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LISBOAN

Linking Interdisciplinary Integration Studies by Broadening the European Academic Network

9th Guest Lecture

Prof. Dr. Wilfried Loth,
University of Duisburg-Essen (Partner no. 23)
hosted by
Prof. Dr. Nicolae Paun,
Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca (Partner no. 44)

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LISBOAN GUEST LECTURE – Prof. Wilfried Loth at Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca, 24 May 2013

On 24th May, 2013 Prof. Wilfried Loth from the University of Duisburg-Essen held a Guest Lecture at the Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca on “European identity: Traditions, experiences, and prospects”. The lecture was attended by approximately 150 persons, mostly from the university.

Prof. Loth argued that the European’s contemporary identity has primarily been determined by the contrast between European traditions in the form of Christianity and the Enlightenment on the one hand and the catastrophes of the twentieth century on the other. Central to the understanding of the European Union and its dynamics is the realization that the process of European unification arose in resistance to the National Socialist domination of Europe. Key motives of the unification movement were the restoration and safeguarding of democracy in Europe, the preservation of peace and the self-assertion of the European nations. Despite numerous disruptions, it were these motives which led to the establishment of the European Community and, finally, they were also decisive for the development of that Community into today’s “EU 27”. Since the middle of the 1980s, the European Community has been understood more and more as a community of values committed to pluralism and democratic freedoms, the rule of law, human rights, and the protection of minorities. To that extent, a common constitutional inheritance arose from the discussions of recent decades and has resulted in a kind of constitutional patriotism on the European level. This European patriotism, which expresses commitment to a system of values rather than being based on an emotional affinity, is compatible with national patriotism. In this regard, one can certainly speak of European identity in the singular. This is not a holistic conception of identity but instead a universal one which respects national identities and the achievements of nations and the nation-states. As far as we can anticipate, European identity will therefore not simply replace national identities. Instead, it becomes apparent that people in Europe live with a multi-layered identity, one that combines regional, national, and European elements.

Further to the lecture, Prof. Loth discussed with about 25 students of the German line of the Faculty of European Studies the problems of multi-layered identities in a region as Transylvania where different national traditions (Romanian, Hungarian, and German) are both conflicting and working at shaping identities. Prof. Loth insisted on the necessity not to simply adapt to a Western European model (which doesn’t exist) but instead to organize the own society in the light of the common European heritage. A discussion with the professors of the Faculty (15 attending) concentrated on the lessons of the German experience in coping with a criminal past and on possibilities of co-operation between Cluj-Napoca and Duisburg-Essen in the future. At a solemn ceremony in the Aula Magna of the University Prof. Loth was decorated as “doctor honoris causa” of the University of Cluj-Napoca.