

# Balkan Parliament 2005

## *About Balkan Parliament International Conference*

**B**y bridging cultural and ethnic barriers between the young people of the Balkan region, Balkan Parliament (<http://www.balkanparliament.org>) wants to inform the youth about the future of the Balkans and its cooperation with the EU, NATO, and other international and regional alliances.

With its strong emphasis on the regional and European integration, the highlight of the Balkan Parliament activities is a week-long Balkan Parliament International Conference in October, which includes both academic (lectures, workshops, panel discussions by prominent guests) and more practical role-playing activities (the evening simulation with about 100 actors; about 2-3 hours per day for 5 days, prepared and directed by Balkan Parliament's Academic Advisor, Prof. Ben DeDominicis).

While the academic component provides useful background information on the recent political developments in the Balkans, the simulation challenges the participants to role-play the leaders of their countries in a dynamic setting of negotiation, diplomacy and conflict resolution.

The project was started in 2001 as an initiative of the AUBG student body. The project obtained partial funding from the Open Society Institute in Budapest, which expired in 2003. Balkan Parliament 2004 was the first year when the project had to rely on third-parties' funding as well as AUBG support. However, it secured such prominent individuals as Mr. John Dimitry Panitza (Chairman of Free and Democratic Bulgaria Foundation) and Mr. Claude Janssen (Honorary Chairman and co-founder of INSEAD Business School, France) as its patrons, and relied on the private funding. For 2005 Balkan Parliament has again secured those individuals as its patrons, supplementing their contribution with a grant from the German Marshall Fund (through its Balkan Trust for Democracy arm).

Past speakers to Balkan Parliament included Richard Shriver, former Assistant Secretary at US Defense and Treasury Departments, Philip Dimitrov, former PM of Bulgaria, Martin Zaimov, former Chairman of the Currency Board, Aernout van Lynden, a prominent war correspondent, Maxim Behar, Chairman of Bulgarian Business Leaders Forum, Sasha Bezuhanova, Country Director for Hewlett Packard, Neil Buhne, UN Resident Coordinator for Bulgaria, and many others. 2005 promises to be the most successful Balkan Parliament ever with expected speakers ranging from Mark Medish (former Senior Director at the National Security Council in the US), James Brown (a prominent Oxford historian specializing on Eastern Europe), Timothy Garton Ash (via video-conference), Theodor Paleologu (a prominent Romanian philosopher and columnist), and many other guests.

Most importantly, since 2001 Balkan Parliament has brought more than 300 young people from over 30 countries to discuss the future of the Balkans. In addition, it has served as a valuable leadership and organizing experience to more than 40 student-organizers. While still functioning as a student organization, Balkan Parliament is due to take the shape of a foundation with a much broader agenda and activities over the coming year.