

Foreword from the Editor in Chief

TSU Institute for European Studies was established in 2007 under TACIS programme with generous financial support of the European Union and in kind assistance of EU Delegation to Georgia.

The idea was to establish the first interdisciplinary, English taught Master's Program in European Studies in South Caucasus Region. This intention was implemented with assistance of the consortium composed of Professors and experts linked to European universities, in particular University Pierre Mendés France of Grenoble, Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences of Athens (Greece), Center for Public Reforms, Innsbruck (Austria). The best practices of EU Universities acting in relevant fields as well as standards and achievements of Bologna process had been thoroughly considered during the program shaping process.

Due to its interdisciplinary format the English taught Master's Program in European Studies is unique as it is based on four faculties of TSU – Faculty of Business and Economics, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, and Faculty of Humanities. This type of interdisciplinary approach aims at giving the student a possibility to gain comprehensive knowledge about the European Union. This was the key idea and purpose of the EU-funded project establishing MA Program in European Studies, while its successful implementation ensured the admission of the first intake students already in 2007.

Apart from this, TSU Institute for European Studies promoted the series of public lectures where in a very friendly atmosphere all interested individuals can get involved into the open discussions with the politicians, diplomats, prominent members of local and international scientific circles with regard to the most important theoretical and practical issues related to EU integration.

Tremendous efforts by the EU, the unique structure and contents of the English-taught program, professionalism of our academic staff as well as the employability ratio of our graduates determined much the successful location of the Institute for European Studies in the overall context of scientific-research and teaching units of Tbilisi State University.

Pro-active stance of TSU Institute for European Studies has lead to gaining great experience and enhanced cooperation with number of local and international partners, which resulted in impressive number of educational and scientific projects. Later on, the idea of sharing experience and introducing expert potential to wider public developed into initiative of conclusion of Memorandum of Understanding between TSU Institute for European Studies and the Head of the Committee on European Integration of the Parliament of Georgia Mr. Davit Darchiashvili. Memorandum of Understanding concluded on February 1, 2011 primarily aimed at strengthening the Committee with academic expertise from the side of TSU Institute for European Studies; while the Committee made commitment to exchange practical experience with relevant academics attached to the Institute. It should be stressed that it is indeed tremendous step towards Public-Private Partnership and eventually towards Georgia's democratic transformation that would never had taken place without financial support of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. I would like to express my sincere gratitude towards them and all persons involved in the project.

In not that long academic life of the Institute for European Studies the year of 2012 is to be commemorated due to the fact that European Union supported elaboration of the first interdisciplinary and interfaculty PhD programme in European Studies which was developed by the active involvement of the experts from the Trinity College Dublin, Central European University of Budapest, as well as Universities of Ljubiana and Graz. After successful accreditation of the programme in 2014, the first intake of PhD students had been admitted. The students already completed the so-called 'taught-component' of the program and had been sent for the research purposes to our partner Universities of Free University Brussels, Jagellonian University Krakow, University of Tartu, Trinity College Dublin, etc.

The EU 'more-for-more' principle worked well for the Institute for European Studies. The progress achieved developed itself into the new incentives and novel opportunities. On October 27 of 2014 the Rector of

TSU Professor Vladimer Papava concluded the Memorandum of Understanding with the State Minister of Georgia on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration Mr. Aleks Petriashvili. The text of memorandum envisages that apart from the pro-active collaboration in the filed of teaching and research, the students of the Institute for European Studies first time ever will have an outstanding opportunity of the full-time internships at the office of the State Minister. These provisions of the memorandum have already been implemented.

The success-stories of the Institute encouraged us to make further steps for supporting the idea of the integration with the EU through high education. My idea was to establish the first bilingual Georgian journal for European Studies as a platform for academic interaction for those young as well as famous scientists who are exploring the EU related research area in Georgia and other Eastern Partnership countries. We are eager for the first edition was financially supported by the European Union within the framework of the project on establishing PhD program in European Studies. Our ambition is to continue to issue the journal at least two times a year.

Finally, on behalf of TSU Institute for European Studies, I would like to express my gratitude to the board of editors of this journal for their invaluable expertise, and especially I would like to thank my mentor and teacher - the Vice-Rector, full member of Georgian Academy of Sciences Professor Levan Alkesidze whom I owe much due to his trust in me and the inspiration to pursue my goals in my academic career. I also would like to thank members of EU Delegation of Georgia who provided invaluable assistance to turn IES into the center of excellence, my special thanks to authors of the articles of this edition, and each and every person who contributed into making all our interesting ideas into successful reality.

Nino Lapiashvili

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