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## Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Research and Studies on Eastern Europe (MIREES)

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*Stay young and keep your hunger for knowledge!* These words, from the speech by **Professor Ineta Dabašinskienė**, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Philosophy of the VDU of Kaunas, Lithuania, at the graduation ceremony of the 6<sup>th</sup> generation of MIREES, perfectly sum up the spirit and innovative nature of this ambitious joint MA Programme supported by the University of Bologna, Corvinus University of Budapest (Hungary), Vytautas Magnus University of Kaunas (Lithuania) and the University of St. Petersburg (Russian Federation) as well as their special partner University of Ljubljana (Slovenia). These words also signify the goal of further developing the international academic network of universities, professors, scholars and students cooperating with MIREES. They gathered in Forlì in September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2010 to celebrate the completion of the first graduating class since MIREES evolved into a *Laurea Magistrale* (Master of Arts) of the Faculty of Political Science 'Roberto Ruffilli' and to officially inaugurate the Academic Year 2010/2011, welcoming the new generation of MIREES students.

The key-note speaker of the ceremony was the prominent French political scientist **Jean Blondel**, Emeritus Professor from the European University Institute in Florence, who delivered an insightful and interesting lecture entitled "Presidential governments in light of the post-Soviet experience".

In the presence of other dignitaries including **Carla Salvaterra**, pro-Rector of the University of Bologna in charge of International Relations, **Paul Bayley**, vice-Dean of the Faculty of Political Science 'Roberto Ruffilli', as well as representatives from the partner universities, the students were conferred their Master's Degrees and received their diplomas from **Professor Stefano Bianchini**, director of the programme. In the tradition of MIREES, the class of 2008/2010 was truly international, consisting of twenty-one students from twelve different countries, ranging from the United States of America and the Netherlands to Ukraine and Turkey, including Italy and almost all the Balkan countries. MIREES students' traditional extraordinary academic performance and outstanding theses were once again repeated by this class, which earned exceptionally high average final marks and the faculty's recommendation to publish three theses. This was a source of great satisfaction for most of the students, who attained this goal after two intensive and demanding semesters spent at the Faculty of Political Science 'R. Ruffilli', one semester at one of the partner or associated universities and the last term entirely devoted to thesis research and writing – a task often involving challenging field research in the countries being studied.

As **Flora Giovannetti** and **Caleb Waugh**, student representatives of the class of 2008 pointed out, in MIREES the students are considered and treated "more or less as *equal parts of one and the same academic community* and thus as *having equal potential in contributing to critical academic knowledge*; this is a rarity in most university settings in Italy and other countries". The continuity of this international academic community – representing a source of intellectual and socio-cultural enrichment for the faculties involved as well as for each individual who is part of it – will be ensured by the forthcoming establishment of an *Alumni Association*: one more tool to perpetuate the spiritual youth and "hunger for knowledge" of the MIREES community.

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