

selbst engagierter für einen positiven Wandel im Land einzusetzen. Jedoch sehe er solche Veränderungen nicht über die lokale Ebene hinausgehen, da er auf dem Niveau der Entitäten des Staates BuH aufgrund der ideologischen Aufladung der Debatte keine Chance auf Wandel sehe. Die Strukturen, die sich im politischen System BuHs etabliert hätten, seien so eingefahren, dass eine Änderung der politischen Verhältnisse des Landes nur durch ein „Generationsprojekt“ zu stemmen sei, wofür zunächst aber eine Rückkehr des Glaubens an den Staat BuH langfristig in den Köpfen vor allem der jüngeren Generation etabliert werden müsse. Solange also der Bildungsbereich spaltende Tendenzen befördere, könne sich nach Einschätzung Turčalos kein Konsens über die Zukunft des Landes herausbilden.

*Beharić* pflichtete *Turčalo* bei, dass das Bildungssystem BuHs nicht nur inhaltlich auf einem schlechten Niveau sei, sondern aufgrund der Spaltung auch die zukünftigen Wähler radikaler Parteien hervorbringen würde. In der Entität Republika Srpska hätten die liberal denken-

den Bürger laut *Malešević* Scheu, ihre Ablehnung des russischen Überfalls auf die Ukraine zu äußern. Mit der bestehenden russophilen Struktur in der Republika Srpska sehe sie die Chance auf Veränderung pessimistisch. Abschließend erklärte *Malešević*, dass sie die Einschätzung *Turčalos* teile, dass ohne eine grundlegende Reform des Bildungswesens eine Änderung der politischen Situation im Land unwahrscheinlich sei.

Zum Abschluss des Bosnien-Forums 2022 fand eine Vorführung der Filmproduktion des Theaterstücks „Was haben wir gelacht – Kollektives Erlebnis einer Belagerung“ statt. Das Theaterstück ist nach einer Idee der beiden in Berlin lebenden Künstlerinnen *Maja Zečo* und *Ina Arnautalić* entstanden und wurde 2021 uraufgeführt. Über ihre Entscheidung zur humoristischen Verarbeitung ihrer persönlichen Kriegs- und Belagerungserfahrungen im Bosnienkrieg (1992 – 1995) und ihre Erlebnisse sprachen *Zečo* und *Arnautalić* in einer anschließenden Filmgespräch.

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## Online Discussion

# Food Security in the Western Balkans and the Republic of Moldova

**Organizer: Southeast Europe Association, online via Zoom, 27 June 2022**

**Report by Viktoria Palm, Munich**

### Introduction

There is a global food crisis looming in the wake of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. Russia and Ukraine are two of the world's most important producers of grain, with a market share of about one quarter of global exports. Not only are harvests and exports from Ukraine negatively affected by the war; Russia has also restricted its own exports of grain and fertilizers. It is thus expected that Russia's actions will have dire consequences on global food markets. Poor countries who are net importers of food are expected to suffer the most from looming shortages, either directly as they depend on imports from Ukraine or Russia or

indirectly as market prices for food and other products rise. Against this background, the Southeast Europe Association organized an online panel discussion on 27 June 2022 to address the question to what extent the countries of the Western Balkans and the Republic of Moldova might be affected by the looming crisis and what national and intra-regional responses are at hand to avoid food security problems.

### Discussion

At the beginning of the discussion, *Stephan von Cramon-Taubadel*, Professor for Agricultural Policy and Director of the Department for Agricultural Economy and Rural Development at the

University of Göttingen, gave an overview of the current situation. He stated that due to the war around 30–35 million tons of grain will be missing in Ukraine's production, while the grain that is being produced is harder to export with export infrastructure being destroyed, resulting in an expected 40–42 million tons of grain being exported less than anticipated by Ukraine in the coming year. According to Cramon-Taubadel this coincides with a situation where world food markets are already tight, with prices on the rise since 2021 due to bad harvests in some world regions and global logistics still struggling with the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. It is expected that in 2023 and 2024 prices will be lower as compared to 2022, but still much higher and more volatile than in previous years. Asked about whether world markets could react quickly to the expected shortages, for instance by activating currently protected areas for agricultural purposes, Cramon-Taubadel voiced his doubts as according to him, additional output cannot be generated that quickly and acreage is still limited.

*Per Brodersen*, Director of the German Agribusiness Alliance at the German Eastern Business Association, took a closer look at Russia's agri-trade policy, which he described as a substantial component of Russian foreign policy. Russia plays an important role in global agritrade as an exporter of grain, fertilizers, agrimachinery, and energy. By restricting exports of grain, fertilizers, and energy in the wake of the war against Ukraine, Russia is using its position for political leverage. It is also suspected that Russia has stolen around 400–500,000 tons of grain from Ukrainian territory, offering it to Syria. At the same time, Russia is also an important consumer and destination market for food products from the SEE region, for instance tomatoes from Turkey or apples from Moldova, and has used this position several times to block imports based on different pretexts.

When looking at the Western Balkans region in particular, *Cramon-Taubadel* stated that the countries of the region are relatively independent from Russia and Ukraine in terms of grain imports (with the exception of Albania, which purchases around half of its cereal imports from Russia). Quite the contrary, Serbia is a se-

rious exporter of cereals itself, and will most likely be profiting from higher prices for its exports. However, even if not directly affected by import dependencies from Russia, the countries of the region will be affected indirectly by the war through higher food prices and rising energy prices. This holds especially true when considering that in the region the respective shares of household expenditures on food and beverages are very high, particularly in Montenegro, Kosovo, and Albania where the poorest households spend 50 percent or more of their incomes on nutrition. Furthermore, it is expected that the level of remittances from abroad will decline along with the revenues from tourism, as the region has usually been especially popular with tourists from Russia.

*Tatjana Brankov*, Associate Professor at the Department of Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness of the University of Novi Sad, took a closer look at the levels of food self-sufficiency of the countries in question. She reported that Serbia is a historically self-sufficient country in food production which could even provide the entire region. However, due to droughts and a lack of fertilizers, grain production is currently below usual levels in the entire region. The Republic of Moldova is also a net exporter of food products and thus independent from imports. Republika Srpska in Bosnia and Herzegovina is also self-sufficient in wheat production and has employed good policies to protect small and medium-sized farms, while BiH as a whole still has a large potential to increase the level of self-sufficiency. Albania and North Macedonia, too, have rather low levels of self-sufficiency in food products with Montenegro being the country with the lowest level in the SEE region as it produces only five percent of its own wheat consumption. However, only Albania depends heavily on imports from Russia and is thus directly affected by the war, while the other countries will most likely be affected only indirectly through rising prices on world markets.

### Possible Solutions

When asked about potential countermeasures to improve self-sufficiency levels and to prevent food shortages in the region and world-wide, *Brankov* suggested to increase investments in the food sectors of the region, especially in the

employment of new technologies. She furthermore recommended to establish a crisis committee to detect crises in the Western Balkans food systems at an early stage, to reduce the VAT (Value added tax) on certain products or to exempt them from custom duties. Additionally, she called for special attention on the speculation regarding food prices currently visible in the Western Balkans.

On a global scale, *Brodersen* argued to keep markets open and to abstain from using products needed in agricultural production for political leverage, such as spare parts for machinery products from Germany, which Russia depends on, as this would only aggravate the global food situation. He suggests that countermeasures against Russia's policies could be the diversification of energy supplies, an endeavor

in which the EU should support also the Western Balkans, as well as the easing of agritrade between the EU on the one side and the Western Balkans and Moldova on the other side to counteract Russia's position as an important consumer of certain goods.

*Cramon-Taubadel* argued that in the long run we will have to change our consumption patterns to relax the situation on global food markets, with less consumption of meat, which would in turn reduce the demand for grain as fodder. However, as consumption behavior cannot be changed immediately, governments should in the meantime provide targeted aid to poor households. Currently, products are scarce, which is why the question of distribution will inevitably arise.

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## Award Ceremony

# Solidarity Award 2022 for Journalists from Southeast Europe

**Organizer: Southeast Europe Association**

**Location: German Bundestag in Berlin with online live transmission, 7 July 2022**

**Report by *Wladimir Dirksen, München***

In a ceremony at the German Bundestag the Serbian journalist *Ivana Gordić Perc* was awarded the Solidarity Award of the Southeast Europe Association in honor of her courageous investigation about the exploitation of Vietnamese workers at the construction site of the Chinese tire factory Linglong International Europe Ltd in Zrenjanin, Serbia.<sup>1</sup>

The SOG Solidarity Award, which was first granted in 2021, honors courageous journalists from Southeast Europe who often expose themselves to great personal risks due to their critical reporting. It aims to celebrate their outstanding work and to recognize their contribution to the promotion of democracy, rule of law and freedom of the press. The award is also intended to

contribute to the protection of journalists on the ground through the public attention it attracts and to honor the great achievements of the award winners. With the award, the SOG wants to demonstrate that it stands by those who speak up for our European values such as freedom of the press and freedom of expression. The award is financed entirely through donations.

The winner of the Solidarity Award in 2022 *Ivana Gordić Perc* works at VOICE (the Vojvodina Research and Analytical Center) and has more than 20 years of experience in newspaper and radio journalism. She started her career in 1999 on Radio Zrenjanin from where she moved to the legendary Radio Coyote. In 2021, she uncov-

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<sup>1</sup> See also *Ivana Gordić Perc's* article in this issue, pp. 59–64 (editor's note).