B—BUG

18 – 21
June
2026

Skopje

No. 151
+ 152

Thessaloniki

3 Programme

7 Speakers

22 Information

Thu 18/6

Museum of Macedonian Struggle, Skopje

Morning and afternoon
Individual arrival
Check-in at BBUG desk

14:00 Welcome lunch in the hotel

16:00 Welcome
Beate Ando, Senior Programme Manager, BBUG

16:30 "Skopje 360 – Heroes, villains, and the search for identities"
A guided walk through a young capital

18:30 "Macedonian mirror: War, peace, prosperity and the power of stories"
Gerald Knaus, Founding Chairman, ESI

20:00 Dinner
Welcome by **Hristijan Mickoski**, Prime Minister of North Macedonia

22:30 Return to the hotel

Fri 19/6

Museum of Contemporary Art, Skopje

8:30 Checkout and departure from hotel

9:00 Introduction to the programme

9:30 Speednetworking

10:30 Macedonian lives – the story of a young democracy
Katerina Sinadinovska, Journalist and Editor

Nikola Dimitrov, Former Foreign and Deputy Prime Minister of North Macedonia

11:15 Coffee break

11:45 On the road to Europe?
Afrim Gashi, President of the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia

12:30 Group input

Continued
Fri 19/6

13:00 Balkan tragedies, Balkan miracles
Kristof Bender, Senior Analyst, ESI

Adnan Cerimagic, Senior Analyst, ESI

13:30 Departure to Thessaloniki

14:30 Lunch

16:00 Bus transfer to Thessaloniki

21:00 Walk to restaurant

21:45 Dinner
Restaurant Kazaviti

Sat 20/6

Apothiki-Warehouse C, Thessaloniki

8:30 Walk to Apothiki

9:00 "Where are we? Greece and Europe seen from Thessaloniki"
Dimitris Keridis, Member of the Hellenic Parliament

10:00 Group inputs[1]

11:00 Coffee break

11:30 Cutting Gordian knots – lessons from the Macedonian name dispute
Nikola Dimitrov, Former Foreign and Deputy Prime Minister of North Macedonia

Costas Douzinas, Professor of Law at Birkbeck University of Londin, Member of Hellenic Parliament and President of the Parliamentary Standing Committee of Defence and Foreign Affairs (2015-2019)

12:30 Greece's way through recent crises
Yiannis Mouzakis, Co-founder and Managing Director, MacroPolis

Prof. Agis Papadopoulos, President, German-Hellenic Chamber of Commerce

[1] Group inputs are presentations by participants with a 10-minute impulse followed by a 20-minute discussion

Continued
Sat 20/6

13:30 Lunch

14:30 Group workshop

16:00 Coffee break

16:30 Screening of stage play 96% and discussion
Prodromos Tsinikoris, Director, Dramaturg and Actor

18:00 "Salonica"
Short introduction to one of Europe's greatest cities
Walking through the historic centre

19:00 Transfer to dinner

19:30 Dinner
Restaurant Trizoni

Sun 21/6

Apothiki-Warehouse C, Thessaloniki

9:00 Predators, the European miracle and its enemies
Francesca Knaus, Author and Policy Advisor

Gerald Knaus, Founding Chairman, ESI

10:30 Coffee break

11:00 Closing remarks, evaluation and debriefing

12:00 End of the programme

„It’s one of the Balcan States. Principal rivers, un-known. ...Population, chiefly brigands. Hobby, assassinating kings and having revolutions.“

Agatha Christie,
The Secret of
Chimneys

Speakers

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

Kristof Bender is the Deputy Chairman of the European Stability Initiative (ESI). He is an Austrian policy analyst who leads research projects on EU enlargement and Southeastern 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, as a researcher for the International Centre for Migration Policy Development and as a consultant for various institutions, including the Austrian Federal Chancellery, DFID and SIDA.

Part of the ESI team since the early 2000s, Kristof has lived in Bosnia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, and is currently based in Vienna.

Adnan Ćerimagić
Senior Analyst, European Stability Initiative (ESI)

Adnan Ćerimagić is a Bosnian policy analyst specialising in European integration and the Western Balkans. He is a senior analyst at the European Stability Initiative (ESI), where he has worked since 2013 on EU enlargement, democracy, rule of law, and regional cooperation.

Before joining ESI, he worked for the ministry of foreign affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, completed a traineeship at the European Parliament, and worked at the European Training and Research Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Graz.

He studied law at the University of Graz and EU diplomacy at the College of Europe in Bruges. Based in Berlin, he regularly writes and comments on EU policy and developments in the Western Balkans.

Nikola Dimitrov
Former Foreign and Deputy Prime Minister of North Macedonia

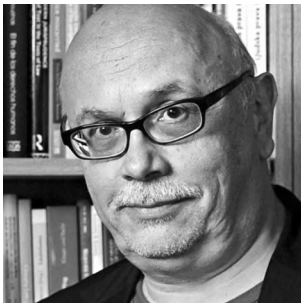
Nikola Dimitrov is a Macedonian diplomat and politician who served as minister of foreign affairs from 2017 to 2020 and deputy prime minister for European affairs from 2020 to 2022. He played a central role in negotiating the Prespa Agreement with Greece, paving the way for North Macedonia's NATO membership and the opening of EU accession talks. Earlier, he served as national security adviser to President Boris Trajkovski, ambassador to the United States, and ambassador to the Netherlands.

A law graduate of the University of Skopje, he earned an LL.M. from the University of Cambridge.

He is currently president and co-founder of the Balkan Center for Constructive Policies–Solution and a member of several European policy networks.

Costas Douzinas

Professor of Law at Birkbeck University of Londin, Member of Hellenic Parliament and President of the Parliamentary Standing Committee of Defence and Foreign Affairs (2015-2019)



Costas Douzinas is Professor of Law at Birkbeck, University of London. He studied at the University of Athens and read for his PhD at the London School of Economics. He is a founding member of the Birkbeck School of Law and the Law Department of the University of Cyprus, founding member and director of the Birkbeck Institute for the Humanities, editor of the journal Law and Critique and founder and managing editor of Birkbeck Law Press. He was the Dean of Law, Dean of Humanities and Vice-Chancellor of Birkbeck, University of London. He was a visiting professor at the Universities of Cape Town, Rio de Janeiro (PUC), University of Sydney (CUA), European University Institute, Princeton University, Charles University Prague among others.

Costas was elected Member of Hellenic Parliament and President of the Parliamentary Standing Committee of Defence and Foreign Affairs (2015-2019) and local councillor in his home city of Pireas in 2024. His many books, translated in twelve languages, include The End of Human Rights; Human Rights and Empire; Nomos and Aesthetics; Critical Jurisprudence; Resistance and Philosophy in the Crisis; Reflections of an Accidental Politician; the Radical Philosophy of Rights; From the University Chair to Parliament Benches; Life in Dark times; States of Exception; The Rule of Judges (in Greek); Law's Desire (in Greek). He wrote a column for the The Guardian, he writes for Democracy Now and has the fortnightly page and "Philosophical Current Affairs" in the Greek Newspaper of Editors. The book "Rights, Resistance and Critique: The Legal Theory of Costas Douzinas" edited by Alexis Alvarez and Illan Wall has just been published by Routledge.

Afrim Gashi
President of the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia

Afrim Gashi has served as president of the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia since May 2024.

Born in Skopje in 1977, he graduated in law from the University of Tetova and earned a master's degree in political science from the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje. Before entering politics, he built a career in journalism and publishing, working in radio and television, editing for the publisher Logos-A, and founding the magazine Shenja.

He co-founded the Besa Movement in 2014 and served as its secretary general, before founding the Alternativa party in 2019 and leading it as chairman until 2024. A member of parliament since 2016, he has worked on European integration, foreign affairs, and constitutional issues.

He lives in Skopje and speaks Albanian, Macedonian, English, Bosnian, Serbian, and Croatian.

Dimitris Keridis
Member of the Hellenic Parliament

Dimitris Keridis is a Greek politician and academic specialising in international relations. A member of the Hellenic Parliament for Athens-North with the New Democracy party since 2019, he served as minister of migration and asylum from June 2023 to June 2024.

He is professor of international politics at Panteion University of Athens, where he has published extensively on international politics, migration, nationalism, and Greek-Turkish relations. Keridis holds a doctorate and a master's degree from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University and a law degree from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, and has held academic posts at Harvard's Kennedy School and at Fletcher.

He directs the annual Olympia Summer Academy, which he established in 2002, and founded the Navarino Network, a public-policy think tank based in Thessaloniki. A regular television commentator on international affairs and European policy, he lives in Athens.

Francesca Knaus
Author and Policy Advisor

Francesca Knaus is an author and policy advisor specialising in Central and Eastern Europe, European enlargement, and human rights. Since December 2021 she has served as senior policy advisor to the German member of parliament Knut Abraham, focusing on the Western Balkans, Eastern Europe, and EU enlargement policy. She studied European Studies at the University of Amsterdam and co-authored the book Welches Europa brauchen wir? with Gerald Knaus.

A co-founder of the European Debate Initiative, she has worked to strengthen public debate on Europe's future across the continent. She has also served as a youth delegate to the Council of Europe and as a legal researcher at the Uyghur Tribunal in London, an independent body examining alleged human-rights abuses against the Uyghur people.

Her work bridges policy analysis, advocacy, and writing on Europe and human rights. She lives in Berlin.

Gerald Knaus

Founding Chairman, European Stability Initiative (ESI)

Gerald Knaus is an Austrian analyst and writer, and the founding chairman of the European Stability Initiative (ESI), a Berlin-based think tank working on democracy, human rights, migration, the rule of law, and EU enlargement.

Born in Austria in 1970, he studied in Oxford, Brussels, and Bologna, taught economics in Ukraine, and spent five years working for non-governmental organisations and international missions in Bulgaria and Bosnia and Herzegovina, including the international administration in post-war Bosnia.

A leading voice on European migration policy, he played a central role in shaping the EU-Turkey Statement of 2016 and helped expose the "Caviar Diplomacy" corruption scandal at the Council of Europe. He is the author of several books on migration, Europe, and democracy, among them most recently Welches Europa brauchen wir? on Europe's future and the defence of democracy. He has been a visiting fellow at Harvard and a regular commentator across European media. He lives in Berlin.

Hristijan Mickoski
Prime Minister of
North Macedonia

Hristijan Mickoski is a Macedonian politician and former mechanical engineer who has served as prime minister of North Macedonia since June 2024. Born in Skopje in 1977, he completed his undergraduate, master's, and doctoral studies at the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering of the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, where he later taught as an associate professor. Before entering politics, he worked in the energy sector, advising the government on energy policy and serving as director general and board chairman of the state-owned electricity producer ELEM.

He became secretary general of the centre-right VMRO-DPMNE in 2017 and took over the party's leadership later that year, succeeding Nikola Gruevski. After seven years in opposition, he led the party back to power in the 2024 elections.

His government has prioritised economic development, investment, infrastructure, energy security, and European integration. He speaks English and Italian.

Yiannis Mouzakis
Co-founder and Managing Director, MacroPolis

Yiannis held a number of senior positions at Thomson Reuters before co-founding MacroPolis.

He has contributed extensively over the last few years to the debate around the Greek crisis and the events in Cyprus through his blog The Prodigal Greek, which earned him a place in the esteemed group of Emergency Specialist bloggers, according to FT Alphaville.

If you appreciate strong views and economic charts look out for Yiannis in The Agora.

Prof. Agis Papadopoulos
President, German-Hellenic Chamber of Commerce

Agis M. Papadopoulos was born in 1966 in Thessaloniki and graduated with distinction from the German School of Thessaloniki. He obtained his Diploma (Integrated Master) in Mechanical Engineering from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki with top marks "Excellent (9/10)" in 1989, his Master of Science in Energy Conservation and the Environment from Cranfield University (UK), in 1991, and his PhD in Mechanical Engineering with top marks "Excellent", specializing in solar thermal systems, from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in 1994.

He is since 1998 Professor for Energy Systems at the School of Mechanical Engineering of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. His main research interests lie in the fields of (a) Energy conservation and renewable energy sources, (b) Energy and environmental design of buildings, and (c) Energy and environmental policies. He has coordinated more than 65 research projects and authored more than 175 journal papers.

He has been Visiting Professor at the University of Cyprus, the Technical University of Hamburg, Germany and Visiting Scholar at the University of New South Wales, Sydney.

Between 2003 and 2005 he was a member of the Regulatory Authority for Energy of Greece.

Between 2014 and 2018 he was Vice-Chairman of the Open University of Cyprus.

Since August 2019 he is Chairman of the Board of EYATH S.A. – Thessaloniki Water Supply and Sewerage Company.

Since July 2024 he is President of the German-Hellenic Chamber of Industry and Commerce.

Katerina Sinadinovska
Journalist and Editor

Katerina Sinadinovska is a Macedonian journalist, editor, and media-freedom advocate who has worked in print, television, and digital media for more than two decades. She holds a degree in journalism from the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje and has held senior editorial positions across Macedonian media.

In 2014 she co-founded the Council of Media Ethics of Macedonia, the country's media self-regulation body, and served as president of its managing board until 2023, overseeing its complaints procedures and its register of professional online media. She is a co-founder of the Balkan Center for Constructive Policies – Solution and editor-in-chief of the media platform Solucija.

A regular voice at regional and international conferences, she has contributed to training and policy work on media ethics, media literacy, and countering disinformation across South-East Europe. She lives in Skopje.

Prodromos Tsinikoris
Director, Dramaturg and Actor

Prodromos Tsinikoris is a theatre director, dramaturg, and actor. His documentary works, based on intensive research, address migration, social inequality, and suppressed historical narratives. He gained international attention with widely performed productions such as Clean City, Telemachos – should I stay or should I go? and 96%, in which social realities are examined from the perspective of those involved.

Tsinikoris was born in 1981 in Wuppertal to Greek labour migrants. He studied at the Theatre Faculty of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki from 1999 to 2005 and was invited to the International Forum of the Theatertreffen Berlin in 2008. Since 2009 he has lived in Athens, where he worked as an actor with Dimiter Gotscheff and as an assistant director with Rimini Protokoll.

Since 2011 he has been developing a series of documentary theatre projects together with Anestis Azas, including Telemachos – should I stay or should I go? (Ballhaus Naunynstraße, Berlin, and Onassis STEGI, Athens, 2013), X Firmen (Theater der Welt, Mannheim, 2014), Clean City (Onassis STEGI and Münchner Kammerspiele, 2016), Hellas München (Münchner Kammerspiele and Athens Epidaurus Festival, 2018), Trashland (Schauspiel Graz, 2022), and Romaland (Onassis Stegi, 2023). Further works include the audio walk In the middle of the street (2015), featuring homeless protagonists in Athens, and the play 96%, about the Holocaust perpetrated against the Jewish community of Thessaloniki and their dispossession during the Nazi occupation of Greece.

In May 2015 he was a member of the dramaturgical team and responsible for the research of X Apartments Athens (concept: Matthias Lilienthal), which took place in the apartments of Athens residents. As a dramaturg he has collaborated with, among others, Lola Arias, Encyclopédie de la parole, Martín Valdés-Stauber, and Paul Preciado as part of the Exercises of Freedom for Documenta 14 in Athens.

From 2015 to 2020, Tsinikoris served together with Anestis Azas as artistic director of the Experimental Stage -1 of the National Theatre of Greece in Athens. Since 2020 he has been co-curator of the International Forest Festival in Thessaloniki and teaches at the directing school of the National Theatre of Greece in Athens.

„I believe that the birth of Europe will appear, with hindsight, as a dazzling adventure.“

Jean Monnet

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The "Baden–Badener Unternehmer Gespräche e.V." (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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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.

The use of AI-based recording or transcription tools (including voice assistants, AI note-taking apps, or any software that captures, transcribes, or processes conversations) is not permitted at BBUG events.
This applies in plenary sessions as well as in private conversations on site.

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

Please note: A photographer and/or videographer will be present during the event, and photos or videos may be taken. BBUG may use this material on its website, on social media, or for internal communications and publications.

If you prefer not to be recorded, please speak with a member of our communications team on site.

If you have any questions in advance, feel free to reach out to us at any time.

Conference Venue
Museum of Macedonian Struggle, Skopje
11 March, Skopje 1000,
North Macedonia

Museum of Contemporary Art
Samoilova 17, Skopje 1000,
North Macedonia

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