

CREES Celebrates its 50th Anniversary

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The Centre for Russian and East European Studies (CREES) turned 50 years old in 2013. To celebrate this landmark and to showcase the expertise and contributions of CREES staff and alumni, the Centre organized a series of special seminars and an expanded annual conference.

The CREES 50th anniversary celebrations spanned the entire year, showcasing the breadth of expertise and interests in the Centre. Many of the events focused on developments in Russia. In March, for instance, Edwin Bacon and CREES' [David White](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/government-society/departments/russian-east-european-studies/staff/profiles.aspx?Referenceld=4533) spoke on the 'Putin, Protest and Pussy Riot: A Turbulent Year in Russian Politics' roundtable, in October Neil Robinson from the University of Limerick joined CREES's own [Richard Connolly](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/government-society/departments/russian-east-european-studies/staff/profiles.aspx?Referenceld=6091) to discuss the Political Economy of Putin's Russia which followed a discussion on the Russian economy earlier in the year between distinguished speakers Pekka Sutela and Shinichir Tabata. In December [Julian Cooper](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/government-society/departments/russian-east-european-studies/staff/profiles.aspx?Referenceld=4460), [David White](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/government-society/departments/russian-east-european-studies/staff/profiles.aspx?Referenceld=4533) joined New York University's Joshua Tucker (who had taken courses in CREES as a student) on a roundtable to discuss contemporary Russian politics and economics entitled, 'Living in Interesting Times'.

The expertise and interests of CREES, however, have always gone beyond just Russia. This broader focus was in evidence in many of the special events over the course of the year. The 50th anniversary celebrations began with a panel discussion on the many faces of the Caucasus to mark the publication of a special issue of Europe-Asia Studies featuring not just current members of staff [Galina Yemelianova](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/government-society/departments/russian-east-european-studies/staff/profiles.aspx?Referenceld=4540) and [Cerwyn Moore](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/government-society/departments/russian-east-european-studies/staff/profiles.aspx?Referenceld=4540), doctoral researcher Nino Kemoklidze, but also former CREES colleague Jeremy Smith and the Georgian Ambassador Giorgi Badridze.

February's special panel discussion on Elections and Authoritarianism in the post-Soviet world involved not just CREES's own [Kataryna Wolczuk](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/government-society/departments/russian-east-european-studies/staff/profiles.aspx?Referenceld=4538) and Matthew Frear discussing Ukraine and Belarus, but also Sarah Birch from Essex who placed developments in the post-Soviet region in broader perspective. Developments in Central Europe were also well represented. Former Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic, Ivetta Radicova delivered a lecture to staff and students on the eurozone crisis and Dieter Segert from the University of Vienna spoke in March on whether Eastern Europe after 1989 was a 'laboratory for the sustainability of democracy'. Earlier in the year Honorary Director General of the European Commission Graham Avery and PhD alumna who now works at the EU Delegation in Ankara, Lara Scarpitta spoke about the future of EU enlargement.

Anniversaries are appropriate moments to look back. One of the final seminars of the series involved Joshua Tucker from New York University and Sara Jones from IGS/POLISIS discussing the legacies and memories of dictatorship in Central and Eastern Europe. But 2013 was not just about looking back but also demonstrating the continued importance of understanding Russia, Eurasia and Central and Eastern Europe. In a highly topical seminar with two other colleagues from POLSIS, [Galina Yemelianova](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/government-society/departments/russian-east-european-studies/staff/profiles.aspx?Referenceld=4540) and [Derek Averre](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/government-society/departments/russian-east-european-studies/staff/profiles.aspx?Referenceld=4443) contributed to a discussion on the Syrian crisis, displaying their detailed knowledge and insights into the ethnic dimension of the conflict and the factors shaping Russian foreign policy and chemical weapons proliferation.

The high point of the year's celebrations, however, was a specially enhanced [Annual Conference](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/government-society/departments/russian-east-european-studies/news/2013/07/50th-anniversary-annual-conference.aspx). Staff, students and alumni gather in Windsor Great Park for a series of stimulating panel discussions and speeches. On Saturday evening all participants congregated with CREES's founding director Bob Davies to raise a glass to the Centre's achievements over the past five decades.

CREES Director, [Dr Tim Haughton](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/government-society/departments/russian-east-european-studies/staff/profiles.aspx?Referenceld=4478) who organized the celebrations said, 'CREES has been one of the world's leading centre for the study of the region over the past five decades. The anniversary events highlighted the breadth of expertise and interests in the Centre and the major contribution CREES has made to the study of the region. We look forward to building on these achievements as we enter our sixth decade. I encourage all of my colleagues, our alumni and friends to join us in this valuable endeavour.'

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