

Professor of Kazan University Oleg Zaznaev visited the Forli Campus

From September 19th until October 9th the Department of Political and Social Sciences of the University of Bologna – Forli Campus with its Center for East Central Europe and the Balkans welcomed Professor Oleg Zaznaev. Professor Zaznaev is the chair of the Political Science department at Kazan Federal University, Russia. His research interests include semi-presidentialism, presidential power, forms of government, post-Soviet politics and Russian politics. Professor Zaznaev's last publications in English concern problems of measuring presidential power in post-communist countries, the latest debate about semi-presidentialism, constitutional manipulations in the post-Soviet space. He teaches courses on methods of political science, academic writings, comparative constitutional law, American and Canadian government and politics at home university.

Professor Zaznaev was visiting Bologna within the Erasmus+ Mobility Program 2016-2017. This program has given a lot of great opportunities to participants: to research and to teach, to gather new resources and curricula, to observe teaching techniques, to meet with Italian colleagues, to talk to well-established professors, to take part in interesting discussions and express viewpoints.

During his stay Professor Zaznaev conducted research on the topic "Political Manipulations in Post-Communist Countries: 'Tricks' with Regard to the Forms of Government". The main aim of the project is to make comparative study of political manipulations of forms of government in post-communist countries. Political leaders and elites in some countries of Eastern Europe and post-Soviet space try to adapt a constitution to accommodate their own interests, such as changing the balance of power between president, prime minister and parliament in their favor. Such manipulations contain a hidden meaning, and thus aim to conceal reality with the illusion of common good when actually strengthening the political power of the actors involved. These manipulations create situations based on inequality in the political sphere, harm society, and inhibit the establishment of the institutional foundations of democracy. Using the comparative method, Professor Zaznaev explains the success and failure of manipulating forms of government in post-communist countries.

Professor Zaznaev offered an open lecture on constitutional manipulations in post-Soviet countries for the MIREES students. There was a lot of questions from the floor during the lecture.

At the present time Professor Zaznaev is taking part in the three-years international research project “Russia and China in the Global World. State and Society between domestic dynamics and International Projections” promoted by the Departmental Unit of the Department of Political and Social Sciences at the Forli Campus. His stay at the University of Bologna gave him a chance to discuss the ongoing project with professors in Forli. He was also discussing ideas concerning possible future joint projects between the University of Bologna and Kazan Federal University.

When asked about his impressions of his stay in Bologna, Professor Zaznaev said that his visit to the University of Bologna was a very important and useful experience for professional and research activities. He expressed deep gratitude toward the University of Bologna, and especially to Professor of East European Politics and History and Vice-rector's delegate for the Relations with East European Countries Stefano Bianchini who helped greatly during Professor Zaznaev's stay there. Professor Zaznaev noted that based on the theme of his research, it is clear that spending time at the University of Bologna, where intensive research on politics of post-communist countries are going on, was of enormous benefit for him. Professor Zaznaev remarked that his research interests fit in nicely with the University of Bologna-Forli campus focus on politics of post-communist world because there are academics that could lend their knowledge and expertise to the advancement of his research. In particular, Professor Zaznaev had meetings with staff members in Bologna and Forli (Filippo Andreatta, Stefano Bianchini, Marco Borraccetti, Riccardo Brizzi, Marco Puleri). He appreciated interesting ideas and advices of colleagues.

Professor Zaznaev was able to gather new material for a monograph on presidential systems that he is publishing next year, as well as learn several new teaching methods and curricula of the MIREES program. He hopes to adapt them for the home University. He pointed out it is very important because one of the priorities of Kazan Federal University is internationalization of education and the usage of tested Western pedagogical practices.