



FMA Bulletin

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EP TO CAMPUS PROGRAMMES

The EP to Campus programme allows Universities to benefit from the expertise and experience of former Members of the European Parliament, who will share their insights into how the EU institutions really work and what are the factors that shape EU decision-making. The programme was conceived to spread the European vision, to give a full and complete understanding of the EU to young generations, to inform future citizens and to help in forging people who will work in the field. During the course of 2013, the Association organised 7 programmes in Italy, Ukraine, Bulgaria, United Kingdom, Turkey and Spain, and agreed to finance five universities which submitted a full programme of activities.

REPORT ON THE JEAN MONNET CONFERENCES HELD ON 2 AND 3 DECEMBER 2013 AT THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF KYIV-MOHYLA ACADEMY

A) The session entitled 'The Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius. What is Next?' was arranged at a time when hopes for future accession were high. Those involved in the conference, which took place at the university on 2 and 3 December 2013, could sense the political turmoil which the suspension of integration talks had triggered, and it galvanised students to occupy the Maidan day and night.

B) European, American and Canadian diplomats attended daily information meetings in order to show their support for the demonstrators without engaging in action openly hostile to the government.

C) I went to talk to the demonstrators occupying the Maidan, as we had done in 2004. I spoke briefly with the daughter of Yulia Tymoshenko, then with members of the organising committee, who had gathered in the union headquarters, located right on the square.

D) All went to plan on the first day of the conference: 50 teachers from all over the country, whose work is directly affected by the Commission programmes, actively participated in the event, along with some 30 students. Representatives of the Commission and the French Embassy were also present. Dr Roman Petrov did an excellent job of coordinating the event. Speakers at the two round table discussions which followed my talk expressed their great disillusionment with the Ukrainian Government, but also with Europe. All the participants alluded to the fact that

the association agreement process had not culminated in a formal application for EU membership. The Ukrainian people are demanding full EU membership. Nothing else will do. The students called for Europe to continue its information campaign, with a special focus on the need for visa liberalisation.

E) The second day of the conference, which was organised by Tamara Martsenyuk from the Sociology Department, was devoted to gender studies. I gave lectures to two groups of Master's students, explaining the action Ukraine needed to take in this area. The influence of the Orthodox Church and Russia's insistence on defending 'traditional family values' are at odds with more liberal European attitudes towards family, abortion, prostitution and homosexuality. In the evening, I visited Independence Square with the NGO representatives and the teachers, where there was a palpable atmosphere of revolution.

Regrettably, though understandably, the two Commission officials had been warned against getting involved in the Independence Square demonstrations.

On the whole, there is no clear support for Ms Tymoshenko; quite the opposite, in fact. It is generally believed that this lack of support was used as a pretext for refusing to sign the EU association agreement.

In conclusion, the two-day conference was highly productive for everybody involved, with real debates against a backdrop of civic unrest and popular enthusiasm for Europe.

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VISIT TO ECONOMICS UNIVERSITY IN VARNA

During my week at the Economics University of Varna, I gave two lectures on Trade Policy Formation, one to Masters students and one open to all students and staff. In addition, I took part in a role-play exercise with students based on issues concerning the present ongoing negotiations for the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). By happy coincidence, I am presently working on the subject myself in my current capacity as adviser to the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC). It was pleasing to see just how well informed the students are with a complex set of issues, as they played the roles of US and EU negotiators. However, I had to point out with polite amusement that they were far more willing to concede that the other side had a valid point than any trade negotiators I have ever encountered. The standard of English was high and the students well able to handle complex issues with fluency and confidence.

Varna is a candidate for “Europe Capital of Culture 2019”. Certainly its rich and varied history should give the Black Sea port a good chance of success. Varna has been at different times a Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Ottoman, Soviet city. Evidence of all occupations are to be found in its architecture, ancient and modern; Hellenic remains are being excavated and the beautiful Sea Garden park across the University boasts a “Cosmonauts` Alley” planted by Yuri Gagarin.

Varna has always been a trans-European nodal point and is confident that it can re-emerge as such with Bulgaria’s membership of the EU. There are grounds for optimism. The magazine Fdi, owned by the Financial Times, declared Varna as “South-Eastern Europe city of the future”. It is a future which the Economics University hopes it has the capacity to contribute to.

The University itself is the legacy of the blossoming of confidence stemming from Bulgaria’s independence from Turkish rule in the decades after 1880s. Varna had long been a successful entrepreneurial city and the local Chamber of Commerce and Industry recognised the necessity of economic higher education. Plans started being laid in 1904 headed by an eminent scholar Tsani Kalyandzhiev, who had studied in Moscow and Zurich and worked as an industrial chemist in the USA.



View of the Conference Room during the public lecture on 25 October 2013.

The Chambers sent Kalyandzhiev on a mission to explore other such initiatives in Europe and to recruit lecturers.

Unfortunately wars intervened and the idea of a foundation was only revived after the First World War, the opening of the new university eventually taking place in 1921.

The university quickly developed a tradition for acting as a bridge between young Bulgarian intellectuals and wider Europe – a tradition once more cruelly interrupted by the war which engulfed Europe. Sadly, Bulgaria’s occupation by the Soviets after the war brought about the same intellectual petrification of academic inquiry as Stalinism brought to the rest of Central and Eastern Europe.

For the young students now attending the Economics University this sad episode is now buried in history. The University can take up the challenge and excitement of its founding years, albeit tinged with a realism that suggests for many young Bulgarian, their future may well be outside Bulgaria.

Let us all hope that the retreat into protectionism in the EU labour market does not blight the chances of the bright young students whom I had the pleasure to meet in Varna.

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