



**CALL FOR PAPERS**  
**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE**  
**“POLITICAL CLIENTELISM IN THE WESTERN BALKANS”**  
**Skopje, North Macedonia, 16-17 November 2020**

The Institute for Sociological, Political and Juridical Research - University “ss. Cyril and Methodius” in Skopje (ISPJR-UKIM), the Faculty of Philosophy - University of Belgrade, and the Faculty of Social Sciences - University of Tirana are calling for proposals for the international conference “Political clientelism in the Western Balkans” which will take place in Skopje, North Macedonia, on 16th and 17th November 2020. The event is made possible due to the generous support of the Western Balkans Fund within the framework of the project for regional scientific cooperation “Western Balkans Group on Political Clientelism”.\*

We invite scholars coming from different disciplinary areas of social sciences (e.g. political science, sociology, economics, anthropology, history) to submit papers that will be focused on the various contexts, forms, causes and consequences of political clientelism in the Western Balkan region. The papers may focus on the region as a whole or may include some or one of the Western Balkans Fund contracting parties (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo,<sup>†</sup> Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia), sub-regions or specific localities. We also invite scholars to propose papers that will include experiences from the Western Balkans into broader comparative contexts. Following the conference, the chosen papers will be published in an edited volume of conference proceedings.

Please note that we have a budget to support the travel and accommodation of a limited number of conference participants that cannot finance their travel and accommodation through their institution/organization. Participation at the conference is otherwise free of charge. Also, please note that in case of inability to hold the conference due to possible social distancing measures in the light of COVID-19 crisis, the event will be postponed or transferred to virtual space and organized online.

#### **TIMELINE**

- 30 September 2020: deadline for abstract submission
- 15 October 2020: deadline for notification of participants
- 16-17 November 2020: conference dates
- 31 January 2021: deadline for draft papers intended for the volume of conference proceedings
- 31 April 2021: deadline for publication of the volume of conference proceedings

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<sup>†</sup> This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.



## ABSTRACT

Political clientelism is a phenomenon that is widely present in the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo,<sup>‡</sup> Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia). It is well documented that during elections across the region, political parties and voters exchange votes for benefits, including money, different goods or employment positions. The public administrations in all Western Balkan states are considered heavily politicized and discrimination based on political orientation is perceived by the population as a frequent phenomenon. There are also widespread accusations that incumbent political parties take advantage of their ruling position to divert public resources towards favorable economic operators and media outlets, which, in turn, act as party supporters. This situation seems to be entrenched: clientelist exchanges have been present in the region in the past 30 years of liberal-democratic transition and remain resilient despite legislative reforms, economic development and growing democratic experience.

During the 1990s and the 2000s, political clientelism was only of sporadic interest to scientists and researchers working in the region. In recent years, however, we note a systematic interest in the topic. Several valuable studies focusing on different aspects of clientelism practiced in the Western Balkans have been published recently (e.g. Cvejić et al. 2016; Brković 2017; Djolai and Stratulat 2017; Imami et al. 2018; Uberti et al. 2019; Piacentini 2019; Popovikj et al. 2019; Bliznakovski 2020; Kera and Hysa 2020) and could represent a basis for further scientific and policy work. The conference “Political clientelism in the Western Balkans” should be seen as an attempt to streamline the already existing research into a joint agenda, as well as a forum through which researchers interested in political clientelism in the Western Balkans could engage in exchange of knowledge and research findings on the topic.

We invite scholars to submit papers that will focus on political clientelism in the Western Balkan region regardless of disciplinary area or methodological traditions within social sciences. The papers may focus on the region as a whole; may include some or one of the Western Balkans Fund contracting parties, sub-regions, or specific localities; or may represent broader comparative studies in which the Western Balkans are included. Some of the possible sub-topics include: clientelist electoral strategies of political parties; political parties’ recourse of clientelist exchange used for building party organizations; clientelist engagement of citizens/voters; citizens’ evaluation of clientelism; effects of political clientelism on democratic and economic development; clientelism between political parties and economic actors; clientelism in the media sector; clientelism in the judicial sector; clientelism and public administration; political clientelism and precarious work conditions; resources exchanged through political clientelism across the region; threats and sanctions employed in political clientelism; practices of clientelist monitoring of voters; (neo-)patrimonialism; clientelism in a historic perspective; policies for suppression of political clientelism; legal framework for suppression of political clientelism; clientelism and ethnic diversity; culture of political clientelism; political clientelism and social inequalities; policy proposals to tackle political clientelism, etc.

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## **GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSION**

Prospective conference participants should submit a 300-500 words abstract of their paper, accompanied by 3-5 keywords, author(s) name(s) and affiliation(s), no later than 30 September 2020. Abstracts should be submitted in English language (the working language of the conference). Submissions and queries should be directed at: [conference@ispji.ukim.edu.mk](mailto:conference@ispji.ukim.edu.mk). Applicants will be notified on the outcome of their submission no later than 15 October 2020.

## **ACADEMIC COMMITTEE ORGANIZING THE CONFERENCE**

Jovan Bliznakovski (ISPJR-UKIM); Aneta Cekikj (ISPJR-UKIM); Bojana Naumovska (ISPJR-UKIM); Jelena Pesic (Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade); Dragan Stanojevic (Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade); Orinda Malltezi (Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Tirana) and Klodiana Beshku (Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Tirana).