



CENTREPEACE

REPORT ON ACTIVITIES BUILDING A CULTURE OF EXCELLENCE

Deliverable 4.1

Marián Koval



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Web-Site Address	www.centrepeace.cz
Coordinator	Masaryk University
Management Team	Zinaida BECHNÁ, Martin CHOVANČÍK, Marián KOVAL
E-mail	centrepeace@fss.muni.cz
Phone Number	+420 549 494 573

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E-mail (s)	koval@fss.muni.cz
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1. Acronyms

CSF	Czech Science Foundation
ERC	European Research Council
EU	European Union
HE	Horizon Europe
IIPS	International Institute of Political Science
KPI	Key performance indicator
MSCA	Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions
PRIO	Peace Research Institute Oslo
RMA	Research management and administration



2. Introduction

One of the main goals of CENTREPEACE is to enhance the excellence of the International Institute of Political Science (IIPS). To reach this goal, the CENTREPEACE project has developed multiple activities such as the IIPS lecture series, RMA Breakfasts, PhD co-supervision, and Gender Equality activities.

This report describes all the activities organised within Work Package 4 since June 2024 till the end of September 2025. It also describes the progress on planned KPIs.



3. IIPS Lecture Series

The goal of the IIPS lecture series is to invite internal or external lecturers to speak about their research interests, then followed by a discussion. The aim of this initiative is to help facilitate the shift in culture at the IIPS, enabling researchers to discuss their work more openly and receive valuable feedback from colleagues, students, and sometimes the broader public. Moving forward, meetings will be organised with the invited lecturers for researchers and PhD students, which should serve as a motivation for self-development for PhD students in their academic careers, as well as an opportunity to broaden collaboration with already established researchers.

So far, CENTREPEACE has organised 3 lectures that sparked multiple discussions and debates.

3.1. How Europe Got Russia Wrong (02 – 04.12.2024)

The first IIPS Lecture was in the form of a course for master's students, where PhD students and researchers could also participate. The lecture was called “How Europe Got Russia Wrong”, and was led by Veli-Pekka Tynkkynen from the University of Helsinki.

Picture 1 Photos from the lectures How Europe Got Russia Wrong



3.1.1. Abstract

The course examines Europe's relationship with Russia from the 1990s onwards through three lenses: energy, violence and the environment. It explores new ways of promoting and protecting the European objectives of peace, sustainability, democracy, and the rule of law.

This course further explores the dynamics of European-Russian relations through a Foucauldian lens on power, focusing on Germany's Ostpolitik and its emphasis on peacebuilding interdependency. Analysing post-Cold War policies toward Russia, the course will critically examine how European discourses have often misinterpreted Russia's actions and intentions. Through a comprehensive review of the lecturer's work, the course will discuss the range of non-military tools available to the EU for strategically addressing Russia's colonial and imperial aspirations. Finally, the course will evaluate a proposed strategy for Europe—one that seeks to engage, empower, and encourage a democratic and sustainable future for Russia.

3.1.2. Program

02.12.2024

12:00 – 16:00 PART I – ORIENTING TO UNDERSTAND EUROPE – RUSSIA RELATIONS VIA ENERGY, VIOLENCE, AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Introduction to How Europe Got Russia Wrong: Energy, Violence, and the Environment

My power tools – premises, methodological and theoretical commitments

Russia – imperialism materialized via the Great Power of flows

03.12.2024

12:00 – 16:00 PART II – ENERGY, LIFE/DEATH AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN EUROPE'S STANCE ON RUSSIA

Energy and Infrastructure – from outside geopolitics to a leverage tool

Violence and tyranny – from condemning to setting a price

The environment and climate – from soft to hard power

04.12.2024

12:00 – 16:00 PART III – A NEW RUSSIA STRATEGY FOR EUROPE

Ostpolitik 3.0 – EU's Russia strategy as transformative eco-power

3.1.3. Other Activities with Lecturer

On the 3rd December 2024, CENTREPEACE also organised a seminar with Prof. Veli-Pekka Tynkkynen. This seminar delved into the publication processes, project applications, and a comparison of research evaluation systems in Finland and the Czech Republic. The attendees were researchers and PhD students at the Faculty of Social Studies of Masaryk University. Thanks to the seminar, valuable knowledge was gained, and a valuable platform for lasting academic relationships and innovative projects was created.

3.1.4. Outcomes

The lecture of Veli-Pekka Tynkkynen was attended by 68 people, of whom 57 were students, and the remaining people were researchers and PhD students from the Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University, or from the public sector, such as the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic. The course challenged participants to move beyond traditional approaches and made them consider innovative, sustainable solutions for fostering peace and cooperation in the region, which served both as a reflective critique of past policy missteps and as a forward-looking exploration of how Europe can navigate its evolving relationship with Russia.

3.2. Air Force Modernisation in Czechia (24.04.2025)

On April 24, 2025, CENTREPEACE organised a public lecture titled “Air Force Modernisation in Czechia: Opportunities and Challenges Ahead, which was open to the public.

Picture 2 Photos from the lecture Air Force Modernisation in Czechia



3.2.1. Abstract

The lecture will offer valuable insights into the complexities surrounding the modernisation efforts of the Czech Air Force, with a particular focus on the planned acquisition of the F-35 fighter jets. The lecture will be given by Dr Thomas-Durell Young from the Department of National Security Affairs at the Naval Postgraduate School.

3.2.2. Outcomes

The lecture was attended by 70 people, among them being students and researchers. The attendees got a better understanding of the opportunities and challenges presented by the acquisition of new F-16 flight jets. After the end of the lecture, the researchers and PhD students had some time to discuss their research and possible research cooperations.

3.3. Art of Academic Publishing (28.04.2025)

CENTREPEACE organised a lecture called “Art of Academic Publishing: Do’s and Don’ts” on April 28, 2025. This lecture was given by Monika Brusenbauch Meislová from the Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University and Katarína Šipulová from the Faculty of Law, Masaryk University, both of them successful researchers with extensive knowledge in academic publishing. The lecture was aimed at PhD candidates and early researchers.

3.3.1. Abstract

The lecture “Art of Academic Publishing: Do’s and Don’ts” will be about how to choose the right journal and topic for the journal, and how to face issues during the writing, publishing and reviewing. It will also present tips and tricks for writing and publishing.

3.3.2. Outcomes

The lecture was attended by 21 people, including researchers, PhD students, and others interested in academic writing. They learned about various aspects of academic writing, including how to set realistic expectations, overcome creative blocks, manage the review process, respond to feedback, and what to do in case of article rejection. This lecture gave a free space for discussion for PhD students and researchers to enable them to share their experiences and ask questions regarding the important aspects of academic work.

Picture 3 Photos from the lecture Art of Academic Publishing



4. RMA Breakfasts

RMA Breakfasts are a monthly meeting space with lectures and discussions between RMAs and researchers from the Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University (and beyond). One or more guests with an expertise on the given topic of the meeting are usually invited. A total of nine RMA Breakfasts have been organised between September 2024 and September 2025.

Picture 4 Photos from RMA Breakfast



4.1. Project Hunting (06.09.2024)

The first RMA Breakfast was organised as part of the on-site kick-off meeting in Brno. The session focused on strategies for identifying and pursuing new research funding opportunities. Participants discussed practical approaches to scanning funding calls, aligning research ideas with program priorities, and building competitive proposals. The lecturers of this session were RMAs from Masaryk University (Alena Lorencová), the Peace Research Institute Oslo (Anne Duquenne, Damian Laws) and University of Helsinki (Anna Korhonen). The RMA breakfast was attended by a total of 30 people.

4.2. Evaluation of Science (18.10.2024)

This session explored the principles and practices of research evaluation at national and international levels. Topics included evaluation criteria, bibliometric indicators, and the implications of evaluation frameworks for research strategy and funding. The lecturer at this RMA breakfast was Michal Petr, Head of the Scientometric Support and Evaluation Centre at Masaryk University. Thanks to the lecture, researchers gained a better understanding of how science evaluation is established at the national and university levels and what it is based on. The RMA Breakfast was attended by 13 people.

4.3. Evaluation of Science at FSS MU (18.11.2024)

Building on the previous discussion, this meeting examined how evaluation processes are implemented within the Faculty of Social Studies. The guest of this lecture was David Šmahel, Vice Dean for Strategy at the Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University, who also held the position of Chairman of the Expert Panel 5 – Social Sciences of the National Evaluation of Science. The attendees gained more understanding on how the evaluation of science works like “behind the scenes”, and how the evaluation of science works at the faculty and what the researchers need to do to achieve a better evaluation. This session was attended by 17 people.

4.4. ERC Starting Grants (05.12.2024)

This RMA Breakfast focused on the ERC Starting Grants. This was the first lecture of the “ERC Series”, which was a series of lectures with various ERC holders. This lecture consisted of three parts. The guest of the first part was Veronika Mikitová, a project manager from the Rectorate Grant Office, who is responsible for the ERC, HE Cluster, and MSCA proposals. She presented the main “theoretical aspects of ERC projects” – including the differences between various ERC grants, and what kind of support is provided at the rectorate level. The second guest was Michal Smetana from Charles University, a successful recipient of the ERC Starting Grant. He shared his personal experience from the preparations for his ERC grant application. The guest of the last part of the lecture was Eva Šlesinger from the Office for Research and Project Support of the Faculty of Social Studies. She presented the planned faculty strategy for supporting the submission of ERC proposals. The participants of this RMA Breakfast could get a comprehensive overview of ERC project proposals and the opportunity to ask questions to both RMAs and researchers. This RMA Breakfast was attended by 25 people.

4.5. ERC Consolidator Grants (24.02.2025)

The following RMA Breakfast was organised within the ERC series with a focus on ERC Consolidator Grants. The guest of this lecture was David Kosař from the Faculty of Law, Masaryk University, a successful ERC Consolidator grantee. Participants of this RMA Breakfast could hear about what worked in the implementation phase, what did not work, and what the grantee would do differently the next time. The RMA Breakfast was attended by 17 people.

4.6. ERC CZ (07.04.2025)

This session introduced the Czech national scheme supporting ERC applicants. The guest of the lecture was Hana Macháčková from the Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University, an ERC CZ holder. Participants could learn about the opportunities provided by ERC CZ and how to adapt the original ERC proposal to fit the ERC CZ scheme. This lecture was attended by 7 people.

4.7. CSF and ERC (16.04.2025)

The discussion centred on the interplay between Czech Science Foundation (GAČR) funding and ERC opportunities. The guest of this lecture was Jakub Drápal, a researcher from the Faculty of Law at Charles University and a successful recipient of the Junior Star project from the Czech Science Foundation, a prestigious grant for early-stage researchers. Participants at this RMA breakfast could learn how to prepare such a project, and how this preparation can also lead to the submission of an ERC project. This lecture was attended by 12 people.

4.8. ERC Advanced Grants (20.05.2025)

This session focused on ERC Advanced Grants and featured Matthew Rampley, a successful ERC Advanced grantee from the Faculty of Arts at Masaryk University. He is also a former member of an ERC evaluation panel. Participants learned about the preparation process for ERC proposals, as well as about the evaluation process of ERC proposals, thanks to the practical experience of the speaker. The RMA Breakfast was attended by 11 people.

4.9. Navigating Horizon Europe (30.09.2025)

This RMA Breakfast was aimed towards a better understanding of Horizon Europe's structure and its pillars. The guest of this RMA Breakfast was Ladislav Čoček, project manager at the Grants Office, Rector's Office, Masaryk University. He supports the submission of Horizon Europe widening projects and cluster projects. The attendees of this session learned more about how Horizon Europe is structured, the types of opportunities available within its schemes, how cluster calls are created and their underlying logic, and what the next work programme will entail. The session was attended by 12 people.



5. PhD co-supervision

Researchers from Masaryk University nominated 3 PhD students who are aligned with the research topics of the project:

- Focus Group 1 Cognitive Warfare: Veronika Blablová researching the topic *“China's AI Strategy: Domestic Approaches, Global Ambitions, and Security Implications”*
- Focus Group 2 Defence Industry: Szolt Lazar researching the topic *“The development of OSINT and AI/ML capabilities by the defence industry in response to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine – exploring the convergence of public intelligence, algorithmic analysis, and strategic military adaptation”*
- Focus Group 3 Eastern Partnership: Jiří Nykodým researching the topic *“Russia's escalatory tactics in the Eastern Partnership countries against the backdrop of the EU security cooperation”*

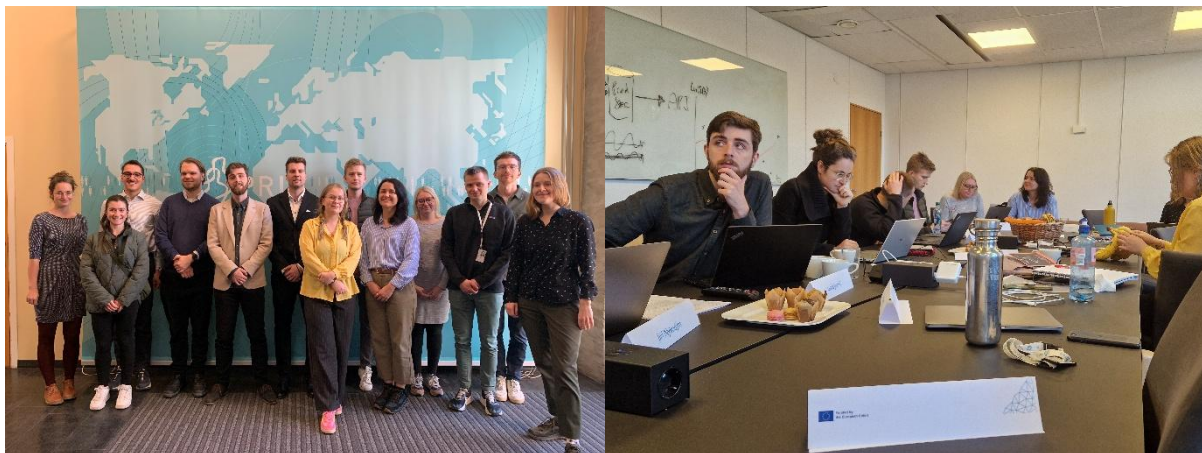
These 3 PhD students are going to benefit from the co-supervision of their PhD with researchers from PRIO and the University of Helsinki. CENTREPEACE will also support other PhD students through organised activities and mobilities.

5.1. Junior Scholar Symposium in PRIO (3–4 April 2025)

Within the CENTREPEACE project, the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) hosted the Junior Scholar Symposium, which brought together early-career researchers (mostly PhD students) from PRIO, Masaryk University, and the University of Helsinki. The event served as a platform for presenting cutting-edge research on European security and peace studies, covering topics such as:

- Regional security dynamics in Central and Eastern Europe
- Political discourse and its impact on security policies
- Great power technological competition
- Security implications of climate change
- Hybrid threats and critical infrastructure in the Baltic Sea region

Picture 5 Photos from Junior Scholar Symposium



5.1.1. Abstract

Are you a junior researcher who would like to present your research to an international audience and receive valuable feedback? Are you looking for an opportunity to expand your research network? Join us for a two-day workshop at PRIO Headquarters in Oslo!

CENTREPEACE is organizing a symposium designed specifically for junior researchers in peace research and security studies from PRIO, Masaryk University, and the University of Helsinki.

Each participant will have an hour dedicated to their paper: You begin with a 15-minute presentation of your work, which is followed by comments from two discussants and a facilitated Q&A session. In addition to presenting their research, participants are expected to act as discussants for at least one other presentation.

5.1.2. Outcomes

Participants engaged in peer review, methodological discussions, and explored ways to translate academic research into policy-relevant outputs. The symposium strengthened inter-institutional networks, fostered trust among scholars, and laid the groundwork for future joint research and mobility initiatives. The symposium was attended by 13 PhD students from Masaryk University (3), PRIO (4), and the University of Helsinki (6).

6. Gender Equality

6.1. Gender and the Academic Workplace (19.03.2025)

As part of CENTREPEACE's commitment to diversity and inclusion, a workshop and lecture on gender equality in academia was held at Masaryk University, led by Special Adviser Lynn Nygaard from PRIO. The session addressed persistent gender imbalances in academic leadership and explored structural barriers that hinder women's career progression. Key discussion points included:

- Unequal representation of women in senior academic positions
- The impact of administrative and family responsibilities on research productivity
- Strategies for overcoming systemic obstacles

6.1.1. Outcomes

The workshop provided practical tools for navigating these challenges and suggestions and ideas for overcoming them, such as institutionalising mentoring programs, supporting career development, and creating systemic solutions to ensure equal opportunities. The workshop was attended by 15 people.

Picture 6 Photos from the workshop Gender and the Academic Workplace, and mentoring



6.2. Mentoring (19.03.2025)

Following the gender workshop, individual mentoring sessions were conducted by Lynn Nygaard with four female academics. These sessions focused on career planning, overcoming professional challenges, and enhancing research visibility. The initiative highlighted the importance of targeted support for women in academia, aiming to reduce gender disparities and improve research diversity. Such mentoring programs are essential for fostering inclusive academic environments where talent and expertise outweigh gender-based barriers.

7. Summary

Between June 2024 and September 2025, we organised three lectures as part of the lecture series, with 159 participants. CENTREPEACE need to organise one extra “IIPS lecture” for one semester, as we had an external lecturer for each of the previous semesters of the project.

So far, CENTREPEACE organised 9 RMA Breakfasts on various topics relevant to researchers and RMAs, with a cumulative 144 participants.

CENTREPEACE got 3 PhD students, who will be co-supervised and get feedback from researchers from partner universities, as well as from their “home” university supervisor. In addition, CENTREPEACE aims at supporting other PhD students in mobility, whenever they can benefit from these opportunities. By way of example, the Junior Scholar Symposium was attended by one non-co-supervised student.

In relation to Gender equality, CENTREPEACE organised a workshop on gender equality, which was attended by 15 people. Furthermore, a coaching session was organised for 4 female researchers, who will benefit from it during their careers.

Figure 1 KPIs Progress of WP4

Name of indicator	Planned KPI	Realised KPI	Completion
T4.1: IIPS lecture series			
SO2b: 12 lectures	12	3	25%
SO2b: 540 participants	540	159	29%
T4.2: RMA Breakfasts			
SO2d: 24 informal staff meetings	24	9	38%
SO2d: 320 participants	320	144	45%
T4.3: PhD co-supervision			
SO2c: 3 co-supervised / consulted students	3	3	100%
T4.4: Gender equality			
SO2f: 1 event	1	1	100%
SO2f: 15 participants	15	15	100%
SO2f: 3 coached researchers	4	3	133%