

New Program: “Ukraine in European Dialogue”

BY TIMOTHY SNYDER

As millions of Ukrainians take risks for the sake of a European future for their country, a historic opportunity presents itself to create a platform for dialogue between Ukrainian scholars, intellectuals and activists and their counterparts in Europe and North America.

For Ukraine, intellectual exchange with the West is crucial for the success of reform efforts and for building a modern, sovereign state governed by the rule of law. But Europe, too, has something to learn from Ukrainians, and not only lessons of civic courage, self-organization and mass volunteer movements. Ukraine is no longer a *terra incognita*; it is a source of insights into politics and civil society that might well be relevant to the European present and future. Understanding Ukraine and the nature of the current conflict with Russia is vital for the future of the European endeavour.

If the Maidan and democratic elections have brought Ukraine closer to Western institutions, now is the time to build the necessary foundations. If reforms fail, the need will be all the greater to create a long-term platform for meaningful exchange. The new project *Ukraine in European Dialogue* seeks to contribute to this exchange.

It will offer both a space for open debate, and practical help. Launched this autumn, the project is based at an institution with a unique record of building relationships that overcome barriers within Europe’s intellectual divides and with a long-standing tradition of practical and intellectual solidarity with societies in transition.

In its efforts to support Ukrainian civil society and scholarship the Institute has invited numerous fellows from Ukraine in recent decades. Important Ukrainian intellectuals, including Yaroslav Hrytsak, Jurko Prochasko, Mykola Riabchuk and Oksana Zabuzhko, have come as Visiting Fellows, as well as many young scholars, translators and journalists. Additionally, in 2010 the IWM launched a program for young Ukrainian academics in the field of history; in May 2014 the conference *Ukraine: Thinking Together*, held in Kyiv, brought together intellectuals and scholars from Ukraine with their counterparts from Western Europe and the US; and the Institute’s journal *Transit* has published numerous articles on and from Ukraine.

When the Institute was founded in 1982, its essential mission had to do with the deep divisions in Europe due to the Cold War. Now, from the still central and attractive site of Vienna, we consider Eastern Europe to encompass Ukraine, Russia, Belarus, and Turkey. The Institute is thus committed to an expansive understanding of Europe. In its thirty-year



House of Clothes, the main venue of the Kyiv Biennial



Conference “Ukraine—Thinking Together”, Kyiv, May 2014



The School of Abducted Europe: Panel “Who is afraid of Gayropa?”, October 9, 2015

history, it has served the purpose of connecting East European intellectual life with that of Western European and North American scholarly and political life. It has demonstrated the universality of the East European experience, drawn Western attention to Eastern Europe, and helped East Europeans to influence the terms of crucial academic and political debates around the world—a tradition that arises from people like Krzysztof Michalski, the founding Rector of the IWM, who believed that it was ideas that could overcome political divides; or Tony Judt, a great historian of Europe of his era and at the time head of the IWM’s *Rethinking Post-War Europe* research program, who understood that the West made no sense without ideas.

In particular, fellows from Ukraine at the IWM have profited from the presence of colleagues visiting from leading European and North American institutions. Ukrainian colleagues also contribute to a global conversation that places internal Ukrainian questions as well as Ukrainian-Russian or Ukrainian-European relations

in a larger global perspective. Aside and apart from the valuable research that they carry out in Vienna, for example, the Ukrainians currently visiting or on staff at the Institute have all made powerful contributions to the Western discussion of events on the Maidan and the war.

The purpose of the long-term program *Ukraine in European Dialogue* is to make these activities more sustainable. It will enable us to do more in the present, and to plan for the future. The intellectual premise is that Europe has much to learn from contact with Ukrainians scholars and intellectuals, just as these have much to learn from contact with Europe. Meaningful political contacts must proceed from intellectual and cultural understanding. We believe that an exchange of the kind envisaged is an essential support to the evolution of a sovereign, rule-of-law, rights-respecting Ukraine within a vibrant, open Europe.

The program is composed of two initiatives:

1st: A series of debates, lectures and conferences under the heading

“Ukraine in European Dialogue,” designed to enable communication between important Ukrainian thinkers and activists and European policymakers and thinkers of influence in the aftermath of the Maidan. The debates include events to be held in Ukraine as well. The program will also offer publications arising from these initiatives, via the Institute’s outlets or elsewhere.

The Institute currently runs a very successful program called *Russia in Global Dialogue*, which brings Russian scholars and intellectuals to Vienna. In the year to come we plan to organize Ukrainian-Russian discussions within this framework.

2nd: The creation of a new program of visiting annual scholarly fellowships.

■ A Junior Fellowship for Scholars from Ukraine in history and in the social sciences. The heart of the Institute are its junior fellowships. More than one thousand young people have been funded for stays at the Institute, many of whom have become prominent in public and intellectual life. These fellowships will be open to doctoral students and post-

docs who are Ukrainian citizens or resident in Ukraine. This allows us to continue our tradition of inviting promising young Ukrainian scholars to the Institute.

■ A Sheptytskyi Senior Fellowship for international scholars in the fields of public ethics, religion and politics. Its name is meant to remind us of the life and achievements of a European cosmopolitan with a broadly European background, a Polish family connection, a toleration that extended, during the Holocaust, to the rescue of more than one hundred Jews. Sheptytskyi’s name also signals strong support for free institutions of higher education in Ukraine today, with which the Institute has many connections already.

■ Solidarity Fellowships for notable scholars from Ukraine whose scholarly and intellectual work has been disrupted by war.

As a prelude to the new project the IWM contributes to the *School of Kyiv Biennial* taking place in the Ukrainian capital from September 8 to November 1, 2015. The Biennial includes an extensive intellectual program organized into “Schools”, with the “School of Abducted Europe” being the focus of the Institute’s contributions. More than 30 scholars, intellectuals and writers give lectures or seminars, engage in public conversations or participate in panel debates. Moreover, the IWM serves as one of the international “Departments” of the Biennial and organizes a number of Ukraine-related events in Vienna. <

More information here:
www.iwm.at/kyivbiennial



The project *Ukraine in European Dialogue* is part of the IWM research focus *United Europe—Divided History* headed by Timothy Snyder. The project’s research director is Tatiana Zhurzhenko. More information about the project:
www.iwm.at/research/projects/ued