

A Successful Bid for European Funding for Research on the Caucasus

Posted on Tuesday 15th October 2013

Dr Kataryna Wolczuk (Dr Kataryna Wolczuk) and **Dr Derek Averre** (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/government-society/staff/profiles.aspx?ReferenceId=4443>) from the Centre for Russian and East European Studies (CREES) in POLSIS have been successful in winning research funding as part of a consortium with French and other European partners for the project on the 'Security-Democracy Nexus in the Caucasus' (CASCADE). Of the total 18 project applications submitted by various consortia, CASCADE came first and will receive full funding from the European Commission. The total value of the project is €2,5mIn with funding €360,000 for the University of Birmingham. The duration is 3 years (2014-16).

The Caucasus, now split between Russia, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, includes a multitude of ethno-linguistic and religious borders. The history of relations between the people of the Caucasus combine long periods of peace punctuated by conflicts. At present, ethno-territorial conflicts constitute an important obstacles to democratisation in the region.

For a long time, the Caucasus has remained at the remote periphery of world politics. But during the last two decades, its geopolitical situation has radically changed. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, a number of regional and international powers – Turkey, Iran, US and the EU – are now active alongside the region's longstanding dominant power, the Russian Federation.

Against this background, the CASCADE project will 1) scrutinise Caucasian states and societies for the root causes of conflict and insecurity, 2) conduct synergetic research on democracy and security in the Caucasus, 3) analyse the links between the region and its wider neighbourhood, 4) provide forward-looking analysis on regional security and democratisation processes, and 5) develop a set of proposals on how the EU could enhance its role in the region.

CASCADE brings together 9 research centres and institutes from across the EU, Russia and the Caucasus and the consortium is led by Dr Laure Delcour from Fondation Maison des Sciences de l'Homme (FMSH) in Paris.

Apart from Dr Wolczuk and Dr Averre, two Research Fellows will be employed on the project, whereas Prof. Stefan Wolff will be a member of the CASCADE External Expert Council. The project will provide an excellent context of collaborative research between Birmingham researchers and their international peers, specialising in the Caucasus and will help shape EU policy towards the complex and pivotal region.

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