

Issue 5, January 2014

## Editorial



Dear friends,

With this fifth edition of the Schools' Newsletter I take the opportunity to wish you a successful year ahead. The past year has been a **landmark year for the Schools' Network** with three new Schools opening: in Tunisia and

Morocco in the Maghreb region, and the first ever regional School serving the Visegrád countries. Indeed, the **regional dimension of our work is flourishing** with the completion of the first cycle of the Western Balkans' Regional Academy for Democracy 'Shaping the European Future of the Balkans – Building a New Political Culture and Political Elite' and the organisation by the Tunisian and Moroccan Schools of the first Middle-East and North Africa regional seminar on 'Understanding the Arab Spring and its impact'.

2013 also represents a **milestone for the Moscow School of Civic Education**, which celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. As Moscow was the first School ever, this is also an anniversary for all the Schools. But sadly, not all anniversaries are so cheerful: it is now **one year since Ilgar Mammadov**, Director of the Baku School of Political Studies, was imprisoned on politically-motivated charges.

Apart from this sad fact, 2014 starts well for the Schools: **the Committee of Ministers has identified the Schools of Political Studies as a priority activity** for the Council of Europe and has increased the budget available to them. As well as being able to make a bigger contribution to the national annual seminar cycles, we are now in a position to take forward our goal to **strengthen alumni involvement in the Network**: the first Network alumni seminar for all Schools will take place in Strasbourg in June 2014. Also, as from the present issue, this Newsletter features an '**Alumni column**' – the first one, on page 3 includes an article by Mikhail Minakov, alumnus of the Moscow School (2010) and of the Ukrainian School (2006), on the implications of the current events in Ukraine on the concept of 'One Europe'.

A further priority for 2014 is to develop **peer-support activities between Schools**, particularly between new and well-established schools. An exciting initiative in this context is the Agreement between the Bulgarian and Moroccan Schools, concluded in Strasbourg last November.

Ambassador Piotr Świtalski

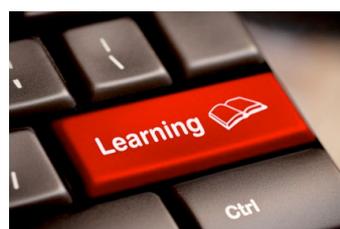
## Peer support between well-established and new Schools: Bulgarian and Moroccan SPS sign co-operation agreement



In the margins of the Strasbourg World Forum for Democracy (27-29 November 2013), **an agreement for strategic co-operation** between the Bulgarian School of Politics "Dimitry Panitzka"

and the Citizenship School of Political Studies in Morocco was signed by both Directors to consolidate their efforts to develop new joint programmes and initiatives. The Bulgarian School will **share its experience in carrying out high quality training** for young leaders and will also **stimulate exchange of expertise and knowledge between the two Schools' participants and alumni**. This programme follows the successful peer support initiative between the Bulgarian and Tunisian School of Politics which came into even prior to official launching of the Tunisian School.

## E-learning programmes embraced by Schools of Political Studies



Rapid technological change and a constantly growing number of course applicants are leading the Schools of Political Studies to explore new educational

opportunities and several Schools have begun to **develop online tools for their participants**. From February 2014, the Moscow School of Civic Education launches a **weekly i-class programme offering online seminars and discussions** with prominent Russian and international experts, work in groups, and essay writing. Throughout the year, i-class participants will discuss the concept of a modern state, political and civic culture, as well as global challenges to democracy. This initiative builds on two years of successful implementation of a distance learning programme which has been completed by more than 600 participants from 17 countries, some of whom have then joined the SPS Alumni community.

## FOCUS ON THE WORLD FORUM FOR DEMOCRACY

Over 500 SPS participants attended the 2<sup>nd</sup> World Forum for Democracy



*Family Photograph of the Schools of Political Studies*

The second edition of the World Forum for Democracy (27-29 November 2013) offered an occasion for **about 500 participants of the Schools of Political Studies** to explore, with numerous other international personalities, issues relevant to citizens' participation in the digital age. As part of the Forum's official programme, a **special plenary session was held to present the Network of Schools of Political Studies**, in particular its activities and innovative projects, to a wider public.

In addition, the Forum provided opportunities for the Schools' participants to congregate in a series of meetings specifically organised for them in order to discuss issues of common interest. The four **regional meetings addressed a major challenge to democracy faced by each region**:

- [May we really speak about a "backdrop" of human rights and democracy in countries of the post-soviet space?](#)
- [How to eradicate corruption in the Western Balkans?](#)
- [What should be done to confront hate-speech and populism in EU countries?](#)
- [How are Northern African countries going through their democratisation processes after the Arab spring?](#)

The programme of special events also included **meetings with judges or lawyers of the European Court of Human Rights**, and information about the Schools was available at a **Stand at the Democracy Innovation Fair**. The enthusiasm and active participation of the participants from the Schools could be felt throughout the Forum event.



*Forum's plenary session on the Network of Schools*



*SPS Stand at the Democracy Innovation Fair*

### Discover Schools' participants impressions about the World Forum for Democracy

Videos of the interviews are available online at: [www.schoolsofpoliticalstudies.eu](http://www.schoolsofpoliticalstudies.eu)



## ALUMNI CORNER



### One Europe is in Danger

By Mikhail Minakov

*President of the Foundation for Good Politics, Kyiv and Associate Professor of Philosophy and Religion at the [Ukrainian National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy \(NaUKMA\)](#). Mikhail Minakov is the author of three books and over fifty articles on political and cultural analysis, philosophy and history. He is an alumnus of the Moscow School (2010) and of the Ukrainian School (2006).*

The idea of One Europe is under threat once again. Today, the risk comes from consolidating post-Soviet authoritarianisms and their emerging friendship with ultra-conservative parties in EU member states.

Post-Soviet fragmented societies and self-defeating oligarchies have provided an accommodating environment for the development of corporate states with authoritarian rulers. Resources of the East are uniting to create an ultra-conservative alternative to the modern and rights based Europe. This trend is a menace to the entire European space: both to the new nations of Eastern Europe as well as to the values of the longer established democracies.

With the fall of communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe, the idea of One Europe from Dublin to Vladivostok has its chance to become reality. However, the post-communist modernisation turned out to have ambivalent results. On one hand, the Change of 1989-1991 provided former the Eastern Bloc with an opportunity for state-building based on political and economic freedoms. On the other hand, in the absence of effective democratic institutions, these freedoms were subject to abuse from enemies of democracy.

For a long time, the enemies of democratic development were not seen as a real threat to the major direction of Europe's progress. In the 1990s the Central European and Baltic countries made a leap into institutionalised democracy. In the early 2000s the Balkan nations began to cope with nationalist regimes. Post-Soviet coloured revolutions have brought a hope for democracy to Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan, as well as to their neighbours. It looked like democratisation of the big Europe could not be halted.

But with the global economic crises of 2008, the new democracies of the East proved to be too vulnerable to anti-democratic reactions. Authoritarian regimes have managed to overcome the

regional trend towards democratisation. Coloured revolutions failed; their leaders left party politics. The winners dropped their democratic façade and their modernisation rhetoric. They came forward with a new agenda of neo-traditionalist ideology promoting intolerance, collectivism and clericalism.

At the same time, in Western Europe the crisis has also fostered radical conservatism. This trend has less open anti-European propaganda, but is nonetheless more open to the values of Kremlin and its allies.

In times of socio-economic crisis, conservatism is a natural and legitimate response to difficult social and economic issues. In a way, it helps restore the misbalances of fast-changing societies. In dialectical competition and co-operation with liberalism and social democracy, conservatism is a necessary element of the contemporary political system.

However, ultra-conservative Europe acts as a competitor to conservatism as well. It is grounded in values which pay lip service to tradition but which function as an excuse for violence against human rights, tolerance, and democratic institutions. By constructing the 'local tradition' as ideology of authoritarian rule, the ultra-conservatives claim tradition's superiority over individual rights, and come up with 'sovereign democracy' type ideologies.

Eastern Europe today is a laboratory of ultra-conservative regimes. These regimes share the same models of the institutional set-up of politics and economics. Tested in Belarus and Turkmenistan, the model of 'vertical power' managed to overcome the separation of powers and established an undisputed authoritarian rule. The vertical merges legislative and judiciary systems with the executive one, and subjugates local self-governance to central government.

Concentration of control over access to main resources in one hand is possible if civil society organisations and private sector are silenced. The ultra-

conservative regimes monopolise control over sources of funding for civic organisations and mass media. At the same time, the big private sector players are controlled and foreign sources of support are prohibited. Once this is achieved, the regimes hold elections which are theatrical rituals of self-legitimation, the judicial courts show permanent obedience and the parliaments rubber-stamp government decrees.

These political regimes evolve in parallel with a deterioration of the free market and the pluralism of economic life. Step by step, small and medium sized businesses are pushed to the margins while state corporations gain control of most national resources.

Overall, ultra-conservative regimes promote the de-modernisation of political, social, economic, and cultural life. This de-modernisation model is being implemented successfully in Russia, Kazakhstan, Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Their success is a result of cooperation and mutual support between regimes. The post-Soviet integration projects were ineffective in all but one dimension: the power elites have always been able to find possibilities to enforce each other's rule. This is especially clear in Ukraine, where Russia's financial support to the Yanukovich regime was followed by most effective anti-democratic institutes.

The current situation in Ukraine provides democratic One Europe with an opportunity to re-adjust regional development and undermine the ultra-conservative approach. The millions of Ukrainian protesters need support from near and far neighbors to reverse the anti-democratic impulse and make the European idea stronger and more effective in its promotion of rights and liberties.

The danger is already here, in our European house. The democratic forces need to take the risk and work together to re-unite One Europe into a more integrated and democratic region.



## NEW PUBLICATIONS

### Report of the Middle East and North Africa Regional seminar ‘Understanding the Arab Spring and its impact’ provides an enlightening review of the region

The analytical report ‘Understanding the Arab Spring and its impact’, prepared by Matthieu Cimino, Science Po Paris, presents the main topics discussed at the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Regional Seminar which was organised in November 2013 by the Tunisian School of Politics, in co-operation with the Moroccan School. It provides a thorough analysis of the political trends in the region, the development of constitutional processes and the state of fundamental rights and freedoms. This seminar was organised with the support of the Council of Europe/EU South Programme. The report is available online at: [www.schoolsofpoliticalstudies.eu](http://www.schoolsofpoliticalstudies.eu).

### Recent publications from the Schools:

#### ‘Participation of Women in Public and Political Life in the Republic of Armenia’

This national report, produced by the Yerevan School of Political Studies, analyses the existing incentives and obstacles to women’s participation in public and political life and assesses the public perception of the role of women in governance.

#### ‘Reflection of National Energy Efficiency Policies at the Local Level’

Published by the Pristina Institute for Political Studies, the report produces an analysis by Dr. Sc. Naser Sahiti, Associate Professor at the University of Pristina, of the energy efficiency strategies of local and international institutions.

### ‘Open Thoughts Papers’ from DPP (selection):

- **Global Challenges and their Impact on Human Rights**, December 2013
- **The Council of Europe and Co-operation with Civil Society**, November 2013
- **Kosovo’s\* path to the Council of Europe**, October 2013
- **The Council of Europe: Time for Reform**, May 2013
- **The Russian Federation and the Council of Europe**, February 2013

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## 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 18 further Schools have been created. 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 nineteen 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 and the countries of the Visegrád group.** [\*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.]

For more information and to subscribe to the Newsletter, please go to the [Schools of Political Studies website](http://www.schoolsofpoliticalstudies.eu).