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## **MIREES Graduation Ceremony**

**Forli, September 25th 2015**

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*By Sanja Kajinić, MIREES Tutor*

Twenty seven students coming from eight different countries received their joint MIREES diplomas and rounds of applause last September 25th at the University of Bologna, campus of Forli. The students of the 2013-2015 generation of the LM MIREES (*Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Research and Studies on Eastern Europe*), awarding a joint diploma of four universities (Bologna, St. Petersburg, Kaunas and Budapest), finished the two-year program with a final graduation ceremony at the *Salone Comunale* of the Municipality of Forli. After two days of thesis defenses, the graduation of the 11th generation of MIREES students was an occasion for the students and their families and friends as well as the professors (also of the associated Universities of Ljubljana and Zagreb) and the wider Forli-based academic community to celebrate their achievement.

The ceremony was opened by professor Carla Salvaterra, Vice-rector for international relations of the University of Bologna. After a short greeting by the representatives of the Forli Municipality, the representatives of the partner universities addressed the audience: professor Ineta Dabašinskiene of the Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas, Lithuania; professor Stanislav Tkachenko of the St. Petersburg State University, and professor Akos Kengyel of the Corvinus University of Budapest. Professor Stefano Bianchini of the University of Bologna, still in the role of the director of the MIREES program, reported on the two academic years from 2013 to 2015. Professor Bianchini looked back on the beginnings of the MIREES program in 2004 and contextualized the importance of 11 years of this pioneering joint degree program focusing on Eastern Europe. He emphasised the fact that MIREES brings together international student body with international faculty (31 professors from 14 countries) to engage in interdisciplinary and innovative research and learning, or as he termed it the pursuit of „emphatic education“.

Two student representatives, Orena Palmisano and Irina Korovinskaya, briefly addressed their colleagues and professors, paying their respects, as did other speakers, to the unexpected premature passing away of one of their colleagues to whom they devoted the whole ceremony. They were followed by Adriano Remiddi of the MIREES Alumni International Association, and their invitees: Ana Radović Kapor (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro) talked about her MIREES years and how her life and career developed afterwards, while Bojan Bilić (Marie Curie post-doctoral fellow at the University of Amsterdam, and former MIREES academic tutor) addressed the responsibilities that MIREES graduates face as young researchers in the turbulent world they live in.

The keynote speech on the „Development of the Russian Science in European Context“ was given by professor Sergey Tunik of the St. Petersburg State University. He addressed the rich history of Russian scientific contributions from the reforms of the Peter the Great and his founding of the Saint Petersburg State University in 1724 through periods of relative isolation, such as during the WWII, to the Nobel prize winning Russian scientists in both natural and social sciences and the contemporary dynamic academic cooperation between Russian and EU academic communities. The awarding of the Master of Arts diplomas to the students, amidst reading out of their grades and congratulations, was the most exciting moment of this ceremonious event. The whole occasion was musically accompanied by the *Collegium Musicum Almae Matris* of the University of Bologna.

After the graduation ceremony, there was an event of the Welcoming of the new MIREES generation at the Sala Artusi at the Eataly Forli. This presented an opportunity for the new MIREES students to meet as a group for the first time and listen to professor Bianchini introduce the program and representatives of the partner universities talk about their institutions, as well as continue the discussion with the new group of students as the event ended with a coffee break.