

Call for Papers: *Southeastern Europe*, Special issue

European Solidarity: the Western Balkans as a testing ground

Guest editors: Ljiljana Šarić & Federico Giulio Sicurella

European solidarity has served as a fundamental norm and motive for the European integration project since its inception and, as such, has never ceased to inspire engagement, debate and reflection. At the same time, perhaps no other value has been put to the test so much and so severely in Europe's recent history and present circumstances. Disputes over the meaning, scope and demands of European solidarity have accompanied and deeply shaped the European Union's eastward enlargement to former communist countries in the 2000s, the management of refugee protection and international migration in the European 'refugee crisis' and, to a lesser extent, the Brexit process. At present, the COVID-19 pandemic, with its unprecedented challenges, has rekindled public attention to the promise and limits of European solidarity in the face of a common threat. All along, the growing success of populist, Eurosceptic and xenophobic currents across the continent has raised concerns that European solidarity might be at risk in a more fundamental manner than ever before.

Involved as they are in these key issues, Western Balkans societies have become both a testing ground for, and a central arena of discussion on, European solidarity. The challenges are vast and far-reaching. Uncertainties and setbacks in the accession process seem to have undermined the EU's role as an aspirational model for the region, favouring the rise of exclusionary politics and authoritarian practices. Moreover, due to its policies of externalisation of migration control and securitisation of borders along the Balkan route, the EU is increasingly regarded as an impenetrable 'fortress' seeking to shift the burden of migration to its neighbouring countries. Most recently, the EU's muddled initial reactions to the COVID-19 emergency have fuelled narratives about the EU's perceived lack of solidarity – both within the Union itself and towards the countries of Western Balkans. At the same time, the prospect of becoming part of an integrated European space – based on democracy, stability, prosperity and, ultimately, some form of principled and inclusive solidarity – still holds a strong appeal in the region. All this makes European solidarity a crucial element in the articulation of new social relations and constitution of new political identities in a wider Europe.

In order to critically examine the place and prospects of European solidarity in the Western Balkans, we invite contributions looking at how notions of European solidarity have been invoked, framed and contextualised, but also challenged and subverted, by different social and political actors in the region, historically as well as in the current crisis. Key questions are: How is European solidarity defined, and what are the sources that enable it? What goals does it serve? What are the boundaries governing who is or is not included in the solidarity frame? How are different forms of solidarity – at the transnational, national and local levels – balanced against each other? What is the relationship between current and past forms of solidarity, e.g. the Yugoslav one? And what does all this tell us about the capacity of the idea of European solidarity to inspire social mobilisation, influence politics, and foster dialogue and change in the wider European society? Studies addressing these questions from a discourse-analytical perspective, i.e. focusing on the discursive construction and negotiation of the concept of European solidarity in various communication contexts, are particularly welcome.

We invite paper proposals addressing the outlined topics and questions. We request that, prior to submitting a manuscript, interested authors initially submit a proposed title and an abstract. The abstracts should be 300 to 400 words long excluding references, and they should include the research

question(s), outline the method(s) used, and indicate the expected results. Please also explicitly address how your contribution intends to go beyond the state of the art in the theoretical, methodological, and empirical sense. Proposals should contain the authors' names, institutional affiliation, and e-mail addresses, along with a short bio. Abstracts will be reviewed by the guest editors for the purposes of ensuring proper fit within the scope of the special issue. Full manuscripts will undergo double-blind peer-review.

Proposal submission deadline: December 1st, 2020

Notification of acceptance: January 4th, 2021

Please send proposals to: ljliljana.saric@ilos.uio.no; federico.sicurella@unimib.it.

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Guest Editors