



College of Europe  
Collège d'Europe

Brugge



Natolin



Funded by  
the European Union

TIRANA CAMPUS



**Briefing note - Working Party on the Western Balkans Region (COWEB), 11 November 2024**

## **College of Europe – Tirana campus**

### *Background and rationale*

The idea of establishing a Master's programme on a new College of Europe campus in Tirana was first raised by Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama and Commission President Ursula von der Leyen during the December 2022 EU-Western Balkans Summit. The financial support required for the project was later confirmed by Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Olivér Várhelyi during the EU-Albania Stabilisation and Association Council in March 2023. Against this backdrop, in October 2023, the Administrative Council of the College of Europe took the decision to establish a branch of the foundation in Albania, centered around a new, tailored academic offer. At the EU-Western Balkans Summit of December 2023, with the College of Europe campus project mentioned in the leader's final declaration, most EU Member States pledged scholarships for the new programme.

The **Master of Arts in European Transformation and Integration (ETI)**, with the subtitle "The EU and Southeastern Europe", has been developed in a multi-stage process of consultation with all relevant stakeholders and after considering the currently existing academic offer at universities in the region and in Europe at large. The programme is a response to the growing need to combine expertise on the EU and the Western Balkans. It will not only target students from the EU or the region but also those who come from other parts of the world and could benefit greatly from the unique academic offer of this programme.

The commitment from the Albanian Government and the European Commission as well as the long history of the College in supporting the EU accession process of candidate countries provide a strong assurance for the successful establishment and development of this project. Moreover, the unprecedentedly positive reaction of the European Commission, Governments of EU Member States and Western Balkans partners as well as other stakeholders to the call to grant scholarships for students - around 30 scholarships have been announced so far - is another proof of the programme meeting current needs.

Admissions to the first year of the new Master's programme were launched in October 2023 by the President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, Prime Minister of Albania Edi Rama and Rector of the College of Europe Federica Mogherini. During the event, President von der Leyen highlighted the importance of the project to Albania and the Western Balkans at large by noting that "adding a College of Europe in pursuit of higher education and excellence can only contribute to the development and prosperity of Albania and the region at large. But also, because the College of Europe will also reinforce all the efforts being made to bring Albania and the region into the European Union". She also underscored that graduates from the Tirana campus of the College will not only contribute to the development of not only the Western Balkans but also the European Union: "Tomorrow, this next generation will work on our common project, the European Union."

During the first academic year (2024-2025), 32 students started their academic journey at the Tirana campus. In line with the motto of "studying and living Europe together", the College of Europe

is dedicated to creating a diverse and stimulating living and learning environment for all students. This appreciation for diversity is well reflected in the background of the inaugural cohort of the ETI programme. In the first academic year, the 32 admitted ETI candidates hold 21 different nationalities. The most represented nationalities are Albanian (8), Italian (5), Macedonian (4), Belgian (3) and Croatian (3). Bosnia and Herzegovina, Germany, Kosovo, Spain and Sweden are represented with two nationals each. Austria, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Cyprus, France, Greece, Ireland, Montenegro, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States will be represented with one national each. Overall, 15 (47%) of the admitted ETI candidates hold EU nationalities (only), 8 (25%) of them hold a nationality of the Western Balkans Six only and another 8 (25%) have both EU and Western Balkan nationalities.

### Mission

The mission of the MA European Transformation and Integration is twofold.

First, as an ambitious and highly student-centred academic programme, it aims to prepare graduates for leadership positions both in the public and private sectors. These include top negotiators, policymakers, consultants and experts in areas of high salience for European transformation and integration, especially with respect to EU-Western Balkans relations. Through its unique “College formula”, the Tirana Campus of the College of Europe will ensure that, for a duration of 10 months, its students – living together – will follow an intensive and challenging programme in a stimulating educational environment. The curriculum prepares students for their professional careers in an increasingly integrated Europe. Furthermore, the programme will also train students to conduct research on the prospects of European transformation and integration, with a specific geographic focus on Southeastern Europe.

Second, the Tirana campus aims at fulfilling the more overarching objectives of the College within a specific Southeastern European context. As such, it aims to contribute to the construction of a united Europe through teaching about European affairs, to facilitate critical debates about European integration and enlargement, and to forge lasting bonds between students of different nationalities coming from a diverse set of backgrounds – sharing the same unique College experience. This academic programme, and the College in general, will further serve this mission by providing scholarly contributions on critical European transformation and integration issues, high-level executive trainings and the organisation of high-profile public events on topical European issues.

### Key facts

Below are presented some key facts on the first academic year and the projections for the future:

- Inaugural cohort of 32 students (living in dormitory close to the temporary teaching facilities at the University of Tirana); 21 different nationalities represented;
- Currently, 95% of students are beneficiaries of full or partial scholarships;
- Master’s accredited by the Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organisation (NVAO);
- Projected growth for the next academic year 2025-26 with up to 55 students (in a new dormitory);
- Long-term campus buildings under construction (for 100+ students), projected completion in 2026.

*Annexes: Academic programme of ETI, academic year 2024-25; brochure of the College of Europe - admission cycle 2025.*