

General Topic 2025:

NATION AND NARRATION IN EUROPE
Language, Culture and Identity in the Pursuit of Europeanisation

Bovec, July 13 – 27 2025

In the period following the Second World War and the defeat of Nazifascism, European countries have adhered to the European Union and its predecessor institutions have experienced a relatively stable period of widespread economic prosperity and social well-being. Implementing peace, democracy, the rule of law, and a stable market economy that respects workers' rights has contributed to this achievement, along with a social welfare system that guarantees citizens access to education, healthcare, and social protection, especially for vulnerable groups, as well as human rights and freedom. All these factors have fostered entrepreneurship, innovation, and creativity, while concurrently supporting the political, economic, and social emancipation of women and minority groups. The European integration process lies at the core of these achievements. Whilst the European Union would require reforms in many aspects, it is now being questioned in its entirety by narratives that oversimplify complex social phenomena and economic problems by reducing them to simple explanations. Most tendencies share a nationalistic approach that frames economic and social problems as solely national problems and cultural conflicts, spreading divisive narratives based on fear and resentment.

Nationalism should not be equated with nation-building, national liberation movements, or 19th-century liberal movements. As an ideology, nationalism promises a simple, but unrealistic salvation: if we have one nation, one language, one culture, in one state and close our borders to the others, all problems will magically disappear. It generally promotes a patriarchal perspective, representing a regression in gender equality. It has often racist elements and tends to identify scapegoats whose exclusion would apparently resolve all societal issues; in the present context, these groups include refugees, migrants, Muslims, the LGBTIQ+ community and feminists. As to the European Union: One objective of most nationalist, far-right movements is to dismantle it. However, how can individual states tackle complex challenges such as economic crises, climate change, limited resources, terrorism, data, AI's challenges, cyber-attacks and fake news? The capacity of individual European states to contend with the resurgence of aggressive imperialistic politics, in combination with hybrid warfare, election sabotage and misinformation – as evidenced by Russia's current political agenda and ongoing invasion of Ukraine – remains unclear.

Questions abound here: How did we get here? Is it all due to historical amnesia or once again to the politics of fear and envy? Are our political systems to blame, too? And why do so many people support far-right movements? Why are movements denying equal treatment of women and the recognition of minorities currently popular? Other questions relate to potential future developments and actions: how and what to do?

Universities have a big role to play, especially as anti-science attitudes grow. Through research, teaching and sharing knowledge, they play a key part in developing ideas and methods that support democracy, the rule of law, human rights, diversity, and peace.

The Bovec Summer School plays a vital role in these efforts, with its 2025 edition focusing on the question of agency and potential action areas. Guiding the edition is the question: What narrative of the nation can foster Europe's peace project, democracy and wellbeing, and integration? We will explore how language, politics, culture in its various manifestations, communications and diplomacy support democracy, freedom, economic and social wellbeing, and diversity. The Bovec Summer School will address issues such as multilingualism, cultural heritage, politics of remembrance, and the hybrid and interconnected nature of cultures.

The Summer School is located in the Alps-Adriatic region, a crossroads of three distinct linguistic families (i.e. the German, Slavic and Roman) and a microcosm of the European continent, reflecting its history of both conflict and cooperation. The region's history has shaped it into an interconnected territory, making it a valuable study of language, culture and geopolitics. Bovec Summer School's deliberate location within the triangle border region of Slovenia, Italy and Austria reflects the region's historical, linguistic, cultural, and political characteristics. It also expresses a commitment to cooperation and transcending divisive boundaries. The Bovec Summer School is based on the idea that borders can be more than simply barriers; they can also create opportunities for interaction and discovery, inspiring curiosity about what lies outside these limits. This unique initiative is a collaboration between seven universities across four countries: Klagenfurt, Ljubljana, Koper, Trieste, Udine, Rijeka, and Osijek. It offers a five-language curriculum: German, Slovene, Italian, Croatian and Furlan. Since 1994, the Summer School has provided a unique cross-border space, with its dynamic combination of multilingualism in practice, a transcultural approach, and a historical awareness of the devastating effects of war, the fruitful impact of peace, democracy, and cooperation.

In times of the re-emergence of political positions that were thought to have been rendered obsolete in the post-1945 era in Europe, the Bovec Summer School aims to equip its participants not only with linguistic proficiency, transcultural concepts, and multidisciplinary scientific insights, but also with the confidence and empowerment to address the significant challenges we face today.



Assoc. Prof. Dr. Cristina Beretta M.A.

Scientific Director of International Bovec Summer School

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