

# DESCnet

Jean Monnet Network DESCnet  
Developing European Studies in the Caucasus  
Newsletter 3/2017

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# 1 – Editorial

Dear friends of the DESCnet Project!

Allow me to extend my warmest greetings to the readers of the 7<sup>th</sup> issue of our DESCnet Newsletter. Almost two years after the inauguration of our project, it is a great pleasure to see that the seeds planted by so many colleagues and partner institutions from both the region and the EU are flourishing in various forms. On the one hand, the activities of our project, particularly the teaching events, have not only provided perfect platforms for the study of European Studies in the Caucasus in a multi-disciplinary manner. Those events have offered excellent opportunities for international and multicultural exchange, creating ideal conditions for dealing with the subjects taught at those events as well as for the equally important aspect of social learning. The 2017 Summer School at Yerevan State University was a case in point: With an unprecedentedly diverse student body, the participants not only focused on individual research interests but also began to go beyond their field of study, even starting to reflect critically about persistent collective narratives. The programme involved both students from Georgia as well as students residing in the disputed territory of Abkhazia. This way, the 2017 Summer School in Yerevan proved to engage not only with the designated subject revolving around energy security in the Caucasus, but also with the societal and political challenges of the region as a whole in practice.

On the other hand, the first Annual Convention of the AESC at Yeditepe University in April 2017 illustrated the scientific excellence of the project consortium. Moreover, it provided an ideal academic platform for young scholars not directly associated with the project to present and discuss their research and thoughts on challenges and opportunities of Europeanisation in the Caucasus. Precisely this intersection and outreach to the wider academic world makes the DESCnet approach so valuable: Setting a clear signal against the fragmentation of European Studies in the Caucasus, enhancing the exchange and mobility of scholars and students alike and supporting already existing academic infrastructures.

Indeed, the political issues that dominate the region and its path to Europeanisation underline the continued need for consolidating this academic approach in the future as well. It is a common phenomenon: Topics of crises appear on and disappear from the news following the acuteness of the word “crisis” which implies an only temporary state. When considering the bumpy road of the Caucasus countries’ different Europeanisation pathways, however, this reading of “crisis” seems to be a misleading conception: The consequences and implications involved in many of those crises are often protracted as well as systemic and involve different areas, which are associated with one another. Sometimes, these issues may span over different regions, originating in one spot and reverberating elsewhere.

This can be handsomely exemplified by the current feud between Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko and the former Georgian President and Governor of the Odessa region, Mikhail Saakashvili. Along with other members of the former Saakashvili government, he was hired in Ukraine to help implement those substantial reforms that have proven so successful in his native Georgia, even if these reforms are now more than a decade old. Yet, when those Georgian reformers began to loudly question the rules of the political game, the muddy waters of Ukrainian politics soon started to emerge.

The controversial stripping of Saakashvili’s citizenship and the subsequent and most recent ‘border escapade’, which was also no short of an illegal crossing onto Ukrainian state territory, painfully highlights the problematic legacies of the entire post-Soviet space: endemic corruption, the prevalence of powerful informal networks and personalised as well as polarised politics. The citizenship drama around Saakashvili thereby bluntly reminds the political observer of another toxic element: citizenship is not only a tool that has been frequently used against the sovereignty of other states – with the Caucasus conflicts as brilliant examples – or a tool, furthering the exclusion for outsiders.



# 1 — Editorial

Citizenship and the stripping thereof can also be abused as a political weapon against *insiders* who are critical of the country's respective course. In this regard, it seems that Ukraine, even after injecting some degree of Georgian experience into the state reform, may follow a well-rehearsed script: The reformers themselves are not convinced democrats, acting in an oligarchic and entirely nontransparent political environment which has shown remarkable resilience and stall – wherever possible – real political reform despite the obligations stemming from the Association Agreements.

We know quite well where this led to after the Orange Revolution in 2005. Yet, one may ask what this means for the academic community? It shows once again, that the path chosen by DESCnet is needed precisely because it furthers the creation of a scholarly infrastructure on European Studies in the region. It is this infrastructure which acts as prerequisite for supporting the political processes of reform. It will be up to us to get the message across that a real transformative agenda implies a rocky path of reform and not simply some boxes on a random list to be ticked for indicating some degree of formal progress.

Speaking for the University of Graz and the project consortium as well, we will make sure to use DESCnet also in future – and beyond its duration – as a vehicle to continue acting in this spirit of promoting exchange and creating encounters of debate for European studies in the post-Soviet space as a whole. The region – fascinating and beautiful as it may be – will keep us busy in this context.

Ass. Prof. Dr. Benedikt Harzl

University of Graz



## 2 – Upcoming DESCnet events

**Second Annual Convention of the  
Association of European Studies for the  
Caucasus  
Ilia State University  
and  
New Vision University,  
Tbilisi (Georgia), 12 – 13 April 2018**

Following the First AESC Convention at Yeditepe University in 2017, the Second Annual Convention will take place at the home of AESC in Tbilisi. The topic adopted by the AESC Management Board is **"Divided over European Values? Assessing the Normative Cleavages in the Caucasus between the EU, Russia and Turkey"**.

This topic will deal with the differentiating impact of Europeanisation in the post-Soviet republics of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia following the signature of the Association Agreement (AA) in 2014 and the refusal by the Armenian government to sign it. We will discuss the possible internal as well as external factors for this cleavage from different disciplines. Is there a growing normative cleavage between those countries that signed the AA and those who did not? While we can observe a straightforward Europeanisation trajectory in Georgia with all the consequences of legal approximation, we do not yet know, if this coincides with an increased normative incompatibility with Azerbaijan and Armenia on the inter-state level as well as the possible estrangements accompanying inside the respective societies. So far, the role of values in the Eastern Partnership has only randomly been addressed, with the conference we would like to make it our transdisciplinary focus for this conference. Finally, we will also analyse how far the new EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy is addressing such kind of issues. DESCnet consortium members in residence Oliver Reisner and Gaga Gabrichidze with their respective teams are already working on the logistics, the formal call for participation is expected to be announced later in October / early November 2017. Hope to see you all in Tbilisi next year!

**Young Researchers' Seminar  
"Teaching in a Multicultural  
Environment"  
University of Tartu,  
Tartu (Estonia), 8-14 February 2018**

The workshop, being part of the DESCNET project, is aimed at bringing together a group of doctoral students and junior researchers from all partner institutions with either experiences or intentions of participating in educational activities developing in a multicultural milieu. With cross-border mobility as a major factor of globalisation student audiences become more and more varied in terms of ethnicity, race, and religion. This increasing cultural diversity is a challenge to teachers, instructors and educators who have to deal with a growing scope of controversial issues that affect students' emotions and identity, touch upon their personal experiences and ultimately make them taking sides in structurally polarised debates. This is of especial importance for regions – such as the Southern Caucasus, or the Black Sea region – with multiple conflicts and a plethora of politically inflammable lines of division. In this context, we invite workshop participants to discuss the following questions: How to teach politically sensitive topics to multicultural groups of students without provoking divisive effects? How to avoid conflicts touching upon politically controversial issues at classes and in other forms of educational activities?

The workshop is targeted to PhD students and junior teaching staff of social and political sciences, economics, law and humanities, affiliated to the DESCnet consortium partner universities. To apply, please submit your motivation letter (2 pages max), which clearly describes your teaching experience, why are you teaching, your future aspirations related to teaching, and includes a brief description of your courses. The motivation letter should be sent to Olena Solohub (olena.solohub@ut.ee) by **November 15, 2017 at latest**. Successful applicants will be contacted within one week after the deadline via email.

## 3 — Disseminating DESCnet

This summer, the Centre for European Studies of Yerevan State University (YSU) hosted the **DESCnet Summer School on "European Integration and Energy Security"**. During 8 full days from July 14 to July 24, 2017, 15 participants from Abkhazia, Armenia, Georgia, Italy, Russia, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine and USA had the chance to explore energy laws, policies in Europe, the South Caucasus and the wider region as well as to study the region's European integration perspectives and challenges.

School participants experienced a multidisciplinary approach to the study of European integration and issues of energy security through a mix of lectures, seminars, practical workshops, round table discussions, group and individual works. We were proud that our School was a joint effort of the Centre for European Studies at YSU together with the DESCnet universities who were represented among the lecturers - University of Tartu (Andrey Makarychev) and University of Graz (Benedikt Harzl, Aiste Mickonyte, Daniela Bereiter), Ilia State University (Giorgi Gvalia) and Shota Rustaveli Batumi State University (Gvantsa Davitashvili).

The school kicked off on July 15 with a welcome session during which YSU staff and programme co-ordinator of the National Erasmus+ Office in Armenia, Ms Lana Karlova, greeted school participants, professors from YSU as well as experts and lecturers from the University of Graz. During the first two days, participants had a mix of lectures, simulations, group discussions and presentations on economic integration and energy policies (Aiste Mickonyte) as well as on EU energy law and EU state aid law (Daniela Bereiter). They also had sessions on the basics of the EU's foreign and security policy (Narek Galstyan) and explored the term "justice" in

relation to European integration (Armine Khachatryan). The notion of conflict was presented in Benedikt Harzl's sessions on "The EU and Conflict Resolution: The Law and Politics of Dealing with *de facto* States".

To ensure the practical component of the School, on July 17 students participated in a special one-day workshop, which was organised by AEGEE-Armenia under the leadership of Armenak Minasyants. Besides team building activities, School participants had special sessions on "Democracy in Practice", focusing on the role of young people in democratic transformations.

Another 4 sessions of the programme covered questions of energy security in the EU's foreign and security policy and specifically energy security in the Caucasus (Aram Terzyan) by examining cases and by offering group discussions.

On 18 July, the YSU team together with the University of Graz organised a special 2-hour round table discussion with high-level expert. Prof Erhard Busek, former vice-Chancellor of the Republic of Austria. Prof Busek spoke about current challenges to European integration, enlargement perspectives and neighbourhood policies, bringing examples from his own experience and providing accession cases.

Taking into consideration the main aims and objectives of the DESCnet project, we were eager to involve Ms. A. Anapiosyan who participated in the Young Researchers' Seminar in Graz, as lecturer in the Summer school. Ms Anapiosyan prepared practical sessions in the field of public policy: problem identification and advocacy by providing participants with necessary advocacy skills and competences.

Andrey Makarychev, who spoke about regional implications of energy, biopolitics and governmentality, provided another set of interesting lectures. Students thus looked at energy security from a governmentality perspective and studied specific cases from the Southern Caucasus. Giorgi Gvalia and Gvantsa Davitashvili discussed with students the process of Europeanisation by examining theoretical and empirical approaches and studying elites' compliance to EU policies in the South Caucasus.

*By Kristine Gevorgyan  
Center for European Studies  
Yerevan State University*





## 4 — Related upcoming events

### **EU-STRAT's Midterm Conference "The EU and Eastern Partnership Countries: An Inside-Out Analysis and Strategic Assessment"** **Institute of International Relations and Political Science, Vilnius University, Vilnius (Lithuania), 5 – 6 October 2017**

The conference sets out to present the intermediary findings of the research project EU-STRAT aimed to provide a re-assessment of the European Neighbourhood Policy, focusing on the Eastern Partnership countries.

The midterm conference features a welcoming word by Linas Linkevičius (Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania), a keynote speech by Leszek Balcerowicz (Professor at the Warsaw School of Economics, Former Advisor to the President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko) and Vassilis Maragos (European Commission, Head of Unit, DG Neighborhood and Enlargement Negotiations (NEAR)), followed by roundtable discussion on the future of the Eastern Partnership. Throughout the conference, all project partners, invited guests, and the interested public will have the opportunity to discuss EU-STRAT's intermediary findings and debate its future research agenda.

A detailed programme is available at <[http://eu-strat.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/EU-STRAT-Midterm-Program-Public\\_09-25.pdf](http://eu-strat.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/EU-STRAT-Midterm-Program-Public_09-25.pdf)>, for more information please contact [egle.kontvaine@tspmi.vu.lt](mailto:egle.kontvaine@tspmi.vu.lt)

### **Ph.D. Workshop "The European Union, Turkey and its Wider Neighbourhood: Challenges and Opportunities"**

**Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals, Barcelona (Spain), 17 – 18 October 2017**

Several interconnected crises are profoundly affecting relations between the EU and Turkey. The refugee crisis, the failed coup attempt in Turkey of July 2016, the UK's aspiration to exit the EU, Turkey's Constitutional referendum, bilateral tensions between Turkey and individual EU Member States, the unravelling neighbourhood and rising Eurosceptic trends on both sides are just the most recent examples.

Although Turkey has always been an integral part of Europe's history, a contrasting mix of conflict and co-operation, has been at the heart of the dense relationship between Turkey and the European project from the outset. Understanding EU-Turkey relations and respective challenges and opportunities of the past and future requires a comprehensive approach of analysing different thematic dimensions, i.e. politics, economics, security, energy and climate, migration as well as identity and culture. Assessing factors that affect the relationship on different levels of analysis – such as the EU, Turkey, the neighbourhood and the global level – underlying historical narratives as well as positions of individual EU Member States seems to be of key importance.

This two-day PhD Workshop, organised within the context of the projects FEUTURE (Horizon 2020) and TRIANGLE (Blickwechsel: Contemporary Turkey Studies, funded by Stiftung Mercator), both coordinated by the Center for Turkey and European Union Studies at University of Cologne, is meant to provide a solid platform for junior researchers to discuss their research with their peers and senior academic colleagues. Papers are welcomed from PhD students of political science, international relations as well as economics, history, law and social sciences dealing with topics related to the EU, Turkey and the wider neighbourhood in the context of EU-Turkey relations.

# F | E U | T U | R E

**THE FUTURE OF EU-TURKEY RELATIONS:  
MAPPING DYNAMICS AND TESTING SCENARIOS**

Participants are additionally invited to attend the FEUTURE Mid-term Conference, which will take place at Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (CIDOB) on Thursday, October 19, 2017 in order to discuss the future of EU-Turkey relations with stakeholders from Turkey, the EU and its Member States as well as the academic community. The submission deadline was 1 August 2017.

## 4 – Related upcoming events (cont.)

**First International Biennial Conference and Graduate Workshop  
The Persianate World and Central Eurasia  
Iranian and Persian Gulf Studies, School of  
Global Studies and Partnerships  
Oklahoma State University,  
Stillwater, Oklahoma (USA), 21 - 24 February  
2018**

The Iranian and Persian Gulf Studies program at the Oklahoma State University invites scholars pursuing research in any of the humanities and social sciences to submit abstracts for individual papers or complete panel proposals. Panel proposals should feature 3-4 paper presentations, with a chair and discussant, and should offer a title that reflects the panel theme. Abstracts should be between 150-200 words in length and include a title, 4-5 keywords, and the author's name and affiliation. Four of the papers presented will be selected for publication in the journal of Anthropology of Contemporary Middle East and Central Eurasia. A \$200 prize will be awarded to a student whose paper demonstrates significant research contribution to the Persianate World and/or Central Eurasia Studies.

The programme concludes with a half-day workshop for graduate students pursuing research in this area on any topic in the social sciences or humanities. The workshop will include panels and discussions on conducting both field and archival research methods, publication strategies and relationships with publishers, networking among scholars in the region, and grant writing and funding opportunities.

Please send abstracts and inquiries to Dr. Anne-Marie Condacse at [SymposiaPersica@okstate.edu](mailto:SymposiaPersica@okstate.edu).

**International Summer University „Krise als Chance? Entwicklungsalternativen in Südkaukasien“ (in German)  
Baku – Zaqatala (Azerbaijan), 1 - 10 October  
2017**



The goal of this summer university is to question transformational processes in the South Caucasus region and to evaluate the fragility of developments in Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia. Participants will learn about international criteria for evaluating „fragility“. They will also discuss the meaning of „fragility“ for international development co-operation and the development of concepts and tools for conflict resolution and prevention.

Funding for up to 10 students from German universities with a specialisation in humanities, social sciences, economics or natural sciences, and who are currently studying on MA level will be available. There will also be funding for 5 students of Georgian and Azerbaijani universities each. More information is available at: <https://www.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/de/bereiche-und-lehrstuehle/aserbajdschan/aktuelles-2>

## 5 – News and ongoing



### Black Sea Institute started in September 2017

Following a growing demand for high-level expertise across the Black Sea, the activities of the "Caucasus Initiative" have been extended, becoming the "Black Sea Institute" by September 2017. The trilingual structure of the Institute remains and will allow experts and researchers to publish in English, French and German. It will continue its research on the Caucasus - ready to investigate issues related to de facto/ partially recognised states, in order to give the floor to those who can rarely be heard by the international community. It will also continue to produce analyses on Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Karabakh for the academic world, think tanks and government institutions. Additionally, it will release several field surveys and publications on Ukraine, Moldova, Russia and Turkey, but also on Transnistria, the territories in the Eastern part of Ukraine, and on Crimea. It is the Black Sea Institute's responsibility to go to war zones, to give voice to the people on the ground, and to talk about what we know and can see by ourselves. For more information, please contact Dr. Michael Eric Lambert at [lambert.michaeleric@gmail.com](mailto:lambert.michaeleric@gmail.com) or visit <https://www.facebook.com/blackseainstitute/>

### Caucasus Studies at Malmö University

Caucasus Studies is an area study, an interdisciplinary field of research and education with a focus on the Caucasus region at Malmö University. The staff consists of researchers with solid knowledge of the Caucasus - its languages, religions and ethnic groups, its historic development, complex political situation and many unresolved conflicts and extensive experience from doing fieldwork in the region.

The center at Malmö University is the only in Western Europe providing distance learning courses on this topic. The flexible online design makes it easy for students to follow the courses in their home country and to combine them with other studies or work. Caucasus Studies has close links with academic institutions and scholars in the Caucasus region, as well as other international institutions with Caucasus research. The center often hosts academics from the region who stay at Malmö University campus and actively involve in Caucasus Studies courses and research.

**The first cycle includes the following course modules:**

- Introduction to Caucasus Studies
- A language of the Caucasus (choice of Georgian and Russian)
- Post-Soviet developments in the Caucasus
- History of the Caucasus

In the second cycle, the following course modules will be dealt with:

- State and nation building in the Caucasus
- Conflicts and conflict resolution in the Caucasus
- Peoples and languages in the Caucasus
- The Caucasus region: causes and consequences of migration

In the course, Caucasus Field and Case Studies you will carry out a study based on empirical data relating to the Caucasus region, preferably as a field study in the Caucasus region. In preparing for the individual study, you will take an introductory course in Caucasus Studies as well as a course on field and case methodology and read special literature focused on a chosen theme (for instance, migration, ethnic/linguistic diversity, social change, religion, culture).

If you choose to do field studies on the site, you will pay for this yourself, but both travel costs and expenses for food and accommodation are relatively low. If you go to Georgia or Armenia, the stay is visa-free to EU citizens. While working on your field or case study you will have contact with your supervisor at Malmö University as well as a co-supervisor in the region. The lectures are held online, meaning you study at a distance but you need access of a computer with Skype and web camera. Online lectures, web seminars, assignments and other online learning activities are scheduled, but there is great flexibility for students to engage in these activities when it fits their individual timetables. The final webinar, when you present your field or case study, is scheduled with mandatory attendance and active participation online or on campus.

For more information, please contact Nicklas Karlsson at [nicklas.karlsson@mah.se](mailto:nicklas.karlsson@mah.se).



## 5 — News and ongoing (cont.)

### Iranian partners in focus: The Institute for Iran-Eurasia Studies (IRAS)

The Institute for Iran-Eurasia Studies, commonly known as IRAS, founded in 2004, is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental think tank and publisher based in Tehran whose mission is to analyse and promote the understanding of major issues and current affairs of Central Asia and South Caucasus. The mission of IRAS is to advance a balanced and realistic understanding of Iranian interests in the Eurasia and South Caucasus, promote the policies that secure them and strengthen the regional cooperation between Iran

and neighboring states. IRAS research is structured around eight topics: defense and security, energy and environment, extremism and terrorism, regional co-operation, peace and conflict, politics and elections, society and culture, and trade and economics, which comprises regional

programmes on Central Asia, South Caucasus, Eastern Europe, China, Russia and Turkey.

IRAS vision is both simple and complex. The Institute exists to help policymakers make decisions that are based on the best available information fueled by the best data, the strongest methods, and the brightest minds. IRAS research is accurate and impartial. Regardless of the research sponsor or Iranian governments' approaches, the work is free of commercial, partisan, and ideological bias. The research is peer-reviewed by experts inside and



outside of The Institute. This scrutiny is part of what makes the Institute a trusted source of expertise and analysis on Eurasia and South Caucasus.

IRAS work is also as transparent and open as possible. The Institute's commitment to the public good means that it wants the work to reach and be understood by as many people as possible, not just other decision makers, experts and academics. All of IRAS reports are available for download from this site for free and from anywhere in the world. IRAS has recently launched its English-version website.

Together with its decade-old sister website (i.e. <http://www.iras.ir>), the new site (<http://www.iras.ir/en>) will enable IRAS to excel in what it does best offer authoritative analysis, content and material from the top Iranian analysts on unfolding developments in Eurasia and the neighboring countries. However, the launch is only the start of what IRAS hopes to achieve digitally and plans to improve the site as it goes along.



The Institute for Iran-Eurasia Studies  
ЦЕНТР ПО ИЗУЧЕНИЮ ИРАНА И ЕВРАЗИИ  
موسسه مطالعات ایران واوراسیا

## 6 — Reports

### Recent conferences and summer schools

*Due to the quarterly appearance of this Newsletter, a number of announcements for conferences and summer schools could only be published on the AESC Facebook site. Here is a brief wrap-up of what happened in August and September 2017. Please feel free to contact the organizers if you require more information*

#### International Academic Conference

##### **The *Intermarium* in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Visions, Architectures, Feasibilities**

**Lazarski University (Warsaw, Poland), 6 – 7 July 2017**

This international academic conference brought together Central and Eastern European scholars to examine the diversity of interpretations of the *Intermarium* concept and assess chances for its various configurations to come into being. The conference focused on the nature of *Intermarium's* concept, as well as embraced the feasibility of its geographic, political, economic, cultural, and security dimensions. The keynote speaker of the conference was Andreas Umland, Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Euro-Atlantic Cooperation, Kyiv. In addition, 20 other panelists representing 9 universities and 4 research institutions from 6 European and Asian states took part in the event. All updates about the conference can be tracked at

<https://www.facebook.com/events/1403503866326988/>

#### International Summer School for Postgraduate Students

##### **Civil Society in Europe: Changing Methodological Opportunities and Limits**

**St. Petersburg (Russian Federation), 22 – 26 August 2017**

The summer school brought together the international interdisciplinary experience of lecturers from Russia and the EU with different academic backgrounds and works with a combination of the following forms of teaching:

- Lectures by political and social scientists on different theoretical and methodological approaches in European civil society studies, including demonstration of research results and ways of using them for students' studies;
- Intensive workshops in which students can directly apply their new knowledge and expertise;
- Methodological discussions of the papers and research plans presented by the participants.

The idea of the school was oriented on two main needs of Ph.D. students working in European Studies and some related topics: (1) the need for additional interdisciplinary perspectives and approaches to current theories of European civil society studies and (2) the need for methodological support in the conceptualisation, realisation and finalisation of PhD research / theses. The main objective of the summer school therefore was to give young researchers methodological and theoretical background on European civil society studies and to train their skills for use in their analysis of social and political processes. For more information, please contact [info@zdes.spbu.ru](mailto:info@zdes.spbu.ru).

#### OSCE Summer School

**Vienna (Austria), 28 August – 1 September 2017**

In order to contribute to the development of the next generation of peacebuilders, the OSCE Secretariat organised the OSCE Summer School in Vienna from 28 August to 1 September 2017 for twenty young people coming from the South Caucasus and other OSCE regions and interested in international affairs. The goal of the Summer School was to promote cross-regional exchanges and build the professional skills of young political experts. Participants took part in a series of briefings, courses and interactive workshops. They learned about the OSCE and received professional training courses, such as mediation and negotiation trainings, a diplomatic communication course etc. More information: [summerschool2017@osce.org](mailto:summerschool2017@osce.org).

#### Fifth Annual Summer School

**"EU Law and European Integration in the South Caucasus" (EULEISC)**

**Shota Rustaveli State University, Batumi (Georgia), 4 – 12 September 2017**

BSU organised the 5th Annual Summer School dedicated to issues of European integration, policy and law. The school's opening ceremony was attended by BSU Rector Merab Khalvashi, Dean of the Law Faculty Adam Makharadze and Minister of Education, Culture and Sport Inga Shamilishvili as well as other prominent guests.

The School hosted 23 students from 7 countries of the wider Caucasus region and Europe. Professors from Austria, Lithuania, Ukraine and Georgia delivered the lectures. Students and lecturers were invited to the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara. The Chairman of the Supreme Council, Mr. David Gabaidze, welcomed the visitors and delivered a lecture on the issues of Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration as well as political, legal and cultural trends in the Autonomous Republic of Adjara.

The annual EULEISC school at BSU aimed at supporting the study of European integration in Georgia. It is the organizer's ambition to turn the region of Ajara into a traditional center of EU studies where EU specialists, researchers and professors as well as young people interested in EU law will gather. On the bases of the experience and knowledge gained as well as the gradual accumulation of intellectual resources, a number of English-language educational programmes will be prepared at Shota Rustaveli State University in the future.

## 7 — Opinions and comments

### EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING EUROPEAN STUDIES

Excellence in teaching is a complex and hard-to-achieve goal. This is true for any field of studies, but even more so for teaching European Studies. It is also rather difficult to determine which concrete steps should be followed to reach this level of “excellence” and how to measure it.

From a student’s point of view, European Studies are divided into three main dimensions: exploring historical perspectives, analysing ongoing tendencies and moving to practical experience. The current developments can only be properly understood and most thoroughly analysed by looking to the path that Europe and European countries have taken over the centuries. As Europe and its policies stand on shared values, it is essential to examine how cultures and identities have developed over time, what the historic legacy is and what is engrained in the collective memory of the people.

As regards ongoing tendencies in European Studies, for excellence in teaching there should be in-depth discussion between different, even conflicting opinions. There is sometimes a tendency that certain issues get authoritatively discussed by NGOs, other CSOs or even famous experts with the result that a discussion appears to be closed and dissenting opinions are no longer accepted. It is important therefore to keep the floor open and prevent mainstream opinion from stifling the critical discourse. While it could look like an easy formula helping to achieve excellence, we should not forget about the specificity of the audience, as different countries have different approaches and knowledge of both the history and policies. Hence, designing specific strategies for concrete groups could give the best outcome at this level.

After determining the audience and developing best-suited curricula, the component of practical experience should be discussed. In my opinion, there are two levels to practical experience. The first one is the professor’s personal experience in practical politics that may help to shed light on the theoretical approaches. The second dimension of practical experience is related to extracurricular activities of students intended to explore European politics. These are diverse opportunities which should be offered to students by universities. Starting from scholarships, conferences, forums, study trips, internships at European structures and ending by the creation of the interdisciplinary intellectual communities.

Finally, I firmly believe that programmes should be developed and updated annually. Lessons learnt from the previous year should work as a best recommendation in the process of designing programmes for the next academic year.



*Elene  
Pachulidze  
PhD student at Caucasus  
University*



## 7 – Opinions and comments (cont.)

### AN EVER CLOSER ASSOCIATION? ON THE STATE AND PERSPECTIVES OF EUROPEAN STUDIES IN GEORGIA

By Prof. Oliver Reisner  
Ilia State University

#### Introduction

"The story of the blind men and the elephant is universally known. Several blind men approached an elephant and each touched the animal in an effort to discover what the beast looked like. Each blind man, however, touched a different part of the large animal, and each concluded that the elephant had the appearance of the part he had touched. Hence the blind man who felt the animal's trunk concluded that an elephant must be tall and slender, while the fellow who touched the beast's ear concluded that an elephant must be oblong and flat. Others of course reached different conclusions. The total result was that no man arrived at a very accurate description of the elephant yet each man had gained enough evidence from his own experience to disbelieve his fellows and maintain a lively debate about the nature of the beast".<sup>1</sup>

Back in 1972, Puchala used this famous story of blind men investigating different parts of an elephant and drawing totally different conclusions as a symbol of conflicting approaches of non-communicating schools in EU Studies. In his book *Bittersweet Europe. Albanian and Georgian Discourses on Europe, 1878-2008*, Adrian Brisku<sup>2</sup> showed that from the late 19th century to the post-communist period, Georgian (as well as Albanian) political and intellectual elites have attributed hopes to "Europe," yet have also exhibited ambivalent attitudes that do not appear likely to vanish any time soon. Thus, Georgians have evoked, experienced, and continue to speak of "Europe" according to a tense triadic entity – geopolitics, progress, culture – which has generated aspirations as well as delusions towards it and themselves.

This unique dichotomy weaves a nuanced, historical account of a changing Europe, continuously marred by uncertainties that greatly affect these countries' domestic politics as well as foreign policy decisions. This divide appeared and increased after the appearance of a European-educated *intelligentsia* in the second half of the 19th century. Paul Manning demonstrated how the "occidentalised" perceptions of this elite transformed them into "strangers in a strange land," while observing their own "backward" society that they set out to modernise in an "orientalising" way.<sup>3</sup>

Tamar Svanidze analysed in detail how Georgian intellectuals were using "Europe" in their Georgian newspapers and journals around the turn to the 20th century.<sup>4</sup>

#### Why continuity matters

Nowadays, there is a broad range of data available on the perceptions of Europe in Georgia. For instance, the survey *Knowledge and Attitudes towards the EU in Georgia* is commissioned by Europe Foundation (former Eurasia Partnership Foundation, EF) and conducted by the Caucasus Research Resource Centre (CRRC) every two years since 2009. Taken together with the Caucasus Barometer and pre-election surveys, these findings shed a good light on the attitudes towards Europeanisation, but need also to be interpreted in the broader context. To summarize just the main points:

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<sup>1</sup> D. Puchala, "Of Blind Men, Elephants and European Integration," *Journal of Common Market Studies* 10 (1972) 267-284.

<sup>2</sup> Adrian Brisku, *Bittersweet Europe. Albanian and Georgian Discourses on Europe, 1878-2008* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2013).

<sup>3</sup> Paul Manning, *Strangers in a Strange Land. Occidental Publics and Orientalist Geographies in Nineteenth-Century Georgian Imaginaries* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2012); Oliver Reisner, "Travelling Between Two Worlds – the Tergdaleulebi, their Identity Conflict and National Life," *Identity Studies* 1 (2009): 36-50; Oliver Reisner, "Georgian student encounters with Russian and

European Universities, 1861-1917 – A Generational Approach," in *Anthropological Researches II: Introduction to European Encounters with Georgia in past and present*, guest editor Françoise Companjen, 88-102 (Tbilisi: Universal, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> Tamar Svanidze: *Les transferts culturels européens en Géorgie dans la seconde moitié du XIXème siècle à travers la presse de l'époque*. École doctorale N°265 – Langues, littératures et sociétés du monde. Centre de recherches Europes-Eurasie THÈSE, soutenue le 3 juin 2016.

## 7 – Opinions and comments (cont.)

- There is a contrast between the evocation of high expectations (national security, restoration of territorial integrity, improved economic situation, especially employment) by political elites and the assessments of ordinary Georgians focusing on material prosperity and job prospects; also, the importance of territorial integrity (very high after August war) is visibly decreasing;
- Georgians – more than just minorities – are Europhiles and ready to join the EU, even if – realistically – only 13% see Georgia ready for this and only a third expect Georgia to be welcome to join the EU among the EU's citizens;
- Besides the general view that EU support to Georgia is very important, it is nevertheless assessed as ineffective.

### Knowledge about the EU (or European values)

These findings raise the question what matters for ordinary Georgian citizens. Surely, it is not the diversity of EU institutions in Georgia (EUDEL, EUMM, EUSR), which mainly matters for those working in this field. The EU is not Europe, Georgia is already part of the community of European values as a member of the Council of Europe. Zurab Zhvania once famously said "I am Georgian and therefore I am European".

Political elites inside the EU as well as in Georgia are not explicit about the connotations and contents of the term "Europe". They often tend to have an instrumental usage of "Europe", as Frederic Coene managed to show, using the example of the political discourse in Georgia from the Rose Revolution of November 2003 until October 2012. In his opinion, using "Europe" is a welcome tool to legitimize certain political decisions. In Georgia, political changes strongly influence perceptions and *vice versa*.<sup>5</sup>

Therefore, Europeanisation needs to be seen as a longer and ongoing process beyond EU perceptions, with a focus on the acquisition of European forms of civic engagement, participation and protest. It is here that we are facing the question: what does

"displaying European values" mean? So far, there are no public debates on those fundamental values that constitute "Europeanness" and how they relate to "national" values and traditions. Despite the public

outrage against a small public meeting on the International Day Against Homophobia and for Tolerance (IDAHOT) on May 17, 2013, civil society is still in a precarious state with little grounding in the broader population.

The most critical values in this respect are:

1. **Solidarity** as the value of community,
2. **Freedom** as the value of autonomy,
3. **Equality** as the value of non-discrimination,
4. **Tolerance** as the value of diversity,
5. **Justice** as the value of proportionality,
6. **Peace** as the value of coexistence,
7. **Human dignity** as the intrinsic value of man.

The most recent qualitative study, in fact a broader discourse analysis, tries to trace "Performing Europeanisation – political vis-à-vis popular discourses on Europeanisation in Georgia".<sup>6</sup> It identified two major directions in media discourses: the pro-Western media discourse stresses security (against Russia), while the anti-Western focuses on (national) identity against allegedly decadent Western values. However, there is a strong inconsistency or ambivalence in the application observed for both discourses. It seems that "Europeanisation" is more used to describe a solution to the continuing socio-economic and security challenges in the country than – like in Radaelli's research paradigm – a problem for the conceptualisation of research. Somehow, Georgian scholars – being representatives of the vocal elites – address the issue of values from a normative perspective: "Is Georgia's Orthodox Church an Obstacle to European Values?"<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Frederik Coene, *Euro-Atlantic Discourse in Georgia. The Making of Georgian Foreign and Domestic Policy After the Rose Revolution* (Oxon and New York: Ashgate, 2016).

<sup>6</sup> Lia Tsuladze, Flora Esebua, Irakli Kakhidze, Ana Kvintradze, Irina Osepashvili, Mariam Amashukeli, *Performing Europeanisation – Political vis-à-vis popular discourses on Europeanisation in Georgia* (Tbilisi: Nekeri, 2016).

<sup>7</sup> Kornely Kakachia, "Is Georgia's Orthodox Church an Obstacle to European Values?" *PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo* No. 322 (June 2014); see also Kornely Kakachia, Alexander Markarov (eds.), *Values and Identity as Sources of Foreign Policy in Armenia and Georgia* (Tbilisi: Universal, 2016).



## 7 – Opinions and comments (cont.)

Very helpful in this regard are some studies on social capital. Georgia exhibits strong in-group social networks in which people show extensive solidarity. However, to the extent that they collaborate beyond their in-groups, Georgians rarely formalise and institutionalise their collaboration. This has significant costs for society, the economy and individuals themselves. Interestingly, the researchers from CRRC back in 2011 have seen clear signs that some groups are beginning to collaborate more effectively than others.<sup>8</sup> Factors that constrain civil society and, therefore, prevent the bridging of social capital in Eastern Europe are:

1. a legacy of mistrust of the public sphere and of participation in it, deriving from the socialist experience and its conscription of individuals into involuntary membership;
2. a persistence of personal friendship networks (i.e. family and close friends) whereby people do not join public organisations to make friends or expand their social circle, and which also soak up most of the solidarity individuals can offer;
3. the pervasive disillusionment that followed the initial euphoria surrounding the fall of communism (Howard 2002).

In addition, there are four challenges for societal bridging or civic activism instead of bonding:

1. popular disbelief and apathy;
2. active distrust towards leaders;
3. free-riding and lack of basic rules;
4. reluctance to institutionalise.

### The EU's support to Georgia

EU support is in general highly acknowledged. It is a true observation that the EU is interested in security and stability in its neighbourhood which includes improving the conditions in Georgia and offering a privileged access to the EU. It is also correct when a third of respondents state that Georgian officials profit the most from EU support. Interests can coincide and create synergies. This is the major direction of EU cooperation instruments, but of course with the intention indirectly to improve the

living conditions of the broader population. Georgia as a lower middle income country that does not receive development aid to assist the poor (the only exemption being IDPs).

When investigating the EU's support to anti-corruption policies in the South Caucasian countries Tanja Börzel and Yasemin Pamuk capture the "dark side of Europeanisation" (Schimmelfennig 2007). They conceptualise the ENP as a political opportunity structure that provides opportunities and constraints to both supporters and opponents of the EU's reform agenda. Which of the two get ultimately empowered, depends not only on the EU's capacity to push for reforms but also on the pull of domestic actors. Studies on "Neighbourhood Europeanisation" have shown that the EU's capacity to hit across its borders has been limited.

While the EU has induced some formal institutional change, it has helped to stabilise rather than to transform existing regimes. Thus, we observe the Europeanisation of domestic structures of the formerly Soviet republics, which, however, appears to have opposite effects to what the EU intends to achieve with its ENP. Börzel and Pamuk call this "pathologies of Europeanisation". The post-Soviet area features some of the most corrupt countries in the world, including the Southern Caucasus region. High adaptation costs and limited incentives render Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia the least likely cases for Europeanisation and domestic change. Despite high misfit and low pressure for adaptation from above and below, all three have responded to the EU's demands for good governance introducing similar formal institutional changes. Yet, rather than systematically fighting corruption, incumbent regimes have instrumentalised the EU selectively by implementing anti-corruption policies to cut the power resources of their political opponents.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Caucasus Research Resource Centre (CRRC), *An Assessment of Social Capital in Georgia* (Tbilisi, 2011).

<sup>9</sup> Tanja A. Börzel and Yasemin Pamuk, *Europeanisation Subverted? The European Union's Promotion of Good Governance and the Fight against Corruption in the Southern*

*Caucasus*, Working Paper No. 26, Kolleg-Forschergruppe "The Transformative Power of Europe", Berlin: Free University Berlin (April 2011).

## 7 – Opinions and comments (cont.)

### Minorities look to Russia

The fact that ethno-cultural minorities look to Russia comes as no surprise since they remember the status they had during the Soviet period and had to readjust the most towards the new nation-state environment. Russia is the main recipient of migrant workers from the Caucasus and Central Asia (for Georgia mainly Armenian diaspora). Also, five years after the August War of 2008 and change of government, even the Georgian population becomes more conciliatory towards the relation with the big neighbour to the North, but certainly the sun is not rising anymore in the North, as Communist party secretary Shevardnadze announced in the 1970s.

The data confirm a divide of cultural orientations. Georgia's efforts on civic integration may not have taken roots yet. While minority NGOs often state their readiness for integration, but not assimilation, this, on the contrary, seems to be the dominant expectation among the Georgian majority. A very telling example is the limited access to information among minorities and their under or non-representation in the public and political life. Here some anthropological studies focusing on the role of the state in the life at the peripheries of Georgia like the volume "State and Legal Practice in the Caucasus. Anthropological Perspectives on Law and Politics" edited by Stephane Voell and Iwona Kaliszewska or the differing forms of "Being a State and States of Being in Highland Georgia" by Florian Mühlfried expose serious discrepancies between the Europeanisation discourse of the elites and the very different practices in the regions outside the capital Tbilisi.<sup>1</sup> Comparisons like in Natalie Sabanadze's "Globalisation and Nationalism. The Cases of Georgia and the Basque Country" (2010) also proved to be quite insightful approaches in identifying different forms of nationalism (ethno-religious, populist and moderate-liberal), while its ongoing transformation is linked to globalisation and the "West" as another recurring myth since the 19th century.

Georgia appeared on the map of the EU as an unexpected success story. Even back in 2006, Dov Lynch had to convince the political community

"Why Georgia Matters".<sup>2</sup> Today there is a growing amount of research, mainly in political sciences, less sociology or history. However, most importantly "European" Georgians must think of how to establish a dialogue with the broader population to achieve some consent on the shared values and where and how to combine tradition and reform. This internal dialogue between the elites and the population seems to be essential for establishing a civil society as a heterogeneous collective actor vis-à-vis the state.

Although a majority of the population of Georgia approves of the Government stated goal to join the EU, reported trust in the EU declined between 2011 and 2015. According to Europe Foundation's "Knowledge and attitudes towards the EU" survey conducted by CRRC-Georgia, only 22 % of the Georgian public reported fully trusting the EU in 2011. In 2013 and 2015, the respective shares were only 4 % and 3 %. The share of those reporting they "trust" the EU moderately, rather than "fully trust" it, also declined from 47 % to 31 %. Distrust in the EU, on the other hand, increased in all age groups (between 2011 and 2015) and all settlement types (between 2011 and 2015), both among men and women (between 2011 and 2015).

Moreover, the EU is increasingly perceived as a threat to Georgian traditions, as described in a recent blog post. This blog post looks at the Georgian public's changing perceptions of EU-Georgia relations focusing on how Georgians think their country is perceived by the governments and citizens of EU Member States. In 2011, 41 % of the population of Georgia reported believing that a majority of EU Member States would like Georgia to enter the EU. Four years later, only 32 % gave the same answer, while the share of those answering negatively doubled.

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<sup>1</sup> Stephane Voell, Iwona Kaliszewska, eds., *State and Legal Practice in the Caucasus. Anthropological Perspectives on Law and Politics* (Surrey and Burlington: Ashgate, 2015); Florian Mühlfried, *Being a State and States of Being in Highland Georgia* (New York and

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<sup>2</sup> Dov Lynch, "Why Georgia Matters," *Chaillot Paper* No86 (1 Feb. 2006). <https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/why-georgia-matters>

## 7 – Opinions and comments (cont.)

Importantly, almost 50% of the population cannot answer this question. Similarly, in 2015, 18 % answered that, in their opinion, a majority of European citizens wouldn't like Georgia to enter the EU, compared to 11 % in 2011.

### Conclusion

Georgia left the Soviet pathway towards a still undefined "EU-Europe", which can be interpreted differently. However, the country is still undecided about its final destination (not in geopolitical, but in societal terms), of how a "European" Georgia should look like and what kind of values it should adhere to.

In terms of research, an opening of approaches in EU studies towards broader contexts (local – regional – global) as well as in disciplinary approaches is to be welcomed. There is a need for more openness and tolerance for the validity of claims made by a plurality of approaches. There are rising "centripetal" tendencies in research that represent a necessity for more self-reflection on the researcher's own position in the discourse field. A broader framework for research on the EU in Georgia is needed exceeding or challenging Western research paradigms of democratization or civil society, as for example Stephen Jones did in his book "Georgia. A Political History Since Independence" (2013).

Coming back to the "Blind Men and the Elephant", we need to work to integrate the diverse parts into a new concept of the "animal" to capture the whole complexity of Europeanisation and EU approximation / association in Georgia through a combination of more than one theoretical approach. The following steps are recommended:

1. Mapping,
2. Conceptualising,
3. Tuning.

Certainly, there is a necessity to create a framework for research uniting EU Studies and area specialists to escape normative fallacies and design more adequate approaches, which allows scholars to take evidence of the elephant's trunk, ears and other parts and work them into an understanding of the whole animal or in our case to capture the whole complexity of Europeanisation in this region.

One challenge remains: classically, European Studies are assumed to be multidisciplinary or transdisciplinary, but how to transform this into practice, if there are no precedents as in the Georgian academia.

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List of new publications relevant for DESCnet and AESC composed by: Thomas Kruessmann

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