

On the Path to Democracy – Transformations in East-Central Europe and the Balkans after the Fall of Communism and the Disintegration of Federal States

19–20 October 2021

Organisers:

Central European Commission of the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences

Co-organisers:

Department of Research on the Eurasian Area, Institute of Russia and Eastern Europe,
Jagiellonian University,

Commission on Recent Slavic History of the International Committee for Slavic Studies.

The conference will be held in Polish and English

The aim of the conference is to analyse and define the nature of contemporary democratising and/or anti-democratic processes in the countries of East-Central and South-Eastern Europe that have taken and are taking place in the last 32 years after the fall of communist regimes and 30 years after the disintegration of multinational federal states.

It seems that democracy is the natural type of regime to which the individual states of the region have aspired or are aspiring. However, the achievements of these political transitions vary and concern both countries that have been more successful in terms of democratisation processes and those experiencing great difficulty or evolving from democracy towards authoritarian forms.

The topics to be discussed during the conference include:

a) the analysis of the transformation of the structure and functioning of states in the course of historical and contemporary democratisation processes in East-Central and South-Eastern Europe. These processes, which are of a dynamic nature and involve a number of stages, will be discussed on the example of individual countries: Baltic, Central European, Balkan, as well as post-Soviet republics – Belarus, and will form the basis for comparative studies on their path towards democracy;

b) the identification of institutional and non-institutional factors (political, historical, cultural, social, e.g. behaviour of power elites, civil society, local government) that influence democratisation or anti-democratic processes; the identification of phases (stages) of democratisation or its decline. For example, in the Balkans, democratisation processes were preceded by armed conflicts, which delayed and permanently influenced the later pace of the process or stopped it altogether;

c) the analysis of whether EU law (the treaty system) favouring top-down integration fosters or hinders the implementation of democratic structures and institutions and democratisation processes;

d) the definition of the role played in the creation of democracy by such common values – accepted or rejected by individual nation states – as the protection of human rights, minority rights, pluralism, solidarity (e.g. during the pandemic), subsidiarity serving taking decisions close to the citizen, decentralisation;

e) the definition of the international role of great and regional powers in shaping – strengthening or disrupting – democratic processes and the rule of law in East-Central Europe and the Balkans.



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