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Dear reader,

A "Wind of change" was blowing all across eastern and south-eastern Europe in the early 90's. At that time political transition towards a new democratic future was changing the landscape of individual states and of the whole continent, offering hope and promising prospects to many. I was 12 years old at the time, and thinking back I do recall a short, 10-day war of independence and a feeling of the uncertain future of a new born country. People say it was hard then: a high unemployment rate, lost markets, unclear and blurred values. But Slovenia somehow succeeded, though still struggling at times; the country had the right attitude and the "third wave of democratisation" boosted spirits and established a young democracy.

To paraphrase a famous concept from Samuel Huntington's book, we could perhaps now call it a "fourth wave of democratization". As a large part of North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula is on the course of change at the beginning of 2011, the wind is blowing again, and at a time when Europe is trying to pull itself out of a financial crisis that is neither temporary nor short, the citizens of Cairo are sweeping the streets in the conviction that a vision of the new should at least look clean.

I'm following the process with empathy and hope. My memory and experience warn me however that numerous will not survive. But as one Slovenian politician said on the evening before the Independence Day: "Today, dreams are allowed, tomorrow is a new day".



Sebastjan Pikel  
Institute Novum

**Roma: fighting the exclusion of a European minority**

*Anna Striethorst, Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung  
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**"No democracy can long survive which does not accept as fundamental to its very existence the recognition of the rights of minorities." – Franklin D. Roosevelt's quote is more valid than ever in today's Europe.**

two years the Brussels office has worked intensively on the rights of the Roma.

The RLF Roma program includes both academic research and a cycle of events on the situation of this largest ethnical minority in Europe. The cycle started off in 2009 with a best practice seminar on education projects. The participants agreed that successful projects need to be participatory: the ideas and fears of the families concerned must be taken seriously, and educational projects can only make a difference if they include measures against the grinding poverty that most Roma children live in.

The Brussels office has further hosted an exhibition on the genocide of Roma during the Holocaust. At the opening event, children of Auschwitz survivors described the decades of non-recognition and the lasting effects on their families. Romani Rose, head of the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma, stressed the importance to learn from history

and actively fight antigypsyism in today's societies.

The latest seminar took place in Bucharest in December 2010. It focused on the mobility of Roma in Europe and on their rights as EU citizens. Lawyers and civil society activists stated that the recent mass expulsions in France were discriminatory against the Roma and that they violated the right to free movement within Europe.

The program tackled the issue of Roma migrants from the EU neighbourhood, too. Field research was conducted on the extremely precarious situation of Roma refugees who after many years in Germany have been forcibly returned to Kosovo – the first of more than 10,000 who will be following over the next four years.

The seminars have given many activists the opportunity to share their knowledge and experiences, and public debates in Brussels and Berlin have helped raise awareness among politicians and civil society. The endeavour continues in 2011.



Above: Roma family in Mitrovica, Kosovo, returned after 17 years in Blaubeuren, Germany

has sparked a fierce debate on how democratic a society can be if it accepts the exclusion of fellow EU citizens.

The fight against rightwing extremism has been a core issue for the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation for many years, both in Berlin and in its 14 foreign offices. For the last



## Impartial media in Bulgaria: a fundamental value of the European Union

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**Promotion of democracy is one of the major priorities for the Bulgarian non-governmental organization "Institute for Social Integration" (IfSI).**

All human rights offences and the disturbing trends regarding a free press are important issues in the EU and that no democratic society should ignore. An increased homesickness for "the order from the past" is often palpable among Bulgarians, provoked by the threats currently posed to freedom of speech.

ism – vulgarity in policy is transforming into vulgarity in journalism. The simple fact is that would-be professional journalists are lacking motivation. In the words of a Bulgarian Deputy, those striving for objectivity will end up standing alone. In people are more and more apathetic, society is folding in on itself.

### Lack of press freedom

According to Reporters Without Borders, for the past two years the "Press freedom index" for Bulgaria has dropped 13 points – from 58 to 71. Among the topics under evaluation were monopoly of the media advertising market and distribution of the printed press, reduction of the advertising market, pressure and attempts at political censorship, and the media's self-censorship and its influence on the public agenda. Wiretapping and phone-hacking is a unique mass phenomenon in Bulgaria (around 20,000 wiretaps were used last year), an issue which is embarrassing and problematic for everyone involved. We should be worried to note that this problem doesn't occupy any major part of the public agenda. Meanwhile the tabloid press is increasingly popular and turning itself into a basic tool in terms of forming public opinion. Some participants in January's discussion perceived a ray of hope in the internet and the media in this context, although this does not constitute a free press. Despite the government's purported efforts at subordinating the media, the internet is a field that is not subject to manipulation in any way. The internet is becoming one area where independent public opinion can be formed, and meanwhile social networks are gathering strength.

### New media law

The Chairman of The Council for

Electronic Media stated that the discussion is a highly visible and important one, especially on the eve of passing new media legislation. A group of experts came to the conclusion that transparency is key in press ownership and media management. Bulgaria's public media statutes are the most contentious point, wherein the arguable question concerns legislation. Is it right to pass two laws simultaneously – one for private media and another for state-owned press? Whatever the decision, it should be clear what expectations the media has vis-à-vis the State, particularly for cases whereby the State is providing the funding. "Right now we are in the situation where public media are pretending to be private, while private media are pretending to implement public missions. The result could be seen as forming some strange media creatures and somehow we have forgotten that our public media are part of our cultural identity" remarked a member of Parliament.

Many issues were raised. How to protect the independence and personal freedom of the journalists? Is the code of ethics for the journalists useful and effective? What about transparency in terms of media owners and their funding? Do we need a journalistic syndicate and what should its terms and conditions be? There were also a lot of questions concerning identity and ownership of electronic media in Bulgaria.

This subject is crucial for Bulgaria, especially with a view to the upcoming elections at the end of 2011 and the media acting as a leading actor and generator of public opinion. IfSI and FES will continue in their endeavour to stimulate discussion among public opinion and implement monitoring and overview on major European issues.

Below: From left to right: Mr. Pentcho Houbtchev (FES), Mr. Marc Meinardus (FES), Mr. Yurii Aslanov (IfSI) and Mr. Sergey Stanishev (BSP), in opening speeches.



In mid January 2011, IfSI and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) Bulgaria office jointly organised an open debate on "Impartial media and media legislation". The organisations were represented by Mr. Marc Meinardus, Ph.D. (FES) and Mr. Yurii Aslanov, Ph.D. (IfSI).

All invited guests were top journalists from the Bulgarian media, members of the Bulgarian and of the European Parliament and diplomats. Among the most active were the Bulgarian National Television, Bulgarian National Radio, TV Channel 3, dailies "Trud", "24 Hours", "Duma", "Land", sociological agencies "Galap" and "Afis" and others.

For both politicians and the media truth and trust are of utmost important. It is often clear that qualitative journalism needs remedying, as it is clear that without high level policy the country's development is far from heading in the right direction and quite obviously in danger.

Today in Bulgaria there is less and less room for professional journal-

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## Promoting Social Dialogue in Georgia

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Below on the left: International Conference on Social Dialogue in Georgia, Tbilisi, November 2010.

Below on the right: Training of Trainers (ToT) on Collective Bargaining, Tbilisi, December 2010.

**Given its continuing importance in sustaining inclusive market economies and participatory democracies in EU member states, social dialogue is often promoted by the European Union when cooperating with neighbouring countries.**

nal, sector and company level;  
b) Foster mechanisms for bipartite social dialogue between employers and employees;  
c) Raise awareness of social dialogue and the role of social partners among politicians.

Since the start of the EU-supported project in February 2010, five Trainings of Trainers (ToTs) for trade

were issued for all ToTs.

In addition to these training sessions, the first international conference on Social Dialogue and Labour Standards in Georgia took place in Tbilisi on November 4th, 2010. As well as the Georgian Government and Social Partners, the conference brought together representatives from the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), the International Association of Employers (IOE) and the European Union (EU). During the second phase of the project, processes of collective bargaining will be initiated and accompanied in selected sectors and companies in Georgia, together with the promotion of best practice examples for social dialogue.

As a partner country of the EU in the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership, Georgia faces substantial challenges in establishing a system of social dialogue. The Georgian Labour Code does not contain any comprehensive provisions on collective bargaining and freedom of association. Bipartite Dialogue between the Social Partners is limited. The ultra-liberal economic policy agenda of the government does not acknowledge the important role that Trade Unions and social dialogue play in strengthening social cohesion and safeguarding core labour standards.



The lack of social dialogue further deteriorates the tense social situation in the country and contributes to the violation of core labour standards in Georgia. Furthermore, it represents an obstacle for Georgia's efforts to meet EU standards in the fields of economic and social legislation.

Against this background, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) has begun to implement a project to promote social dialogue in Georgia, with the financial support of the EU. Specifically, the three aims of the project are to:

a) Strengthen the capacities of social partners (trade unions and employer associations) on the nation-

unions and employer associations have been implemented. In June 2010 representatives from Georgian employers associations and trade unions jointly attended ToTs on collective bargaining, conflict resolution and negotiation skills. In July 2010 a ToT on workplace policies and setting up mechanisms of social dialogue for members of the Georgian Employer Association (GEA) was launched. In November of that year a ToT on the same topic was delivered for members of the Georgian Trade Union Confederation (GTUC). A training on strategies for political campaigning and advocacy for trade unions took place in Tbilisi in December 2010, and Georgian language training manuals

The willingness and ability of the Georgian government to safeguard core labour standards and comply with ILO conventions will become an even more important issue when the EU and Georgia start negotiating a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA), envisaged as part of a future EU Association Agreement.



### CALENDAR

Internal Training Course on Project Management, 16-18 March 2011, Malta (MT)

ENoP Orientation Seminar, 17 May 2011, Brussels (BE)

Internal Training Course on involvement in EC projects, 8-10 June 2011, Sofia (BG)

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## Magna Carta Winter School 2011: Federalism and Meritocracy in Italy

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**C**lose to L'Aquila, the town destroyed by a terrible earthquake in 2009, Magna Carta Foundation has intended to take part symbolically in the "social reconstruction" through the organization of a training course.

Magna Carta Winter School was born two years ago as union between the traditional Foundation's objective to contribute in the formation of a new ruling class and the strong willing to support the Region in building its future.

The second edition of the School took place from 14 to 16 January 2011. This year, Magna Carta decided to celebrate the 150° Anniversary of the Italian national unity offering to new generations the opportunity to reason and discuss - with professors, politicians and experts - about the new challenges that our Country is going to face and the reforms required to compete with the global economy.

This workshop, addressed to 50 selected students among 18 and 35 years old, pursued the aim to help new generations in deepening their know-how about the federalist reform of the Italian State and the merito-

cratic changes introduced by the last educational reform.

As regards the federalist one, the participants talked about the fiscal federalism, the new regions' responsibilities in the sectors of energy, budget, State property, Public Health Service and the principle of subsidiarity applied to local administration.

Moreover, the students discussed about the cultural change-over started in our Country thanks to the last educational reform. The merit principle - as the reform contains and the Italian Youth Ministry affirmed - must become the only one respected in the school, in the University and in the working world. This is the only way, for Italy, to face the growing competition imposed by the Asian developing countries and dictated by the inexorable process of globalization.

In the afternoon, during the open plenary sessions, Magna Carta organized some political round tables. In the first one, Roger Abravanel - witty manager and adviser of the Education Ministry - presented and discussed with the Youth Ministry his second book titled "Rules". This essay analyzes the value of reasonable rules and citizens' responsibility in the Ital-

ian economic development. The second round table was dedicated to the Italian political situation, discussed by some politicians: Gaetano Quagliariello (Senator and Honorary President of Magna Carta), Maurizio Gasparri (President of the major parliamentary group in the Senate), Gianni Chiodi (Regional President of Abruzzo), Antonio Tancredi (senior Deputy), and Francesco Valli (President of Magna Carta Foundation).

The full immersion course ended with the traditional dedication by the student. The second edition of Magna Carta Winter School is dedicated to Goffredo Mameli, the composer of the Italian national who has sacrificed his life for the national cause.



Below on the right: final plenary session.

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