



CERGU Spring/Summer Newsletter

Director's Letter



Spring/Summer 2014

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CERGU can keep and maintain its role as a research-led network... and to keep its spirit of a generous attitude between different disciplines and research traditions.

-Claes-Göran Alvstam

The spring of 2014 has been eventful for the [Centre for European Research \(CERGU\)](#), and as the director I would like to thank everyone for their contributions! We started with a research application seminar in January, and ended with a joint book seminar (a coming book about the 20 years since the Swedish referenda on the EU membership) in June. This anniversary coincides with the 15th anniversary of the successful [European studies programmes](#) at the University of Gothenburg.

Together, CERGU and the [Centre for European Studies \(CES\)](#), commemorates these anniversaries by a number of events during 2014 ("Jubileumsåret"). During the spring we organised public events such as [Europaperspektiv](#), [Europaforskardagen](#) and participated in the Science festival together with the student organisation [Brännpunkt Europa](#) with a seminar "Central and Eastern Europe: Fully European or the European Other?". CERGU's [international Advisory Board \(IAB\)](#) will also contribute during the autumn with Claes Alvstam serving as the new chair. As a result of these joint activities we have been nominated for [the cooperation prize](#) and the University itself has received support from the vice chancellor to be promoted as a [Jean Monnet centre of European excellence](#).

This spring has also been marked by the European Parliament Election. Several of CERGU's scholars have participated in [election research](#), writing [analyses](#) and as [media expert commentators](#), in addition to cooperating with the students during the [EU Election week events](#). Elections and Democracy in Brussels was also the theme of a successful conference CERGU co-organised in Brussels 7-9 April.

We are extremely pleased to have received [111 applications for our three announced international postdoc positions](#). The generous [grant from Rj](#) has so far allowed us to welcome three new [postdocs](#): Angela Kölling, Joakim Ruist and David Brax. The interviews for new postdocs will take place in August. Many thanks to you all, as well as to everyone else involved in our events, research, advice and social activities! Neither of this would work without our excellent [administrators](#); a warm thank you (and welcome) to Angie Sohlberg who joined us in January, to Emily Hayes Polk for the great external communication work, and especially to Birgitta Jännebring, for being the most essential person to make CERGU work! I wish everyone a well-deserved summer's vacation before we start again in the autumn!

Have a wonderful summer!
Linda Berg

This year will see one of our most senior members of CERGU, or one of our "founding fathers" as we call him, Claes-Göran Alvstam move from his role serving on the Steering Committee to a new role on our International Advisory board. Recently he answered a few questions about his different roles at CERGU and his thoughts on the future.



Q: How will your role at CERGU change with this move?

A: Well, there will actually not be to many changes regarding my relations with CERGU. The role of the steering group is to represent the mother faculty and to maintain the delicate balance between the different disciplines under the common umbrella, while the assignment to coordinate the International Advisory Board (IAB) is more focused on one particular issue, i.e. how to further improve the international network.

Q: What are some points of pride for CERGU in recent years?

A: The financial support from Riksbankens Jubileumsfond was of course one of the major achievements during recent years, since it confirmed CERGU's role as one of the leading nodes for European research in Sweden. I have also been very pleased to watch the vigorous development of the CERGU community, particularly when it comes to attracting young non-Swedish scholars. The launch of the weekly breakfast was obviously one of the best decisions that we took, since it gave us a solid platform for establishing good informal contacts between people who otherwise wouldn't have had a chance to meet and to exchange views.

Q: What are your hopes for the future of CERGU?

I sincerely hope that CERGU can keep and maintain its role as a research-led network with a small and flexible common administration, and to keep its spirit of a generous attitude between different disciplines and research traditions. The pitfall in an organization like CERGU is always to become set in a fixed mould, dominated by one single discipline and where the administrative routines become the main purpose. Personally, I would very much like to see a higher emphasis on European languages and literatures, the understanding of which are often keys to comprehend national history, culture and politics. The results of the recent EP elections show that the European project – if there exists such a creature – still has a long way to go, and that there is an almost eternal and inexhaustible need for deeper multidisciplinary based interpretations of national versus European identities. The sad events in the "Eastern Neighbourhood" do also call for a higher emphasis on Russia – particularly how to better understand contemporary Russian views on "The Western society" and Russian geopolitical perceptions - in CERGU's future activities.



Brussels Conference 7-9 April

Together with various Belgian and Swedish partners, CERGU organized the conference "Elections and Democracy in Europe," which took place in Brussels, Belgium 7-9 April. The motivation for the conference was to examine similarities and differences between Belgium and Sweden, two countries that experience local, regional, national, and European elections in 2014, and compare these countries with other European democracies. The conference also featured cutting edge research on inter-institutional relations within the European Union, and vibrant discussion of EU policy and leadership during a year of change within the EU. Plenary sessions consisted of prominent electoral politics scholars from Belgium, Sweden and the UK; a roundtable discussion with members of European Parliament; and a keynote address by Simon Hix of the London School of Economics that focused on the 2014 European Parliament elections. CERGU scholars were well represented throughout the conference, presenting their research and serving as panel chairs and discussants. Conference participants came from a range of European universities and disciplines, making the Elections and Democracy in Europe conference an international and interdisciplinary success that reflects CERGU's core mission.

Successful Call for Postdoctoral Positions at CERGU

Thanks to impressive efforts in publicising the three open postdoctoral positions, CERGU received applications from a vast range of scholars hoping to join our Gothenburg-based centre. With 111 applicants seeking the three open postdoctoral spots, we can report that we received applications from 62 men and 49 women. 91 of the applicants identified as European, including 24 Swedes. We also had applicants from North and South America, Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Oceania.

When asked to identify disciplines, 30 applicants listed Political Science, 10 Sociology, 8 Philosophy, and 8 History. We also received applications from disciplines ranging from Scandinavian Studies to Cultural Geography, History of Ideas to Political Theory, and many more.

Numerous applicants indicated more than one of CERGU's thematic areas on their applications, so taking into account some overlap, we can say that Cultural Borders and Identity was listed 42 times, Societal Challenges and Actors 34 times, Migration 23 times, EU Institutions 16 times, and Global Europe 14 times. The CERGU team looks forward to announcing the new postdoctoral researchers once interviews are complete, and to welcoming them to Gothenburg in January 2015.

Jean Monnet Centre of European Excellence

In a decision 3 June 2014, the Vice Chancellor of the University of Gothenburg reconfirmed her support of the university's status as a Jean Monnet Centre of European Excellence. This status was originally awarded in 1998. This revitalization will function as an umbrella for the overall and complete European environment at the university, bridging research and education and aiming to reach across all faculties. Under this umbrella, CERGU is important for its cross-disciplinary research, and the Centre for European Studies (CES), under the Department of Political Science, is important for the cross-disciplinary education: the Bachelor's and Master's programmes of European Studies.



Centre for European Studies Highlights of spring 2014 for CES

In May 2014 the student-led series of lunch-lectures *Brännpunkt Europa* celebrated its two-year anniversary. Since the very first event on May 9 2012, 25 events attracting more than 1400 people have been organized, entailing on average 56 participants at each event. During the spring term of 2014 there have been 8 events attracting 473 participants, which means on average 59 participants. This is an unprecedented achievement of the students, and a great success for European studies contribution to a critical public space on current matters. The spring of 2014 also saw the nomination of *Brännpunkt Europa*, CERGU, and CES for GU's so called [cooperation prize 2014 \(samverkanspriset\)](#). On April 2-4, study directors, administrators, and coordination coordinators went for a study-visit trip to Brussels, visiting the European Parliament, the Commission, and the External Action Service and the city of Bruges. To promote future collaboration and exchange on European studies and research, on April 22-27 the director of study together with two senior advisers, travelled to Shanghai to meet colleagues at School of School of International Relations and Public Affairs (SIRPA), and Centre for European Studies, both at Fudan University.

Urban Strandberg, Director of Studies



We wish you a very happy summer from Europe and we will see you in the fall! Stay up to date with us over the break by liking our [Facebook page](#) or [LinkedIn group!](#)



Coming in the fall: Meet our new postdocs and find out more information on the CERGU fall kickoff event!

