



MIREES Testimonials

This section brings to you the major assets of the Program through the enthusiastic feedbacks of MIREES graduates and their stories of success.

Daniele Fattibene, Class of 2012/14, *Research Intern at Polish Institute of International Affairs*

I decided to study at the University of Bologna, since it has a long-lasting tradition in International Relations studies. Its efficient infrastructures and modern services, as well as its high degree of internationalization provide you the best tools for both your academic and personal growth. In this context, MIREES is the only program in Italy focusing on eastern European studies. Its renowned faculty, its interdisciplinary approach towards academic research as well as the presence of many foreign students, make it really unique! I really appreciated the possibility to study in English, to improve my skills in terms of academic writing and research and the compulsory mobility, which allowed me to spend one semester at Saint Petersburg State University, by increasing my skills in Russian Language. So...what are you waiting for?

Taras Fedirko, Class of 2011/13, *PhD candidate at Durham University*

I chose MIREES because I trusted it would allow me to develop my academic interests in East European societies under the tutoring of an international faculty, over the span of two years. The programme gave me a good understanding of the region through the lens of several disciplines, while allowing for an in-depth specialisation in cultural studies and anthropology of post-Soviet societies, which I took with me further to the PhD level. Besides the numerous opportunities for academic and professional growth that so much contributed to shaping me, I most enjoyed the seminar culture of MIREES. The diversity (in terms of both national and academic origins) of MIREES students fostered the sense of intensity of debates and intellectual collaboration that turned out to be my single defining experience of the programme. A point of rupture within the routine of the Italian university, MIREES gathered most dedicated students nationally and from abroad — the ones who knew exactly what they were doing, and where they wanted to go. It was a pleasure, but also a challenge, to be part of such a group that now continues to exist, out of the University

Maria Luigia Pisani, Class of 2011/13

The International context is what I liked the most of my Master degree. Every day, I joined classes with students coming from different countries, many of those born in Eastern Europe, which was the subject of my studies. In this way I also had the privilege to learn from my colleagues, getting to know different perspectives, coming up from the political transition of Eastern Countries. This was a great added value of our International program and.

Dora Komnenović, Class of 2010-12, *PhD candidate at University of Geissen*

What I liked the most about MIREES was the possibility to interact. We would always find time for engaging discussions, in and outside the classroom. We were a fairly small group, so it was much easier to establish a closer relationship with professors and fellow students. Last but not least, the openness and friendliness of most professors helped us bridge the authority gap and allowed us to create a more participatory and active learning environment.

Carolin Roeder, Germany, *PhD Candidate at the University of Harvard*

I decided to apply for MIREES since it was the only postgraduate program in Europe, which allowed me to focus on South-Eastern Europe. While there are some MA programs on Russia or Central Europe, MIREES is unique in its coverage of the entire post-socialist sphere. The variety in topics, teachers and disciplinary approaches is quite impressive, and so is the list of renowned professors I had the opportunity to be taught by.

Forli might be a provincial town, but MIREES was a truly international experience. I very much enjoyed the intimate learning environment. Through MIREES, I did not only broaden my academic horizon but established a network of dear friends and valuable colleagues around the world. From this network, both my PhD and further research projects have evolved

Victoria Donovan, United Kingdom, *PhD Candidate at Oxford University*

Perhaps the most attractive element of the MIREES programme was the world-class scholars who participated in it. The combination of intense courses and the intimate location of Forli allowed a level of contact with these senior academics, which I have not experienced, in any other educational institution. The lengthy overseas period was also an asset in as much as it allowed for the development of the language skills necessary to write an in-depth and original MA thesis (something which is not always the case with MA programmes focusing on Eastern Europe). It also provided an opportunity to intern at an organisation in that country (I did mine at the St Petersburg Times), thus allowing for the development of marketable skills, which is useful if you are not seeking a career in academia. With the help of the opportunities provided by MIREES (in particular my language knowledge), I was able to find a position on a PhD programme in Russian at Oxford University, which has proven to be extremely stimulating.

Heather Johnston, United States of America, US Department of State Foreign Service Political Officer

MIREES provided me with an understanding of international relations that no other program could match in geographic/cultural breadth and quality. In my profession, this unique understanding of the "other side" is invaluable, allowing me to be more effective when dealing with peers in my host country and advising my own country. I am actually in a place to actively improve world relations with the United States, largely thanks to the education I received from MIREES.

Evdokija Atanasovska, Macedonia, *Ministry of Defence*

What makes MIREES unique is the variety of subjects it offers, something that you can rarely find with other Masters. Having a freedom of choice has given me the opportunity to get a deeper insight into the subjects in which I have had a genuine interest. Not to mention the fact that thanks to MIREES I have studied in Italy and learnt a lot about the European Union, and eventually ended up in Russia, where I could further my knowledge and do my research. Finally, I would like to stress that through MIREES I have acquired invaluable experience, which I successfully apply at work and everyday life.

Alina Stanculescu, Romania, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

I am working at the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as a Junior diplomat. It's been already around one year and a half in this position for me, after graduating the master. The activity is really rewarding, the knowledge accumulated at MIREES proved its utility and relevance, which makes me feel at ease in most situations. Despite my professional obligations, I tried to keep track of the developments of MIREES, which is for all of us (graduates), I presume, a matter of pride. Thanks to the IECOB bulletins I receive from Aurora, I'm updated of the evolutions at MIREES, which bring me joy and satisfaction knowing I am one of the this master's graduate students.

Mirjana Kosić, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia (dual citizenship), *Co-founder and Executive Director of TransConflict*

MIREES programme was a determining point in terms of my professional development and the choice of future career, since it not only enabled me to change my environment and study abroad, but actually helped me to - through education and thorough research - better understand the conflict in the former Yugoslavia and reconcile those understandings with my personal experience of war in BiH. Another significant value of MIREES is that it has already become the brand in itself, increasingly recognised and acknowledged by and within broad academic community in the EU and the US. The understanding, knowledge and analytical skills acquired and honed during two years of MIREES programme have been highly appreciated in the past four years, i.e. since I completed my MA (generation 2004-2006). Since then, I worked with EU CAFAO in Bosnia and Herzegovina (EU Office for Customs and Fiscal Assistance), Belgrade NGO Center in Serbia, and in 2009, I co-founded an organisation TransConflict Serbia, an organization undertaking conflict and post-conflict transformation projects and research throughout the Western Balkans.

Tanja Kovačič, Slovenia, *PhD Candidate at National University of Ireland*

Studying at the MIREES program provided me with a wide array of knowledge and skills, which have enabled me for life and work in the international sphere. Interdisciplinary master gave me a deeper insight into understanding of historical and contemporary development of Eastern and South-eastern Europe, which is a necessary background for everyone who wants to deal with the region or with a broader European context. Personally, I found especially remarkable a mobility period in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. This experience gave me a unique possibility for being involved in studying, working and living on the ground and gave me a more complex picture about the country, which I could never completely understand only through remote observations. I recommend the program to everyone who wants to learn more about the region and who wants to build his/her professional career on the international level, private and public sphere...Or to everyone who just wants to find answers not only about regional but also about world politics.

Lucy Sommo, United States of America, *Editor at Balkan Insight*

MIREES was a great experience on an academic level, especially the opportunity to study with students and professors from many different backgrounds and from many different countries. The language component was crucial and unique, and I certainly believe that the experience enriched and strengthened my academic and professional profile.

Josipa Rizankoska, Macedonia, *Project Manager, Institute for Democracy "Societas Civilis" – Skopje*

Even before I got enrolled in MIREES I was engaged at one NGO in Macedonia, and I am currently working as a Project Manager in the same Institute. The Institute for Democracy "Societas Civilis" - Skopje (ID) is a think tank that deals with projects concerning democracy in the post socialist countries. Without MIREES I could probably still work there and be occupied with something, however, my inclusion at the ID now has much more value and essence, exactly because of my MIREES education. What I want to say is that before MIREES I was technically involved at this NGO (without having idea of the real meaning on the post-socialist democracy building). Now, after my MIREES "enlightenment" I am far more creatively productive. Each project I work on is closely related with the curriculum of MIREES but I have no obstacles anymore because I was thought to think widely and openly. MIREES was not only a place where you could study or improve your language skills, MIREES was a big international family where all the brothers and sisters could have an opportunity to understand each other thanks to the opportunity to live and study together, to share experiences from the past and ideas for the future. These MIREES students were able to communicate on 10 languages at the same table, they were able to celebrate so many different holidays and practice many different traditions. MIREES was not just a study programme, MIREES was a way of living, it was a human experiment with incredibly successful results.

For any enquiry or feedback, please contact:

MAIA - Mirees Alumni International Association
University of Bologna, School of Political Sciences - Forlì Campus
Via Giacomo della Torre, 1 - 47121 Forlì (Italy)
E-mail: board@mireesalumni.com

