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## MIREES Public Lecture Series 2012-2013

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The academic year 2012-2013 at the Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Research and Studies on Eastern Europe (MIREES) was rich in events. Within the framework of its Public Lecture Series, a number of international and interdisciplinary conferences, lectures, seminars and workshops took place between October 2012 and June 2013 at the Bologna University School of Political Science, Forlì Campus.

The honor to open the Public Lecture Series went to two prominent professors from Corvinus University of Budapest, Zoltan Szántó and Peter Futó, who delighted the audience with important insights on Hungarian economy. More specifically, Dr. Futó outlined the evolution of co-operation patterns in Hungarian business networks in the context of entrepreneurship development policy, while Dr. Szántó spoke about corruption transactions and their main features. Later in October an international conference co-organized by MIREES, the Institute for Central-Eastern and Balkan Europe (IECOB) and the Italian-Croatian (ASCER) and Italian-Slovene (ASSER) Economic Associations, «Challenges in Facing the Actual Crisis: Slovenian and Croatian Perspectives» took place. The speakers included the Consul General of the Republic of Slovenia in Italy, Dr. Dimitrij Rupel, Mrs. Mirjana Matanić, First Secretary of the Embassy of Croatia in Italy and Mr. Sani Ljubunčić, Head of Sector at the Croatian Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Crafts. The three distinguished guests gave students and entrepreneurs from Emilia-Romagna region the opportunity to deepen their knowledge on the entrepreneurial and investment climate in the two countries. The event also included a roundtable chaired by Mr. Alberto Amati, President of the above mentioned associations and Prof. Stefano Bianchini, Director of the MIREES program. Another international conference devoted to Croatia and its imminent accession to the EU followed on the occasion of the Day of Europe, in May 2013, and saw the presence of the Croatian Ambassador to Italy, Prof. Damir Grubiša, the well-known linguist and journalist Inoslav Bešker, Mr. Patrick Leech, City Councillor-Forlì Municipality, as well as three professors from Bologna University, Stefano Bianchini, Francesca Fauri and Francesco Privitera. The Croatian and Swedish Ambassadors also visited Forlì on Holocaust Remembrance Day in January 2013 and the ensuing seminar on «Memory and the Art of Serving» organized in the City Hall with the active involvement of MIREES students and professors.

Other events in 2012-2013 included lectures by frequent guests at MIREES, like the prominent Lithuanian philosopher and MEP, Leonidas Donskis, who enchanted the audience with his disquisitions on the «Devil in Politics: Evil as a Loss of Memory and Sensitivity». In his talk, the philosopher outlined the different ways of perceiving the Devil in politics from a historical perspective, by focusing primarily on the Renaissance period and the 20<sup>th</sup> century totalitarianisms. Previously academic tutor at MIREES and currently lecturer at the Faculty of European Legal and Political Studies in Novi Sad, Leonas Tolvaišis, talked about «Kosovo, the Current Phase: The Conflict Over Status and Ethno-political Implications». The young scholar displayed the abundant photographic material he collected during several years of research in the so-called ghettos or enclaves populated by Kosovo Serbs. Prof. Nina Belyaeva, Head of the Department of Public

Policy at the Higher School of Economics in Moscow, delivered an inspiring lecture on «Russian protest and Russian Opposition: “Systemic and Anti-Systemic”». The Russian professor presented some of the most salient features of her Department’s long-lasting research on the issues of interaction between «the civil society» and «the power» in Russia and other post-Soviet countries. Another «MIREES veteran», Dr. Natallia Pinchuk, gave a presentation on «The Belarusian Authoritarian Puzzle». In her talk, the Belarusian researcher focused on some key economical, political and cultural issues in the State that has become synonym for the last dictatorship in Europe. A special attention was devoted to the relationship between Belarus and its two main trade partners, namely the European Union and Russia and their «competition» for influence over the country.

In 2013, MIREES welcomed some of its former students such as Igor Novaković, research fellow at the International and Security Affairs Centre- ISAC Fund from Belgrade, who analyzed «Turkey’s New Approach to the Western Balkans: A View from Serbia». In his talk, the speaker underlined that, despite the growing activity in the Western Balkans, Turkey tends to overestimate its capabilities. More specifically, the country has no military power outside NATO, its economic achievements are rather modest and its soft power is limited in the region. Ljubica Spaskovska and Tanja Kovačič, PhD candidates at Exeter and the National University of Ireland respectively, presented two case studies on the topic of youth in post-socialism. Ljubica Spaskovska talked about the last Yugoslav generation and youth politics in late socialism, while Tanja Kovačič presented her inter-generational approach to growing up in the Slovenian Karst. On the second day of their visit, the two scholars offered a methodological seminar on oral history and qualitative narrative research. Artan Hoxha, a PhD candidate from Tirana and visiting fellow in Forlì, delivered a lecture on the «Religious Policy of the Albanian Communists, 1944-1949: Between Tradition and Ideology». Other guests included lecturers from Poland, Lithuania and the United States. More specifically, three Polish PhD candidates and lecturers at the Warsaw University Institute of International Relations introduced some of the pillars of Polish Foreign Policy to the MIREES students: its EU and non-EU dimensions. Anita Budziszewska, Lukas Golota and **Daria Mientkiewicz summarized the main aims of Polish Foreign Policy as** «to serve Poland-to build Europe-to understand the world». A couple of months later, their senior colleague, Prof. Maria Pasztor, gave a talk on «Housing, Meat and Adaptation Strategies in Poland after 1945». Two professors teaching at Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas, Gerda Jakštaitė and Jurate Imbrasaitė devoted their lectures to Lithuanian Foreign Policy and to «Citizenship and Democracy in Lithuania: active, traditional or monitorial citizen?»

Sam Potolicchio, professor at Georgetown University and founder of the Preparing Global Leaders Institute, advised students on how to become an effective leader by referring to some examples in post-socialist Europe. Prof. Martin King Whyte from Harvard University focused in his talk on the end of the Cold War and post-socialist transformations by analyzing China and Eastern Europe, while Prof. Matthew Evangelista from Cornell University spoke about «Transnational Politics and the End of the Cold War». Another professor from the United States, Francine Friedman (Ball State University), discussed «Minorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina: The Bosnian Jewish Community» and argued for their full political participation.

The MIREES Public Lecture Series has been further enriched by a couple of two and three-day seminars held by three prominent lecturers. Professor Emeritus at the European University Institute, Jean Blondel talked about «The Presidential Republics in the Ex Soviet Union», namely their setting up after 1990, their different structures and their intrinsic natures. A three-day seminar on the empirical and normative implications of deliberative democracy was offered by Jurg Steiner, Professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Last but certainly not least, we should mention two lectures by Prof. Akos Kengyel from the Department of World Economy at the

Corvinus University Budapest, on «Strengthening Economic and Social Cohesion Within the EU: The Impact of EU Level Regional Policy», followed by a critical evaluation of the new regulatory framework in the period 2014-2020.

Towards the end of the academic year, Bojan Bilić, a sociologist from Serbia, shared with the students his research on (post-)Yugoslav anti-war engagement and presented his most recent work on the topic. Furthermore, Matteo Verda from the Institute for the Study of International Politics (ISPI) examined the issue of energy security in a changing international system. Finally, a more practically oriented workshop took place in June «Working FOR or working WITH the EU: Career Opportunities in and around the EU and how to get an EU job», led by Gabor Mikes, the Managing Director of Arboreus On-Line-Training Services.

The Public Lecture Series continues in the 2013-2014 academic year, with equally stimulating guests and events.

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