

Issue 10, January 2016

Editorial



As this is the last newsletter before I retire in March, my colleagues have kindly allowed me to share my thoughts on the Schools which it has been my privilege to work with for over five years. I've worked at the Council of Europe for over twenty years and I can safely say that working with the Schools of Political Studies has been one of the most meaningful of all my missions. I have been particularly impressed by how Schools' directors and participants, coming from such different parts of Europe, and now beyond too, have been able to build links, especially between countries which are experiencing either frozen or, sadly, thawing conflicts.

I am aware that many Schools are operating in conditions which may be very challenging, either for political or economic reasons. In many cases the Council of Europe as an intergovernmental organisation is doing all it can to address the issues and to ensure that the rule of law operates everywhere. At the same time, I have felt that it is the responsibility of all the Council of Europe staff, at all levels of responsibility, to carry out our tasks with commitment and respect. This may just mean responding rapidly to requests or it may mean using all our energies to try to identify new and better ways to support the Schools.

Many commentators are predicting difficult times ahead in 2016 throughout our planet and, indeed, for our planet. It's not always easy to remain optimistic when we are bombarded with information about a seemingly limitless number of threats. But this is why the Schools are more important than ever – we offer a small oasis of dialogue, communication and vision for a democratic future. This is exactly what our beleaguered world needs! I wish you all very well and I'm sure that in one way or another I will remain contact with you.

Ruth Goodwin,
Finance Officer

Schools' Directors forge links with the Human Rights Commissioner



On the eve of the 4th Strasbourg World Forum for Democracy (18-20 November 2015), the **Directors of the Schools of Political Studies had the privilege to meet with Mr Nils Muižnieks,**

Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, in order to learn about his work and **explore ways in which the Schools could work more closely with the Commissioner's Office.** Mr Muižnieks presented his current priorities and areas of concern which include migration, asylum for refugees, surveillance laws and gender equality – issues which are of high relevance to the School countries too. The meeting also offered an opportunity to **discuss the challenging political contexts** in which several Schools of the Network operate.

SPS Network met in Berlin 'In Search of Lost Universalism'



The Association of Schools of Political Studies, at the initiative of the Moscow School of Civic Education, and with the support of the Robert Bosch Stiftung, held an **International Forum "In**

Search of Lost Universalism" in Berlin, on 28 and 29 October 2015. Over **200 representatives of the Schools of Political Studies from 21 countries,** along with ambassadors, eminent scholars and opinion-makers from Finland, France, Germany, Norway, Sweden and United Kingdom, **discussed the crisis of values in European society.** The Forum started from the presumption that there are many cultures – yet only one civilisation, founded on human rights, freedom, the rule of law and democracy. This civilisation needs to be constantly reinvigorated. **Discussion panels explored the evolution of the contemporary world, history and memory, media and propaganda, and democracy and civic education.** Discussions in different formats included keynote addresses by German Minister of Foreign Affairs, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Director of Policy Planning of the Council of Europe, Matjaž Gruden, and the President of the Association of Schools, Catherine Lalumière.

FOCUS ON THE WORLD FORUM FOR DEMOCRACY

The annual Strasbourg event brought together 500 School participants



The 4th World Forum for Democracy “Freedom vs control: For a democratic response” (18-20 November 2015) offered an occasion for 500 participants of the Schools of Political Studies to explore, with numerous other international personalities, **the necessary balance between security and freedom** in a democratic society under threat. The Forum also provided opportunities for the Schools’ participants to congregate in a series of **meetings organised specifically for them including four thematic sessions** on aspects of democratic security and stability:

- [The human rights dimension of migration in Europe;](#)
- [Democratic security in Europe, regional perspectives;](#)
- [The future of liberal democracy and civil society activism in Europe;](#)
- [Decentralisation and democratic local governance: exchange of best practices and perspectives.](#)

The film “GaraSH” by Belarusian film director and participant of the East-European School of Political Studies, Andrei Kureichik, was screened at a session entitled “**Paradoxes of self-identification of people in the post-Soviet space**”. The screening was followed by a stimulating discussion on soviet mentalities and western values.

The programme of special events also included **meetings with judges or lawyers of the European Court of Human Rights, a speed networking exercise by profession and bilateral meetings** where School participants were able to discuss issues of common interest and establish contacts for future co-operation.

A solemn but lively **diploma ceremony**, during which the Secretary General handed certificates to School participants, marked their completion of the 2015 Schools cycle and **reaffirmed the strong commitment of the Council of Europe to the Schools of Political Studies Network.**

SPS contribute to the main Forum programme with a Lab on migration policies



As part of the Forum’s official programme, a special lab “**A call for effective and just migration policies in Europe**” was co-organised by the Schools of Political Studies of **Bulgaria, Greece, Tunisia and Morocco**. In the context of the refugee crisis unfolding in Europe since the summer of 2015, **the lab explored the migration processes and political options needed to introduce effective and just migration policies grounded in human rights and the rule of law.** It presented specific initiatives for refugees in transit and destination countries and a perspective from Northern Africa. The lab also **offered an overview of the main outcomes of the Summer Academy for Strengthening Democracy in the Euro-Med Region**, a joint

project of the Bulgarian, Tunisian and Moroccan Schools, which presented the analysis of the security situation in the Euro-Mediterranean region, the risks facing the region as well as specific measures that ought to be implemented.

ALUMNI CORNER

Civic Roundtable Project: a new event for Schools' alumni in 2016



In 2016 the annual **International Alumni Seminar** of the Network of Schools of Political Studies will evolve into a **broader pan-European programme** for young leaders on the current

state of **European and global governance**. The programme is based on the conviction that most national challenges, as well as responses to these challenges, have cross border causes and consequences. Given this pan-European and international dynamic, the Civic Roundtable will offer selected SPS alumni and other young leaders a **platform to study trends and challenges, to start building a peer resource network and to experiment on ways to forge a better civics across Europe and beyond**. The Civic Roundtable will be implemented by the **European School of Politics in Istanbul** in close collaboration with the Council of Europe and the Network of Schools of Political Studies. The first Roundtables are planned in **Berlin and Strasbourg in May and June 2016**.

2015 International SPS Alumni Seminar addressed today's threats to democracy



The **second Alumni Seminar** of the Council of Europe Schools of Political Studies took place in **Sarajevo from 25-26 June 2015** and explored ways of **"Defending Democracy, Freedom and Human**

Dignity against Internal and External Threats". The event brought together alumni from the 21 Schools of Political Studies. Participants **addressed the root causes of radicalisation** in democratic societies and **explored ways of protecting societies without undermining democracy**. A separate session was devoted to the promotion of women's rights and the fight against domestic violence. The seminar concluded with a **brainstorming round table on the development of the Schools' Network**, in particular its alumni dimension, and with a special visit to the UNESCO World Heritage Old Mostar Bridge. **The detailed report of the seminar is available on the [SPS website](#).**

FOCUS

ON ALUMNI OF THE YEREVAN SCHOOL OF POLITICAL STUDIES (UP TO DECEMBER 2015)

Vahe Enfiadjyan, MP, National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia

Aram Ghazaryan, Director, "AR" TV Company

Artak Ghazaryan, Director, USAID / Armenia Pension Reform Implementation Programme

Edgar Ghazaryan, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia to the Republic of Poland; Former Governor of Vayots-Dzor Region (2012-2014)

Tsovinar Hambardzumyan, Head of External Relations Department, Office to the President of the Republic of Armenia

Artsrun Hovhannisyan, Official Representative, Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Armenia

Haykaz Khachikyan, City Mayor, Lori Region of the Republic of Armenia

Irina Kocharyan, Member of the Council of Elders of Yerevan

Bishop **Hovakim Manukyan**, Primate of the Armenian Diocese of Great Britain

Artsvik Minasyan, MP, Deputy Chair of the Committee on Financial, Credit and Budgetary Affairs of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia
Sergey Minasyan, Political Analyst

Zaruhi Postanjyan, MP, National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia

Iren Sargsyan, Notary of Ajapnyak District, Yerevan, Republic of Armenia

Menua Soghomonyan, Academic Secretary of Yerevan State University

Shahen Tonoyan, Prosecutor of Ararat Region of the Republic of Armenia

Shirak Torosyan, MP, National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia

Hrayr Tovmasyan, Chief of Staff, General Secretary of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia; Former Minister of Justice of the Republic of Armenia (2011-2014)

Taguhi Tovmasyan, Founding Director and Chief Editor, "People" Newspaper

Artem Yerkanyan, Political Analyst

Artak Zakaryan, MP, Chairman of the Standing Committee on Foreign Relations of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia



The Association of Schools welcomes the newly created Western African School

The Civic School of Western Africa (ECAO), which took its inspiration from the Council of Europe Network of Schools of Political Studies, held its inaugural seminar on 14-17 December 2015 in Lomé, Togo. The School is an independent initiative supported by the *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie* (OIF) which aims to prepare young leaders to meet future challenges of African societies. It is a regional project by its very nature as participants are recruited from the eight French-speaking Western African countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo. The new School has been invited to join the Association of Schools of Political Studies to share experiences and best-practices with other members of the Network.

Recent publications from the Schools

In 2015, the Visegrád School of Political Studies (VSPS) published in English its first compilation of policy papers prepared by School alumni and participants of the “V4 Meets EaP Programme”. The publication includes essays on “The Role of Cultural Diplomacy in the V4 Countries”, “Corruption and Transparency in the Visegrád Region”, “V4 Promoting Democracy and Sharing Transition Experience” and “Ukraine in the European Security Architecture”. These and many other thought-provoking pieces are available on the [VSPS website](#).

The guidebook “[How to participate efficiently?](#)” has been published by the regional initiative “Public Dialogue on the Sustainable Use of Energy in South-East Europe” which was carried out by the seven Schools of the Western Balkans with the support of the German Agency for International Co-operation (GIZ) and German Federal Environmental Foundation (DBU). The guide presents an overview on **civil society participation in the creation of public policies on energy efficiency** and provides proposals and recommendations on **how to encourage and better organise public dialogue**.

CONTACTS

DIRECTORATE OF POLICY PLANNING (DPP)

Matjaž Gruden

Director

matjaz.gruden(at)coe.int
+33 (0) 3 88 41 21 18

Michael Remmert

Deputy to the Director

michael.remmert(at)coe.int
+33 (0) 3 88 41 34 05

Ruth Goodwin

Finance Officer

ruth.goodwin(at)coe.int
+33 (0) 3 88 41 34 96

Yuliya Kochneva

Project Assistant

yuliya.kochneva(at)coe.int
+33 (0) 3 88 41 21 89

Suzette Saint-Marc

Project Assistant

suzette.saint-marc(at)coe.int
+33 (0) 3 88 41 28 67

ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF POLITICAL STUDIES

Jack Hanning

Secretary General

jack.hanning(at)gmail.com
+33 (0) 6 75 79 73 27

www.schoolsofpoliticalstudies.eu

ABOUT THE SCHOOLS OF POLITICAL STUDIES

The Council of Europe Schools of Political Studies train future generations of political, economic, social, cultural and environmental leaders in countries in transition. They run seminars and conferences on democracy, human rights and the rule of law. The first School was created by civil society activists in Moscow in 1992 and since then 20 further Schools have been established. The Schools' Network now covers the whole of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the countries of the Visegrád Group, the Caucasus and the Southern Mediterranean region.

The twenty-one Schools are (in order of their founding): [Russian Federation](#); [Georgia](#); [Bulgaria](#); “[The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia](#)”; [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#); [Moldova](#); [Kosovo*](#); [Serbia](#); [Romania](#); [Croatia](#); [Armenia](#); [Ukraine](#); [Azerbaijan](#); [Albania](#); [Montenegro](#); [Belarus](#); [Tunisia](#); [Morocco](#); the countries of the [Visegrád group](#); [Turkey](#) and [Greece](#). [*All references to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.]

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