



THE BELGRADE FUND FOR POLITICAL EXCELLENCE



A FEW WORDS *from the Director*

Sonja Licht



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Our 10 members of staff (8 full-time + 2 part-time) are fully engaged in the implementation of all our programme and management activities, and most of the tasks are implemented on a team basis. The BFPE staff has a particular accumulation of knowledge and skills, with many years of experience working in the NGO sector, as well as in academia.

The Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence (BFPE) is currently in its third year, and its efforts to date have been very intensive. In such a short period, we have managed to organise over sixty different events, including major conferences (such as the one entitled “Serbia - Five Years After” which marked the fifth anniversary of democratic change beginning) and three multi-annual programmes, with more than thirty seminars, lectures, public debates, book launches, etc. Thus the BFPE has become well known, not only among its alumni, but throughout the country as well. This is largely a result of its efforts to empower the existing political elite by broadening their knowledge and experience, providing an opportunity for them to acquire special skills and thereby contributing to the building of a new and responsible political class committed to European values and European integration.

At the BFPE, we firmly believe that knowledge empowers and builds self-esteem and that communication between representatives of different parties and among politicians and civil society leaders reinforces our commitment to a common European future. Knowledge also helps to remedy biased approaches and to build a national consensus about the future, i.e. about the need to work as hard as possible to make it possible for our country to become a full member of the European family.



MISSIONS *and objectives*

The Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence (BFPE) was founded under the auspices of the Council of Europe in November 2003. The President of BFPE is its founder, Ms Sonja Licht, while Mr Zarko Stepanović is programme Director. BFPE is a non-profit-making, non-partisan organisation committed to the training of men and women engaged in public service.

The Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence aims to facilitate the process of building and continuously developing a new, democratic leadership in the political sphere and in other areas of public life, leaders who will lead Serbia towards European and Euro-Atlantic integration.

The main objective of the Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence is the transfer of knowledge and skills needed in order to achieve a democratic transformation of Serbian civil society, based on respect for pluralist democracy, human rights and the rule of law. A particular aim is to develop regional co-operation in south-eastern Europe so as to increase the region's stability, security and democratic potential.



SELECTION *process*

The school's target groups are MPs, politicians of parliamentary and non-parliamentary parties, local self-government representatives, the judiciary, civil society and the media.

A number of political groups, such as democracy-minded MPs and government and party officials, are invited to nominate candidates for selection. The criteria on which admission is based are age, education, degree of success in political career, ambition and readiness to develop own career by acquiring relevant knowledge, interest in European and Euro-Atlantic integration issues, gender representation (30% quota), representation of national minorities, territorial representation, etc.

Representatives of other target groups are nominated, in order of importance, by professional associations and institutions. We try to keep to a ratio of 75% politicians to 25% others.

Candidates send a detailed application form and CV to the BFPE. An internal BFPE committee examines the applications and selects participants according to the above-mentioned criteria. Twice as many applications are usually received as there are places available.



ACTIVITIES *and events*

Annual seminar series (under the auspices of the CoE) in 2006

- 3 national sessions of 4-day seminars per year - March, May, September;
 - 1 session in Strasbourg (Summer University for Democracy) - July.
- Themes of national seminars: Transition process; Serbia and Montenegro European integration process; Stability, security and regional co-operation.

The BFPE strives to achieve its objectives through the following programmes:

Education of women politicians

- 1 follow-up session for the 2005 intake/March 2006;
 - 3 general sessions for the 2006 intake/March, April, June 2006.
- Topics: politics; gender-sensitive language; gender and media; legal framework for gender equality; socio-economic position of women in Serbia and Montenegro; misogyny and women's solidarity.

Young political leaders of Serbia

- 1 follow-up session for the 2005 intake/March 2006;
- 1 international relations module (3 sessions) / March, April 2006;
- 2 introductory modules (2x3 sessions) / May, June, October, November 2006.

Topics: values in politics; party-building skills; Serbia and Montenegro in the EU integration process; introduction to the EU – institutions and policies, negotiation, presentation and protocol.

Capacity-building by parliamentary committees of the National Assembly of Serbia on poverty reduction issues (in co-operation with the UNDP Office in Serbia)

- 2 seminar training sessions for MPs of 5 parliamentary committees/ June, September 2006;

- 2 study visits (in Serbia and to the EU)/October, November 2006.

Enhancing the role of the Serbian Parliament and young politicians in the EU integration process

- (in co-operation with the PONTIS Foundation, Slovakia)
- 2 expert seminar sessions/June, September 2006;
 - 1 study visit to Bratislava/October 2006;
 - 1 training session/November 2006.

Getting to know your country: Multi-ethnic educational visits (in co-operation with the OSCE Mission in Serbia)

- 6 three-day visits to Belgrade for national minority students from different regions of Serbia/March – September 2006

The Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence is committed to developing a flexible open forum for the exchange of ideas.

Seminars are organised on an interactive basis, in order to encourage and train participants to express their own point of view on a particular issue and subsequently to defend it during plenary and workshop discussions. It goes without saying that this process requires a high level of commitment.

Lecturers

In order to maintain the universally high degree of political excellence of the seminars and other events organised by the BFPE, every effort is made to use high-quality home and foreign speakers, distinguished experts, prominent public figures and practitioners, with good communication skills. Where possible, the BFPE strives to establish regular co-operation with the lecturers considered to be the best.



EVALUATION

After all activities and events, participants are asked to provide written and oral evaluations. The evaluation indicators serve as a tool for assessing present activities and planning future events in a way that will more efficiently meet participants' needs. In order to assess the success of lectures and workshops, the following are appraised: subject relevance, method of presentation, preparatory work by the lecturer and level of interaction among participants. **The BFPE will continue its internal evaluation of programme orientation and management procedures during the regular retreat sessions held every year.**

FUNDING

Donors: Open Society Institute; Rockefeller Brothers Fund; Charles Stewart Mott Foundation; European Agency for Reconstruction; Westminster Foundation for Democracy; Council of Europe; UNDP; Balkan Trust for Democracy; Fund for an Open Society - Serbia; Freedom House; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sweden.

Partners: British Embassy, Belgrade; OSCE; Balkan Trust for Democracy; Wilton Park Conference Centre, United Kingdom; Club of Madrid; Centre for European Reform, London; Centre for Modern Skills, Belgrade; Secretariat for Labour; Employment and Gender Equality; Vojvodina Executive Council; Office for Gender Equality; Montenegrin Government; EU Institute for Security Studies, Paris; Geneva Centre for Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF).

ALUMNI

The BFPE is committed to building a strong alumni network and therefore organises regular meetings, numerous ad hoc events, debates, regional and local courses, seminars, conferences, etc. **The aim of the network is to establish permanent links, providing a resource which is very important to the long-term sustainability of the BFPE, thanks to the building of a true community of future democratic leaders.**

Since 2003, our annual seminar has been attended by some **120 distinguished politicians from Serbia as well as Montenegro**: around 50 MPs, many high-level government officials, chiefs of staff, advisers, civic leaders, prominent journalists and political analysts. Approximately a third of them remain actively involved in alumni activities. At the same time, the alumni organisation of our Young Leaders programme – OMLIS – now has more than 250 members, with their own website, regular meetings and spin-off projects.



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