



Salam Alum

osce ACADEMY
in Bishkek

OSCE ACADEMY ALUMNI MAGAZINE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

WELCOME NOTE	2
ALUMNI NETWORK IN NUMBERS	2
ACADEMY’S UPDATES	3
Meet the New International Office Assistant	3
Research	3
Incoming Student Academic Mobility	5
ALUMNI AND COVID-19	6
Grassroot Project to Save Hundreds of Lives in Remote Areas of Tajikistan.....	6
“Fight Against COVID-19” Charity Team in Kyrgyzstan	7
ALUMNI AND ACADEMY	8
Alumni Workshops	8
Virtual Alumni Conference “The COVID-19 Crisis and its Impact on Post-Soviet Central Asia”	10
Virtual Plov Cook-off Brings Together Alumni from All Over the World.....	10
ALUMNI ACHIEVEMENTS	11
Alumna of the Year 2020: The Story of Mingul Seitkazieva	11
AROUND CENTRAL ASIA: UZBEKISTAN	14
Fostering Change for Human Rights and Social Justice.....	14
A Life-Changing Perspective with the OSCE Academy	17
‘I studied at the OSCE Academy because I Wanted to Bring a Positive Change’	19
Opening the Front Door to a More Transparent Central Asia: The Story of a Young Leader and Anti-Corruption Expert from Uzbekistan.....	21
ALUMNI OPPORTUNITIES	24
Junior Public Officers Programme.....	24
Alumni Travel Grants.....	26
One-Year-Stay at NUPI Fellowship.....	28
Master of Advanced Studies in International and European Security	30
Research Fellowship at the International Secretariat of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.....	31
ALUMNI NETWORKING	24
Central Asia-Azerbaijan Fellowship Program	33
The Europe-Central Asia Monitoring Fellowship Programme	35
John Smith Trust (JST) Central Asia Fellowship Programme.....	36
Third ECPR-OSCE/ODIHR Summer School on Political Parties and Democracy.....	38



Sergey Marinin, International Office Assistant

Distinguished Reader,

We are excited to share this special 10th-anniversary edition of SalamAlum, an annual magazine about the Alumni Network of the OSCE Academy in Bishkek. In this issue, we managed to compile the stories of great accomplishments of more than 30 alumni, as well as provide updates about the Academy’s life and new developments within the Alumni Network.

In these turbulent times, the OSCE Academy faced multiple challenges all because of the

COVID-19 pandemic. All programmatic activities had to be transferred to online mode, discovering different modalities to keep our community strong. And although many plans had to be put on hold, we managed to fulfil most of our commitments within our multiple alumni initiatives. We successfully held our Alumni Conference in the virtual format this year. Additionally, we organized several important virtual workshops devoted to the topics of storytelling, effective online functioning, preparing job applications for international organisations and project management. Besides the formal online events, we held one of its kind ‘OSCE Academy Plov Cook-Off’ online cooking fest, gathering alumni from all over the world to cook Central Asia’s signature dish and enjoy enriching conversations on socio-political and cultural issues.

Of course, this year’s edition could not be complete without the stories of our Alumni activism efforts to help their local communities fight the pandemic’s negative impact. Additionally, the Academy jointly with Alumni made its contribution to the COVID-19 relief in Kyrgyzstan. Collectively we managed to fundraise and purchase 140 various items of medical protective equipment and medicine for the Issyk-Kul district hospital in Cholpon-Ata city.

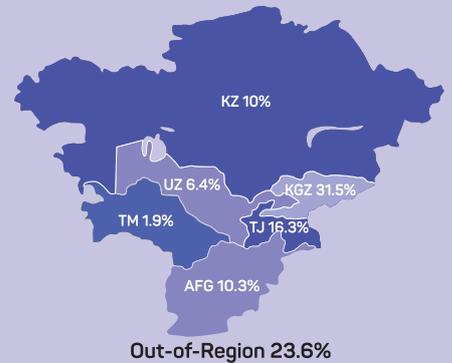
The exclusive opportunities for our alumni remained available this year thanks to the continuous support of our long-time partners and donors. Read the stories of the current fellows Galina and Aidai of the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI) and Anastasia’s from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. The Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP) provided one more alumna with the unique opportunity to receive a MAS Scholarship for Central Asia. The Junior Public Officers (JPO) Programme keeps attracting our graduates and with great pleasure, we witness a growing interest from the state structures we cooperate with under this programme. Some of our former JPO fellows are already successfully employed by ministries of their respective countries.

Everything mentioned above and more in this issue of SalamAlum. Enjoy your reading!

Our sincere gratitude goes to the OSCE, its participating States and especially to the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, that specifically fund the alumni activities.

Alumni Network in Numbers

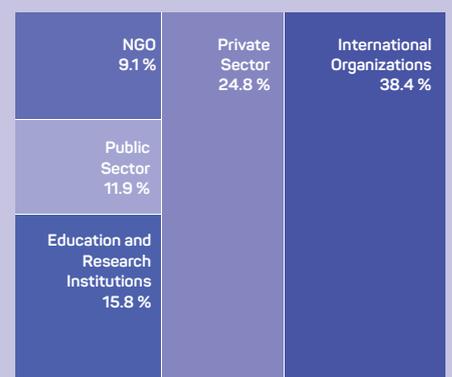
Geography



Employment



Employment by Sector



The data provided illustrates the general statistics, which is based on the results of the Alumni Survey 2020 and contains information about 482 alumni. The overall number of graduates is 520 (275 females and 245 males).

ACADEMY'S UPDATES

International Office Assistant

The OSCE Academy Alumni Network welcomes its new International Office Assistant Sergey Marinin, who joined the OSCE Academy team in February 2020. Sergey is also a graduate of the Academy's MA Programme in Politics and Security of 2014. Prior to joining the Academy, he worked at a number of think-tanks and international organizations, including the International Secretariat of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the Central Asia Program at George Washington University, and the Soros Foundation-Kazakhstan.

"I am very excited to join the Academy in my new capacity this year! I am responsible for alumni affairs and maintaining the Alumni Network. Being an OSCE AiB alumnus myself, I hope to reinvigorate our diverse community and use your talents for strengthening our organisation. Here at the Academy, we will make sure to develop more engagement opportunities for our graduates, create more collaborative initiatives. I invite you to be more active and stay in touch with our alma mater by contributing your talents and attending events. Let us make our community stronger and more visible!"



Research

NUPI Postdoctoral Research Fellowship

In early 2020 the OSCE Academy in Bishkek launched its new Postdoctoral Research Fellowships in cooperation with the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Two Postdoctoral Research Fellows – Dr. Rahat Sabyrbekov and Dr. Mirza Sadaqat Huda, were selected through a competitive recruitment process. Both Fellows are working in the field of climate change and natural resource management. The Fellows help build the research capacity of the OSCE Academy through publications in peer-reviewed journals, grant writing and taking an active part in the academic and research events.



Rahat Sabyrbekov

Dr. Rahat Sabyrbekov received his PhD from the School of Economics and Business at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences. He obtained his Master's degree from the University of Birmingham, the United Kingdom. Dr. Sabyrbekov serves as an author for the Intergovernmental Platform for Ecosystem Services and Biodiversity Assessment Report. Dr. Sabyrbekov's research interests include environmental economics, ecosystem services, natural capital, and natural resource management.

In September 2020 Dr. Rahat Sabyrbekov and Dr. Indra Overland published Open Access Article "Why Choose to Cycle in a Low-Income Country?" in *Sustainability* 2020, 12, 7775





Mirza Sadaqat Huda

Dr. Mirza Sadaqat Huda earned his PhD from the Sustainable Minerals Institute of the University of Queensland and his Master's and Bachelor's from Macquarie University and the University of Canberra, respectively. He has undertaken policy-relevant research on natural resource governance and conflict resolution at the University of Queensland, Nanyang Technological University and Griffith University. Dr. Huda's analysis has been published in *Energy Policy*, *Geoforum*, *Water International* and *Energy Research and Social Science*. He has contributed op-eds to the *Policy Forum*, the *East Asia Forum* and the *Australian Institute of International Affairs*.

Dr. Huda is an Asia EDGE Fellow at the National Bureau of Asian Research, Washington and a Non-Resident Fellow at

Energy Peace Partners, California. His research focuses on the Belt and Road Initiative, the politics of renewable energy in Asia and global climate governance.

In April 2020 Dr. Huda published a book at Routledge 'Energy Cooperation in South Asia: Utilizing Natural Resources for Peace and Sustainable Development'.



Volkswagen Foundation Post-Doctoral Research Fellows

The OSCE Academy's Associate Research Fellows Dr. Aijan Sharshenova and Dr. Shairbek Juraev have received grants from the Volkswagen Foundation, Germany, for Postdoctoral Research Fellowships 2020-2022 to be implemented at the Academy. As a result, the Fellows will be producing several publications and organize a series of seminars and workshops at the OSCE Academy in Bishkek.



Aijan Sharshenova

Fellowship on "Institutional Change and Social Practice. Research on the Political System, the Economy and Society in Central Asia and the Caucasus"

Dr. Aijan Sharshenova is an Associate Research Fellow at the OSCE Academy in Bishkek. Dr. Sharshenova holds a PhD in Politics, Master's degree in International Studies from the University of Leeds, UK, and a Master's Degree in the EU and Central Asian Studies from the Institut für Europäische Politik and the Centre International de Formation Européenne. Before joining the OSCE Academy on a full-time basis, Dr. Sharshenova has worked at the UN and UNDP country offices in Bahrain. She also worked at the International Peace Institute's office in Bahrain and on development projects in Kyrgyzstan. Dr. Sharshenova's research specialization is democracy promotion and democratization, post-Soviet authoritarianism, and international development. Her regional expertise is post-Soviet Eurasia. Recently, Dr. Sharshenova published her book 'The European Union's Democracy Promotion in Central Asia' available on Amazon.



Shairbek Juraev

Fellowship on “Negotiating Strategic Partnerships: Domestic Roots of Foreign Policies in Post-Soviet Eurasia”

Dr. Shairbek Juraev holds a PhD from the School of International Relations of the University of St Andrews and an MSc in International Relations from the London School of Economics. He previously served as Deputy Director at the OSCE Academy in Bishkek and as a Dean of Academic Development at the American University of Central Asia. Dr. Juraev taught courses in Central Asian Politics, Foreign Policy Analysis and International Relations at various times at the American University of Central Asia, the OSCE Academy in Bishkek and the European University in St Petersburg. His research interests include a wide range of political and policy issues in Central Asia, with particular focus on foreign policy, political institutions and regime dynamics in the region.

Incoming Student Academic Mobility

Following the positive experience of Erasmus+ academic student exchange launched in 2019, in January 2020 the OSCE Academy also started the realisation of Student Exchange on bilateral basis. For the Spring semester 2020 we were glad to welcome two exchange students from the European School of Political and Social Sciences Université Catholique de Lille within the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding signed in September 2019. Eliza Belas and Philippine Marie Raphanaud joined the group of MA students of Politics and Security of the Academy for the Spring semester of 2020. During their stay, the students attended classes offered by the Academy and explored the culture and nature of Kyrgyzstan.

The OSCE Academy plans to continue developing further the Academic Exchange not only for the student body, but also for faculty and staff members via Erasmus+ as well as bilaterally, providing more opportunities for intellectual exchange, new cultural experiences as well as expanding the network.



ALUMNI AND COVID-19

In light of the rapid growth of confirmed COVID-19 cases in Kyrgyzstan, the OSCE Academy did not stay out of fighting against the pandemic's negative impact and on 30 July made its collective contribution. The OSCE Academy staff members and alumni came together to support medical personnel in the Issyk-Kul region. The Academy team delivered 140 protective suits, nitrile gloves, shoe leggings, face masks N95, several pulse oximeters, and medicine to the Issyk-Kul district hospital in Cholpon-Ata city. We thank our alumni for supporting this initiative and share some of their stories of compassion and a great help during that difficult time.

Grassroot Project to Save Hundreds of Lives in Remote Areas of Tajikistan

Sabrinisso Valdosh, alumna of the MA Programme in Economic Governance and Development of 2017 from Tajikistan. She is a winner of the 'Best MA Thesis' award during her studies at the OSCE AiB for analysing the production structure of Tajikistan's economy with a focus on quantifying the inter-industry linkages and their impact on the economy. She is also a former Research Fellow of the Europe-Central Asia Monitoring. Sabrinisso co-initiated a grassroot project to save hundreds of lives in remote areas of Tajikistan.

Pamiri Youth Network is an incredible team consisting of 8 powerful and passionate girls including Sabrinisso. A couple of months ago they initiated a fundraising campaign to purchase an oxygen generator for the hospitals in three remote areas of Tajikistan - Rasht, GBAO and Khatlon.

As a result, they are cooperating with the Community Initiative Programme of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) for matching funding. Subject to all reporting requirements met, all donations were supposed to be DOUBLED by the EBRD! According to the team's research, oxygen generators cost over £100,000, but as the total amount was supposed to be doubled, they had to collect at least £50,000. To reach the target, they collaborated with numerous artists, singers, dancers, bloggers and many more amazing individuals. Some of the wonderful highlights had been the online concert by a Latvian music band singing Tajik songs. It was joined and supported by thousands of online users. Sabrinisso's team would have never anticipated that so many people would not stay aside and would offer a helping hand during such uncertain times for all of us.

Their collective women-led network was created as a response to COVID - 19. All its members currently study and work in the UK, Canada, and France. The whole story started when the outbreak of coronavirus was announced in Russia. As everyone knows, the COVID-19 outbreak eliminated even the basic income stream of migrant families. Talking to friends and relatives about the problems caused by COVID-19, they heard many heartbreaking stories and decided to act. Starting with WhatsApp chat to help one family, they ended up helping to over 200 migrant families in Moscow. Their 24/7 dedication resulted in the first successful fundraising they launched in April. Within a month they raised £10500!

In parallel with the implementation of the first fundraising, they were working to reach a target of £50,000. The second fundraising was certainly more ambitious, but they understood that the final goal will indeed make a significant contribution to supporting hospitals in remote areas of Tajikistan and providing them with an uninterrupted supply of oxygen. Before launching this fundraising, they talked to many Tajik doctors and did a thorough research on what the hospitals lacked during the pandemics and they were supported by many donors and professionals. By accumulating funds in their second fundraising account, they have reached the target! **Please, read the full story on our website:**



“Fight Against COVID-19” Charity Team in Kyrgyzstan

Guzal Abdirazakova, alumna of the MA Programme in Politics and Security (Central Asia) of 2017 from Kyrgyzstan, works as a Monitoring and Evaluation Advisor for the Green Economy and Sustainable Private Sector Development Programme, GIZ Kyrgyzstan. Guzal has been working for GIZ for about 8 years in Regional and Bilateral programmes. Last summer she was involved as a short-term international expert to develop a monitoring system for the regional project within GIZ Cambodia that works on Fostering and Advancing Sustainable Business and Responsible Industrial practices in the clothing industry in Asia particularly in Cambodia, Vietnam, Pakistan, China, Myanmar, Bangladesh. She was the first M&E professional from Kyrgyzstan who was involved as an international expert. She is one of the founding members of the “Fight against COVID-19” charity team in Kyrgyzstan.

2020 will be always remembered as one of the challenging years in the history of the country. For the first time in modern history, Kyrgyzstan faced an epidemic on a global scale. A thousand dead, tens of thousands of infected, overcrowded hospitals, quarantine and lockdown, and closed borders. No one was ready for this - neither the population, nor the doctors, nor the authorities. People began dying at the doorstep of hospitals. Dozens of deaths every day. Kyrgyzstan had the highest death rate in Central Asia. The daily news was horrifying, people started self-organizing and raising funds to support the hospitals with necessary protective means, medicine and oxygen generators.

Guzal is one of the initiators of the Charity team and has mobilized more than 300 people locally to raise funds for the needs of one of the rural hospitals in Shamaldu-Sai, Jalalabad province. The hospital in Shamaldu-Sai serves 7 nearby villages with a population of 50 000 people. The hospital was under-equipped and was not able to diagnose and treat, thus people had to travel to the bigger cities while risking/infecting others on the way. Together with her team Guzal has attracted international support and raised the necessary amount in a matter of weeks and replaced the broken Soviet-type X-ray machine with the new modern mobile X-ray machine, provided oxygen generators, installed a disinfection tunnel at the entrance of the hospital and elbow disinfectants, purchased laryngoscope, protective equipment, medicine, etc. Guzal has recently received an Appreciation letter from the hospital and the local community of Shamaldu-Sai for her great contribution to fighting COVID-19.



Online Recruitment Bootcamp by OSCE Recruiters

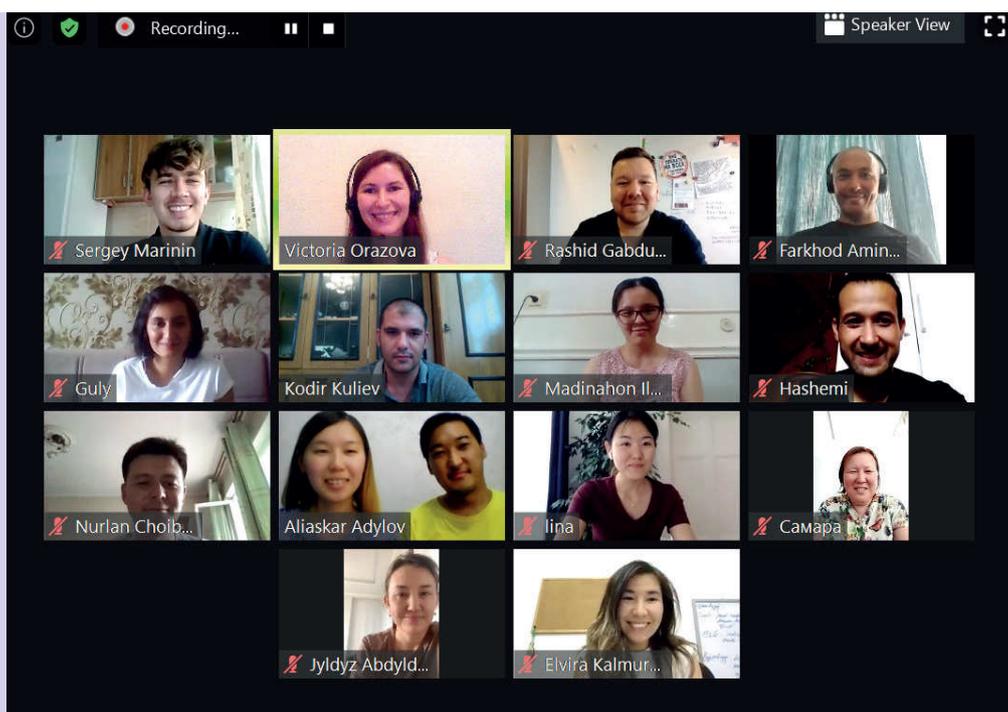
On 24 June the OSCE Academy had its second virtual alumni workshop on “Preparing an Application and Preparing for Interviews with International Organizations” led by the OSCE Recruitment team – Mr. Gustavo Araujo, Chief Recruiter and Head of Talent Acquisition, Saltanat Tursungazieva and Pavel Nalimov from the Talent Acquisition Team. The event consisted of two sessions. The first was about the application process to international organizations. The trainers explained how to understand the job description and complete activities to better adapt future applications based on their backgrounds and interests. The second part was devoted to the question of why Competency-Based Interviews are used in the recruitment process across the globe. The presentation was followed by the practical exercise allowing participants to put themselves in the shoes of recruiters and candidates for a better understanding of what is expected from candidates during the interviews.



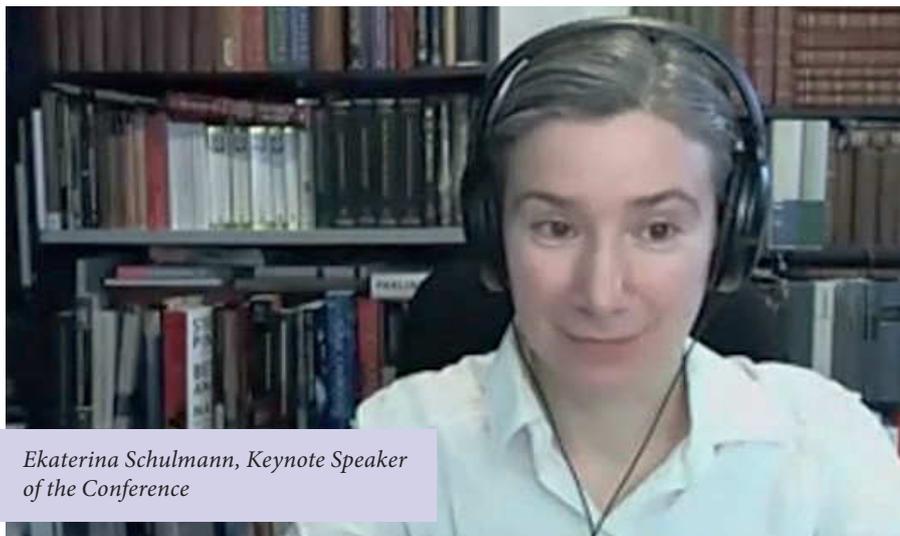
The OSCE Academy is grateful to the OSCE Recruitment Team for its support of Academy activities targeted at students and alumni.

Interactive Workshop on Digital Tools and Challenges

On 24 July the OSCE Academy had its third interactive alumni workshop on Digital Tools and Challenges Amid the Global Pandemic led by the OSCE AiB alumnus of 2013, Politics and Security Programme, Mr. Rashid Gabdulhakov. The workshop aimed to broaden theoretical perspectives and practical approaches of participants while empowering and encouraging them to generate new strategic knowledge on the subject matter. The participants and the trainer discussed important security, infrastructural and behavioural changes that rose as part of the online shift of lots of spheres caused by the pandemic. The alumni discussed issues of privacy and surveillance, assessed the so-called ‘digital twins’, explored state-citizen and citizen-to-citizen relations amid current global transformations.



Virtual Alumni Conference “The COVID-19 Crisis and its Impact on Post-Soviet Central Asia”



Ekaterina Schulmann, Keynote Speaker of the Conference

On 18-20 November, the OSCE Academy in Bishkek held its biennial Alumni Conference themed ‘The COVID-19 Crisis and its Impact on Post-Soviet Central Asia’. This year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic the conference was conducted in virtual format and was merged with the joint expert project of the OSCE Academy in Bishkek and the Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS). The conference had three panels: ‘COVID-19 and Human Rights’, ‘COVID-19 and Migration’, and ‘COVID-19 and Foreign Policy of Central Asia’. The Keynote Speaker

of the event was Dr. Ekaterina Schulmann, a renowned Russian political scientist. She presented on the shift of global values caused by the COVID-19. The keynote speech was followed by a panel on COVID-19 and Human Rights, covering gender-based and domestic violence, the impact of the pandemic on police officers, and the education quality in the region.

The second day commenced with the second panel themed ‘COVID-19 and Migration’. The speakers discussed labour migration in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan during the crisis. Participants also had a chance to listen to a presentation on ‘Social Impact of COVID-19 Worldwide and in Kyrgyzstan: Findings from the Life with Corona Study’ by Dr. Damir Esenaliev, Senior Researcher, Leibniz-Institut für Gemüse- und Zierpflanzenbau (IGZ) and the International Security and Development Centre (ISDC).

The final day of the conference was devoted to the discussion of foreign policy in Central Asia. Specifically, the panellists presented their topics on China’s medical diplomacy in Uzbekistan, on what COVID-19 has revealed about international relations of Central Asia in general, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on EU-Central Asia cooperation. Additionally, there was an opportunity to listen to Kasiet Ysmanova’s presentation about the Central Asian Barometer research findings related to the topic.

The exchanges at the conference will be published in a summary report within the *Academy Papers* series.

Virtual Plov Cook-off Brings Together Alumni from All Over the World

On 25 October the OSCE Academy in Bishkek held a virtual networking event called “OSCE Academy Plov Cook-off”, initiated by two of our alumni Rashid Gabdulhakov and Farkhod Aminjonov. Both culinary experts instructed other alumni on how to cook two variations of the most famous Central Asian dish - Oshi Sofi and Namangan plov. Thirteen alumni from Central Asia, The Netherlands, Germany, Georgia, Russia, Ukraine and The United Arab Emirates gathered together on a Sunday evening and had productive and joyful two hours full of laughs, heart-warming moments and cultural, and political debates. The online cook-off culminated in the culinary artworks parade made by the participants.

Follow the hashtag #OSCEAcademyPlovCookOff on social media to see more pictures of the event!



Final dishes by alumni cooked at the Cook-off

Alumna of the Year 2020:

From Fetching Water in the South of Kyrgyzstan to working at the UN Headquarters in Vienna

Every year the OSCE Academy Alumni Network selects one graduate to receive the title of the Alumna/us of the Year. The Award honours the Academy's most outstanding alumni. We wholeheartedly congratulate Mingul Seitkazieva, alumna of 2007 of the MA Programme in Politics and Security from Kyrgyzstan, for receiving most votes and receiving the award this year. We wish her more successful endeavours in the future and are happy to publish her story here.

"I am very honoured to be named the Alumna of the Year 2020 award. I cannot thank enough OSCE Academy Alumni for nominating and supporting me! That means a lot to me."

Formative years in the south of Kyrgyzstan

I spent my formative years in southwestern Kyrgyzstan. In remote mountainous Kadamjay, once famous for its metallurgical production, directly on the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border. Chronologically, it coincided with both the Soviet period and independence. Linguistically, as I lived both in urban and rural areas I was exposed to Russification but preserved my Kyrgyz language due to my parents' effort. Also, life in the Fergana Valley exposed me to Uzbek culture.

Life in the village made me aware of the tremendous gap between the lives of urban and rural girls. The latter had less time to study because they were preoccupied with fetching water, household chores. Rural ethnic Kyrgyz attended Kyrgyz schools. Whereas urban children attended Russian schools. This difference contributed to polarisation between Russified ethnic Kyrgyz and traditional Kyrgyz who do not speak the same language and represent different worlds. Thus, rural Kyrgyz women's agenda is survival, without access to clean potable water and providing for basic human needs.

After finishing school, I moved to Osh. My mother motivated me to enter Osh State University (in Soviet times known as Pedagogical Institute) because both my grandmother and grandfather studied there in the 1950s. So, I studied English at the Foreign Languages Department and even worked as a school teacher. As a student, I took part in the Civic Education Project (CEP) that was targeted at giving equal chance and access to western education to youth in the southern regions of Kyrgyzstan and thus smoothen existing imbalances.

My quest for the resolution of cross-border issues made me a participant of the first OSCE Central Asian Youth Network (CAYN) seminar in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. That



Mingul at the UN in Vienna

also inspired me to work for international development agencies like ACTED and Mercy Corps in peace-building projects in rural communities along the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border.

OSCE Academy in Bishkek

Eventually, the Master Programme in Political Science at the OSCE Academy in Bishkek was a logical continuation to my quest to get an in-depth theoretical knowledge of complexities of the border delimitation process in the Fergana valley.

I am thankful for the OSCE Academy because it takes into consideration uneven regional development in Central Asian countries in the selection of prospective students and it gives equal chance to get a high-quality education for young people who could be disadvantaged by some structural reasons, like different level of development of various regions. It is a privilege and unique chance to get a first-hand experience from renowned professors and international practitioners on Political Theory, International Relations, Political Islam, History of Central Asia, Conflict Resolution. Especially I liked discussions about theories of Franz Fanon and Edward Said about decolonization and orientalism that

shed more light on understanding political processes in Central Asia.

Apart from studies, the OSCE Academy is also an ideal place for building lifelong friendships with smart young people who come from different countries.

Turkmenistan

As a part of the MA Programme at the OSCE Academy, I worked as Human Dimension Intern at the OSCE Centre in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan in summer 2007. I was exposed to a new yet similar Turkic culture, fascinating historical places like Merw, Nisa and Oxus river, contemporary neoclassical architecture of Ashgabat and very warm and hospitable people.

As a person who comes from a landlocked country with no access to the sea, I was very happy to explore the Caspian Sea. For the first time in my life, I tasted camel's milk and saw a camel. By the way, I learnt to swim and to ice skate (how paradoxically it may sound) in Turkmen deserts. As my internship was in the summer I, together with my OSCE colleagues, went to the Olympic Sports Complex in Ashgabat after work. Sometimes we were invited for con-

certs of our creative American colleague who performed on the guitar. I learnt basic Turkmen language.

Vienna

After the OSCE Academy I was invited by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly to work as a Research Fellow. I spent one year at the OSCE PA Vienna Liaison Office in 2008-2009. It was a great experience and school of multilateral diplomacy because I attended OSCE committees, assisted with speech writing, arranged meetings with Permanent Delegations of the OSCE participating states, assisted in the preparation of election observation missions and performed other office tasks. In June 2008 I travelled together with colleagues from the OSCE PA International Secretariat to the OSCE PA Annual Session in Astana, Kazakhstan held for the first time in the Central Asian region. It was also a great multi-cultural experience because OSCE PA Research Fellows lived in a shared apartment. I shared mine with my German colleague and friend Christiane who taught me to ride a bike. As a gratitude, I lent her to cook plov. After my OSCE PA fellowship, I stayed in Vienna and worked at the International Centre for Migration Policy Development as a Project Assistant. Afterwards, I made a big gap in my career due to family reasons. I became a mother of two beautiful children and was caring for them.

Children, travel and activism

For a couple of years, I lived in Africa in Cape Verde Islands where I accompanied my husband with our little children. Following our time in Africa, I returned to Austria. Although my second child has special needs, I gradually managed to cope with numerous medical appointments and therapies. I also used that time when I did not work for my

Mingul at 2008 OSCE PA Annual Session in Astana





Mingul with her children in Volksgarten, Vienna

personal development. I improved my German by taking language courses and courses on trans-cultural communication and the history of Austria. I visited galleries and museums of fine arts while my children were in kindergarten. I learnt to drive a car and got my driving license.

I am also an active member of the Kyrgyz diaspora in Austria. We organised sports events like the Cycling Marathon along the Danube river on the occasion of the 27th anniversary of the Independence of Kyrgyzstan, cultural events, and concerts of traditional artists. We also meet the Kyrgyz Government and President when they come for official visits to Europe. During the COVID-19 crisis we raised funds for the charity to support hospitals in Kyrgyzstan with equipment and medication and vulnerable Kyrgyz rural female migrants in Austria.

In pre-COVID times I took advantage of the developed European transport infrastructure (trains, low-cost airlines), open borders, the central location of Austria and travelled with my children around Europe.

UN Headquarters

As Vienna is home to many international organizations I started to look for employment. I worked in 2017-2018 in Vienna at the CTBTO (Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organization) in the Division of Administration as Visa and Relocation Support Assistant temporarily. Since 2019 I work at the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) as a Statistical Assistant at the Policy Research Department. I became very interested in the topic of Sustainable Development Goals and applied for a part-time MBA study in Sustainable Development and Governance. It is very difficult to balance between career, children and study, but if a woman wants to achieve more in her life, she always needs to overcome obstacles. Education, travel and cultural enlightenment are the best tools.

AROUND CENTRAL ASIA

In the previous issue of SalamAlum we got acquainted with our alumni from Tajikistan working with the society, academia and in government. This time we are moving to Uzbekistan to introduce our graduates working in the non-profit sector, public-private enterprise, international organizations and in the research sphere. Dilfuza Kurolova, an alumna of 2015, Bobur Nazarmukhamedov, an alumnus of 2011, Gulnoza Akhmedova, an alumna of 2019 and Kodir Kuliev, an alumnus of 2014 share their professional experience in different spheres, but with one goal – development of their home country.



Fostering Change for Human Rights and Social Justice

Dilfuza Kurolova is an alumna of 2015, MA Programme in Politics and Security from Uzbekistan. As an enthusiastic and aspiring leader, Dilfuza is actively promoting human rights and the development of civil society in Uzbekistan and teaches at the Webster University Tashkent.

Dear Dilfuza, you are well-known in our Alumni Network and you do a lot of important work in Uzbekistan. Among those myriads of initiatives what would be the most important one or two? And how would you call yourself – a social justice advocate, an activist, a researcher or maybe even a politician?

I am honestly flattered on such a compliment. First of all, I think the Academy selects only the ones, who truly deserve to be in the “family” and who care about their communities, countries and the region. I position myself as a human rights lawyer, while I do not hide that I had (and maybe still have) political ambitions. However, the most important for me is to make and be the change, not just to have power for personal benefits.

All of my work and projects are a priceless experience for me and play an important role in the country/society. It is hard to identify one or two. Perhaps, my own social project in providing legal consultations to people through social media would be the one I am proud of. I rarely take and lead cases, but recently we could get a passport for a 28-year-long stateless person, who needs medical and social assistance. Now she can get all the state support and assis-

tance with this official document. Of course, these pro bono consultations provide evidence where the justice sector and legislation are weak and point on gaps for improvement.

Let us talk about your OSCE Academy experience. What are your most precious memories from those times?

It is almost five years from graduation and it was a priceless time in my life! Interesting that after applying and waiting for the results, I visited the OSCE Academy for the summer training course. I liked it so much that I received an acceptance letter while being there. So, my love for the Academy started way before actually starting the classes. Definitely, after four years of working in Uzbekistan, I was in need to dive into research and academia that I enjoyed a lot; but the most important is that I found my life-long friends. Home-based parties were one of the important social life events of our class, where we cooked together and sang songs, played games. I enjoyed a lot of my coffee time at the bench next to the ping-pong table during breaks (by the way, I never played it).

All our group travels are a separate story: mountains, sightseeing and of course travel to Europe for the summer internship. We took a free Istanbul day tour, where we had so much fun before we hopped on our planes to different destinations. Internship at the OSCE Secretariat was another separate journey both for professional experience and personal life. We backpack travelled with Elvira, where we cooked plov in Italy, rubbed our feet into calluses, slept on the floor of the hostel, tried interesting food, left without money (of course), but had an unforgettable experience of exploring.

In short, every single moment at the OSCE Academy is a precious memory for me. I am grateful for such an experience and thank the OSCE AiB's staff who create such condi-

tions for students and keep in touch with alumni.

Ok, now let us get back to your professional life – how did it change after you graduated from the Academy?

It changed dramatically. When I went back to Uzbekistan I had no job and none of the state bodies even accepted my application, because of securitization in the country. So, I decided to teach international law and human rights at my alma-mater, Tashkent State University of Law. After almost a year, I got an offer from the World Bank to join the social development team and work for the cotton awareness-raising project. I shall say that the Academy's degree



Nooruz celebration at the OSCE Academy

and its reputation as one of the best think tanks played a crucial role in my acceptance to the Bank. After quitting the University, I worked for the private sector for a while and understood that I'm not a business person. And then I've been accepted as a legal consultant at the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) for an exciting project on access to justice on economic, social and cultural rights in Uzbekistan, the area of law that I am most interested in.

Slowly, but surely, I became the one promoting rule of law and social justice in the country. I work a lot with human rights defenders, NGOs, civil society groups, media, and of course state bodies, justice sector actors and international organizations in providing my expertise and/or help them if needed. I believe that this would not happen if we did not have a power shift back in 2016.

Currently, I am a consultant at the World Bank and the ICJ covering many aspects of social development and human rights. In addition to that, I am a founding curator of the Global Shapers Tashkent Hub and continue providing free legal consultations to people. And of course, I am a 24/7 mother and life-partner.

You do a lot of work on social justice and citizen's engagement in Uzbekistan and even provide pro bono legal consultations. What motivated you to move into the human rights protection realm?

I have two credos in my life: "Better regret what the one has done rather than what has not" and "Who else if not me/us." Knowing that the institutions are not working and there is a lack of social contract in Uzbekistan, I decided not just to complain and criticize, but instead help as much as possible in my capacity and be constructive in arguments. Since I am passionate about international law and mechanisms, the human rights field I guess was the logical decision, even if sometimes it is hard and overwhelming. Regarding pro bono, I always provided consultations to my friends and their friends; knowing that there is a lack of legal literacy in my community and country, I made it more public and open for those who seek free legal consultation. I am grateful to receive feedback and proud of those who decided to fight for their rights because in most cases I am not only informing

people about legal steps but highlighting that there are legal remedies and we have a right to demand the restoration of our rights.

I do work a lot with state agencies and judiciary, I think partially because I never provide my comments just for the sake of criticizing and



taking a lot from practice and information on the ground. Moreover, my tight connection with civil society organizations and human rights activists/defenders also helps me to work and push forward human rights in the country.

Earlier this year you gave an interview to a popular Uzbek YouTube channel “Ular”, where you talked a lot about gender issues in Uzbekistan. How is it to speak your truth in a traditional society? What were the reactions after the interview?

It was hard to negotiate because the project is in the Uzbek language and my working languages on this topic are English and Russian. I am fluent in Uzbek but afraid to explain certain concepts incorrectly; so, we agreed that the questions will be in Uzbek and I'll be speaking in Russian. And as I assumed this was one

of the biggest critiques from the audience from the beginning. However, I have thousands of followers who supported me, and this interview is the only one on gender and spoken by a woman at this show (all the other guests were men). However, it became popular and the most-watched episode after a short observation made by a religious blogger, who spread hate speech and attacked the whole interview from a very radical point of view, which was not even true. As it became a common scenario for those who think differently, all my social media accounts were attacked and I received death and damage threats on Facebook pages and direct messages. Of course, it was stressful, but I decided to play the game on my table and turned it as my next lobby project to fight against hate speech and hate crimes, surely without threatening freedom of speech, which is still weak.

This is another experience, where I learnt that we, as civil society, professionals and experts have to speak more, often and louder. And of course, be the change!

You are one of the most energetic and active OSCE AiB graduates and many alumni know you well by plenty of projects that you lead. Could you tell us your secret of vitality and constant strife for success?

Oh wow! Never expected that! Thanks a lot! Here is what I do to manage my time (I started thinking about it once I received tens of messages with the same questions. Because I never thought before that it is an issue):

- Results: if I see the results of my work, I want to work more. So, tangible and feasible results are motivating me a lot to work more and harder.
- Time-management: I'm obsessed with timing and scheduling.

I always wear watches and have an electronic and paper-based planner. I value my time a lot, so I don't do things that I don't like.

- Sleep control: I usually sleep 4-5h, and it is okay for me. Of course, if I want to sleep more I do so, but usually, I don't. So, I think it is important to listen to the body and identify biological clocks.

- Eat: eat well and healthy. Since I do not eat red meat for more than 12 years, I try to compensate it with other products, that are healthy for the body.

- Sports: I do different types of sports depending on time and finance (of course). Now, I'm trying to learn horse riding, and I love it.

- Stress relief activity: I usually do colour or cross-stitching when I need “myself” time or need to distract from everything.

- Spend time with family: I always have time for family, like walking, exploring, travelling, watching movies and cooking.

- Have fun with friends: it is also important!



A Life-Changing Perspective with the OSCE Academy



Bobur Nazarmukhamedov graduated back in 2011. Bobur is a young professional from Uzbekistan with over 8 years of professional experience and proven track record in the fields of political affairs, child labour, economic affairs, regional planning and development. He currently works as a Programme Officer at the International Labour Organization (ILO) Headquarters in Geneva.

Let us start at the beginning – tell us how you ended up at the OSCE Academy? What did you do before starting your Master’s degree here?

I came to study at the OSCE Academy as a result of my volunteer experience. Throughout my tenure at “Kelajak ovozi” Youth Initiatives Center and UN MDG Youth Network in Uzbekistan I have visited all the regions of Uzbekistan and witnessed the environmental problems occurring due to the drying of the Aral Sea in the Karakalpakstan region, a high degree of salinization

in the Navoi region, and mismanagement and misuse of water and energy resources in the Fergana Valley. I saw the absence of political will to cooperate in Central Asia as the main reason for the continuing despair of my country and neighbouring countries. I was convinced that Central Asian cooperation was an established mechanism which, if followed, would bring benefits to all parties.

Thereby, after obtaining my undergraduate degree in English Language and Literature from the National University of Uzbekistan, my strong wish to see people of Uzbekistan prosper led me to pursue my graduate studies in the area of Politics and Security in Central Asia.

How were your studies and living experience in Bishkek for a year?

Studying in Kyrgyzstan, a country, which has been experiencing a rapid political change since 2005, has encouraged me to seek to understand the reality of events that took place in recent years, including the 2010 South Kyrgyzstan riots, the Tulip Revolution of 2005, and political unrest during Kurmanbek Bakiyev’s presidency. Exploring the reasons behind this and other incidents opened my eyes to the impact corruption might have on public administration and the entire development process in the country.

Enrolled in the interdisciplinary MA Programme in Politics and Security of the OSCE Academy, I have significantly broadened my understanding of ongoing political processes in the region and beyond. Excelled academically throughout my studies at the Academy I was able not only to gain a valuable academic experience, but I also got a unique opportunity to develop my professional skills in an internship position at the OSCE

Secretariat in Vienna. My assignment to the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities went like the blink of an eye, but it was enough to change my entire vision of climate change and security nexus. I gained a different awareness about the linkage between environmental degradation and security and of the impact climate change might have on the stability and the entire development process in the OSCE region. Subsequently, I developed my experience into a specialist paper, and I was invited to present my findings at the 2nd OSCE Academy conference on Central Asian Comprehensive Security and Sustainable Development.

What was your strategy after graduation? Did you have a clear vision of what you wanted to do? What went well and what did not?

The main strategy for my post-graduate career journey was based on tailoring my career aspiration, that is working for a mission-oriented organization with a limited number of entry-level opportunities available for young professionals. Studying at the OSCE Academy equipped me with a strong background in various aspects of regional and international politics and as such served as a good foundation for my professional development. Just after I graduated from the OSCE Academy, I was fortunate to participate in three international summer school programmes, attend two conferences, publish two academic articles on security-related issues in Central Asia. But most importantly, I got an immensely exciting opportunity to pursue my career at the OSCE Secretariat in Vienna. Having passed all rigorous stages of the selection process I became the first Uzbek candi-

date to be selected among more than two hundred applicants into the OSCE's Junior Professional Officer Programme. Launched in 2006, the programme is designed to broaden the geographic diversity of the Organization by giving young nationals of participating States an advantage in the competition for entry-level professional posts.

After three months of dealing with projects in the politico-military dimension of security, in particular, projects related to arms control, border management, combating terrorism, conflict prevention and military reform in the OSCE's Transnational Threats Department, Border's Unit, it wasn't completely clear to me how all the big words translated into concrete action. I was then transferred to continue my career with the Office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) in The Hague, Netherlands. What a journey it has been! I was able to experience new dimensions of the national minority problems in the South-east European region and at the same time, witness concrete attempts to rectify them. I managed to perform challenging tasks, in particular following political, national minority and security-related developments in South-east European countries daily, while also developing background material on priority countries and reporting upon changes. Yet another remarkable experience was the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the OSCE HCNM which allowed me to learn about the achievements of the past and discussing future challenges. Working alongside a fascinating group of individuals, all engaged, highly skilled and outright funny, I saw, first-hand, actual results of the political debates in Vienna.

What do you do nowadays?

I currently work as a Programme Officer within the Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work



Branch (FUNDAMENTALS) of the International Labour Organization (ILO) HQ in Geneva. In my current position at ILO, I am responsible for the coordination of the global project aimed at increasing the capacity of host governments in 11 countries to reduce child labour, including its worst forms. My main tasks include planning, design, implementation and management of project activities; as well as evaluation and reporting.

Before joining the ILO, I held diverse professional positions in different sectors (private sector, NGOs, international organizations), through which I have developed strong administrative and organizational skills. After graduating from the OSCE Academy in 2011 with an MA degree in Politics and Security (Central Asia), I worked as a Programme Management Officer at the OSCE Secretariat in Vienna. Before moving to Japan and pursuing my graduate studies in 2014, I worked as a Monitoring and Evaluation Officer at the Office of the OSCE HCNM in The Hague, where I was responsible for monitoring and preparing analytical reports on political and security-related developments in South-east European countries.

Bobur, you have had quite an impressive professional growth throughout your career, what is your formula of success?

As a person, I believe that one has to have his/her aims. In this case,

it is easier to keep working despite temporary difficulties and not to fall into depression. It is also essential for young professionals to be confident of themselves. Therefore, in all their activities they should aim at their ultimate goal and believe in their ability to overcome difficulties. I consider that the new challenges strengthen us as a wise motto says that persistence and diligence win all the difficulties. Besides, I see hap-



piness in being active, in learning and achieving desired results.

Any final tips for our graduates and students?

I believe that our personal, academic and professional experiences could contribute as much as our interpersonal skills to our career success. The OSCE Academy provides its graduates with an opportunity to pursue a graduate degree while taking tailored courses in the social science dimensions of politics and security. Equally, students benefit from guidance from the research staff and follow the research programmes in their field of interest. At the OSCE Academy, they could nurture and share a unique set of social and professional experience, explore their research interests, and contribute a new and innovative multidisciplinary approach to their field. Developing their interdisciplinary understanding of the political and development issues in Central Asia is the first-hand experience, which I believe, could serve as an essential instrument for seizing relevant opportunities upon graduation.

'I studied at the OSCE Academy because I Wanted to Bring a Positive Change'

Gulnoza Akhmedova, alumna of 2019 of the MA Programme in Politics and Security, tells her story of professional growth and how the OSCE Academy has become a turning point in it, as well as shares some advice on career success.

Dear Gulnoza, could you tell us about what you do nowadays?

After graduating from the OSCE Academy I wanted to pursue a career in development and human rights. Nowadays I am working with the International Non-governmental Organization ACTED as a Project Manager of a project financed by the European Union. The project is aimed at the protection of women from gender-based violence in Uzbekistan through their empowerment, raising awareness on their rights and strengthening civil society. We work with different levels of society in partnership with Women CSOs: on a micro-level, we empow-

er women survivors of violence by providing comprehensive support services on a meso level. We work with community representatives, law enforcement agencies and other institutions responsible for the protection of victims of violence by providing training. Finally, we try to involve different stakeholders at the governmental level for resolving this issue nationally.

Why gender?

I want to live in a society where all people are provided with equal rights and opportunities and every life matters. Having mentioned that, I want to tell you about the experience of visiting the USA as a Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant. During my one year stay, I saw how different it was to be a girl or a woman in that country. The USA might not have achieved complete gender parity, but the contrast with Uzbekistan was remarkable if you consider women in STEM, in pol-

itics or in Academia. Women there are provided with more freedom to make their life choices, something that is still missing in Uzbekistan. Here the girls are largely viewed as potential mothers, daughters-in-law and wives and nurtured accordingly. Sometimes this means that their academic potential and aspiration for higher education is neglected. This is a very depressing situation as it then results in their low status in the family and society, vulnerability to gender-based violence, low economic status, etc. Gender equality is part of fundamental human rights protected by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and various other international human rights norms such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration, etc. But in my personal view, it is also the prevalence of human dignity without any discrimination. It is also worth mentioning how important it is to achieve gender equality for inclusive and sustainable development, comprehensive security, democracy and the rule of law.

How hard is it to work with gender issues in Uzbekistan nowadays? Is there any progress in achieving gender equality?

Uzbekistan has achieved considerable progress in adopting international human rights norms, but still faces challenges regarding their implementation. As society itself adheres to patriarchal norms, it is very hard to implement state legislation and protect women's rights. I think I have a great advantage as I can observe the situation on a grassroots level. All those institutions that are supposed to provide a first-hand response to victims of gender-based violence such as heads of communities or police officers, at times adopt victim-blaming strategies and have poor knowledge of both the legisla-



Presenting the project at EIDHR Launch event at the premises of EU delegation in Uzbekistan



tion on violence and the means to support and protect women from abusers. Therefore, I would summarize that there is progress in the direction of gender equality, at least on paper. But institutional weaknesses, the prevalence of traditions and stereotypical cultural norms prevent these aspirations to become a reality.

What were the turning points in your life that led you to your current profession and where is the place of the OSCE Academy in it?

I consider studying at the OSCE Academy a turning point in my career. But let me tell first what led me towards this programme. I had a degree in English philology and worked as an interpreter in numerous international organizations. While working with Medecins sans Frontières (MSF) I visited different regions where people suffered from Tuberculosis (TB) and other diseases in the Aral Sea area. It is important to note that women and

children were among the risk group due to constant malnutrition. I also understood that it is not enough to treat the diseased people and there will not be any progress in reducing TB in the country unless the causes will be eliminated which is poverty, unemployment, degrading environment not to mention gender inequality.

Therefore, when asked why I want to study at the OSCE Academy, I replied that I want to bring positive changes. And that it is not enough for me to be successful professionally as I want to be able to make an impact with my work.

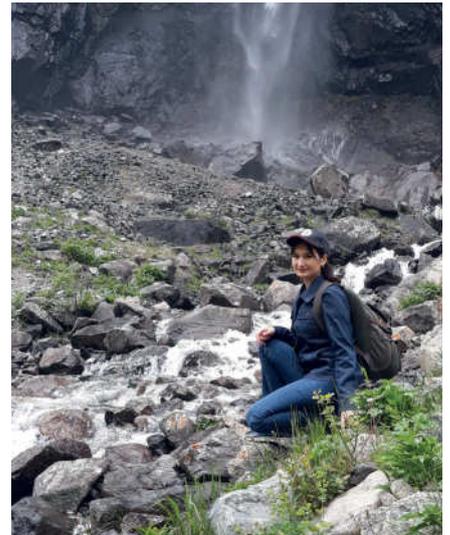
Tell us more about your studies at the Academy. What was your motivation to apply for the MA Programme here?

I admit that the year I spent in Bishkek while studying at the OSCE Academy was both very challenging and memorable. The programme is very intensive and at times, it was hard to keep up with assignment deadlines, reading schedules and be present in all classes. I remember being constantly late because of sleepless nights. But having said that, I want to express my sincere gratitude to all our professors and mentors for maintaining high academic standards and requiring us to work hard. I learned to think critically and apply the evidence-based approach in decision making. The OSCE Academy stands out as the only academic institution in Central Asia that ap-

plies both theory and practical experience, provides the opportunity to network and has a very effective support mechanism for its alumni. These are the things that made me choose the OSCE Academy for my MA studies.

Could you share any tips with our students and alumni?

Based on my personal experience, I advise all present students of the OSCE Academy, especially those who do not have an employment experience, to start thinking about their future careers, the fields they want to concentrate on and choose their research topics accordingly. The field that I wanted to work in the future was gender equality, therefore I wrote my thesis on this topic. My academic experience played a decisive role in my present employment. And I also recommend both, current students and alumni, to never stop their development and always learn something new regarding their field of interest and work. I also recommend them to stay tuned to the OSCE Academy alumni events and try to contribute to the Academy as alumni.



On a group tour to Belogorka waterfalls in the mountains around Bishkek



Women Startup Weekend in Bishkek, when received 2nd place for an IT project (with Sherzod Shamiev, PS 2019)

Finally, I wish you all to stay healthy in these challenging times!

Opening the Front Door to a More Transparent Central Asia: The Story of a Young Leader and Anti-Corruption Expert from Uzbekistan

Kodir Kuliev is an Adjunct Professor of International Studies & Ethics at Webster University in Tashkent. Mr. Kuliev is a Governance & Anti-Corruption expert with more than 7 years of experience in the private sector and international and diplomatic organizations.

Dear Kodir, you are famous within our Alumni Network for your continuous contribution to researching corruption in Central Asia and beyond. Tell us how you came to realize you wanted to study this particular field.

Growing with resistance to dishonesty and moral duties rooted in my personal values, already before I joined the OSCE Academy, I thought corruption was only about ethics and politics. At the Academy, I was privileged to study corruption from the lenses of economics. That is when I understood that corruption is typically about economic crime and problem of calculation. In 2014, in partial fulfilment of my MA thesis, the OSCE Academy financially supported me to intern and learn more about corruption at the International Anti-Corruption Academy (IACA) in Austria, for which I am very grateful. That is exactly when I decided to focus on and explore more about corruption.

Also, working in the arena of anti-corruption is **powerful, sensitive and unique**. It was several years ago when I applied to one of the executive-level positions in one organization (location and organization name are kept confidential). I was highly competitive and succeeded in all the exams. I was unbelievably happy until I was abruptly asked to meet with the deputy head of the



At the UN Headquarters, Vienna

organization. He directly told me that all of my work experiences, according to my resume, show that I worked normal working hours while that position I landed in the organization does not sometime allow me to have my lunch on time and even go home before 9 p.m. He added that my presence in that particular system could be risky because of my intrepid leadership skills and zero tolerance against corruption. There are plenty of such examples I can bring from my life, but generally there are employers out there – be it private or public or even international organizations - that are scared of my anti-corruption background. If you think carefully, this is not much about what I do; rather it is mostly about who I am... I love the way I am and I am proud that I excel in something rare and powerful.

You are quite young and already work as an Adjunct Professor at Webster University in Uzbekistan. Was it difficult to embark on this journey?

By the time my contract at the British Embassy ended, I had one job offer from a place where I did not have much desire to work and one bad news from the UN headquarter in NY, the place I had an enormous desire to work for, telling me that I did not get the job I applied for. To me, that unpleasant event meant one thing – I was not competitive enough to get that position at the UNHQ. When I was about to decide about whether I had to take on the job offer I still had or not, I unexpectedly got a message from one of my mentors Dr. Gordana Pesakovic



Presenting a project at the OSCE Academy

strongly recommending me to apply to the then-newly launched Webster University in Tashkent. Dr. Pesakovic has been mentoring me since she bigheartedly agreed to supervise me in delivering my MA thesis about corruption at the OSCE Academy at the last minute after my first supervisor passed away suddenly, may he rest in peace. To make the long story short, I passed the job interview and was hired to lecture undergraduate students on international studies. Due to my studies and work experiences in ethics, compliance and anti-corruption, I later was approved to teach ethics too. And this is what I call a *kismet*.

Do you feel your calling more in being an academic or a practitioner?

Practitioner. Officially I am a governance expert who specializes in anti-corruption. In life, I confidently see myself as a leader who is willing to and capable of living with what I call a 'take-and-give' principle. I have a philosophical explanation to why the Webster University plays an important role in my career growth as a governance specialist. My philosophy is that when I am living a prosperous life, which certainly includes the job I enjoy, healthy lifestyle and sufficient money to live, etc. that means I am 'taking'. To succeed in everything, I should keep it balanced with what I call a 'giving'. In other words, I feel obliged to give back to the society either by donating or by volunteering to help others in need. This has nothing to do with religion or norms, by the way. It is philosophically, psychologically and economically justified formula for success.

Today's globalization, besides its benefits that people experience, caused people to be victims of materialism. That is usually when people lack sense of care and love, two vital ingredients necessary for societies to prosper. That said, by teaching and mentoring youth, I am giving back to the society, thus I am showing the existence of **care** and **love**... That renders profuse pleasure in my life and makes me feel fulfilling at my

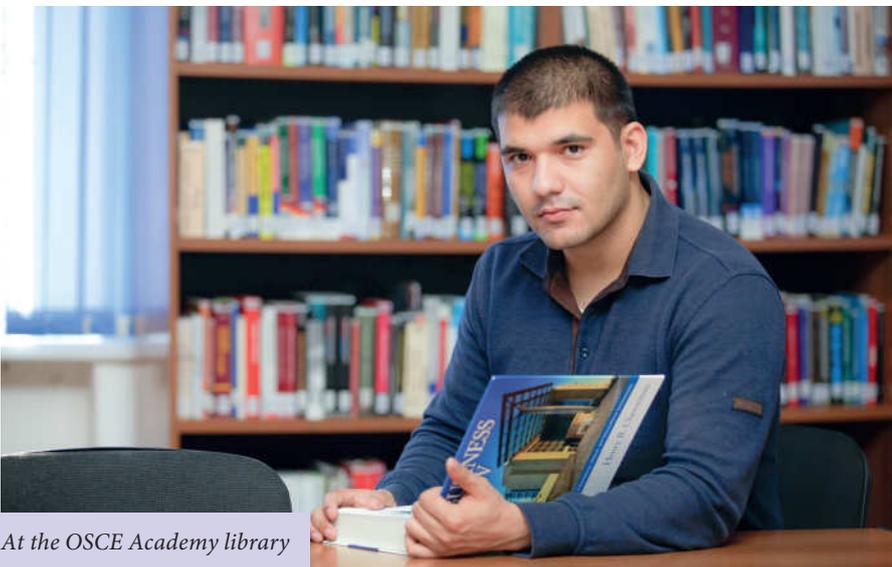
heart. That is a positive energy. With so much psychological effect on my life, I am motivated to deliver good results at any project outside of academia. So, I am very privileged to lecture at Webster University because I do not have to look for opportunities to give back to society. I am already in the world of opportunity from where I get a lot of energy to deliver good results in my projects I manage outside of Webster. When you keep that balance, you will experience *eudemonia*.

This has become a rather traditional question by now – what role did the OSCE Academy play in your professional or perhaps even personal life?

Without the valuable training and the opportunity to convene with experts the Academy provided, I believe I would not probably be able to make a transition from where I had been before I joined the Academy where I am right now. In fact, the sought-after knowledge I got at the Academy helped me to secure a competitive scholarship to study international human rights law at KIMEP University and win the Siemens Scholarship to be trained in anti-corruption at IACA, a mecca of international anti-corruption practitioners. Moreover, thanks for sleepless weeks and nervous pre-exam days I had endured during my studies at the OSCE Academy, I polished my skill of delivering results under pressure.

What projects are you currently engaged in besides teaching at the University?

I am currently involved in two anti-corruption projects and several informal volunteering activities to help people in need. Maybe you heard about a resonant case of high-level public corruption associated with 16th century *medresseh Gavkushon* in Bukhara city, but that is one of my projects. As a freelance



At the OSCE Academy library

researcher, I am currently studying the possible effects of anti-corruption-based approach in minimizing human rights violations in Central Asia as well as designing a 'corruption perception survey' for universities in Uzbekistan.

What are your aspirations for the future?

To secure a "D2" level job at the United Nations in the anti-corruption direction is one of my dreams. It requires at least 15 years of progressively responsible job experience in the relevant field as well as rewarding leadership contributions.

Finally, what would you like to advise to our graduating class? Any professional tips?

Giving advice is a responsibility, especially professional one and particularly to the OSCE Academy's student body, because I know that students graduate the Academy with a highly competitive background and the advice, to my belief, must

really be useful or at least suitable. That said, with my complete respect to their remarkable intellect, I will provide a few tips necessary for making headways in their life.

First, be what I call '*an event interpreter*'. I categorize losers and winners into people who surrender to events (*losers*) and people who can interpret the events (*winners*). The former is where you *usually fail* and the latter is where you *usually succeed*... For example, as an *event interpreter*, in 2013 when my thesis supervisor at the OSCE Academy unexpectedly passed away, may he rest in peace, in the middle of his supervision and there was little chance for me to defend my dissertation and graduate, not only did I successfully graduate from the Academy but I also became the only Uzbekistani who graduated and even worked at the UN-backed International Anti-Corruption Academy in Austria, became a professor of Webster University and learned that giving up is the worst thing you can do on your

way to your dream. If I comprehended the event as it is [no chance to continue the dissertation and defer the graduation next year] I would have probably failed to graduate... Instead, I *turned failure into success*. I interpreted the so-called '*bad luck*' into '*good luck*'. I perceived that event as an opportunity and started to search for another professor to supervise me. Having seen my persistence and passion to succeed in the last minute of my study term, the Academy recommended me to work with Dr. Gordana Pesakovic. She is the one who motivated me to stand up and move on, to deliver a good research. And she is the one who recommended me to apply to Webster University. How and why? Recall that event with the thesis. I never let her leave me since then and she has been mentoring me ever since. Just one formula: change the difficulty into opportunity and hand in there and it has a 'multiplier effect'.

Dear students: I know most of you are not married yet. If it rains outside unexpectedly, for example, do not cancel your date with your girlfriend or boyfriend. Rain is just an event you can turn into some fortune. Let me give you another example from my life. I do not like rains much, but once it rained and supposedly ruined my dating plan with my girlfriend. However, what I did was I interpreted the rain (event) into a chance to what I have and where I am now. If I let the event (rain) own and control me back then, I would not have two incredibly terrific sons you see in the picture [I was already married during my studies at the Academy and lived in Bishkek with my family], graduate the OSCE Academy with the support of my family and have the privilege to share my stories with you in SalamAlum 2020. I married that girl eventually. The rain (event) was the opportunity. So please be an event interpreter.



Kodir with his sons

Junior Public Officers' Programme

In support of the professional integration of alumni in the public service, starting from 2010 the OSCE Academy has run a Junior Public Officers' (JPO) Programme. The JPO Programme provides an opportunity to the OSCE Academy's graduates from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Afghanistan to intern at the ministries of foreign affairs and other state agencies of the country of their respective citizenship.

The OSCE Academy has agreements with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Agency for Investment Promotion and Protection as well as the Ministry of Economy of Kyrgyzstan.

In 2020 overall six alumni conducted their internships in Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan:

Mir Ahmad Daimirian, *alumnus of 2019 (Afghanistan)*: “The JPO has been an experience for me to know the MFA better, and networking with some employees whom I had known before, thereby allowing me to restore my relations with them. At the same time, I was exposed to the nature of work being done in several entities of the MFA.”



Fatima Framarz, *alumna of 2019 (Afghanistan)*: “Learning about the norms of working in the public sector is the most important factor which will contribute to the development of my future career. As far as I would like to work with state institutions or the public sector I learned how to manage my professional behaviour as a governmental official. Moreover, profiling, writing official letters, and the way of communicating in official diplomatic language are other experiences that will be an asset to contribute to my future career.”



Assel Murat, alumna of 2019 (Kazakhstan): “I received experience and knowledge in my future career endeavors as in state-based entities, NGOs or IOs. In addition to this, I can use my sharpened skill to work in short deadlines and find solutions/alternatives to the problem in a limited time.”



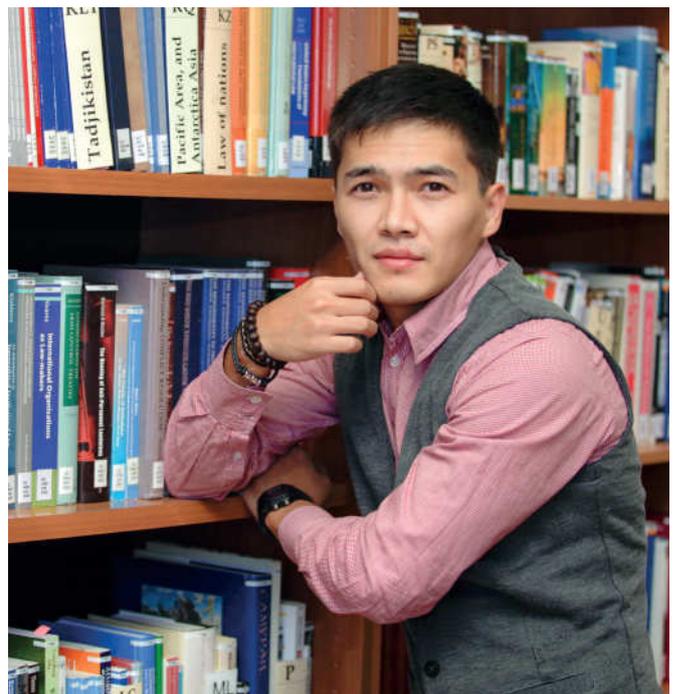
Zhalgas Bolat, alumnus of 2019 (Kazakhstan): “The following programme utilized my strongest traits as well as helped me to sharpen my knowledge and skills. I particularly note that the given assignments and tasks were well balanced between being analytically and practically oriented. I aspire to pursue a career in the diplomatic service of my country and within the structures of the MFA. As such, I am confident that the experience and knowledge that I have gained during this programme will contribute to the pursuit of this meaningful career.”



Mirlan Otorbaev, alumnus of 2019 (Kyrgyzstan): “The experience that I gained will help me in more efficient working with government officials, and understanding the dynamics of governmental departments. At the same time, it broadened my overview in such aspects as public-private cooperation, information exchange, and procedural assistance for private enterprises in addressing bureaucratic matters.”



Talgat Ilimbek uulu, alumnus of 2014 (Kyrgyzstan): “I received invaluable experience by working with public officers. I feel that I acquired a good grasp of how decision-making works in governmental organizations which certainly will benefit me.”

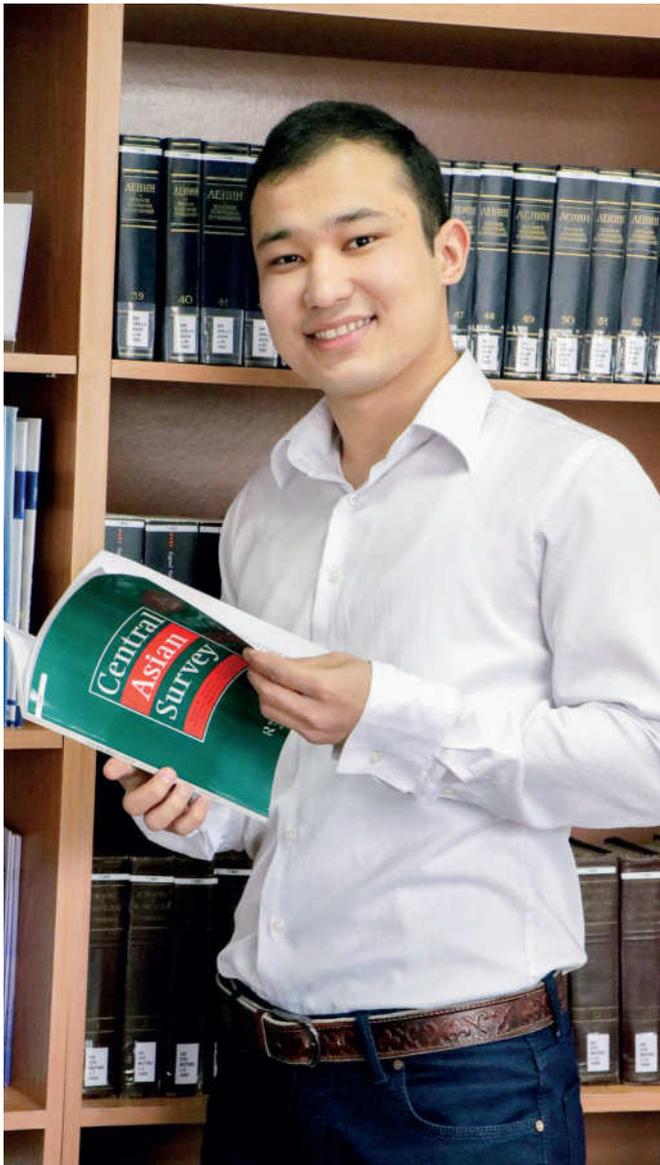


My path to MFA and the Importance of the JPO Programme: Success Story of Dinmukhamed Omirali, JPO of 2019

Dinmukhamed Omirali, alumnus of 2018 of the MA Programme in Politics and Security, participated in the JPO Programme in 2019 and upon successful completion of his internship was hired as a Leading Specialist at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

I am Dinmukhamed Omirali, a graduate of the OSCE Academy's Politics and Security Programme 2018. Now I am working as a Leading Specialist at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan (MFA). I would like to share my story on how the OSCE Academy and especially its JPO Programme helped me to get there where I am now.

After graduation, every student wants to have some experience in working life. For this reason, the OSCE



Academy has a unique programme for its graduates, which is the JPO Programme. The programme is mainly for those graduates who want to work with governmental organizations. I was one of the lucky students of the Academy who had received this opportunity. From March until June of 2019 I was interning at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The education received at the OSCE Academy and three-months internship within the framework of the JPO Programme helped me to be noticed by many diplomats, but still was not enough to be hired. Therefore, I decided to stay voluntarily for another three months with the permission of my boss.

Finally, after six months at the Ministry, I was successful in my application to the vacant position of Specialist in my department. It is now more than a year since I have been in the MFA and now I am in the position of Leading Specialist. Life in diplomacy has its interesting points like the time difference, experiences in different cultures, and especially the responsibility that diplomats have. Also, the networking here, which I am trying to focus on, gives great opportunities for you in the future. Overall, it is always interesting to observe an institution from inside. This is how my career has started after graduation and it is important to note the role of the JPO Programme in it. I will be always grateful to the OSCE Academy that gave me this opportunity and be proud to be its Alumnus.

Alumni Grant

The OSCE Academy Alumni Network, with support of the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), offers alumni grants to qualified OSCE Academy alumni to support their professional and academic development. This year two alumni received Alumni Grant to attend a conference and a traineeship.

Jafar Usmanov

Jafar Usmanov, alumnus of 2005, received a Grant to present at the 14th General Conference of the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR), 24-28 August 2020

I received a 'travel' grant to participate in the General Conference of the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) that ran from 24 to 28 August 2020. It was not a usual conference - it celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the ECPR - and like many large events,

this year convened online. The ECPR Virtual General Conference brought together more than 2,200 scholars speaking at 72 sections, four round-tables and hours of discussions and exchange.



I contributed to the conference by presenting on NGO activism in a challenging environment. My input was based on the doctoral research that I am currently taking forward on coping strategies of civil society activists in Central Asia. Despite challenges on the ground, NGO activism is alive and dynamic - project activities are running and services are delivered to target audiences. And statistically, there are no signs of a substantial drop in the number of registered non-governmental organisations in recent years. I found that activists navigate challenges in their routine through diverse practices - some more generic, others tailored to a specific context.

My presentation at this conference was well received and raised interest. I received nine comments and seven questions from the panel members - all very helpful to advance the paper to a peer-reviewed journal article that I intend to publish. My thanks to the OSCE Academy for support with the 'travel' grant, which I think amid travel restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic was rather an academic advancement grant.

Cholpon Aitakhunova

Cholpon Aitakhunova, alumna of 2012, received a grant to participate in the Project Management training course from the Codify Academy in Kyrgyzstan - in preparation for international PMP, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, September-November 2020

More than 2 years ago, I have started an interesting journey in my career with involvement in climate change and environmental governance issues in Kyrgyzstan and the region. While my first steps included participation in the national and regional events, studies of local climate action in Kyrgyzstan and other self-training activities, including informational interviews and networking with experts in the sphere, as of today the chosen path led me to my current position as a coordinator at the Green Alliance in Kyrgyzstan. Green Alliance is an association of approximately 50 organizations from civil society, private sector, academic community and individual experts who work to promote sustainable development, green economy and climate agenda in Kyrgyzstan. As part of the Alliance, I was able to participate in as well as coordinate multiple events such as a series of «Green Talks» expert discussions, national climate change fora and others. In particular, last year I was the coordinator of the First Youth Climate Change Forum in Kyrgyzstan, where we gathered more than 300 youth



representatives from all over the country for our event. Continuing the story of my journey in this field, I would also like to share that recently I became a regional network coordinator of Central Asia Youth for Water Network (CAY4Water). Our network aims to bring together youth from countries of the region and engage them in Central Asia water management issues. Some of my other achievements for this year include my participation in Central Asian Leadership Program on Environment for Sustainable Development of the Central Asian Regional Environmental Center as a speaker and a participant in September 2020, as well as my current participation in the Climate Change and Renewable Energy International Visitor Leadership Program of the US State Department.

Understanding that in these responsible roles, relevant competencies are needed to be successful in my work, I was for long interested in completing professional project management courses. As a matter of fact, after some research, I found out that there is a lack of such courses in Kyrgyzstan, and we have only a few certified project management professionals in the whole country. Still, when I learnt that a local company - CodifyLab launched its project management course, I immediately applied for it and also received financial support from the OSCE Academy in Bishkek in the framework of the 2nd Alumni Grant 2020. During the 4 months of my "Project Management" (PM) course (August-November), I got trained on the foundations of project management, including project life-cycle (initiation, planning, execution, controlling and closure), management of project schedule, resources, risks, stakeholders, communications, quality; got introduced to various methods and frameworks (Waterfall, RUP, Agile, Scrum, Kanban); learnt about different tools in PM, and gained other necessary and valuable knowledge that I already apply in implementing my everyday tasks as well as planning my future projects. Indeed, participation in the PM course is part of my bigger career plan, which includes becoming a certified project management professional and working on large scale national and international projects in addressing climate change and environmental issues. Eventually, knowledge and skills in PM are highly demanded today and are universal in terms of applicability just in any sphere.

I would like to take this opportunity and express my biggest gratitude to the OSCE Academy in Bishkek for supporting my training course in project management in the framework of the Alumni Grants programme. It was indeed a unique experience as well as highly relevant to my current work in managing current and planning future projects.

One-Year-Stay at NUPI Fellowship

In 2020 two more alumni had a chance to participate in the fellowship offered by the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI): Aidai Isataeva, alumna of 2018 of the MA Programme in Economic Governance and Development, and Galina Kolodzinskaia, alumna of 2017 of the MA Programme in Politics and Security. This Fellowship is exclusively targeted at the alumni of the OSCE Academy. This stay is an add-on to the MA degree from the OSCE Academy, and the purpose is to further prepare the two successful applicants for work in international affairs or continued study/research by deepening their practical and academic experience. Here are their stories.



A Dive in Norwegian History at Bygdøy

Aidai: It was the third week of January, I just returned from my fascinating vacation in Scandinavia when I received an email asking me if I would still consider coming to NUPI as a visiting research fellow. Being a visiting research fellow at NUPI was not less than a great objective of mine while I was studying at the Academy due to my longstanding interest in academia. That is why, when I was offered the fellowship, I accepted the offer within an hour. I had quit my job in GIZ and flew to Norway in February when the situation with coronavirus started to evolve. Within 2 weeks after my arrival in Oslo, the world had imposed travel restrictions and we all started working from home. I must note here that NUPI managed to have an excellent transition to a new operational mode by providing necessary equipment, organizing digital events, and supporting people in both work and personal issues. Coming to NUPI was one of the quickest decisions I have ever made, and it is certainly the right one! It is such a pleasure and greatly motivating to be part of a world-known think-tank and work with top-notch researchers. Every day I am engaged in substantial research work and gain valuable insights that certainly contributes to my future professional career.



At the University of Oslo Library

Despite all these Covid-related restrictions, I have taken part in a variety of workshops and seminars organized by NUPI to expand my perspective and advance my research skills. There is no doubt that I will use all this accumulated knowledge and experience both in my further studies, which I will start right after the fellowship, and in my future career.

Beyond the work at NUPI, I have plenty of time to explore Norway and experience the Norwegian lifestyle. Living in Oslo, I had a fascinating track across Norwegian history and culture by visiting unique museums and churches, took fjord cruises, tried delicious dishes, and enjoyed outdoor activities. In August, I and Galina had a beautiful chance to do a road-trip around the south-western part of Norway and visited some of the most popular places such as Loen, Geiranger, and

Rakssetra with a panoramic view of Olden and Loen



Trollstigen. This trip was an unforgettable introduction into Norwegian nature which is rich with breath-taking views, turquoise lakes, deep fjords, and bewitching waterfalls. And there is a plethora of many other experiences and stories which will always be a lovely memory of mine about the fellowship at NUPI and life in Norway!

Galina: My NUPI fellowship has a coincidental link with my application to the OSCE Academy in Bishkek. It was in the early spring of 2016, while participating in an inter-cultural dialogue workshop in India, that I was considering serious changes in my career and I noticed the OSCE Academy's MA Programme announcement

The Gateway to the Fjords in Geiranger



on my Facebook timeline. Without pondering too much I opened the Academy's website to learn more about the admission and graduates' opportunities and the NUPI fellowship programme was one of the first items I saw. I still remember thinking about how cool it must be to spend a year working with one of the world's best-known think-tanks. Of course, I couldn't have thought then that barely 4 years later I would become a part of it.

My decision to apply for the NUPI fellowship was closely linked with my interest in research related to the advancement of the Religion and Security Index (which was my thesis project at the University of Geneva and the Geneva Centre for Security Policy in 2018). I was

eager to expand my knowledge of quantitative methods and learn about similar research from leading European scholars for my future PhD project. Thus, NUPI became an ideal platform for me to receive such a first-hand experience. The atmosphere of profound academic focus and intellectual pursuit at NUPI remained unaffected by the pandemic. Although the majority of the events are now held online, Aidai and I are still able to enjoy a plethora of very intellectually-rewarding discussions and workshops. Our joyful and productive experience at NUPI would not have been possible without strong support from our senior research fellows and colleagues such as Indra Øverland, Helge Blakkisrud, Kristin Fjæstad, Roman Vakulchuk, Elisabeth Librekt Olsen and many others who created a truly friendly work environment fostering our professional growth. I am also very grateful to my flatmate and now friend Aidai with whom I have gone through two lockdowns and shared a new life-style. Despite the unexpected challenges imposed by Covid-19, I believe our time in Norway will always remain as one of the fondest memories of our lives.

If I were asked to describe my NUPI fellowship experience with one word, it would be ‘inspiring’. I will strongly recommend and inspire other graduates to apply for the NUPI fellowship next year; which undoubtedly will become one of the most enriching cultural and intellectual experiences of their lives. In the end, we would like to express our profound gratitude to NUPI and the OSCE Academy in Bishkek for providing such a wonderful opportunity for young professionals in Central Asia.

Hiking around Stryn



Master of Advanced Studies in International and European Security

The OSCE Academy alumni along with graduates of other universities from Central Asia each year compete to be selected and enrolled to the Master of Advanced Studies (MAS) in International and European Security. The MAS programme is open for recent university graduates as well as practitioners with professional experience in a security policy-related field to study at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP) and the Global Studies Institute (GSI) of the University of Geneva. Raushan Bolotalieva, alumna of 2011, was granted this opportunity for the academic year 2020-2021.



As an alumna of the OSCE Academy Master's programme in Politics and Security, I was selected for the 2020-2021 Master of Advanced Studies (MAS) in the International and European Security which is jointly run by the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP) and the Global Studies Institute of the University of Geneva (GSI). The programme is intended for young and mid-career professionals to provide them with knowledge and skills in the field of comprehensive security and help them build networks which could be put into practice once they are back to their national or international institutions.

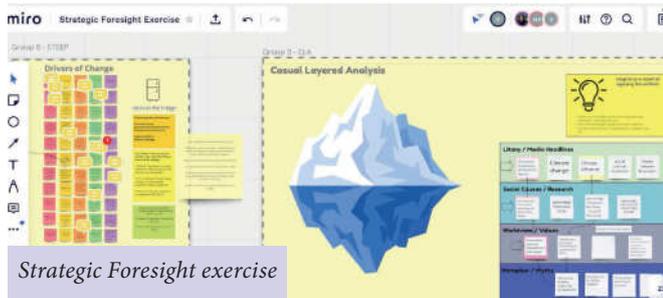
It has to be noted that the MAS programme is based upon GCSP's Leadership in International Security Course (LISC) - a course on international security policy taught for 35 years to enhance participants' knowledge and skills so that they can take on new leadership roles

Iran's Nuclear Programme online exercise at GCSP



in their government structures, as well as international and non-governmental organizations. I truly believe that this is a unique opportunity for Central Asians to join the international community of security experts to be able to think critically but at the same time constructively and to build leadership mindset.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic-related restrictions and challenges for educational institutions, the MAS programme started in October 2020 with a digital format of learning which convened virtually all 21 enrolled fellows



with half of them based in Geneva and the rest in their home countries. I was excited to meet a diversity of fellows from a wide spectrum of backgrounds such as police and military officers, diplomats, representatives of other state structures, research institutions, civil society and international organizations who represent different countries from all continents.

Moreover, I have highly appreciated the efforts of GCSP in organizing a digital learning platform - Claned and stimulating fellows to use lots of new and useful online tools such as Padlet, BeeKee, Miro and facilitating Zoom sessions delivered by distinguished experts. These experts represent highly qualified academics, experienced diplomats, government officials and practitioners from around the world. GCSP staff members have spared no efforts to efficiently adapt the learning process to the digital context with the integration of useful digital tools, exciting simulation exercises and discussions in groups which contributed to making this learning journey interesting and at the same time responsive to the needs of the participants.

The first term of the programme lasting from October to December 2020 became fully digital and was structured in such a way to let the fellows have around 4 hours of “offline learning” for individual and group reflection and preparation as well as 4 hours of “live learning” that focus on interaction with expert facilitated and led lectures, discussions and case studies. As the face-to-face dimension is key to the learning process, it is expected that starting from January until May 2021 if the epidemiological situation allows, the course will switch to a hybrid format of learning.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mahabat Murzakanova, an alumna of the 2008 of the MA Programme in Politics and Security, for inspiring me to participate in this great learning opportunity. She was so kind and open to share her experiences and to give her advice on all issues related to the MAS programme. Moreover, I would like to thank Dr. Siobhan Martin and Sophie Ingelaere for guiding and motivating us through the LISC and making it a meaningful and rewarding learning experience as well as Dr. Stephan Davidshofer and Dr. Alessia Biava for their continuous support and advice with conceptualizing and writing the MAS research paper.

Research Fellowship at the International Secretariat of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly International Secretariat regularly engages eight or nine graduate students of political science, law and international relations from universities in OSCE participating States as Research Fellows. Starting from 2017, one position of the Research Fellow a year is granted to the OSCE Academy graduate (under the MoU signed on 10 August 2016 and prolonged on 8 November 2019). In 2020 Anastasia Griadasova, alumna of 2016, received this opportunity and shares her story with us:

“I consider my time working at the OSCE PA as a very special turning point and I look forward to new experiences ahead.”

2020 presented me with an opportunity to have a fellowship in one of the oldest OSCE institutions. I joined the International Secretariat of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in Copenhagen in January and since then I have been living in one of the happiest countries according to the World Happiness Report.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly attracts young researchers from the OSCE Participating States to provide expertise and gain practical experience in the parliamentary dimension of the OSCE. I am honoured to



In front of Little Mermaid

represent Kyrgyzstan in the Secretariat and to share my knowledge and expertise of our Central Asian region. I have always wished to observe multilateral diplomacy in action and the work in the OSCE PA provides such an opportunity where one can witness how states represent their interests and interact with each other in the international arena.

This year COVID-19 changed the 'modus operandi' of many organizations. Life is divided into before and after. Before lockdown, I took part in one of the statutory meetings of the OSCE PA – the Winter Meeting in Vienna, where I was able to witness how Central Asian parliamentarians along with other MPs from the OSCE participating states represented national interests and debated various topics related to the comprehensive concept of security. Despite lockdowns across the OSCE re-



Meeting with Ambassador KAIRAT ABDRAKHMANOV (Kazakhstan)

gion, OSCE PA members remained committed and were very active in raising various topics related to human security. I have been involved in the work with parliamentarians and prominent experts in the field of climate change, migration and other OSCE related fields. I also participated in bilateral and multilateral meetings of the OSCE PA delegations. I went to Kazakhstan where I was part of the Need Assessment Mission (NAM) evaluating the pre-election environment ahead of the elections in January 2021. Before joining the Secretariat, I had been working in the electoral field for more than two years so joining NAM was a very exciting experience for me that added great value to my professional development. I already consider my time working at the OSCE PA as a very special turning point and I look forward to new experiences ahead.

Indeed, it has been an eye-opening year of transformation and enlightenment for me. Despite the difficult public health situation around the world including Denmark, I am embracing new experiences, improving my research skills, deepening my knowledge in specific topics, collecting nice memories with my friends in Denmark and living the dream to reside by the sea and use a bike as a means of transportation (essential in Denmark!).

I am extremely grateful to the OSCE Academy for the opportunity to expand my horizons, networks and a chance to share the knowledge and perspectives on CA I gained at the Academy in an international institution such as the OSCE PA. I would like to thank Dr. Diana Digol, who triggered my interest in the work of the OSCE while delivering a module on the OSCE during my studies. I would also like to express my gratitude to the OSCE PA Secretary General, Roberto Montella, my inspiring supervisor Farimah Daftary and the whole team of the OSCE PA for enriching my professional experience through my involvement in the projects of the organization. I would encourage graduates of the OSCE Academy not to hesitate and apply for this wonderful opportunity of self-development and personal growth.



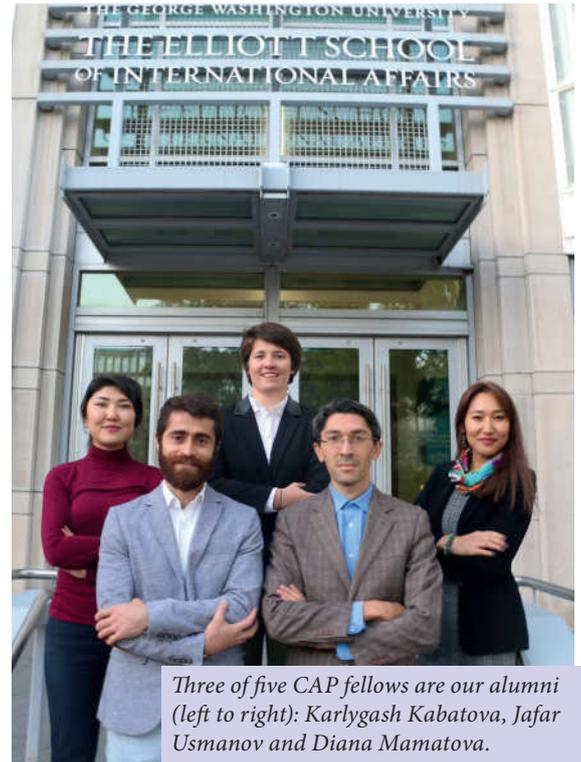
At the meeting of OSCE PA Secretary General Montella with Central Asia delegations

Alumni Networking

The OSCE Academy's alumni are active and enthusiastic leaders who never stop learning. In this rubric, we managed to gather the reflections and opinions of those OSCE AiB graduates who became the lucky ones to be selected as participants of various fellowship programmes and summer schools on studying the Central Asia region.

Central Asia-Azerbaijan Fellowship Program

The Central Asia-Azerbaijan Fellowship Program (CAAFP), conducted by the George Washington University – Elliott School of International Affairs' Central Asia Program (CAP) is intended for young professionals – scholars, government officials, public policy experts, and social activists – who seek to enhance their research and analytical skills and become public policy leaders. The fellowship is available to individuals from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan. The fellowship program provides a platform for the exchange of ideas and builds lasting intellectual networks among the Central Asian and Azerbaijani and U.S. scholarly and policy communities.



Three of five CAP fellows are our alumni (left to right): Karlygash Kabatova, Jafar Usmanov and Diana Mamatova.



Aichurek Kurmanbekova, alumna of 2014: The time I spent in Washington, DC from September to December 2019 was one of the most exciting adventures in my life! By mid-2019 I had been working for Human Rights Watch for over two years, so by that moment, I started to feel overwhelmed with my work. Being a lucky person, I was chosen as one of the four Central Asia Program fellows at George Washington University. As a young practitioner, I was not using the academic skills that I gained at the OSCE Academy in 2013-2014. However, the CAAF Program encouraged me to use both my professional and academic backgrounds. I especially enjoyed working with one of the best post-Soviet region experts, Dr. Marlene Laruelle, who guided me throughout the Program. Also, I met amazing friends who changed my life for the better!

Karlygash Kabatova, alumna of 2014: When I was at the IERES on Central Asia and Azerbaijan Program we not only had the marvellous Dr. Marlene Laruelle but our program coordinator was Dr. Liliya Karimova, who gave us great advice on how to better structure our research and papers. Even though my topic of youth sexuality education was unusual for the program where people would typically research migration, border conflicts or nation-building, CAP became a great source of connections for me. It was the perfect mix of academic guidance and freedom at the same time. Of course, the whole experience of being in the US for the first time opened a special chapter in my life.



Diana Mamatova, alumna of 2009: The Central Asia and Azerbaijan Fellowship Program at EIRES, GWU gives knowledge, network, and opportunities for its fellows. I could not value more how a devoted team of high-level professionals worked with us throughout the fellowship. Public policymaking has become much closer to me as a young professional. I produced a policy-brief on cross-border issues in the Fergana valley and peacebuilding possibilities on the ground. The fellowship not only taught me to write analytical work, but also raise awareness on acute peacebuilding issues in the region (in the US and outside), recommend policy solutions, and continue discussions and further research on these issues after the fellowship.



Natalia Zakharchenko, alumna of 2012: They say that dreams do not work unless you do. I would say the recipe is more complex, but adding some enjoyment, passion and curiosity to the process won't hurt. Back in 2014, I was coming back home from my CAP fellowship, charged emotionally and academically by people, events, and self. Immensely thankful to the program and Dr. Marlene Laruelle personally for the empowerment of young scholars from Central Asia, and giving us a chance to shine in the vibrant hub of regional research.

Dilmira Matyakubova, alumna of 2014: The Central Asia Program is one of the few platforms that offers dynamic academic discourse and policy perspectives. It helped me re-orientate my academic expertise into the policy arena.



Daniyar Kussainov, alumnus of 2014: Three years ago, I had the privilege to be a fellow of the Central Asia and Azerbaijan Program at George Washington University. It was the best in class experience for me as a researcher and political scientist. We met with prominent international scholars and U.S. policymakers, had classes with practitioners of the Obama administration and people we only read about in books and articles before. I would recommend this fellowship program as a complementary tool for advancing your career and academic prospects. I am forever grateful for this opportunity.

EUCAM

The Europe-Central Asia Monitoring - EUCAM fellowship programme is based at the Centre for European Security Studies in Groningen, the Netherlands. It hosts three researchers for periods of three months each spring and autumn. EUCAM fellows are young professionals from the Central Asian region working with civil society or in academia with a specific interest in policy-oriented research and Europe-Central Asia relations. The fellowship programme provides an opportunity to implement a personal research project and publish it; visit EU institutions and interact with policy and academic communities in Belgium and the Netherlands, as well as participate in training and conferences.

Irina Kulikova, alumna of 2019: I was in Groningen, the Netherlands, when I found out that I was selected to participate in the EUCAM programme, which was supposed to take place in the same city. This programme was an excellent opportunity to further enhance my research and analytical skills which I gained at the OSCE Academy. The topic I researched at the EUCAM was about gender-based violence in Kyrgyzstan during the COVID-19 pandemic. And although the programme was conducted online due to the current travel restrictions, I still found this experience to be very enriching and exciting.



Muslimbek Buriev, alumnus of 2017: Before the EUCAM Fellowship, I have never been to Europe nor did I have a chance to publish a research paper in English. Surprisingly through EUCAM I finally ticked these two boxes on my to-do list. More importantly, the Fellowship allowed me to take a glimpse on the operation process of a European think tank. In Tajikistan, entities that provide independent analysis on contemporary political issues are yet to appear, and being a EUCAM fellow was insightful in that respect. Ability to collect data from state representatives, make connections and understand how Europe sees Central Asia were among the perks of visiting EU institutions in Brussels – an amazing opportunity that was a part of the Fellowship program. Such huge experience is a game-changer for every young researcher, who aspires to establish oneself in the realm of political analysis.

Aizhan Erisheva, alumna of 2018: Hi! My name is Aizhan, and I am currently an EUCAM Fellow. I am researching women empowerment. This year fellows have been working online, due to the pandemic. I enjoy the programme despite the current situation. It is a great opportunity to improve your research skills, to discuss topical issues of the region, attend online workshops, training; and interact with EU-Central Asia relations experts. Moreover, I have an opportunity to participate in an online EU-CA Civil Society Forum and discuss possible policy responses.



John Smith Trust (JST) Central Asia Fellowship Programme

The JST Fellowship Programme provides exceptional young leaders with the opportunity to explore issues of governance, social justice and the rule of law through a month of workshops, discussions, debates, visits and meetings in the United Kingdom. The



Mini Alumni Reunion at JST Fellowship

programme aims to inspire and equip young and potential leaders to make a positive contribution to their societies. Applications are open to citizens of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. John Smith Fellows can come from any field, particularly politics, public administration, the media, civil society, law, and business – if a clear link is made to JST themes. The age band of Fellows is normally 25 to 35 years.

Zamira Isakova, alumna of 2013: The John Smith Trust (JST) Fellowship Programme was founded in memory of one of Britain's best-loved politicians, John Smith MP and offers young professionals from Central Asia



and Wider Europe the chance to explore issues of good governance, the rule of law and social justice in the UK through an intensive four-week programme of workshops, discussions, debates, visits and meetings. John Smith Fellows often work in governance (national and local), public administration, the media, civil society, law, and social enterprise, but other areas are also considered as long as there is a link to JST themes. Interestingly, each participant in the program has to develop and implement a small action plan in their home countries to tackle local issues, based on the experience and skills acquired during their visit to the UK. Therefore, in addition to this, the candidate has to draft a plan to solve local issues in-country or community, which the candidate would develop and shape into a full-fledged action plan during the visit to the UK.

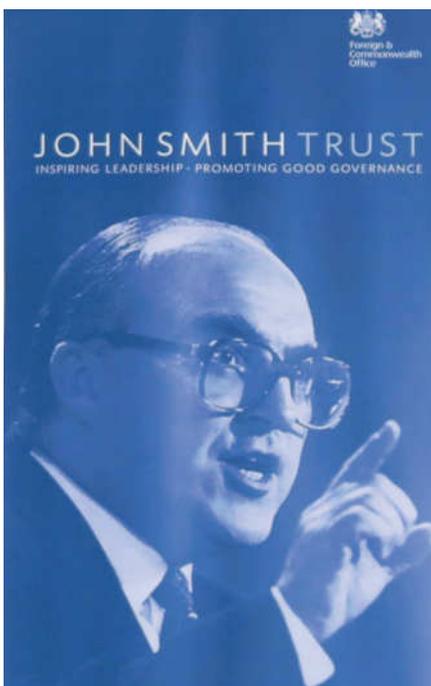
Karlygash Kabatova, alumna of 2014: It was only a month but we were very busy learning about how the English and Scottish parliaments, courts, political parties and non-governmental organizations work. The most valuable and unique part of the programme is that



the JST team organizes for every fellow to meet organizations and institutions that are relevant to a fellow's fields of work. Fellows learn from those organizations' experience and can keep in touch or develop their relationships. As a researcher and advocate of youth sexuality education I was lucky to meet people who enriched my research and perspective on the issue.

Dilfuza Kurolova, alumna of 2015:

I was so happy to recognize the OSCE Academy alumni among the JST fellows in 2019, so I felt myself already among a part of the family. A year ago, it was one of the best professional experiences I had in a long time. Right before the fellowship, I was so overloaded with work and I was waiting for a change of atmosphere. The JST gave me friends, a network and the experience to see how the justice sector is operating in the UK. Visits to the Parliaments in Edinburgh and London, as well as getting to know the Supreme Court of the UK impressed me a lot that I still present this as an example of the judiciary functionality in Uzbekistan. We had a wonderful time “locked” at the castle at the beginning of the Fellowship, which I think was the best decision of the programme, where we could know each other better. Also, I met wonderful people and high-level experts in their fields, and of course, I met a superhero in human rights law, Baroness Kennedy (I was almost crying at the meeting). So, it was fun and at the same time a learning month in the UK. I miss the team, we are still in touch and I am grateful to have been selected for the Fellowship.



*Dartmouth House. 2019.
Parliamentary debates within JST 2019. London, UK*

Third ECPR-OSCE/ODIHR Summer School on Political Parties and Democracy

On 17 August, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) launched their week-long Summer School on Political Parties and Democracy. This third edition of the summer school was organized in collaboration with the OSCE Academy in Bishkek, the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, and the Research Centre for the Study of Parties and Democracy - REPRESENT - of the University of Nottingham.

Due to the COVID-19 crisis, this edition was held online. It brought together 21 researchers, practitioners and civil society leaders in the field of political parties and democracy from Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Ukraine.

Two OSCE Academy alumni and one current MA student participated in this school.

Arzu Sheranova, alumna of 2015: The program of the third ECPR-OSCE/ODIHR summer school covered important topics in the study of democracy and political parties, and also addressed contemporary issues democracies are facing, such as populism. In particular, the participants and the summer school experts discussed challenges in building strong democratic institutions and institutionalization of party systems in post-Communist countries and beyond. I found the summer



school lectures and discussions very useful and learned more about OSCE ODIHR's activities. I presented a paper on voting preferences in rural Kyrgyzstan during the 2015 parliamentary elections and received valuable comments and suggestions. Despite its online format, the school succeeded to create a network of enthusiastic researchers and practitioners interested in building strong democracies. Overall, I found the program very useful and motivating, and I recommend the ECPR-OSCE/ODIHR school to the OSCE Academy students and alumni.

Nosirkhon Qodirov, student of 2019-2020: This school provided me the opportunity to share my paper with 23 participants from different backgrounds and countries, and also experts in the field of political parties and democracy, which I found very helpful for my future ca-



reer. As one of the participants in the 3rd edition of the summer school, I can say with full confidence that it was one of the most rewarding intellectual experiences of my research career. The summer school, which provided for a highly interactive environment between the participants and the presenters, did an amazing job of combining theory and practice. It offered me a great opportunity to develop my interest in political parties and democracy further, to deepen my knowledge about the topic, and to gain new ideas and perspectives. Through the well-structured thematic sessions, consisting of a lecture followed by an open discussion, we were able to interact with high profile academics and practitioners in the field, who gave us interesting insights into the latest developments and recent research on the subject. Furthermore, I was able to present my research and to receive valuable feedback on it. I can say it was a great occasion to broaden my professional network with experts and very enthusiastic participants coming from other OSCE participating states.

MA in Economic Governance and Development Programme 2019-2020



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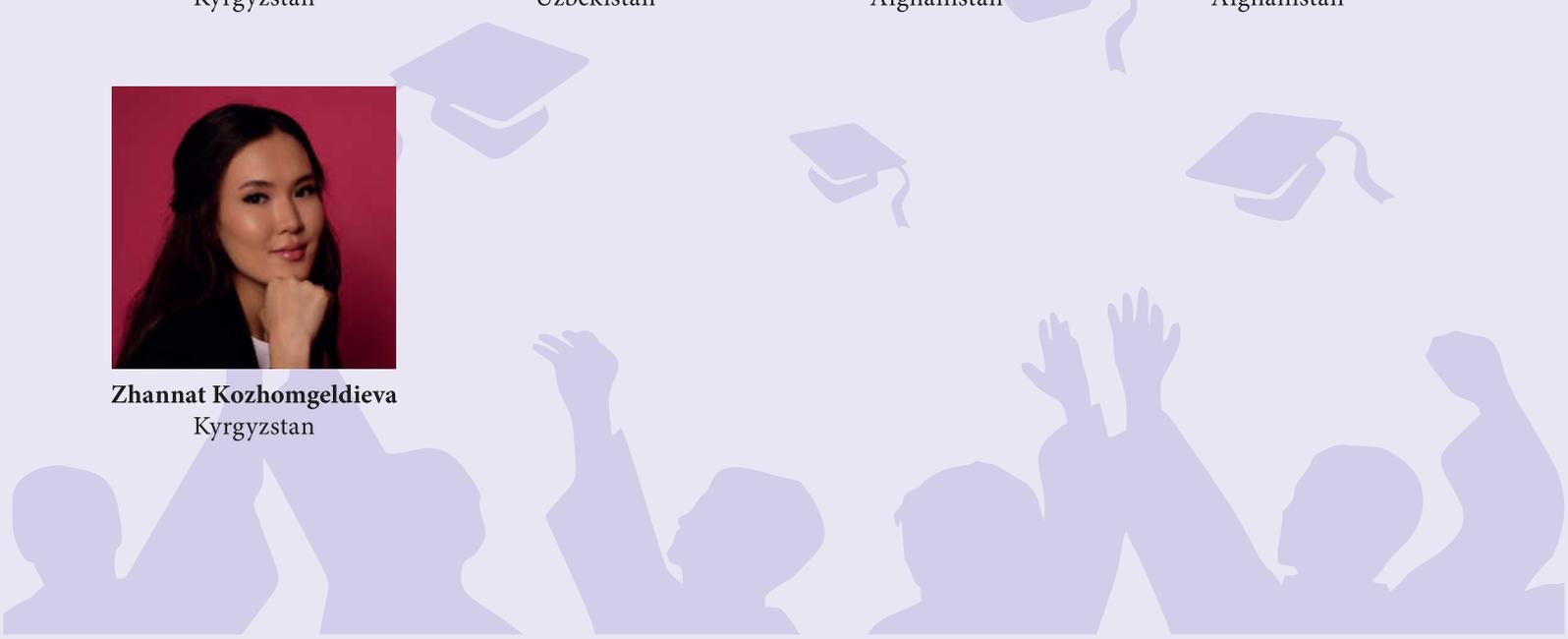
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MA Programme in Politics and Security Programme 2019-2020



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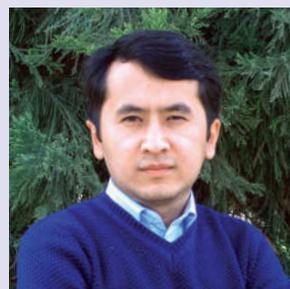
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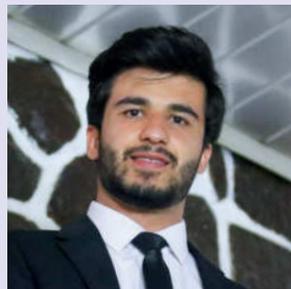
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