

ABOUT THE SCHOOL OF CIVIC EDUCATION

Historical Background

The School of Civic Education (SCE), as the successor to the Moscow School of Civic Education (originally Moscow School of Political Studies till 2013), was founded in 1992 by Russian intellectuals and philosophers, Lena Nemirovskaya and Yuri Senokosov under the auspices of the Council of Europe. They believed that society, and particularly post-Soviet society, needs an enlightenment about the rule of law, active citizenship, and institutions that are part of modern democracy, and that forward-minded young people need a centre for civic education, unbiased expertise, open debate and interactive networking.

In the past 30 years SCE has developed as one of the foremost institutions in the field of civic society and civic education. Drawing on strong links with academic and research institutions and think tanks from around the world, the School has been able to organise nearly 300 seminars to bring the best expertise to the post-Soviet space and introduce over 25,000 influencers – new public and civic leaders, educators, media professionals – from Russia and neighbouring countries to Western traditions of democratic development and civic engagement. New knowledge and ideas have been multiplied and put into practice nationally and in neighbouring regions, thus shaping the environment and making a transition towards a more developed, responsible and conscious society more feasible.

There are 22 Schools of Political Studies (SPS) now founded on the School's model which have emerged since 2005 as a special project of the Council of Europe. The SPS network is now covering the whole of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, as well as some countries in the Southern Mediterranean region.

Regretfully, it becomes obvious that the democratic culture, not having received enough confident support and promotion, cannot keep itself afloat. Even having established institutions of independent court, press, and elections, is not enough for a culture of democracy to be understood and discerned correctly by the entire society. Responsible citizenship is the missing and critical element that would secure democracy.

Activities

SCE's activities include interdependent and mutually reinforcing educational programmes for different audiences:

1. The *Fundamentals of Democracy and Civic Engagement Programme* for new participants aimed at encouraging critical thinking, deepening knowledge of the rule of law and fundamental freedoms, active and responsible citizenship.
2. The *Civic Leadership Advanced Programme* for the most motivated and civically engaged alumni of the School which is aimed at nurturing effective practitioners and leaders in local communities and international cooperation.
3. The *Practicing Citizenship Programme* for educators focused on promoting democratic values in secondary school and other educational institutions in Russia through awareness-raising events and training, combined with participant-led implementation of local projects and advanced training for a network of regional coordinators.
4. *Issue-based workshops* for SCE alumni to illustrate the importance of civil society in the processes of building a state of law and the means to address the global challenges facing the world, organized in partnership with and hosted by SCE academic partners.
5. The *In Search of Lost Universalism International Forum* to provide the floor for an open dialogue to rejuvenate the spirit of global civics through vital debates presented by European and Russian experts, including SCE alumni and representatives of the Schools of Political Studies of the Council of Europe.
6. SCE *Sapere Aude* website (<https://sapere.online>) and the *Sapere Aude Podcast* to cover the most remarkable trends and phenomena of the global world as well as the post-Soviet space sharing the most notable thoughts of the best analysts, philosophers, historians and other public figures from all over the world.
7. The *Publishing Programme*, which annually produces four issues of the *Obshchaya Tetrad* – herald of civil life along with 4 – 5 books in the field of philosophy and humanistic sciences, economics, politics and culture which previously were distributed among programme participants and to the regional

universities and public libraries in regions. Now most publications are available on digital reading platforms.

Every year over 100 the most prominent experts, public figures, politicians, journalists, decision makers, civil society leaders and creative artists from over the globe come to speak at School, attracted by the quality of the audience and meaningful deliberations. These include Lyudmila Alexeeva, Anne Applebaum, Carl Bildt, Christopher Coker, Kenneth Clarke, Ralf Dahrendorf, Daniel Dettling, Ralph Fiennes, Álvaro Gil-Robles, Sylvie Kauffmann, Henry Kissinger, Catherine Lalumière, Yury Levada, John Lloyd, Bobo Lo, Sir Roderic Lyne, Ian McEwan, Michael Mertes, Diana Pinto, Dominique Moïsi, Thomas Pickering, Richard Pipes, Pierre Rosanvallon, Jutta Scherrer, Lord Robert Skidelski, Daniel Tarschys, Baroness Shirley Williams, Krzysztof Zanussi, and others.

Though, as the political environment has changed grammatically since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in late February 2022, paralleled with growing exponentially repressions in Russia, SCE sees it essential to be in contact and provide support to those who have continued to promote values of democracy and human rights in continuously worsening political climate, whether they remain in the country or had to flee from prosecution.

To this end, SCE has reconsidered the goals and schedules of its programmes to provide both a short-term response to the immediate needs of the target audiences in view of the terrible events unfolding in Ukraine and in neighbouring countries, as well as medium- to long-term resiliency building for civil society actors facing great challenges in view of political situation in Russia, that will allow capitalization upon future socio-political openings and opportunities for change.

Legal Developments

With the passing of the “Foreign Agents” law in 2012 in Russia, and the ‘Undesirable Institutions’ law of 2015, the School faced increasing pressure from Russian authorities. Named as a foreign agent in 2014, the original Moscow School found it impossible to continue to organise seminars and conferences under this label, yet, never ceased its work and already in 2015, the School transformed itself into the School of *Civic Education*. Since then, taking the situation in Russia as an opportunity, the School has been expanding its horizons and developing into a center for civic education beyond Russia.

The School, albeit legally dissolved in Russia as a legal entity, continues to be a focus of pressure campaigns that only proves its relevance to counter the repressive regime.

Implementation Partners

SCE has been enjoying partnership and cooperation with a number of prominent think tanks, universities and institutions, including the Swedish Institute of Transition Economics (SITE); Institute for Human Sciences (IWM); the Reuter Institute for Journalism Studies, the University of Oxford; the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI); Stockholm School of Economics (SSE); SSE in Riga; the European Humanities University; Konrad Adenauer Foundation; the Swedish Institute and others while receiving a long term support from private and governmental donor institutions.

Partnership context and multi/bi donors

For decades already the School has been supported by donor institutions of Sweden, Norway, Finland, Germany, United Kingdom, USA, Council of Europe, Netherlands, France and others. However, with the continued aggression of the Russian Federation in Ukraine, for many governments, institutions, and even experts working in citizenship and human rights, support for civil society of the Russian Federation is becoming somewhat controversial.

At the same time, international organisations, EU and state bodies call for continuations of support for Russia civil society actors that share the values of democracy and human rights both in and out of the country. For instance, a European Parliament [resolution \(7/04/22\) on the increasing repression in Russia, including the case of Alexei Navalny](#) calls for “European External Action Service (EEAS) and the Member States to closely monitor the human rights situation in Russia, provide emergency assistance and increase support for the civil society, independent NGOs, human rights defenders and independent media which remain active in Russia, including sustainable and flexible financial assistance” and for Member states to provide support measures to those who need to flee the country to avoid prosecution.

School globally

The School also claims that as a representative of Global Civil Society it should be taken by other international organizations like the UN not only as a beneficiary but as a strategic partner, and recently the School has become among other prominent global civic institutions a part of the civic campaign “We The Peoples” in the call to the UN for inclusive global governance (<https://www.wethepeoples.org>).

Anti-war stand

The School continues bringing participants both from Russia and Ukraine (as well as Belarus, other CIS countries and Europe) and experts together in our call to stop the war, stop the disinformation and hatred, bring people together in solidarity and to promote universal values we’ve always stood for, as well as democracy, the rule of law, freedom, peace and our interconnectedness.

The School believes in civil society, and every seminar is aiming to foster the civic anti-war movement that as a part of joint global effort will contribute to peace.

Both the founders of the School, Lena Nemirovskaya and Yuri Senokosov, as well as every member of the team signed every anti-war open letter and continue volunteering for peace in numerous anti-war initiatives.