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## **INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE: "MEDIA, INTERNET, DEMOCRACY"**

**Eva Pálešová\***

The International Scientific Conference was a three days expert round table which took place on April 23, 2012 at the New Bulgarian University in Sofia, on April 25, 2012 at the Faculty of Political Sciences and International Relations of the Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica and on April 27, 2012 at the Pierre Mendès University in Grenoble. The main purpose of the event was to create the space for discussion and exchange of experience and analyses between specialists and citizens from different countries of the European Union. The conference presented a good opportunity for meeting and establishing the co-operation as well as friendly discussions between experts on the main themes of conference, as well as international relations in general.

The Faculty of Political Sciences and International Relations of the Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica by participation in this Conference continues in successful co-operation with the French universities. The partnership with the French universities is very dynamic in the area of the science and research. Thanks to co-operation with the professor **Gilles Rouet**, originally from the University of Reims, at present from the **Paris Descartes University**, the Faculty of Political Sciences and International Relations of the Matej Bel University organised and co-organised several international scientific conferences in the period of 2007 – 2011.<sup>1</sup>

The aim of the organisers was to unify the attitudes of academic community towards specific topics of transformation of public spaces by new media and

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<sup>1</sup> European Union Enlargement and the European Neighbourhood Policy in Banská Bystrica, December 2007; Identity, Citizenship and Democracy 20 Years after The Fall of the Berlin Wall in Charleroi, October 2009; The Bologna Process and the European Neighbourhood Policy in Batumi, Georgia, June 2010; Citizenship and Nationality in Europe in Banská Bystrica and Sofia, April 2011 and more.

new applications. The dynamics of the international security environment has changed the perception of the world security during the last ten years. International security has become more complicated, less predictable, with many new actors. The citizens develop social applications in networks and play an inevitable role in a participative way of information. This interactivity caused bursting of traditional edition of knowledge and renewed the forms of publication without valuation or validation. For this purpose it is essential to encourage an intensive debate on specific issues the new society should deal with. It is in its own interest to approach the global debate with well considered ideas and, consequently, to shape the strategic ambit also for its own benefit.

More than 70 speakers took part in the conference which made it a busy international conference. The formal part of the conference went on until evening and it was followed by an informal evening reception, where the participants had the opportunity to continue the discussion on topics having been opened at the conference, and to build links for future co-operation. It is also necessary to say that Grenoble, venue of the third panel of the Conference took place, hosted also significant Dutch-American sociologist, guest of honour, **Saskia Sassen**, noted for her analyses of globalisation and international human migration. **Mrs. Sassen** is considered to be one of the top 100 intellectuals in the world. Due to her participation at the Conference she was awarded the honour citizenship of Grenoble. Contributions presented at this conference, as well as those which could not be officially presented due to the lack of time, will be published in the Proceedings of Conference with the eponymous title – Media, Internet, and Democracy by the French publisher l' Harmattan.

Conference was divided into three parts – panels, which took place at 23<sup>rd</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> April, 2012 in Sofia, Banská Bystrica and Grenoble. The topics of the first panel were focused on questions related to the applications and paradoxes of digital democracy and e-participation. The experts agreed that the digital democracy is one of key issues which scientific research should address. The participants stated that twenty years after the velvet revolutions democracy seems to be in crisis. According to them there are three threats of democracy. The first threat is rather irresponsible and corrupt elite, the second one is lack of interest of the citizens in relation to politics, and the last one is a globalisation which imposes a domination of the economic in politics. The “Arab spring” put forward the question of relations between the Internet and citizens’ participation. Taking this into consideration, the experts discussed the revitalisation of democracy. Studies dealing with young people, who are at least active in

politics, but the most active in the virtual world, were presented. The experience also demonstrated that there were differences in the form and the intensity of comparisons in the “Arab world” and twenty years separate democratic revolution and digital revolution in the post-communist world.

The second- panel was focused on issues related to social networks and international relations in the context of dynamics of international security environment. The participants agreed that the new U.S. administration has brought some kind of changes into the foreign and security policy by developing a new form of diplomacy. In case of comparison and evaluation of the “soft power”, scientists focused not only on the respective content but also on the way in which this policy had been implemented. The experts agreed that upon criterion of American priorities, the question of cultural diplomacy remains one of the fundamental pillars of foreign policy – not only because of American perception of smart power, but also because of transformation of general applications of social media. The participants unanimously agreed that “smart power” is limited with digital revolution and the new social media evolution in its ability to succeed in conditions out of the state’s area, but also the ability of major vectors to learn about culture as a way of life.

When talking about the impact of the Media, the European academic community is focused on the questions dealing with innovation in training and pedagogic tasks of new practices. The experts during the third panel of this Conference agreed that the new devices of production of knowledge should change the processes of training due to the immediate and superabundant availability of contents and lack of organisation. According to the forum members the exact content of internet cannot be precisely defined due to its constriction of private areas. At the same time it is necessary to reinforce the perception of the Internet as a very real and practical form of political, worldwide organisation. The experts expressed the idea that it is not only a media which had been radically transformed in the public space, but it has its implication in manners of cultural and media practices as well.