

FOREWORD FROM THE EDITOR IN CHIEF

Working on this issue of the Journal coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic. The world had to face various problems and the academic society was not an exemption. At the Institute for European Studies of TSU, we had to cope not only with the proper adaptation of the distance and hybrid methods of teaching and learning, but we also had to rethink how to deal with the negative effects of the economic crises on the education, that was the result of, *inter alia*, the massive and long-term lockdowns. In particular, lots of prospective students from Georgia as well as other countries of the Eastern Partnership region who were applying to our interdisciplinary English taught Masters Programme in European Studies, had been indicating in their application forms that they were not sure if they would manage to find enough financial resources to cover the tuition fees for their studies. Lack of the available job opportunities for the youth during the pandemic was among the top reasons outlined by the applicants. Taking into consideration this pessimistic context that we had in that particular moment, it is even more important to underline the invaluable support we had been provided with, quite unexpectedly. And it did not go without emotions. On behalf of the academic and administrative staff of the Institute for European Studies of TSU, I would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Director of the South Caucasus office of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation Dr. Thomas Schrapel and his amazing team for their decision to initiate a very special and unique merits-based stipend programme for our selected Master's students.

Among the several programmes of the Institute, the KAS had opted for supporting the beneficiaries of the Master's in European Studies. We are proud to say that the winners of the prestigious Konrad Adenauer Scholarships, who had been revealed as a result of the highly competitive scholarship contest, - are seven Georgians, three Armenians, three Azerbaijanis, two Ukrainians and one Moldovan student. The generous support covered not only the full tuition fees but also ensured that the students are provided with the monthly allowances for their most important necessities. This significant contribution made by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation had undoubtedly made a unique contribution to the history of the development of the TSU Institute for European Studies and its Master's programme. Herewith, I would like to highlight a very successful role played by Mr. Jonathan Nowak, Deputy Director of the South Caucasus Office of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, and Ms. Irina Lashkhi, the Project Manager at KAS, who have been enthusiastically and tirelessly involved in the work of the selection committee, which was quite a long and a challenging process.

It is highly significant that the authors of two articles of this issue of the journal are the KAS scholarship holders. They submitted the papers within the frames of the course on the Historical Context and the Governance of the EU, offered by me during the Autumn semester, the period which coincided with the 30th anniversary of the unification of Germany. I asked the students to present a small scale research on this topic. Among the extraordinarily good papers from the cohort, two of them turned out to be so interesting that together with the honorable members of the editorial board, we decided to give them a well-deserved place in this edition. And even if the rest of the publications of this issue of the journal are not about the unification of Germany, this edition is symbolically dedicated to this very important event.

It is to be mentioned that the authors of other thought-provoking articles are the researchers of the Institute's Doctoral programme, as well as the students of the Institute's Regional Master's programme in Human Rights and Democratization which was established by the European Commission within the frames of the Global Campus initiative.

This is the first issue since he left us forever and I would like to celebrate the life and to remember with love the distinguished Professor and the Full Member of the National Science Academy of Georgia Levan Alexidze, the founder of the school of International Law in Georgia, a recognized scientist, my teacher, a senior colleague and a loyal friend. He, confident in the success of my new initiatives, unconditionally supported me throughout the process of founding this scientific Journal. All those years of the Journal when he agreed to be a co-editor and to share the burden with us are invaluable. While the heartache will not be healed, I would like to state on behalf of the editorial board that it was our honor to work side by side with this great man and that we feel the responsibility to justify his trust and undertake to lead the journal in the right path.

I am delighted to have an opportunity to congratulate the honorable members of the editorial board, the technical staff, my dear colleagues and all the authors of the articles for their very hard work and the patience during the whole process of preparation of this publication. And of course, I wish lots of success to this edition!

With best regards,

Nino Iapiashvili

Editor in Chief