

DIRECTORATE OF POLICY PLANNING



DPP-SPS (2012) 1 E fin.

Strasbourg, 10 May 2012

**Strategy for the
Schools of Political Studies
for 2012 and beyond**

*Document prepared by the Directorate of Policy Planning Secretariat
in co-operation with the Schools of Political Studies and in
consultation with other Council of Europe Directorates*

The Ministers' Deputies took note of this document on 2 May 2012

Introduction

The first School of Political Studies was created almost twenty years ago in Moscow and, inspired by its success, fifteen more have been established in countries in transition from autocratic to democratic societies and states.¹ All the Schools have been developed in close partnership with the Council of Europe.

The Schools **bring together young leaders from different political parties and sectors of civil society**, including from ethnic minorities, the mass media and the business world. By focusing on young leaders the Schools make a specific and targeted contribution to fostering **new generations of leaders in the political, economic, social, cultural and environmental fields**, alongside other institutions of formal and non-formal education.

The Schools of Political Studies provide **high-quality training and know-how exchange** to participants in an atmosphere built on shared values of pluralism, diversity and open dialogue. They offer an effective and flexible mechanism to develop a modern political culture, both locally and internationally.

Each School selects a **group of participants on an annual basis** (approximately 30 or more, depending on available resources). The activities supported by the Council of Europe comprise a **basic cycle of three national seminars per year**. Moreover, the students participate in the Council of Europe's Summer University for Democracy, which has now been integrated into the Strasbourg World Forum for Democracy. This presence in Strasbourg provides an opportunity for the students to meet their peers from the other Schools informally and, more formally, through regional meetings that are organised during their stay.

Additional events, including bilateral and regional meetings, are organised by the Schools and their Network (see below) throughout the year. These activities are financed in co-operation with a wide variety of domestic and international partners, both public and private.

In line with the vocation of the Council of Europe to promote and protect democracy, human rights and the rule of law, the Schools' annual cycles of seminars and other events cover a **broad range of themes**: democratic institutions and governance; electoral systems and culture; freedom of expression and of the media, mechanisms of human rights protection; participation of civil society in decision-making. For some Schools, topics may have a regional focus (often in the framework of regional seminars) or a focus on EU matters (in particular in EU candidate or prospective candidate states).

Another major objective of the Schools is to enhance the participants' practical leadership, organisation and communication skills.

The achievement of the Schools also comes from their capacity to bring together people who otherwise rarely communicate with each other, for example members of opposing political parties, or politicians and representatives of civil society. They **help to bridge religious, ethnic, social and political barriers and create a healthy climate of dialogue and mutual understanding**. Moreover, the Schools have proven their ability to deliver **confidence building measures** through their activities within individual countries and through bilateral and regional activities.

For the Council of Europe, the Schools function as a significant **multiplier for the promotion of the Organisation's values, objectives and standards**, as well as providing effective opportunities to reinforce the profile and visibility of the Council of Europe in those countries with a School presence.

¹ The sixteen European Schools of Political Studies are: **Albania** - Academy of Political Studies; **Armenia** - Yerevan School of Political Studies; **Azerbaijan** - Baku Political Studies Programme; **Belarus** - East-European School of Political Studies; **Bosnia and Herzegovina** - School of Political Studies Bosnia and Herzegovina; **Bulgaria** - Bulgarian School of Politics "Dimitry Panitza"; **Croatia** - Academy for Political Development; **Georgia** - Tbilisi School of Political Studies; **Kosovo*** - Pristina Institute for Political Studies; **Republic of Moldova** - European Institute for Political Studies; **Montenegro** - School of Democratic Leadership; **Romania** - "Ovidiu Sincai" European School; **Russian Federation** - Moscow School of Political Studies; **Serbia** - Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence; **"The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"** - School of Public Policy « Mother Teresa »; **Ukraine** - Ukrainian School of Political Studies.

[*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 the Schools, the Council of Europe offers **an umbrella that enables them to adhere to the high standards advocated by the Organisation**, particularly in countries where they may be subject to political pressure. This 'safety net' role also helps the Schools attract young leaders from all sectors of society to participate in their programmes.

The Network of the Schools of Political Studies

The Network of the Schools of Political Studies (NSPS) was created by the Council of Europe in 2005 in order **to strengthen the ties amongst Schools and between the Schools and the Council of Europe**. It has been successful and long-lasting with each School co-operating within this broad and diverse network with common aims, whilst at the same time maintaining its specificity and its autonomy.

As well as providing an opportunity for the exchange of information, expertise and best practices, the Network supports the development of horizontal ties between the Schools, particularly at **bilateral, regional and inter-regional levels**. The Network also facilitates opportunities for the Schools to work on partnership projects and joint initiatives.²

Furthermore, the Schools offer a **communication channel between the Council of Europe and the alumni**, to maintain links with them and to draw on them as a source of expertise and as **active multipliers** in the dissemination of **standards and practices developed by the Council of Europe** during events for the School's participants and more generally in their countries. This kind of engagement helps strengthen the Schools themselves by broadening their participation in public debate on policy options, thereby enhancing their visibility within their own country.

By establishing in 2008 the **European Association of the Schools of Political Studies of the Council of Europe**³, the Network is able to communicate with a voice of its own. The Association plays an important role in creating and maintaining the network of School Alumni, many of whom occupy high positions in politics, state administration, media, business, and civil society, either in their own countries or internationally.⁴

Building a strategic vision for the Schools of Political Studies

Democracy in Europe is facing challenges and concerns at all levels with political extremism, populism, electoral absenteeism and political stagnation threatening the vitality of the European democratic model. The Schools of Political Studies have proven themselves to be reliable and effective partners for the Council of Europe and they provide an important means to foster Europe's response to these challenges.

Taking account of the major challenges facing our societies, the Schools' curricula are constantly evolving. By way of example, an increasing number of events are devoted to issues such as **gender equality, environmental protection and sustainable development, economy and finance**.

More can be done to **mainstream the Schools into the activities of the Council of Europe and vice versa**.

Many Council of Europe departments have developed practical **training materials** in various fields and have gained experience in their effective implementation. Such training materials and approaches should be examined and used by the Schools if appropriate. Examples of such departments are the Education and Youth departments, the Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform (tools on

² For example in the Western Balkans there are two ongoing regional projects "Linking the Young Leaders" with the participation of all schools from the region and "Public Dialogue on the Sustainable Use of Energy in South-East Europe" with the participation of five schools from Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro, 'The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia' and Albania.

³ www.schoolsofpoliticalstudies.eu/home_2.aspx

⁴ Notable alumni include: **Eduard Sharmazanov**, Vice Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia; **Olga Shparaga**, Associate Professor of the European Humanities University, Editor of the Internet Journal "New Europe", Belarus; **Sergei Stanishev**, Interim President of the Party of European Socialists, Chairman of the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP), Prime Minister of Bulgaria (2005 - 2009); **Zaza Tavadze**, Vice President of the Constitutional Court of Georgia; **Dorin Chirtoacă**, General Mayor of Chisinau Municipality, Republic of Moldova; **Rifat Fejzic**, Reiss of Islamic community in Montenegro; **Carmen Ionescu**, Editor-in-chief, RADOR News Agency, Romania; **Viktor Dvurechenskikh**, President of the Board of Auditors of Moscow, Russian Federation.

leadership, public ethics, performance management, strategic planning, etc.) and the Joint CoE/EU Intercultural Cities Programme. With regard to the latter programme, students and alumni could be invited to relevant meetings in the context of the Intercultural Cities Programme and local policymakers involved in Intercultural Cities could participate in meetings of the schools dealing with issues of diversity management, integration and social cohesion, three important themes of the Council of Europe's work.

The **internet as a tool for citizens' political participation** and engagement in democratic processes and governance could also be included in the Schools' programmes. The Internet Governance Strategy of the Council of Europe, adopted by the Committee of Ministers in March 2012 includes a chapter on 'Maximising the Internet's potential to promote democracy and cultural diversity'. The Information Society Unit in DGI has facilitated training sessions on internet governance for Steering Committee members and Council of Europe staff. This experience could be usefully shared with the Schools. Moreover, National IGFs (Internet Governance Forum) offer good examples of multistakeholder participation and could inspire the Schools' curriculum and teaching methods.

By prioritising gender equality through awareness-raising and capacity building, the Schools can significantly contribute to and promote a more equitable participation of women in political and public life in the member states. They can also offer a vehicle for creating a better understanding and ownership of gender equality principles as well as for fostering gender equality into policy-making.

Schools of Political Studies could extend their capacity beyond their current role as a training provider by **developing research and think tank capacities**, provided they have the means. This could respond to a demand in their country for an institution able to provide well-documented options for democratic policies.

The Council of Europe should find ways to make the best possible use of the young leaders trained at the Schools, i.e. their alumni, by **drawing on them as experts or trainers in the different Directorates/Departments of the Organisation**.

Through their participants, alumni, boards and management, Schools have **extensive grassroots experience and in-depth knowledge of local, national and European trends in their country**. In intergovernmental activities where a contribution from civil society is required, either ahead of or as a follow-up to such activities, the Secretariat could consider **consulting the Schools** for their input whenever appropriate (bearing in mind the regulations on the participation of civil society and educational institutions set out in internal rules, terms of reference, or treaties).

In cases where the Secretariat is organising open events, the Schools might also be consulted and/or involved in the organisation and preparation of such events.

Field offices and the Directorates that implement **assistance and cooperation activities** might usefully consult with the Schools as they are well-placed to help identify issues in that country that should be addressed and programmes that could be proposed. Depending on their capacities, Schools may help implement Council of Europe projects in the field, both nationally and regionally, for example on electoral capacity-building.

The project of the Schools of Political Studies represents **a success story of the Council of Europe**. Nevertheless, it may be argued that the image and recognition of activity is not at the level it deserves. A jointly implemented **campaign to promote the Schools of Political Studies** could have a positive impact for both the Schools and the Council of Europe. The target groups of the campaign would include: relevant bodies within the Council of Europe; senior level policy makers in member states; CoE member state Missions in Strasbourg and in national capitals; think tanks and NGOs; MEPs, EU Commissioners and Directorate-Generals, as well as local EU delegations in the countries of the Schools.

Such a campaign could be supported by an **electronic newsletter produced by the Network of the Schools**. This initiative could start to some extent in 2012 and would be consolidated in 2013 provided that the necessary additional budgetary resources are identified.

The Schools of Political Studies will play an important role in the **Strasbourg World Forum for Democracy**. In addition to their students' participation in the event, the Schools could be invited to

contribute to programme development and consolidate their role by **organising run-up or follow-up events to the World Forum outside Strasbourg**.

Expanding the Network of the Schools of Political Studies

Given the capacity of the Schools to build democratic culture in countries in transition, they represent an important element for Council of Europe policies towards neighbouring regions. As the Arab Spring has brought several countries to pursue the path towards democracy, the Schools could play an important role in the Organisation's policy towards neighbouring regions and the Neighbourhood Policy of the EU. In this context, **establishing schools of political studies in Tunisia and Morocco** is in an advanced state of preparation. First contacts have also been made with **Kazakhstan**.

Whilst remaining sensitive to specific concerns of countries on the south-eastern Mediterranean rim, including the legacy of their colonial past, there will be many **opportunities for new Schools in the European neighbourhood** to benefit from the experience of the existing Schools, be it through becoming part of the Network of the Schools or through partnerships with individual Schools.

The Schools provide a model for education, training, co-operation and exchange of knowledge which is just as appropriate for long-standing European member states. With this in mind, plans are underway to explore the opportunity of **creating additional Schools of Political Studies in the eastern Mediterranean area**. In Cyprus, for example, a School could build upon the *European Forum Cyprus* and its network of alumni.

Also, in a longer-term perspective, and resources permitting, schools in **countries of the Middle East**, with which the Council of Europe is developing co-operation, might be envisaged. Particularly in a regional perspective such schools could contribute to the development of confidence-building at civil society level, taking advantage of the experience of Schools from other regions and of the Council of Europe as a whole.

Partnerships and fundraising

The Schools of Political Studies suffered a reduction to their Council of Europe budget for national activities in 2011, followed by another decrease in 2012. The current economic climate means that it is not easy to find sources of funding in addition to the core funding provided by the Council of Europe. If the Schools are to continue providing quality training, as well as develop new activities and build links with new Schools, they need to **develop new partnerships**.

They could consider, for example, **establishing partnerships with formal or non-formal educational establishments** in their own countries or abroad with a view to exchange professors/trainers and to invite students to each others' events. Co-operation with other networks could also be fostered, for example with the Policy Association for an Open Society (PASOS) Network.

The quest for resource mobilisation might be facilitated by periodically **organising donor information and co-ordination meetings**, for example once a year in the framework of the Strasbourg World Forum for Democracy. At the same time, the above-mentioned electronic newsletter may be used as an information platform about funding opportunities.

Efforts will continue to seek **EU financial support** for the activities of the Schools. **Host states** could become more involved in **financially supporting the Schools** in their countries, although the utmost care must be taken to ensure that such support does not entail any loss of independence for the School concerned.

An important partner at the Council of Europe for such efforts is the Office of the Director General of Programmes (ODGPROG). It is mandated to ensure **coherence between different Council of Europe activities in the field and to lead fund-raising and partnership-seeking efforts**, in particular with the EU and big donors. In order to avoid parallel fund-raising strategies, ODGPROG shall be informed, consulted and involved as appropriate.

In order to support and facilitate the Schools' fundraising efforts, a **'toolkit for fundraising'** with regard to relevant EU and Joint Programmes, including information about eligibility and application procedures, will be developed by the Secretariat in co-operation with the Schools. Moreover, capacity-

building training sessions could be organised, either in Strasbourg or on a regional basis, subject to available financing.

An **impact measurement methodology** for the Schools' annual training cycles and other activities will be developed by the Secretariat in co-operation with the Schools' Directors and their staff.

In order to attract funding from EU bodies and other partners, each School will prepare a **marketing presentation**.⁵

The next steps in 2012

January – April

- Finalising the strategy to take account of comments received from the Schools' directors and from different sectors of the Council of Europe;
- Presentation of the finalised paper to the GR-DEM of the Committee of Ministers;
- Exploration of ways to draw the attention of the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress and the Conference of INGOs to the Strategy, with a view to its endorsement and promotion;
- Contacts with European Institutions in Brussels.

May - July

- Preparation of the following documents:
 - o Toolkit for fundraising;
 - o Methodology for impact measurement of schools' activities;
 - o Marketing presentation about each school.
- Directors' meeting in Tirana;
- Launching of new Schools of Political Studies in Tunisia and Morocco.

5-11 October

Strasbourg World Forum for Democracy.

⁵ Such a presentation would include at least the following elements: description of Schools' national, bilateral and regional etc. activities, past and future; learning objectives for the participants; information about the cost of seminars and other events; possible contribution to confidence building measures; other skills the School possesses in addition to training young leaders; mechanism for selecting the candidates for the annual training cycle; an assessment of the alumni's career paths; other activities organised by the Schools.