

CEPSA

Central European Political Science Association
30 CONFERENCES. 30+ YEARS. ONE COMMUNITY.

A Story of Academic Cooperation Across Borders

ALMANAC

Petr Just and Simona Kukovič

Fakulteta za uporabne družbene študije v Novi Gorici/
School of Advanced Social Studies in Nova Gorica

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Petr Just and Simona Kukovič

September 2026

COLOPHON

Central European Political Science Association: 30 Conferences. 30+ Years.

One Community. A Story of Academic Cooperation Across Borders

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AND SOCIETAL CHANGE
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PREFACE

The early 1990s were a remarkable time for Central and Eastern Europe. Old political orders were disappearing, democratic institutions were taking shape, borders were becoming bridges rather than barriers, and new opportunities for cooperation emerged across a region that had long been divided.

Amid these profound political and societal transformations, a small group of political scientists recognized that this historic moment also called for a new academic community. They believed that political scientists from Central and Eastern Europe should not only observe and analyse these extraordinary changes, but also create a space where ideas, experiences, and perspectives could be shared across borders. Looking back today, it is unlikely that they could have imagined what this initiative would become.

More than thirty years later, CEPSA stands as far more than an association organizing annual conferences. It has become a community that has connected generations of political scientists, institutions, countries, and research traditions. It has witnessed the transformation of our region, accompanied the development of political science in Central and Eastern Europe, and created opportunities for countless academic collaborations.

Yet perhaps its greatest achievement cannot be measured by conferences, publications, or institutional partnerships alone. Throughout these three decades, CEPSA has also become a place where professional respect has grown into genuine friendship. Many of us return each year not only because of the academic programme, but because we know we will meet colleagues who have become lifelong friends. These personal bonds, crossing borders, cultures, and generations, are among the most valuable legacies left by those who founded this association.

For more than three decades, CEPSA has brought political scientists together across countries, institutions, and generations. As Central and Eastern Europe continues to change, so do the questions we ask and the challenges we seek to understand. Yet the purpose of CEPSA remains the same: to connect scholars, encourage academic exchange, and strengthen political science across the region.

Across borders.

Across generations.

One political science community.

We belong to a generation that experienced the birth of CEPSA from a distance. While its founders were laying the foundations of this community, many of us -including the two authors of this booklet -were still pupils in primary or secondary school. Today, we have the privilege of contributing to the same association, building upon the work, vision, generosity, and countless voluntary hours invested by those who came before us.

This small publication is our tribute to that legacy. It is offered with sincere gratitude to the founders of CEPSA, to every President, Vice-President, Secretary General, Executive Committee member, conference organizer, reviewer, volunteer, and colleague who has devoted time and energy to ensuring that CEPSA not only survived, but continuously evolved into a stronger, more professional, and internationally respected academic association.

This Almanac could not have been created without the generosity of colleagues who shared their memories, photographs, documents, and archival materials with us. We are sincerely grateful for every contribution that helped us piece together CEPSA's story and preserve it for future generations.

Our special thanks go to (listed alphabetically): Davor Boban, Ladislav Cabada, Jakub Charvát, Miro Haček, Maciej Hartlinski, Boglárka Koller, Ewa Kołodziejska, Karin Liebhart, Silvia Miháliková, Vladimír Naxera, Eszter Neumann, Ana Petak, Jaroslav Ušiak, and Jerzy Wiatr.*

The story of CEPSA is, above all, a story about people. We sincerely hope that future generations of political scientists will continue to recognize the value of this community, nurture its spirit of cooperation and friendship, and carry its legacy forward.

Happy 30th CEPSA Conference and Vivat the Central European political science community.

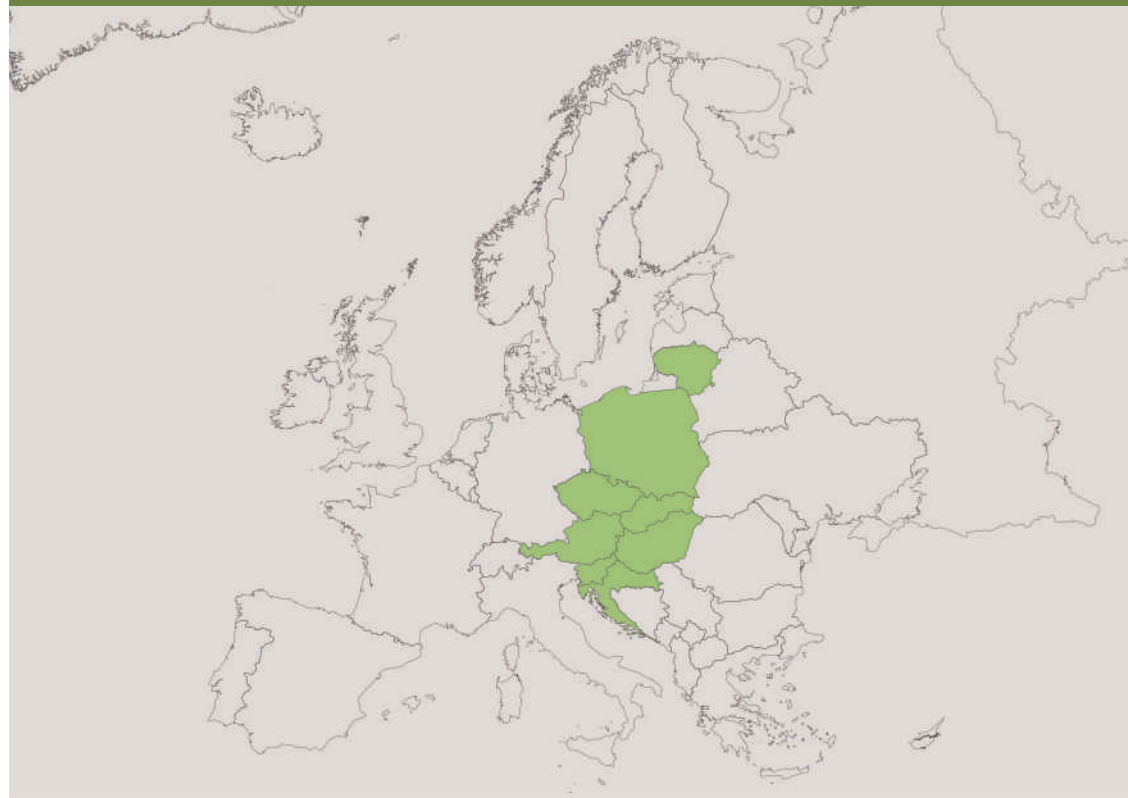
Simona and Petr

* All photographs and other materials included in this almanac are drawn from the personal archives of the almanac's authors and the contributors listed above.

SECTION 02

CEPSA AT A GLANCE

ONE COMMUNITY ACROSS BORDERS



8

countries

8

national political science associations

30

conferences

30+

years of continuous regional academic cooperation

7

affiliated academic journals

partnerships with IPSA and APSA

a growing community of established
and early-career political scientists

SECTION 03

30 CEPSA CONFERENCES (1996-2026)

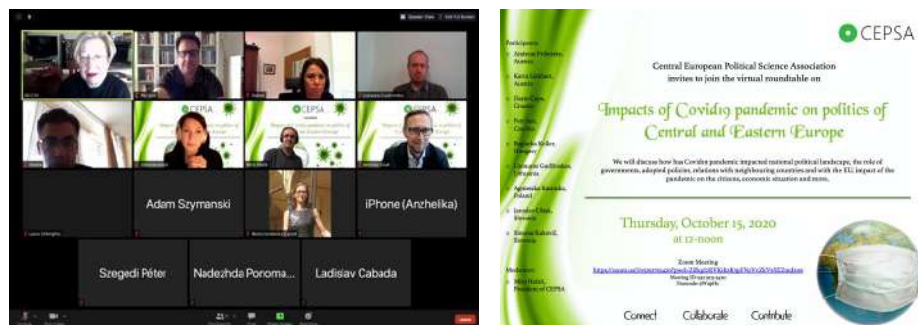
Although we are celebrating the 30th conference of the Central European Political Science Association (CEPSA) in 2026, the pre-history of what is today CEPSA began a few years before 1996. In September 1994, political scientists from three countries - Austria, Hungary and Slovenia - met in Vienna, Austria, for the first ever Central European regional conference. And the event obviously was a success, because the second edition took place the following year (October 1995), this time in Budapest, Hungary.

And when it was Slovenia's turn to host the Central European regional conference - the third country of the original trio to do so - the local organizers decided to invite colleagues from Croatia, the Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovakia as well. A total of seven countries from the Central European region were thus represented at the conference in Bled, Slovenia, in November 1996, and that's why this event is considered to be the first Central European political science conference as we understand the term today. Of today's member states, only Lithuania was not represented at the time; it joined five years later.

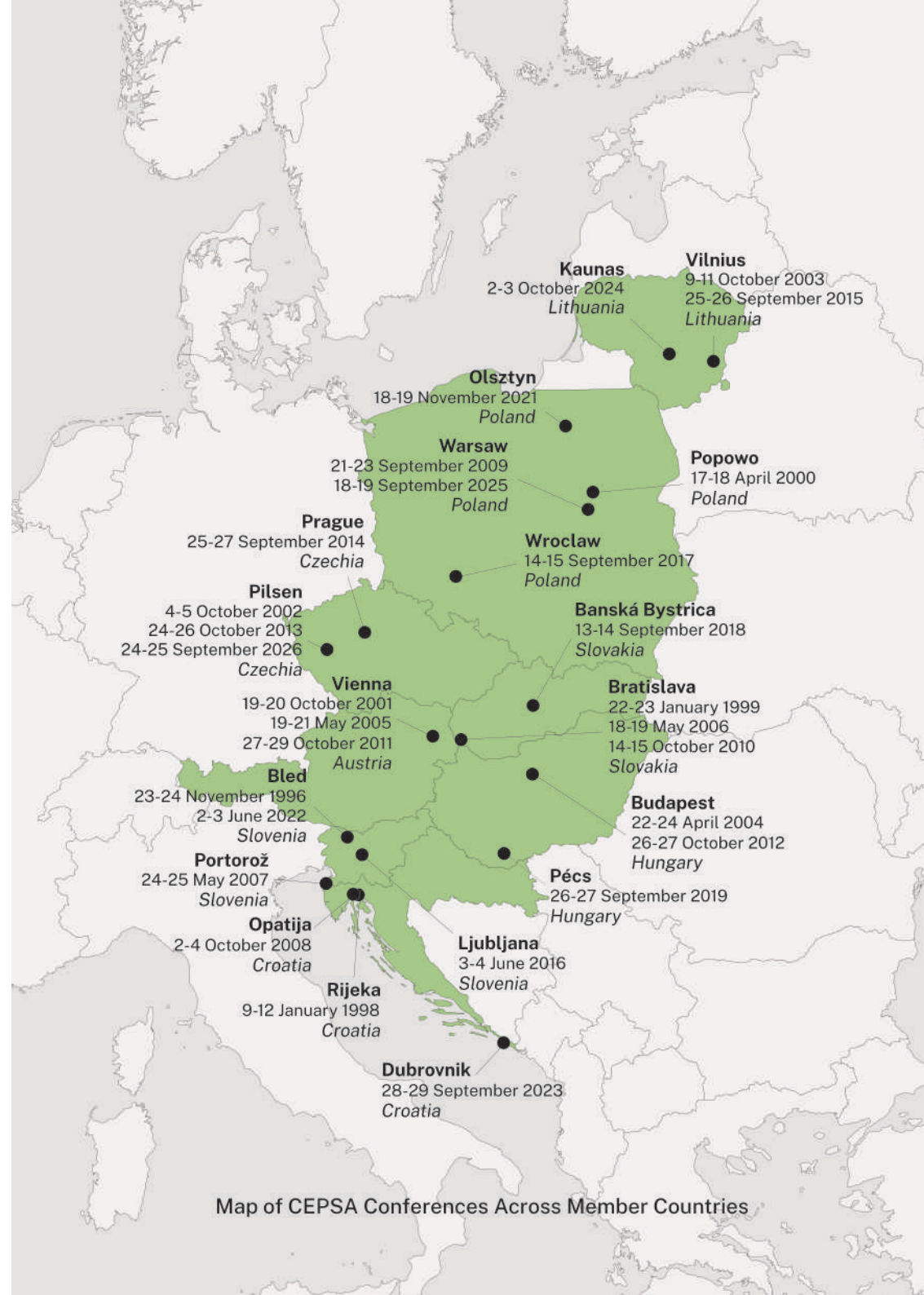
Cooperation of national political science associations in the Central European region lacked any institutional framework at that time. However, this fact did not prevent them from organizing joint ventures, as evidenced by a list of conferences held after 1996. Although no conference was held immediately in 1997, in the following years political scientists from seven Central European countries gathered in Rijeka, Croatia (January 1998), Bratislava, Slovakia (January 1999), and Popowo, Poland (April 2000).

And it was in Popowo in 2000 that the decision to establish an umbrella organization bringing together the national political science associations of seven partner countries was made. And so CEPSPA was founded, its by-laws adopted and official leadership elected. In its first term as an organization (2000–2003) CEPSPA was steered by President Jerzy Wiatr (Poland), Vice-President Joseph Bayer (Hungary) and Secretary General Drago Zajc (Slovenia). In the following year (2001), Lithuania joined the founding group, bringing CEPSPA to eight countries and eight national political science associations.

The rhythm of annual conferences continued and was not broken even during Covid-19 pandemic. Just the size and the form of the event was naturally a bit different in 2020. It was organized as an online roundtable with the key theme “Impacts of Covid-19 pandemic on politics in Central and Eastern Europe.”



A moment to remember: The first virtual CEPSPA Conference, held online via Zoom, October 2020.



Map of CEPSPA Conferences Across Member Countries

Of 30 conferences held in 1996–2026, the most took place in Poland – together five times. Three countries, Czechia, Slovakia and Slovenia, hosted CEPSA four times each, and the remaining four countries, Austria, Croatia, Hungary and Lithuania, welcomed political scientists from Central Europe three times each.

While all conferences organized in Austria were held in one and the same city, Vienna, each conference organized in Croatia was set in a completely different place (Rijeka, Opatija, Dubrovnik).

Besides Vienna, six other cities hosted CEPSA conferences multiple times (Bratislava and Pilsen three times each, Bled, Budapest, Vilnius and Warsaw twice each).

Vienna also ranks as the biggest city (by population) where CEPSA conference has ever been held (CEPSA 2001, 2005 and 2011). The smallest place to ever host a CEPSA conference was the village Popowo in Poland (CEPSA 2000).

Slightly less than half of the conferences (14) took place in countries' capital cities, which means that CEPSA gave participants the opportunity to get to know places outside of political and administrative centres. Croatia is the only CEPSA country that hasn't placed any of its conferences in the capital city.

Over its 30 editions, CEPSA travelled to 19 different locations across Central Europe, with only one conference – in 2020 – taking place entirely online.

CEPSA has a clear preference for autumn: exactly 70% of all conferences (21 out of 30) took place between September and November, with October being the most popular month (ten conferences), closely followed by September (nine).

Looking back at three decades of CEPSA conferences also means looking back at three decades of profound political and societal transformation in Central and Eastern Europe. As the region itself has changed, so too have the questions occupying its political scientists. Over the years, CEPSA conferences have reflected the major political developments, debates and challenges of their time, providing a unique academic lens through which to observe both the transformation of the region and the evolution of political science within it.

CEPSA has always been very inclusive, both in terms of participation as well as thematic arrangements. Despite that, every issue had its main theme which framed most of the conference presentations. Conferences were always hosted by local institutions, mainly universities and colleges. The variety of these institutions when it comes to their types (both public and private ones) and sizes (both bigger, medium and smaller ones) shows that CEPSA has genuinely always wanted to unite political scientists from the region, regardless of what sort and/or size of institution they come from.

Furthermore, CEPSA has always welcomed participants regardless of their academic status or seniority. Alongside established academics, CEPSA has consistently provided opportunities for doctoral students and early-career scholars. **Supporting the next generation of political scientists has been one of CEPSA's key missions and guiding principles from the very beginning.** Some conferences included dedicated PhD sessions or panels, while doctoral students have always been equally welcome to participate in general sessions and panels. Since 2025, CEPSA has also awarded a prize for the **Outstanding Young Scholar Paper**. The first recipients were Petra Bezděková (Palacký University Olomouc, Czechia) and Dorka Takácsy (Corvinus University of Budapest, Hungary).

The conferences were often held under auspices of local, regional and national political authorities, but still succeeded to maintain its political neutrality. The patrons of the conferences included (among others) Milan Štěch, President of the Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic (CEPSA 2014), Adam Jezierski, Marshal of the Lower Silesia Voivodeship, Poland (CEPSA 2017), Ján Nosko, Mayor of

Banská Bystrica, Slovakia (CEPSA 2018), or Gustaw Marek Brzezina, Marshal of the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship, Poland (CEPSA 2021). The keynote address during the 2008 conference in Opatija was delivered by then-President of Croatia Stjepan Mesić (in office 2000–2010), while former President of Poland Aleksandr Kwasniewski (in office 1995–2005) delivered the keynote address during the 2025 conference in Warsaw.



A moment to remember: First Outstanding Young Scholar Paper Award ceremony, Warsaw, Poland, September 2025. From left: Dorka Takácsy, Petra Bezděková, Boglárka Koller, Katarzyna Kołodziejczyk, Simona Kukovič, and Agnieszka Kasińska-Metryka.



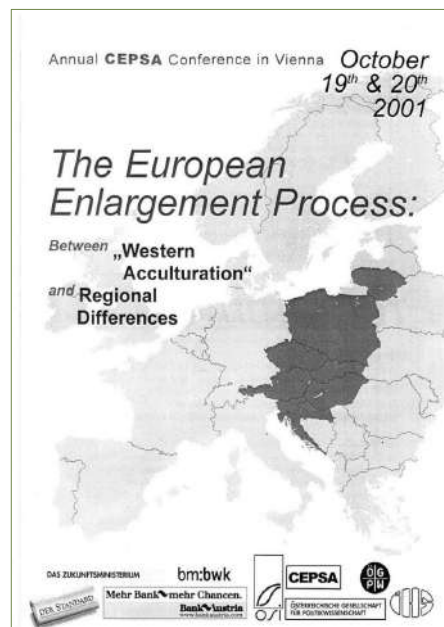
A moment to remember: Keynote address by then-President of Croatia Stjepan Mesić at the CEPSA Conference, Opatija, Croatia, October 2008.



A moment to remember: Keynote address and discussion with former Polish President Aleksander Kwaśniewski at the CEPSA Conference, Warsaw, Poland, September 2025.



From the CEPSA archives: Programme of the CEPSA Conference, Popowo, Poland, April 2000.



From the CEPSA archives: Programme of the CEPSA Conference, Vienna, Austria, October 2001.



A moment to remember: CEPSA Conference in Opatija, Croatia, October 2008.



From the CEPSA archives: Programme of the CEPSA Conference, Opatija, Croatia, October 2008.

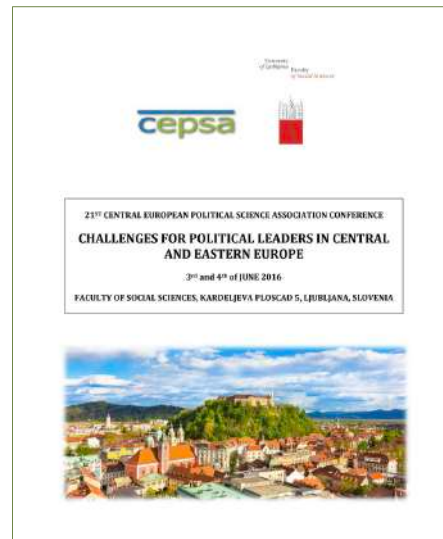




A moment to remember: CEPSA Conference in Prague, Czechia, September 2014.



From the CEPSA archives: Programme of the CEPSA Conference, Prague, Czechia, September 2014.



From the CEPSA archives: Programme of the CEPSA Conference, Ljubljana, Slovenia, June 2016.



A moment to remember: CEPSA Conference in Ljubljana, Slovenia, June 2016.



22ND ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF CENTRAL EUROPEAN POLITICAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION: INTEGRATION VS DISINTEGRATION? CEECS TOWARDS EUROPEAN UNION AND ITS CHALLENGES, 14 – 15 SEPTEMBER 2017, UNIVERSITY OF WROCLAW, POLAND	
Address: Building 2/3 Kampus WNS UWr, Koszarowa 3, 51-149 Wrocław	
Thursday, 14th of September	
8:30-9:30	Registration
9:30-9:50	Welcoming remarks: Marshall of the Lower Silesia Voivodship, HM Adam Jezierski, Rector of the University of Wrocław University
9:50-11:45	Keynote speakers: prof. Alexander Szerbiak, prof. Andrzej Jablonski
11:45-12:00	Coffee break
12:00-13:30	1st Panels sessions
1 Central Europe as a Region: Different Definitions, Different Approaches	
Chairs: Ladislav Cabada (Metropolitan University Prague) and Boglárka Koller (National University of Public Service, Budapest)	
Central, East-Central or other "Eastern" Europe?: Visegrád Group and alternative projects of Central European regional cooperation; Ladislav Cabada (Metropolitan University Prague)	
Recent development in Central European cooperation: the functionalist approach, Boglárka Koller (National University of Public Service, Budapest)	
Central Europe: Does it share any security interests? Šárka Waisová (University of West Bohemia in Pilsen)	
Central Europe in the Perspective of Common Security Challenges: Integration or Disintegration, Jaroslav Ušiak (Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica)	
A New East-west Divide in the Enlarged European Union? The Visegrad Four States in Search of the Historical Self in National Discourses on European Integration, Christopher Walsch (Corvinus University, Budapest)	
2 The CEE Political Parties in a Changing Political Environment I	
Chairs: Beata Kosowska-Gąstol (Jagiellonian University, Kraków) and Dominika Mikucka-Wójtowicz (University of Warsaw)	
The main directions of political parties' and party systems' changes and the factors that influence them, Beata Kosowska-Gąstol (Jagiellonian University, Kraków)	
Party Institutionalization in new democracies: The threat of decision-making power personalization, Ivan Vuković (University of Montenegro)	
Slovenian Political Parties in Changing Environments, Alenka Krašovec (University of Ljubljana)	
New parties in Croatia: electoral competition without program, Davor Boban (University of Zagreb)	
3 Party Leaders and Populist Parties in Central and Eastern Europe. Comparative Perspective	
Chair: Maciej Bartłomiej (University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn)	
Shaping populist leadership, post-communist challenges, Sergiu Gherghina (University of Glasgow) and Sorina Cristina Soare (University of Florence)	

From the CEPASA archives: Programme of the CEPASA Conference, Wrocław, Poland, September 2017.



A moment to remember: CEPASA Conference in Wrocław, Poland, September 2017.



A moment to remember: CEPASA Conference in Wrocław, Poland, September 2017.





A moment to remember: CEPSA Conference in Banská Bystrica, Slovakia, September 2018.



23rd Annual Conference of Central European Political Science Association

One hundred years after: 1918-2018

Thursday 13 – Friday 14 September 2018, Banská Bystrica, Slovak Republic

*Organized by
the Central European Political Science Association
in cooperation with
the Faculty of Political Sciences and International Relations,
Matej Bel University*

and financial support from the city of Banská Bystrica and Mayor Mr. Ján Nosko

Venue
Faculty of Political Sciences and International Relations
Kuzmányho 1, 974 01 Banská Bystrica, Slovak Republic

From the CEPSA archives: Programme of the CEPSA Conference, Banská Bystrica, Slovakia, September 2018.



A moment to remember: CEPSA Conference in Pécs, Hungary, September 2019.



From the CEPSA archives: Programme of the CEPSA Conference, Pécs, Hungary, September 2019.



From the CEPSA archives: Programme of the CEPSA Conference, Olsztyn, Poland, November 2021.



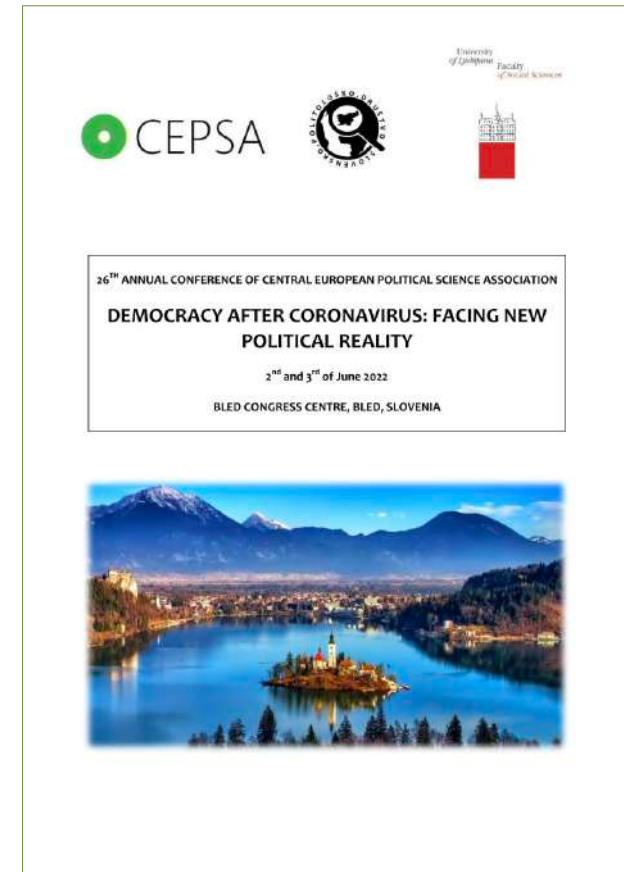
A moment to remember: CEPSA Conference in Olsztyn, Poland, November 2021.



A moment to remember: CEPSA Conference in Bled, Slovenia, June 2022.



A moment to remember: CEPSA Conference in Bled, Slovenia, June 2022.



From the CEPSA archives: Programme of the CEPSA Conference, Bled, Slovenia, June 2022.



A moment to remember: CEPSA Conference in Dubrovnik, Croatia, September 2023.







WAR AND DEMOCRACY: CENTRAL EUROPEAN DEMOCRACIES UNDER PRESSURE

*Dormitory
Student Center of University of Dubrovnik
Marka Marojice 2b, 20000 Dubrovnik*

*The Department of Economy and Business Economy,
University of Dubrovnik
Lapadska obala 7, 20000 Dubrovnik*

PROGRAM SCHEDULE

Organizational Committee:

Goran Čular, Faculty of Political Science, University of Zagreb, president of the CPSPA

Miro Haček, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana, president of the CEPSA

Ana Matan, Faculty of Political Science, University of Zagreb, vice-president of the CPSPA

Višeslav Raos, Faculty of Political Science, University of Zagreb, vice-president of the CPSPA

Anka Kekez-Koštro, Faculty of Political Science, University of Zagreb

Pero Maldini, University of Dubrovnik

Ivan Miković, the CPSPA Secretary

2

Financially supported by the Faculty of Political Science University of Zagreb, Ministry of Science and Education and the Student Center of Dubrovnik






From the CEPSA archives: Programme of the CEPSA Conference, Dubrovnik, Croatia, September 2023.



A moment to remember: CEPSA Conference in Kaunas, Lithuania, October 2024.



From the CEPSA archives: Programme of the CEPSA Conference, Kaunas, Lithuania, October 2024.



From the CEPSA archives: Programme of the CEPSA Conference, Warsaw, Poland, September 2025.



A moment to remember: CEPSA Conference in Warsaw, Poland, September 2025.

CEPSA MILESTONES

1994

Vienna: first regional meeting

1996

Bled: first conference in today's CEPSA format

2000

Popowo: CEPSA formally established

2001

Lithuania joins

2015

Memorandum of Understanding with American Political Science Association (APSA)

2016

CEPSA goes social: its official Facebook page is launched

2018

CEPSA establishes its official website and strengthens its online presence

2020

CEPSA goes online during Covid-19

2021

return to in-person conferences

2024

First all-female leadership of CEPSA

2025

Memorandum of Understanding with International Political Science Association (IPSA)

2025

First Outstanding Young Scholar Paper Award ceremony

2026

30th CEPSA Conference

CEPSA

GOES INTERNATIONAL

COOPERATION WITH APSA AND IPSA

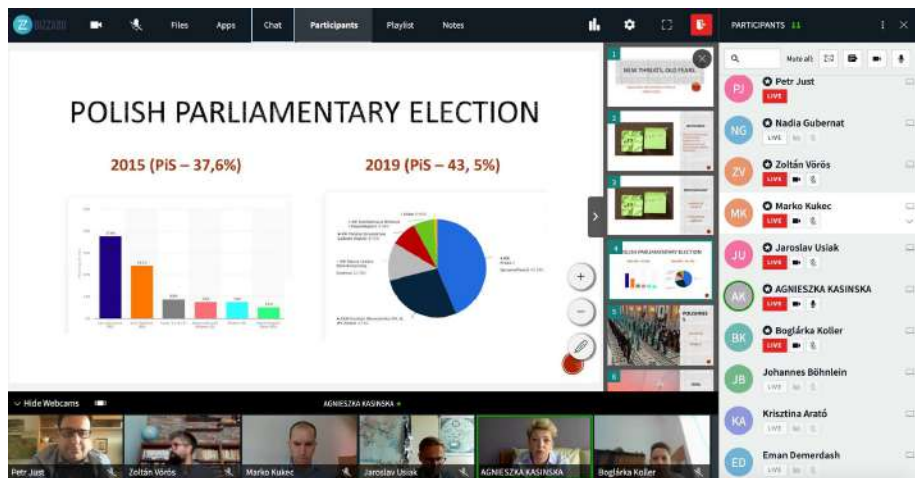
In 2015, CEPSA signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the **American Political Science Association (APSA)**, after regularly organizing panels, using the slot that the Slovenian Political Science Association agreed upon in 2007. The MoU gives CEPSA the status of “partner organization” and the right to receive one panel allocation per each APSA annual conference (with the same right for the APSA regarding each annual CEPSA conference). This way CEPSA has continuously organized its panels at the APSA annual conferences for the last two decades, with the sole exception of 2020, when the APSA conference was organized online because of the Covid-19 pandemic. The most recent panels organized by CEPSA took place in Boston (2018), Washington, D.C. (2019), Seattle (2021), Montreal (2022), Los Angeles (2023), Philadelphia (2024), Vancouver (2025), and Boston (2026). Then-Executive Director of APSA Steven Rathgeb Smith served twice as the keynote speaker at CEPSA conferences (2016 and 2022).



A moment to remember: CEPSA at the APSA Annual Meeting, Philadelphia, USA, September 2024. From left: Christian Welzel, Agnieszka Turska-Kawa, Petr Just, Boglárka Koller, Simona Kukovič, and Miro Haček.



A moment to remember: Keynote address by then-APSA Executive Director Steven Rathgeb Smith at the CEPSA Conference, Ljubljana, Slovenia, June 2016 and Bled, Slovenia, June 2022.



A moment to remember: CEPSA panel at the 2021 IPSA Virtual World Congress.

On the occasion of the 28th World Congress of Political Science held in Seoul, South Korea, in July 2025, CEPSA signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the **International Political Science Association (IPSA)**, after organizing one or two panels at the world congresses for the past two decades, mostly under the kind sponsorship of Research Committee 47 (Local-Global Relations). The signed MoU gives CEPSA the benefit to receive one panel allocation per each IPSA world congress, but the cooperation with RC47 will continue going forward. The memorandum effectively confirmed the practice that had already been in place. CEPSA organized panels at the IPSA World Congresses of Political Science in Brisbane (2018), Buenos Aires (2023), and Seoul (2025), as well as at the virtual congress held during Covid-19 times in 2021.



A moment to remember: Signing of the CEPSA-IPSA Memorandum of Understanding, Seoul, South Korea, July 2025. From left: Pablo Oñate (then-President of IPSA) and Simona Kukovič (CEPSA Secretary General).



A moment to remember: The CEPSA-IPSA Memorandum of Understanding, Seoul, South Korea, July 2025. CEPSA and IPSA representatives, from left: Petr Just, Boglárka Koller, Miro Haček, Pablo Oñate, Simona Kukovič, Kim Fontaine-Skronski, Mathieu St-Laurent, and Agnieszka Kasińska-Metryka.



A moment to remember: CEPSA at the IPSA World Congress in Buenos Aires, Argentina, July 2023. From left: Petr Just, Agnieszka Kasińska-Metryka, and Liutauras Gudžinskas.



A moment to remember: CEPSA panel at the IPSA World Congress in Buenos Aires, Argentina, July 2023.

SECTION 05

CEPSA

LEADERSHIP OVER THE DECADES

In 2000 and then at every third conference, the new leadership was elected by CEPSA Council. All members of CEPSA leadership by terms of office are listed in the following table:

TERM 2000-2003

President: Jerzy Wiatr (Poland)
Vice-President: Joseph Bayer (Hungary)
Secretary General: Drago Zajc (Slovenia)

TERM 2003-2006

President: Atilla Agh (Hungary)
Vice-President: Andreas Pribersky (Austria)
Secretary General: Katarzyna Gilarek (Poland)

TERM 2006-2009

President: Silvia Miháliková (Slovakia)
Vice-President: Drago Zajc (Slovenia)
Secretary General: Karin Liebhart (Austria)

TERM 2009-2012

President: Karin Liebhart (Austria)
Vice-President: Krzysztof Pałeczki (Poland)
Secretary General: Tatiana Tökölyová (Slovakia)

TERM 2012-2015

President: Ladislav Cabada (Czechia)
Vice-President: Miro Haček (Slovenia)
Secretary General: Ana Matan (Croatia)

TERM 2015-2018

President: Ladislav Cabada (Czechia)
Vice-President: Miro Haček (Slovenia)
Secretary General: Liutauras Gudžinskas (Lithuania)

TERM 2018-2021

President: Miro Haček (Slovenia)
Vice-President: Boglárka Koller (Hungary)
Secretary General: Petr Just (Czechia)

TERM 2021-2024

President: Miro Haček (Slovenia)
Vice-President: Boglárka Koller (Hungary)
Secretary General: Petr Just (Czechia)

TERM 2024-2027

President: Boglárka Koller (Hungary)
Vice-President: Agnieszka Kasińska-Metryka (Poland)
Secretary General: Simona Kukovič (Slovenia)



A moment to remember: CEPSA Council, Banská Bystrica, Slovakia, September 2018.



A moment to remember: CEPSA Council, Olsztyn, Poland, November 2021.



A moment to remember: CEPSA Executive Committee Meeting, Bled, Slovenia, June 2022. From left: Simona Kukovič, Agnieszka Kasińska-Metryka, Jaroslav Ušiak, Petr Just, Boglárka Koller, Miro Haček, Jerzy J. Wiatr, Karin Liebhart, Ingrida Unikaitė-Jakuntavičienė, Dario Čepo.

Besides top three officers who represent CEPSA, there are two other governing bodies. The first one is the **Executive Committee**, composed of the leading trio plus one representative per each national organization and past Presidents. This body meets usually once a year, on the occasion of the annual conferences. A few times in the past, extraordinary meetings were held as well in-between the conferences. The second body is the **Council**, whose composition differs from the Executive Committee by having two representatives per each national organization. Council meets usually once every three years and its main task is to elect the **President**, the **Vice-President** and the **Secretary General**.



A moment to remember: The election of the first all-female leadership in CEPSA's history, Kaunas, Lithuania, October 2024. From left: Simona Kukovič (Secretary General), Boglárka Koller (President), and Agnieszka Kasińska-Metryka (Vice-President).

So far 18 people served in the top 3 positions of CEPSPA Presidium. Some of them held multiple positions. Two Presidents served previously as Vice-Presidents (Miro Haček, Boglárka Koller), one President served previously as Secretary General (Karin Liebhart) and one Vice-President served previously as Secretary General (Drago Zajc).

Two Presidents served two terms (Ladislav Cabada, Miro Haček), two Vice-Presidents served two terms (Miro Haček, Boglárka Koller), one Secretary General served two terms (Petr Just).

The oldest elected President was Jerzy Wiatr (was 69 at the time of his election), the youngest elected President was Ladislav Cabada (was 39 at the time of his election).

Hungary has sent two Presidents (Attila Ágh, Boglárka Koller) and two Vice-Presidents (Joseph Bayer, Boglárka Koller). Poland has had two Vice-Presidents (Krzysztof Palecki, Agnieszka Kasińska-Metryka) and Slovenia has had two Secretaries General (Drago Zajc, Simona Kukovič).

The leadership elected in 2024 and serving in the year of the 30th anniversary of CEPSPA conferences is the first and only all-female.

SECTION 06

PAST PRESIDENT'S MEMOIRS AND REFLECTIONS

Jerzy Wiatr, CEPSPA President 2000-2003



The Central European Political Science Association has been formally established at the conference in Popowo (Poland) attended by political scientists from Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. It was one of the series of such conferences, which began in early 1990s and for a period had no lasting structure. At the 1999 conference in Bratislava the representatives of the Polish Association (Krzysztof Palecki and myself) suggested the formation of a lasting international structure. Both of us were vice-presidents of the International Political Science Association (respectively in the terms of 1979-1982 and 1997-2000) and this experience largely influenced our thinking about the future of political science communities in our region. It was agreed in

Bratislava that the new regional organization would be established at the next conference, pending the approval of all national associations involved. Drago Zajc and I wrote the draft of the by-laws of the new organization.

The formal decision was made at the next year's conference in Poland. The conference elected the first Executive Committee. It was the only time when there were two candidates for the post of president: Jozsef Bayer from Hungary and me. After being elected (by huge majority) I nominated Professor Bayer for the post of vice-president and Professor Zajc for the post of general secretary. Both were elected unanimously.

“Our experience largely influenced our thinking about the future of political science communities in our region. It was agreed in Bratislava that the new regional organization would be established at the next conference.”

Jerzy Wiatr, CEPSA President 2000–2003

During my term as CEPSA President we had annual conferences in Vienna (2001), Pilsen (2002) and Vilnius (2003). Prior to the Vilnius conference the Lithuanian Political Science Association applied for membership in CEPSA and was admitted unanimously. It was the only case of CEPSA expansion. In the following years CEPSA has been able to attract numerous political scientists from other countries to attend its conferences but no new association asked for membership.

One of the most important events of my presidency was the special (informal) session organized by CEPSA at the XVIII IPSA Congress in Quebec. It was well attended (37 participants) and marked the presence of our regional organization in the international community of political scientists.

Attila Ágh, CEPSA President 2003–2006



Attila Ágh served as the second President of CEPSA from 2003 to 2006, succeeding the Association's first President, Jerzy Wiatr. During his mandate, he worked alongside Vice-President Andreas Pribersky (Austria) and Secretary General Katarzyna Gilarek (Poland).

During this period, CEPSA continued its tradition of annual regional conferences, bringing together political scientists from across Central Europe. The conferences were held in Budapest (2004), Vienna (2005), and Bratislava (2006), further consolidating the regular academic exchange and cooperation that had been at the heart of CEPSA since its establishment.

-Editorial note based on CEPSA archival records.-

Silvia Miháliková, CEPSA President 2006–2009



With great gratitude and pride, I remember my time serving as president of the Central European Political Science Association. This period was not only a professional challenge for me but above all an opportunity to collaborate with exceptional colleagues from across the region who share a commitment to advancing political science research and academic cooperation.

“I especially value the atmosphere of mutual respect, open dialogue, and support.” Silvia Miháliková, CEPSA President 2006–2009

I especially value the atmosphere of mutual respect, open dialogue, and support that made it possible to carry out significant initiatives and strengthen our association's position internationally. These experiences remain a lasting source of inspiration and personal enrichment for me.

I sincerely remember and appreciate everyone who was part of this shared journey.

Karin Liebhart, CEPSA President 2009–2012



During my term in office, CEPSA conferences were held in three neighbouring countries: Slovakia (October 2010), Austria (October 2011), and Hungary (October 2012). The CEPSA conference in Bratislava was titled “From Crisis to Recovery? Domestic and International Responses in a United Europe” and was organized by the Slovak Political Science Association in collaboration with the Departments of Political Science,

European Studies, and International Relations at Comenius University in Bratislava. In October 2012, Budapest hosted the CEPSA conference “Crisis and Governance in Central and Eastern Europe,” organized by the Hungarian Political Science Association and the Institute of Political Science at ELTE, with Andrassy University as a partner. Both conferences focused on the topic of crisis, which, unfortunately, is still a hot topic two and a half decades later.

I particularly remember the 2011 CEPSA Conference, which took

place in Vienna for the third time, following conferences in 2001 and 2005. It was hosted by the Austrian Political Science Association (of which I was the chairperson that year) and the Department of Political Science of the University of Vienna. The Austrian Association of Cities and Towns and the Renner Institute were cooperation partners. The conference featured the topic “Multilevel Politics: Intra- and Inter-level Comparative Perspectives” and was organized in conjunction with the IPSA Research Committee 47 (Local-Global Relations) meeting.

Another activity I remember well was the ESF Launch Event of the Final Report „Forward Look: Central and Eastern Europe Beyond Transition“, in May 2012 in Budapest, in which I took part on behalf of CEPSA. Also in 2012, in July, CEPSA organized a joint panel “Central European Experiences and the Issue of Global Democratization” together with IPSA RC 47 “Local-Global Relations” at the IPSA World Congress 2012 in Madrid, and I had the honour to chair this panel.

Finally, during my tenure we sought to strengthen CEPSA's online presence (at the time still under the domain *cepsa.at* and with a different logo) to raise the international profile of CEPSA and its activities.

“Even in a world that has undergone significant geopolitical changes, it still makes sense to discuss issues and challenges that affect a specific European region.” Karin Liebhart, CEPSA President 2009–2012

As I look from the past toward the future, I see a promising and exciting future for CEPSA for several reasons. I would like to highlight two of these reasons in particular:

- Even in a world that has undergone significant geopolitical changes, it still makes sense to discuss issues and challenges that affect a specific European region - not exclusively, of course, but in a special way - regardless of any differences between the individual CEPSA member countries that belong to that region.

- For the first time, CEPSA has a leadership team composed entirely of women, and this sends an excellent message, especially at a time when many of the achievements of women's and gender politics are once again being called into question - in Central Europe, throughout Europe, and in other regions of the world.

Ladislav Cabada, CEPSA President 2012-2018



I was elected president of CEPSA in absentia in 2012, at a time when I was seriously ill and unable to work properly for almost six months. Being elected under these circumstances provided me with great support. Throughout my two terms in office, I was fortunate to have the support of an excellent, hardworking and reliable leadership team. Miro Haček, the Vice President, played a key role in organizing a variety

of activities, including CEPSA's efforts to connect with the partner association of Balkan political scientists, as well as with APSA and other professional organizations. After 2018, he also excelled in the role of CEPSA President. Ana Matan was the scientific secretary of CEPSA during the first term and Liutauras Gudžinskas during the second. Their work held symbolic significance for me and the entire organization — the Croatian and Lithuanian national political science associations had only sporadic contact with CEPSA prior to 2010, and the engagement of both scientific secretaries was crucial in renewing and strengthening relations. This included the excellently organized annual conference in Vilnius in 2015. In my view, this was a crucial issue, not least because CEPSA's key pillars to date — the Austrian and Hungarian national associations, specifically Andreas Pribersky and Attila Ágh — were no longer able to host the annual conference practically every year, as they had promised me over coffee sometime around 2000 (I believe it was in Budapest, as Andreas's fluency in Hungarian left me awestruck).

I would characterize my time in office as being shaped by two significant and overlapping factors. The first is generational change. I was the first CEPSA president not to be involved in its founding. The re-establishment of ties with the Croatian and Lithuanian national associations thus fits into the broader context of expanding the group of friends of Central European democracies and Europeanization who founded CEPSA to include new members. It was wonderful to continue meeting leading figures in Central European political science, such as Jerzy Wiatr, Attila Ágh, Drago Zajc, Silvia Miháliková and Karin Liebhart, at the annual conferences. At the same time, however, representatives of the younger generation began to appear more frequently at conferences from around the mid-2010s onwards.

“I was the first CEPSA president not to be involved in its founding. At the same time, representatives of the younger generation began to appear more frequently at conferences.” Ladislav Cabada, CEPSA President 2012-2018

The second major focus of my presidency was to shift CEPSA's activities from a narrow institutional framework at the national level, which was often limited to a single department or institute, to a broader spatial framework. This decentralization was also reflected in the locations of the annual conferences, which were held not only in capital cities such as Prague, Vilnius and Ljubljana, but also in Pilsen, Wrocław and Banská Bystrica.

My term began with the unusual circumstance of two consecutive annual conferences being organized by the same national association, with the support of two universities where I had worked: the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen in 2013, and Metropolitan University Prague the following year. I would like to thank both universities for their support during a period when no other offers to host the conference had emerged. I would also like to thank my colleagues on the CEPSA leadership team for helping us to overcome unfavourable trends of waning interest in the organization's activities,

and for successfully restarting CEPSA. I am delighted to see that the organization is thriving and that the annual conference is generating a great deal of interest. I look forward to seeing you all in Pilsen again in September 2026!

Miro Haček, CEPSA President 2018–2024



I had the honour of serving as President of the Central European Political Science Association (CEPSA) for two consecutive terms, from 2018 to 2021 and from 2021 to 2024. It was the first time in the history of CEPSA that a Slovenian political scientist assumed the presidency, which made the appointment both a personal distinction and a significant professional responsibility.

My motivation to take on this role was deeply rooted in my extensive international experience, particularly through participation in conferences organized by American Political Science Association (APSA), International Political Science Association (IPSA), and other major academic bodies. Observing their organizational standards, strategic vision, and professional infrastructure inspired me to elevate CEPSA to a comparable level of visibility, credibility, and operational stability.

When I assumed office, CEPSA faced serious structural challenges. The association did not have an official website, had no academic journal, and had not produced any publications for more than a decade. Calls for papers for annual conferences were often circulated only weeks before the events, and conference programmes were sometimes distributed just days in advance. In short, CEPSA lacked the institutional framework expected of a recognized international academic association.

From the outset, my objective was clear: to professionalize CEPSA and align it with the standards of the most respected political science associations worldwide. Looking back, I believe we largely achieved this goal. Importantly, this transformation was not the result of individual effort, but of collaboration with a small, but dedicated team that shared a common vision of institutional renewal.

One of the most significant constraints throughout my presidency was the complete absence of financial resources. CEPSA had no independent funding, which remains a structural obstacle. To ensure continuity and development, I occasionally supported certain activities through my own research projects — a fact that many members may not be aware of. Cooperation with some national associations was at times challenging; rather than viewing CEPSA as a supportive international platform, they often acted cautiously or defensively. Nevertheless, together with a committed group of colleagues, we overcame these obstacles.

Under our leadership, CEPSA annual conferences reached unprecedented levels of participation, with more than 300 applications in some years. We successfully organized conferences in highly attractive regional locations, including Dubrovnik, Croatia, and Bled, Slovenia, thereby increasing both visibility and academic appeal. Moreover, we managed to re-engage national associations that had previously expressed doubts about their continued involvement in CEPSA.

The Covid-19 pandemic presented an additional challenge. The 2020 annual conference had to be cancelled and replaced with a smaller online event. However, by November 2021, CEPSA was among the first regional associations to return to in-person academic events, successfully organizing a conference in Olsztyn, Poland, attended by approximately 130 participants — a strong signal of institutional resilience and community commitment.

“I envision CEPSA as a unified, region-wide association representing political scientists across the entire Central and Eastern European region.”

Miro Haček, CEPSA President 2018–2024

Looking ahead, my vision for CEPSA may appear ambitious or even naïve, yet I firmly believe in its potential. I do not see CEPSA merely as the loose international extension of eight national political science associations, some of which are doing great, but others merely exist. Rather, I envision CEPSA as a unified, region-wide association representing political scientists across the entire Central and Eastern European region. Instead of fragmentation into multiple national structures, CEPSA could evolve into a single, strong, and cohesive organization capable of becoming the largest and most influential regional political science association globally — and an important partner within the broader framework of IPSA. All that is needed to fulfil this vision is to dare to go further.

Serving as President of CEPSA was both a challenge and a privilege. It demonstrated what can be achieved through strategic vision, institutional commitment, and collective effort, even in the absence of financial resources. I remain confident that CEPSA's strongest years still lie ahead.

Boglárka Koller, Current CEPSA President, elected in 2024



I began my mandate in 2024 with a deep sense of honour and responsibility. CEPSA has been an important regional organization for political scientists in Central and Eastern Europe, and I feel privileged to contribute to its continued development at a time when regional academic cooperation is becoming more important than ever.

I am also very happy that the 30th anniversary of our organization falls within my mandate, offering a special opportunity to reflect on CEPSA's achievements and its future role in international political science.

For the first time in CEPSA's history, the association is led by an all-women leadership. Working with Agnieszka Kasińska-Metryka as Vice President and Simona Kukovič as Secretary General has been professionally enriching. I believe this milestone is not only symbolically important but also reflects CEPSA's forward-looking spirit.

At the same time, my presidency builds on the very strong foundations laid by previous CEPSA leaders, especially my predecessor, Miro Haček. His work created a solid basis on which we can now further expand the association's international visibility, professional network, and academic impact.

One of the most important aspects of my mandate has been CEPSA's growing engagement beyond the region. I am very pleased to serve as President at a time when CEPSA is expanding its network and deepening its partnerships with major international organizations and institutions, including APSA, IPSA, and the European University

Institute. These collaborations open new opportunities for our members, enhance scholarly exchange, and place Central and Eastern European political science more firmly on the international academic map.

CEPSA is gaining importance in today's changing world order. In an era marked by geopolitical shifts, democratic challenges, security concerns, and transformations in European and global politics, the perspectives of Central and Eastern Europe are indispensable. Our region offers unique historical experiences, analytical insights, and scholarly contributions that are relevant far beyond our geographical borders.

“CEPSA has become not only a platform for regional cooperation but also an important voice in international political science.”

Boglárka Koller, CEPSA President since 2024

This growing relevance is also reflected in the increasing global interest in CEPSA's activities, the rising number and visibility of scientific journals affiliated with our academic community, and the broader attention paid by political scientists to our work. CEPSA has become not only a platform for regional cooperation but also an important voice in international political science.

Looking to the future, I see CEPSA as an even stronger, more visible, and more inclusive academic organization. My hope is that we will continue to support young scholars, strengthen cooperation among the national associations, deepen international partnerships, and contribute to global debates in political science from a Central and Eastern European perspective.

For me, serving as CEPSA President is not only a professional honour but also a personal commitment to connect scholars, institutions, regions, and generations. I am confident that CEPSA has a bright future ahead.

CEPSA PUBLICATIONS

DOCUMENTING POLITICAL AND SOCIETAL CHANGE

Throughout its existence, CEPSA has regarded publishing as an important extension of its academic mission. Bringing political scientists together at conferences has always been only one part of the CEPSA's role; equally important has been creating opportunities for their ideas, analyses, and debates to reach wider academic audiences and to remain documented beyond individual meetings.

Over the years, CEPSA has therefore contributed to a number of multi-authored books and edited volumes. Some emerged directly from papers and discussions presented at CEPSA conferences, while others were conceived as independent publications devoted to particular political and societal developments affecting Central and Eastern Europe. In this way, CEPSA publications have provided snapshots of the region at particular moments in its political development, documenting the questions, transformations, and challenges that occupied political scientists at the time. The 30th CEPSA Conference continues this tradition with a commemorative volume on 30 Shades of Freedom in Central and Eastern Europe, bringing together reflections on one of the fundamental concepts

that has shaped the political transformation and development of the region over the past three decades.

Alongside books and edited volumes, CEPSA also serves as an umbrella organization for scientific journals published across its member countries. Today, seven journals form part of this wider CEPSA publishing community, together providing important platforms for political science and related social science research in and about Central and Eastern Europe.

Journal of Comparative Politics (JCP) is a biannual, open-access journal established in 2007, focusing primarily on comparative politics, political cultures, civil society and political developments in Central and Eastern Europe. It is published by a consortium of three Central European universities: the University of Ljubljana (Slovenia), the University of Economics in Bratislava (Slovakia), and Alma Mater Europaea – European Centre Maribor (Slovenia).

Politics in Central Europe (PCE), established in 2005 and published by Metropolitan University Prague in cooperation with CEPSA, provides a platform for research in political science, international relations and comparative politics, with a particular focus on Central Europe.

Politické vedy, published by Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica since 1998, covers political science, international relations, modern history and security studies, bringing together contributions from Slovak and international scholars.

Baltic Journal of Political Science (BJPS) is a peer-reviewed journal published by the Institute of International Relations and Political Science at Vilnius University. Focusing primarily on the Baltic Sea region and particularly the Baltic states, it publishes theoretical and empirical research in political theory, comparative politics, international relations and public policy.

Intersections. East European Journal of Society and Politics (Intersections. EEJSP) is an open-access, multidisciplinary journal

published by the Centre for Social Sciences in Budapest, approaching Central and Eastern European societies from political, social and cultural perspectives.

Central European Journal of Politics (CEJOP) is a biannual journal published by Jan Evangelista Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem, with a focus on comparative politics and interdisciplinary research related primarily to Central and Eastern Europe.

The Polish Political Science Yearbook (PPSY) is an international, open-access journal covering political science, international relations, public policy and related disciplines and bringing together theoretical and empirical research from different methodological traditions.

Together, these seven journals demonstrate both the diversity and the growing international visibility of political science scholarship within the CEPSA community. Several are included in major international bibliographic and citation databases, including Scopus and Web of Science. Among them, the Journal of Comparative Politics and Politics in Central Europe are ranked SJR Q2, while Intersections. East European Journal of Society and Politics is ranked SJR Q2 in Law and Q3 in Sociology and Political Science. Other journals within the CEPSA network are indexed in international databases such as ERIH Plus, DOAJ, EBSCO, ProQuest, CEEOL and others. Together, they provide an important publishing infrastructure for scholars from Central and Eastern Europe and contribute to bringing research from the region into wider international academic debates.

Looking ahead, we hope that publishing will become an even stronger dimension of CEPSA's academic mission. We will continue to encourage cooperation among the journals within the CEPSA community, create opportunities for joint publications, and support books and edited volumes emerging from our conferences and scholarly networks. We hope that many more works will be created under the academic umbrella of CEPSA - works that will advance political science while at the same time capturing the defining moments of their time and documenting the most important political

and societal transformations, debates, and challenges facing Central and Eastern Europe.

In this sense, **CEPSA's publications are more than academic outputs. Together, they form part of the intellectual memory of Central and Eastern European political science:** a record of how political scientists have observed, interpreted, and sought to understand their region at different moments in its history - and a legacy through which future generations will be able to revisit those moments and understand the questions that shaped them.



CEPSA in print: Selected books published over the years.

SECTION 08

LOOKING AHEAD

Thirty conferences provide an opportunity not only to look back, but also to look ahead. Over the past three decades, CEPSA has grown and changed together with the region and the political science community it represents. New generations of scholars have joined those who established and shaped the Association, bringing new questions, perspectives and ambitions while carrying forward a tradition built largely on voluntary commitment, cooperation and mutual trust.

The future of CEPSA will depend on its ability to preserve what has made this community distinctive while continuing to evolve. This means remaining a welcoming platform for established scholars and, especially, for young and early-career political scientists; strengthening cooperation across countries and institutions; expanding CEPSA's international presence; and creating new opportunities for research, publishing and academic exchange. Yet it also means preserving something less tangible but equally important: the personal connections and friendships that have always extended beyond conferences, institutions and national borders.

CEPSA has never been built by institutions alone. It has been built by people willing to contribute their time, ideas and energy, often voluntarily, because they believed in the value of bringing the political science community of Central and Eastern Europe together. The responsibility for carrying this legacy forward now gradually passes to new generations. We hope they will recognise the same value in meeting, debating, cooperating and simply spending time together that generations before them did.

Thirty conferences are therefore not an ending, but a milestone in a continuing story. **The first thirty conferences tell the story of where CEPSA has come from. The next thirty will tell us where this community is capable of going.**

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30 CONFERENCES.
30+ YEARS.
ONE COMMUNITY.

The story continues.

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