

THE **SCHOOLS OF POLITICAL STUDIES** OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE



” A Network for emerging
democratic leaders
in Europe and beyond





The Schools of Political Studies of the Council of Europe

BUILDING A NEW DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL CULTURE

For twenty years, the Schools of Political Studies of the Council of Europe have developed to **provide training to emerging leaders aspiring to build a modern, democratic political culture**. Today there are Schools in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and part of the Maghreb region in Northern Africa.

The Schools of Political Studies **offer an open and fair-minded space where dialogue and exchange are encouraged between upcoming leaders** active in the political, economic, social, media, cultural and environmental spheres. Annual cycles of seminars and other events address themes relating to democracy, the rule of law and human rights.

Participants are selected from various political parties, public administrations, different sectors of civil society and from minority groups. In this way, the Schools provide an opportunity to bring together **stakeholders from all elements and shades of society who otherwise rarely communicate with each other**; in some countries the Schools of Political Studies may be the only forum where such dialogue is possible.

A SUCCESS STORY OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

The vitality of the European democratic model is under stress and faces a wide range of challenges such as political extremism, populism, impacts of economic and financial crises, electoral absenteeism and political stagnation. Responding to such threats is at the heart of the Council of Europe's mandate and the **Schools of Political Studies are reliable and active partners** in this task, functioning as **effective multipliers for the values and standards** promoted by the Organisation.

At the same time, the **Council of Europe offers the Schools a patronage that enables them to adhere to the high benchmarks advocated by the Organisation**. This is particularly important in countries where they may be subject to political pressure.

Recognising this mutually beneficial relationship, the **Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe has identified the Schools of Political Studies as a priority area for the Organisation**. A continuous effort is being made to further mainstream the Schools into the activities of other sectors of the Organisation, for example standard setting and monitoring bodies, capacity-building activities, as well as the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities.

How the Schools work

ACTIVITIES AND THEMES

■ **The Schools' events** supported by the Council of Europe **comprise a basic cycle of three national seminars per year covering a broad and ever-evolving range of themes.** Additional events, such as bilateral and regional meetings, are organised by the Schools and the Network throughout the year. Each School's annual intake comes to Strasbourg to participate in the Council of Europe's World Forum for Democracy.

■ **The topics explored in the seminars address issues relevant to democratic principles and practice.** They are wide-ranging and include: good governance principles; electoral processes; participatory democracy; conflict prevention instruments and techniques; conciliation and dialogue for regions in crisis; regional co-operation; principles of European construction, and expansion of the EU and its Neighbourhood policy. They also examine global challenges such as: combating terrorism and organised crime, environmental protection, and the role of new technologies and their impact on the functioning of democratic societies. Moreover, emphasis is placed on **developing practical leadership skills**, for example in management, communication and public speaking.

■ **The seminar speakers**, who are recognised experts in their field of competence, **are practitioners, politicians, public officials or academics.** Council of Europe Offices and European Union Delegations based in the Schools' countries are regularly involved in their activities.

SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

■ Each School admits a group of **30-40 young leaders** (average age 35) who will participate in the seminars for one year. They are selected from the public and private sectors according to their level of social or professional responsibility, taking into account relevant political, social, geographical and ethnic factors in each country. Gender balance is also a key criterion in the selection procedure.

■ In recent years a **solid network of School alumni has been developed within each School.** These networks serve to strengthen co-operation and links both amongst current participants and with previous participants. Many of the steadily growing number of school alumni attain high-level positions, either in their own countries or internationally, and are in a position to act as multipliers for the values the Schools represent.

SOURCES OF FUNDING

■ In addition to Council of Europe funding for the Schools' core seminars, **all the Schools attract additional voluntary contributions** from a wide array of international, national and local sources, including from independent non-governmental organisations such as foundations and think tanks. A non-exhaustive list of partners is provided overleaf.

■ The Schools, both individually and as regional Networks, **are actively seeking to establish new partnerships and to identify new sources of funding.**

” Fostering
democratic
dialogue



” Helping create
democratic
structures



A genuine network

AN EFFECTIVE AND EXPANDING NETWORK

■ The Network of the Schools of Political Studies was created by the Council of Europe in 2005 and has blossomed into **one of the most successful and well-functioning European networks of democratic leadership training**. It strengthens the ties amongst the Schools and between the Schools and the Council of Europe and enables the Schools to co-operate in a broad and diverse community of interest, whilst at the same time maintaining their specificity and autonomy. The Network **helps to secure the independence of the Schools** as well as their adherence to democratic values.

■ In addition to providing a **framework for the exchange of information, expertise and best practices**, the Network offers an environment in which regional and bilateral activities are developed. Such exchanges facilitate **informal, in-depth dialogue between countries in the same region** (for example Russia and Georgia; Armenia and Azerbaijan; Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Croatia) and thereby contribute to reconciliation in divided regions.

■ The Network also facilitates opportunities for **partnership projects and joint initiatives**. Recent examples include: the Regional Academy for Democracy (RAD) which comprises the seven Western Balkans Schools of Political Studies; the Eastern Partnership University for Democracy which brings together the six Schools of the Eastern Partnership region; and the Tunisian and Moroccan Schools which are joining forces to develop regional seminars in the Maghreb region (North Africa).

■ Plans are underway to create Schools of Political Studies in Western European countries. Furthermore, the Schools of Political Studies 'brand' can serve as a **model for countries beyond Europe and its Neighbourhood**, hence similar initiatives, inspired by the Schools, are underway in Central Africa.

STRASBOURG WORLD FORUM FOR DEMOCRACY

■ Each School's annual intake takes part in the Council of Europe World Forum for Democracy in Strasbourg. **This major event in the international democracy calendar brings together over a thousand people** who participate in high-level plenary sessions and workshops. In addition to this, a number of meetings are organised specifically for the Schools' participants to discuss common problems in bilateral and regional meetings, and to meet Judges from the European Court of Human Rights.

■ As well as providing stimulating, youthful input into the Forum debates, the School's presence provides **an opportunity for the participants to meet their peers from the other Schools**. The links forged at the Forum help build international networks which can last for entire careers.

THE ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF POLITICAL STUDIES: A NETWORK FOR DEMOCRACY IN THE 21st CENTURY

■ In 2008, the Directors of the Schools of Political Studies founded the European Association of Schools of Political Studies in order to **strengthen ties, stimulate development and support the Council of Europe's activities to promote the Schools' Network**. Endowed with a legal framework, the Schools now have a tool which **allows the Network to communicate with a voice of its own**.

■ The Association plays an **important role in supporting the Schools' alumni**. The website of the Association has become a major communication and information hub for its members as well as providing a platform for dialogue and exchange amongst School alumni and current participants.

Committed partners

INTERNATIONAL AND EUROPEAN ORGANISATIONS

- ▶ EU Eastern Partnership (EaP)
- ▶ EU Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)
- ▶ EU European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR)
- ▶ European Commission
- ▶ NATO Public Diplomacy Division
- ▶ Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)
- ▶ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- ▶ USAID
- ▶ USAID Business Enabling Project

PUBLIC AUTHORITIES AND AGENCIES

- ▶ Austrian Ministry of Defence
- ▶ British Council
- ▶ British Foreign and Commonwealth Office
- ▶ Bulgarian National Assembly
- ▶ Canada Fund
- ▶ City of Strasbourg
- ▶ Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- ▶ Dutch Embassy, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- ▶ Dutch Embassy, Croatia
- ▶ Dutch Embassy, Georgia
- ▶ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- ▶ Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- ▶ French Embassy, Bulgaria
- ▶ French Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- ▶ German Embassy, Bulgaria
- ▶ German Development Corporation (GIZ)
- ▶ Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- ▶ Liechtenstein Government
- ▶ Matra Programme, Netherlands
- ▶ Norwegian Embassy, Croatia
- ▶ Norwegian Embassy, Serbia
- ▶ Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- ▶ Polish Embassy, Ukraine
- ▶ Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- ▶ Serbian Ministry of Defence
- ▶ Serbian Parliament
- ▶ SlovakAid

- ▶ Swedish Development Agency (SIDA)
- ▶ Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
- ▶ Swiss Embassy, Ukraine
- ▶ Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- ▶ Turkish Development Agency (TIKA)
- ▶ US Embassy, Croatia
- ▶ US Embassy, Serbia
- ▶ Zadar Municipality, Croatia
- ▶ Zagreb Tourist Board

FOUNDATIONS, THINK-TANKS AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR

- ▶ America for Bulgaria Foundation
- ▶ Association Nouvelle Europe, France
- ▶ Balkan Trust for Democracy
- ▶ Barcelona Centre for International Affairs
- ▶ Bonita Trust, Gibraltar
- ▶ Carnegie Moscow Centre
- ▶ Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, USA
- ▶ Croatian Chamber of Commerce
- ▶ Czech Institute for European Policy (EUROPEUM)
- ▶ Erste Bank, Austria
- ▶ European Fund for the Balkans
- ▶ European Endowment for Democracy (EED)
- ▶ Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Germany
- ▶ Institute of Public Affairs, Poland
- ▶ International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES)
- ▶ International Renaissance Foundation, USA
- ▶ International Republican Institute, USA
- ▶ International Visegrád Fund, Slovakia
- ▶ Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Germany
- ▶ Olof Palme International, Sweden
- ▶ Open Society Institute, Serbia
- ▶ Open World Leadership Centre, USA
- ▶ Providus Centre for Public Policy, Latvia
- ▶ Robert Bosch Foundation, Germany
- ▶ Rockefeller Brothers Fund, USA
- ▶ Slovak Atlantic Commission
- ▶ Soros Foundation, Azerbaijan
- ▶ Soros Higher Education Support Programme
- ▶ Supporters of Civil Society in Russia (SCSR), USA



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NEWSLETTER

- To register for the quarterly electronic Newsletter, which provides up-to-date information on activities, please go to the Schools' Network website (www.coe.int/t/dgap/sps)