dinner

19:15 Group workshop

20:00 Dinner
Restaurant Baoli, Avde Sumbula br. 3, Sarajevo 71000

22:00 Walk back to hotel

Sat 21/6

National Museum of Bosnia and Hercegovina

7:00 Individual breakfast in the hotel

9:00 Morning walk to National Museum of Bosnia and Hercegovina

9:30 "War and Peace in Europe – 1990 – 2040" - Presentation by **Gerald Knaus**, Founding Chairman, European Stability Initiative (ESI), conversation with **Brigadier General René Leitgen**, Director Academic Plans, Policy & Engagement, NATO Defense College

11:00 Coffee break

11:30 "The future of South-East Europe – view from the Adriatic" - Conversation with **Ditmir Bushati**, Former Foreign Minister of Albania

Continued
Sat 21/6

12:00	"View from Banja Luka" - Conversation with **Mladen Ivanic**, Former Member of the Bosnian Presidency, Former Prime Minister of Republika Srpska
12:30	"View from Zagreb" - Conversation with **Dr. Christian Hellbach**, German Ambassador to Croatia, Former Head for South-East Europe, MFA
13:00	Lunch
14:00	Group input
15:30	Walk to Cineplexx
15:45	Confronting the Past Movie screening "Quo Vadis, Aida?": A film about the massacre of Srebrenica, awarded with the European Film Prize Followed by a discussion with **Adnan Ćerimagić**, **Gerald Knaus** and **René Leitgen**
18:45	Walk back to hotel
19:45	Transfer to restaurant by bus
20:00	Dinner Park Princeva, Iza Hrida 7, Sarajevo 71000

Sun 22/6

Hotel Courtyard by Marriott

8:30	Breakfast meeting Debriefing and Discussion (Sky Lounge)
10:00	Individual departures
10:00	Bus transfer to airport
12:30	Bus transfer to airport

Program is subject to change

“If you take a look at Sarajevo at any time of day, from any surrounding hill, you will always inadvertently come to the same conclusion. It is a city that is wearing out and dying, while at the same time being reborn and transformed.“

Ivo Andrić, author and Nobel Laureate in Literature

European Stability Initiative

The European Stability Initiative (ESI) is a think tank focusing on South East Europe, human rights, and the enlargement of the European Union. It is based in Berlin with team members also working from Istanbul, London, and Vienna.

ESI was founded in June 1999 in Sarajevo as a research network to support the integration of the Balkans into the European Union after having witnessed the disastrous consequences of illiberal nationalism during the Balkan wars. Its founding chairman is Gerald Knaus. ESI is a non-profit organisation financed by donations. Its work has been supported by many institutions, including the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Stiftung Mercator, the Open Society Foundations, and ERSTE Stiftung, among others.

Kristof Bender
Deputy Chairman
and Senior Analyst

Adnan Ćerimagić
Senior Analyst

Gerald Knaus
Founding Chairman

Katharina Knaus
Senior Analyst

Speakers

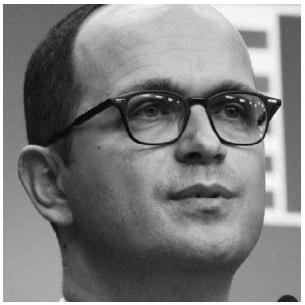
Kristof Bender
Deputy Chairman and Senior Analyst, European Stability Initiative (ESI)

Kristof Bender is ESI's Deputy Chairman. He leads various ESI research projects on EU enlargement and on South Eastern Europe.

Educated in sociology in Vienna and Paris, he has worked in South East Europe in various capacities since 1997, including managing higher education projects in Bosnia for the World University Service, as Attaché for Humanitarian Affairs in the Austrian Embassy in Belgrade, and as a consultant for various institutions, including the Austrian Federal Chancellery, DFID and SIDA.

Part of the ESI team since early 2000, Kristof has been living in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, and is currently based in Vienna. He is also a Europe's Futures fellow at the IWM Vienna (Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen), a board member of the Kosovo Civil Society Foundation (KCSF) and an advisory board member of Institute Alternativa (Montenegro).

Ditmir Bushati
Former Foreign Minister of Albania



Ditmir Bushati is an Albanian politician, diplomat, and legal expert who served as minister for Europe and foreign affairs from 2013 to 2019. A leading voice on EU integration and regional cooperation, he played a key role in Albania's accession negotiations and represented the country in key international forums.

Bushati studied law at the University of Tirana and earned an LL.M. in international law from Leiden University. He later completed programmes at Harvard University, the Academy of American and International Law, and Abo Academy in Finland.

Before entering politics, he worked as a legal advisor to Albania's Constitutional Court and Ministry of European Integration and was founding director of the European Movement Albania. A member of parliament since 2009, Bushati chaired the committee on European integration and currently leads Albania's delegation to the OSCE. He is a member of the European Council on Foreign Relations and continues to write and lecture on international and European law.

Adnan Ćerimagić
Senior Analyst, European Stability Initiative (ESI)

Adnan Ćerimagić is ESI's Senior Analyst for the Western Balkans and is researching EU policy towards the region. Before joining ESI in August 2013, Adnan has worked for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo and Brussels. He also did a traineeship in the Secretariat of the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee and worked for the European Training and Research Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (ETC) in Graz.

He studied law at the University of Graz and EU International Relations and Diplomacy at the College of Europe in Bruges.

He is a member of the Advisory Board of the International Institute for Peace in Vienna and the International Advisory Board of the Belgrade Centre for Security Policy. Adnan is based in Berlin.

Dr. Christian Hellbach
German Ambassador to Croatia, Former Head for South-East Europe, MFA

Christian Hellbach studied law at the University of Konstanz, where he obtained a doctorate in constitutional law. Before joining the Federal Foreign Office, he worked as a lecturer, lawyer, and adviser at the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety of the Federal Republic of Germany.

He served abroad in Tashkent, Geneva, Belgrade, Bogotá, Sarajevo, and Santiago de Chile. At the Foreign Office, Hellbach worked in the departments for legal affairs, Europe, human resources, and political affairs.

From 2016 to 2019, he was commissioner for Southeast Europe, Turkey and the EFTA countries, and afterwards served as German ambassador in Santiago de Chile. Since August 2022, Christian Hellbach has been the German ambassador to the Republic of Croatia.

Mladen Ivanić

Former Member of the Bosnian Presidency, Former Prime Minister of Republika Srpska

Mladen Ivanić is a Bosnian Serb politician, economist, and professor. He served as the Serb member of the presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina from 2014 to 2018, holding the rotating chairmanship twice.

A co-founder and long-time president of the Party of Democratic Progress (PDP), Ivanić was prime minister of Republika Srpska (2001–2003) and minister of foreign affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina (2003–2007). He previously served in the presidency of the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (1988–1991) and was a member of both chambers of the state parliament.

Trained as an economist, Ivanić studied in Banja Luka and Belgrade, earned his doctorate in 1988, and completed postdoctoral work at Mannheim and Glasgow. He was a professor of political economy for over three decades and led the Bosnia office of Deloitte, one of the world's largest professional services firms, in the late 1990s.

A frequent participant in international conferences, he has advised the UNDP and World Bank and published several books and academic papers. He lives in Banja Luka and speaks English and German.

Darja Softić Kadenić
Cantonal Minister, Sarajevo

Darja Softić Kadenić is a Bosnian legal scholar and public official, serving as minister of justice and administration in the government of Sarajevo Canton since June 2021.

She completed her undergraduate, master's, and doctoral studies at the Faculty of Law, University of Sarajevo, and earned a second master's degree from the University of Graz, where she received an award for best thesis.
She is an associate professor of civil and succession law and has published on topics such as digital inheritance and gender equality in property rights.

In early 2023, she briefly served as acting prime minister of Sarajevo Canton.
As minister, she has led initiatives to modernise public administration, including the launch of an e-portal for citizens and the adoption of a law on e-government. She has also overseen projects to improve judicial infrastructure and promote transparency.

Gerald Knaus

Founding Chairman, European Stability Initiative (ESI)

Gerald Knaus is the European Stability Initiative's (ESI) founding chairman. In 2021, he received the Karl Carstens Award by the German Federal Academy for Security Policy.

In 2020, he published the award-winning SPIEGEL Bestseller "Welche Grenzen brauchen wir?" ("What Borders Do We Need?") and in 2011, he wrote the book "Can Intervention Work?" with the British writer and politician Rory Stewart.

He is a founding member of the European Council on Foreign Relations and was for five years an Associate Fellow at the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy at Harvard University's Kennedy School. After studying in Oxford, Brussels, and Bologna, he taught university economics in Ukraine and spent ten years working for NGOs and international organisations in Bulgaria, Bosnia and Kosovo and has published extensively on migration, the rule of law in Europe and refugee issues, as well as on corruption.

He writes the blog www.rumeliobserver.eu and tweets on @rumeliobserver

Katharina Knaus
Senior Analyst, European Stability Initiative (ESI)

Katharina Knaus is senior analyst at ESI Berlin.

Besides other languages Katharina speaks fluent Turkish and has been a member of ESI's Turkey team since 2006. She studied law in Vienna and Brussels. She worked as a counsellor for refugees from Bosnia and published articles on EU refugee law.

From 1997 she worked in Sarajevo for the Boltzmann Institute for Human Rights, reporting on war crimes in Bosnia and Kosovo. She then worked for the OSCE and the Human Rights Coordination Centre at the Office of the High Representative in Sarajevo, reporting on human rights violations and refugee returns.

She has also published on human trafficking in Southeast Europe.

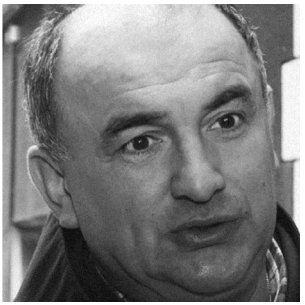
Brigadier General René Leitgen
Director Academic Plans, Policy & Engagement, NATO Defense College

Brigadier General René Leitgen is a senior officer in the German Army and currently serves as director for academic plans, policy and engagement at the NATO Defense College in Rome, a position he has held since June 2022. In this role, he oversees curriculum planning, faculty development, academic outreach, and the coordination of flagship NATO courses and conferences.

A trained artillery officer, Leitgen joined the Bundeswehr in 1978 and holds a degree in pedagogy from the University of the Bundeswehr Hamburg. His career has spanned command, staff, and policy roles in Germany and abroad, including deployments to Bosnia and Afghanistan.

He led a rocket artillery battalion, directed operations at the Bundeswehr's Joint Operations Command, and served as chief of training coordination at NATO's Resolute Support Mission in Kabul. In Berlin, he held senior posts at the Ministry of Defence, including head of the Afghanistan task force and director of strategic planning. He is known for his expertise in multinational cooperation and military education.

Fra Mirko Majdandžić
Franciscan Monastery of the Holy Spirit, Fojnica



Fra Mirko Majdandžić is a Bosnian Franciscan priest known for his tireless advocacy of reconciliation, coexistence, and community engagement in post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina. Born in Busovača, he studied at the Franciscan Classical Gymnasium in Visoko and completed his theological studies in Sarajevo. He has served in numerous parishes, including Sarajevo, Zenica, Bugojno, Fojnica, and Vareš, and since 2022 in Brestovsko near Kiseljak.

During the war, he remained in besieged Sarajevo, later promoting Croat return to majority-Bosniak areas such as Bugojno, where he organised improvised schooling for returnee children. A long-standing promoter of interethnic dialogue, he initiated cultural events and joint activities between Bosniaks and Croats, including mixed football matches and agricultural cooperatives.

Nicknamed the "brother with guitar", he gathers youth around music, spirituality, and shared values. Fra Mirko embodies the Franciscan spirit of humility and love for Bosnia, which he calls a shared home. For him, reconciliation is the true miracle: former enemies choosing to live side by side again.

„Es gibt kein christliches, kein jüdisches, kein muslimisches Blut. Es gibt nur menschliches Blut. Wir sind alle gleich.“

Margot Friedländer

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The "Baden-Baden Entrepreneur Talks" (BBUG e.V.) are a not for profit association established in 1955.

Today, about 120 of the most important German companies, primarily from industry, make up its membership, including almost all of the DAX-40 corporations as well as a substantial number of medium-sized 'global players' of the German "Mittelstand". Together they represent the backbone of the German economy.

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Code of Conduct

BBUG provides a safe and open space where executives come together to exchange ideas, learn, reflect and critically address the predominant questions of society and economy. In order to maintain the immediacy and openness that characterize our unique climate of open dialogue, we must ensure that participants can be certain that everything they say will remain confidential - not only in the plenary discussion, but also during private conversations.

At every BBUG event, the Chatham House Rule applies as our mandatory minimum standard of confidentiality. It postulates that participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker may be disclosed without that person's explicit permission. Participants at BBUG events agree to abide by this agreed-upon standard of confidentiality.

Please be considerate when using social media. It would violate the spirit of BBUG to quote speakers or other participants, or to publish images of others who are not aware they are being photographed. At the same time, we encourage you to share personal experiences, thoughts and reflections on social media and through other channels.

Our tenet is simple: Please respect the confidential space provided by BBUG and treat others the way you wish to be treated by them.

By registering for and participating in the conference you agree to grant BBUG permission to freely use any photographs and/or video footage of you taken during your participation without remuneration for marketing and publicity purposes.

Dress appropriately, we recommend smart casual.

Conference Venue

National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina
Zmaja od Bosne 3
71000 Sarajevo

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Courtyard by Marriott
Skenderija 1, 7100 Sarajevo

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