Roundtable “Albania towards EU Regional Development” - European Commission Programmes: Jean Monnet Chair and “European Parliament to Campus”

This roundtable was organised on the 14th November 2012 in the framework of the Jean Monnet Chair at UET and the “European Parliament to Campus” Programme facilitated by the UET Centre. The aim of the roundtable was to bring together representatives from civil society, academia and the government so as to engage in an in-depth discussion regarding the dynamics of regional development in lieu of the European Union accession process.

The Roundtable “Albania towards EU Regional Development” was organized in the framework of the launch of the Jean Monnet Chair at the European University of Tirana and the “European Parliament to Campus” Programme, programmes endorsed by the European Commission, with the participation of Mr Jens-Peter Bonde, Former Member of European Parliament. The event was facilitated by the UET Centre.

The roundtable aimed at discussing the challenges and opportunities of the EU integration and accession process in the context of Albania with a particular focus on regional development policy, IPA programmes and structural funds. The Jean Monnet Chair, Dr Nevila Xhindi, moderated the roundtable and offered her perspective on regional development and EU integration processes based on her research on EU regional policy. Mr Bonde shared his personal experiences with the participants from the European Parliament and insights regarding the human dimension of the decision-making processes in the EU institutions. The discussion was concentrated on the institutional and human capacities of Albania regarding the integration and accession process. The suggestion here was that there is an urgent need to build organisational, institutional and human capacities in order to be better prepared to apply for and benefit from structural funds on due course.

Representatives from civil society organisations pointed out more urgent matters for Albanian society and polity such as the candidate status and the political reforms. Whereas the researchers and doctoral candidates presented a more critical approach to the integration process and related EU discourses. In this sense, the roundtable provided a combination of practical experience in EU decision-making processes with insights from Albanian priorities and urgent matters as well as critical approaches from academia.