

Amer Kurtovic, IRES Student, Presented at the CEEISA-ISA Joint Conference

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Amer Kurtovic, a Master student at the Department of International Relations and European Studies, attended the CEEISA-ISA Joint International Conference held in Belgrade, Serbia on June 17, 2019 and presented his paper entitled "The European Commission's Western Balkans Discourse: An Analysis of its Performative Structures" as the only representative of International Burch University at the conference.

The three-day CEEISA-ISA Joint International Conference, held between June 17 and June 19, was organized by the Central and East European International Studies Association and the global International Studies Association and welcomed more than 500 political scientists with equally as many papers being presented at dozens of panels.

Kurtovic presented his paper at the panel "After Europe? Practices of Contestation and Socialization in the Field of European Foreign and Security Policy," alongside esteemed experts from Stockholm University, the Swedish Institute of International Affairs, the London School of Economics, Uppsala University, and the University of Trento and to an audience of about 20.

"I analyzed 1,507 press releases published by the European Commission since when they started using the term in 1998, coding each one for various characterizations that are present in each statement. So, first, I identified a series of such statements into a discourse" Kurtovic explained.

His paper analyses the discursive structures the European Commission uses in reporting on the Western Balkans, arguing that the discourse the European Commission created and is recreating is significant in understanding how the European Commission, as the European Union's main counterpart to the Western Balkans states during their accession, perceives as the Western Balkans states.

"This helps us to also identify how the European Commission perceives the European Union itself, although that aspect wasn't analyzed to any great depth. What the paper did focus on, however, was how that discourse justified certain EU policies towards the Western Balkans, such as enlargement," Kurtovic continued.

"A logical continuation of this study is to explore other discursive strands by other discursive actors, both inside and outside the European Union, subjugated discourses such as the one considering this area Southeast Europe instead of the Western Balkans, and to explore domestic elites' reception of those discourses," Kurtovic further stated.

Although this paper developed from a B.A. thesis, mentored by prof. dr. Adis Maksic and defended in the last academic year, Kurtovic intends on "integrating the comments from the

conference, as well as from other sources, refining the paper to focus more on theoretical aspects, and the submitting it for publication in a peer-reviewed journal.”

His research interests focus on the European Union and the European Commission in specific, education and higher education in specific in the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s EU integration process, and discourse theory and discourse analysis as a prism through which to observe those phenomena and a tool with which to explain them.

Kurtovic is one of the best students at the Department, managing to excel academically while partaking in such extracurricular activities of academic significance. In addition, the Department is more than happy to accommodate and support such ambitious students like him. We are very proud of our Amer Kurtovic.