

SalamAlum

OSCE ACADEMY
in Bishkek

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OSCE ACADEMY ALUMNI MAGAZINE



"This recognition is for all women who try to keep work-life balance, for those women who do not want to sacrifice family or career ambitions to reach their goals. I really want to illustrate that everything is possible until we keep trying and wanting. Yes, it is not so easy, but nothing is impossible. I wish every girl, young lady and woman at different stages in her life will be empowered for her goals."

— **Dilfuza Kurolova,**
Alumna of the Year 2024, pg. 16

"This award reflects the significance of my life's journey, my contributions, and the many values I cherish, most of which have been cultivated during my tenure at the OSCE Academy. It is not merely a personal achievement but serves as a testament to the collective impact of the Academy's alumni and a reminder of the positive transformations we can bring to our communities."

— **Abdulvahhobi Muminjoniyon,**
Alumnus of the Year 2024, pg. 18

Annual Alumni Conference
on "Economic Development
of Central Asia: Anti-Corruption,
Green Economy and Digital Economy",

pg. 7

Alumni of the Year 2024:
Dilfuza Kurolova
and
Abdulvahhobi Muminjoniyon

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Alumni / Student Summer School
on Women, Girls
and Children's Rights
in Central Asia

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Welcome Note



It is with great excitement and joy that we welcome you to the 14th edition of SalamAlum. As we compile the most recent updates and accomplishments of the OSCE Academy and its alumni, we are delighted to share with our expanding community of readers that, as of February this year, the OSCE Academy alumni network has grown to an impressive 655 graduates.

We are excited to share the key achievements of the Academy and its alumni community throughout 2024. One of the highlights was the Annual Alumni Conference, which united scholars and enthusiasts around the theme of Economic Development of Central Asia. The event encouraged a lively exchange of ideas, bringing together not only our alumni but also experts from around the world as well as local professionals. Held on September 20-21, the Conference featured three stimulating panels on Anti-Corruption, Green Economy, and Digital Economy. It served as a

valuable platform for alumni to engage with these important issues and offer insightful contributions.

Aligned with our passion for continuous growth and learning, the Academy, with support from the OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek and in partnership with the Global Campus of Human Rights in Venice, successfully organized this year's Alumni Summer School. The theme, 'Women, Girls, and Children's Rights in Central Asia,' offered a unique chance for both alumni and students to explore pressing contemporary issues and expand their intellectual perspectives. The summer school took place on the beautiful shores of Lake Issyk-Kul. During the week, alumni and students had time and opportunity to establish friendships, get to know each other better, and build professional networks.

Each year, the number of our academic and professional opportunities continues to grow, thanks to the unwavering support of our long-standing partners and donors. For example, the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs offers its One-Year Stay-at-NUPI Fellowship, which enables graduates to advance their projects, enhance their analytical skills, and further professionalize their work. In 2024 two more alumni had a chance to continue their fellowships offered by NUPI. Additionally, the Geneva Centre for Security Policy awarded a MAS Scholarship for

Central Asia to one of our alumni, providing her with a unique opportunity. Our 2024 alumna, Aizhamal Dzhanibekova, began her fellowship at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy in the Fall of 2024. This year, two graduates participated in the Academy's Junior Public Officers Programme, gaining valuable experience in government agencies of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. Another alumna was selected for the Junior Teaching Fellowship Programme, allowing her to teach at one of the universities in Kyrgyzstan.

Dear readers, as you explore the pages of this magazine, we invite you to delve into the stories of achievement, innovation, and progress that define the OSCE Academy. With the continued support of our donors, the Academy's work is thriving, and we hope that our ongoing success will inspire further confidence and investment in our mission.

Dear graduates, we also thank you for your dedication, engagement and support for the activities of the OSCE Academy.

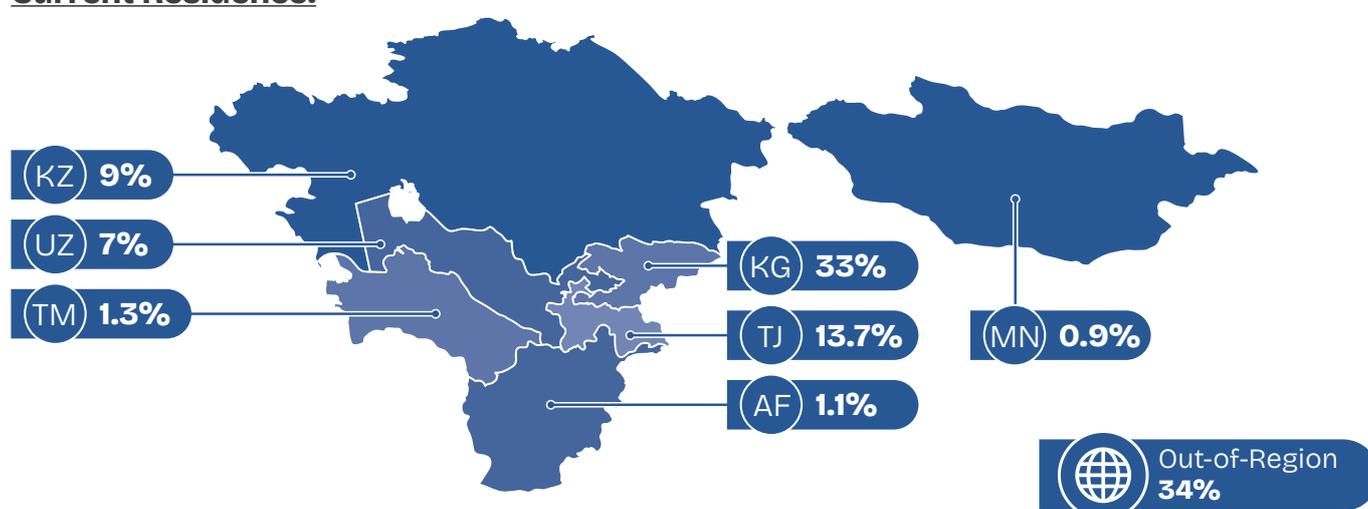
Our sincere gratitude goes to the OSCE, its participating States and especially to the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), and the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Finland, Poland, and Switzerland that specifically fund the alumni activities.

International Department Team

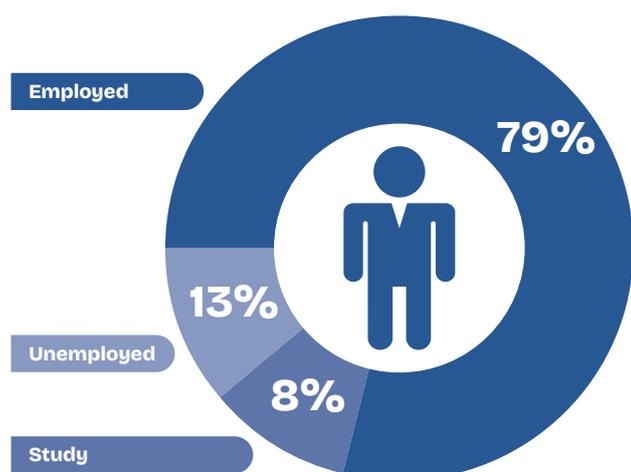
Alumni Network in Numbers

The OSCE Academy conducted its annual **alumni survey** in the first half of this year. It keeps MA graduates engaged in Alumni Network activities and delivers information about the status of their employment and professional development at this point.

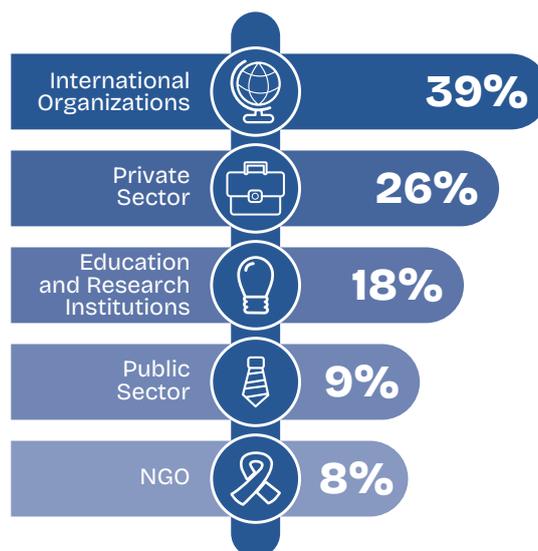
Current Residence:



Employment:



Employment by Sectors:



By 2024 the overall number of graduates is **655 (340 females and 315 males)**. According to the survey, **almost 74 per cent (54% women, 46% men)** of alumni who are citizens of one of the five Central Asian states or Mongolia live and work in the wider Central Asian region. When considering all alumni, including those from out of region and Afghanistan, **66 per cent** reside in the region. Of those who are currently out of the region, **14.5 per cent** are continuing their academic career (including PhD candidates). **79 per cent (55% women, 45% men)** of the respondents are employed, 8 per cent (37% women, 63 % men) continue their education. 36 per cent (53% women, 47 % men) of the alumni hold senior positions, such as Directors, CEOs, Heads of departments, Coordinators/Managers and Officers working for the Central Asian governments, international organisations, education institutions and NGOs. **32 graduates (32% women, 68% men)**, who chose an academic path, are currently doing their PhD.

Academy's Updates

Student Exchange of 2024

Daphné Guillerault

The OSCE Academy fosters partnerships with regional and international universities to collaborate in research and dialogue, as well as to implement exchange programmes and internships. This year, the Academy was happy to host Daphné Guillerault within the framework of a Memorandum of Understanding with the European School of Political and Social Sciences. Daphné joined the BA Programme in Economics in January for one semester.



"I spent 5 months at the OSCE Academy and I really enjoyed this experience. I am from France and I appreciated the opportunity to discover a new culture, to meet new people and to study a new topic: economics. I chose four courses: History and Geography of Kyrgyzstan, Russian, and Macroeconomics.

During my free time, I visited a few places in Kyrgyzstan such as Issyk-Kul, Son-Kul, I played kok boru, I went to a wedding, I hiked the Komosomolets with friends etc. I thank the Academy for its support and for the kindness of every person I've met there. My departure to France will be sad."



François Deguine

This year, the OSCE Academy was pleased to host François Deguine, a student from Sciences Po, the Institute of Political Studies in Toulouse, for a four-month research internship. During his stay, François assists with the ongoing research projects and other activities of the Research and Training Department, while also taking the time to explore the natural beauty of Kyrgyzstan.

"I am glad I got to spend my internship semester at the OSCE Academy. The research I have helped to conduct was very interesting for anyone who aims to deeply understand current political stakes in Central Asia. The Academy is also dynamic and I have been honored to attend many events and workshops it organized. Almadan (my Supervisor) was very involved in the research and it has been stimulating to work with her."



Alumni and Academy

Annual Alumni Conference “Economic Development of Central Asia: Anti-Corruption, Green Economy and Digital Economy”



Left to right: Dr. Maximilian Burger-Scheidlin, Senior Director, International Chamber of Commerce Austria, Dr. Indira Satarkulova, Deputy Director, OSCE Academy in Bishkek, Ms. Ekaterine Nakashidze, Deputy Head of the OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek, Mr. Colin McCullough, Senior Planning and Co-ordination Officer, OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek

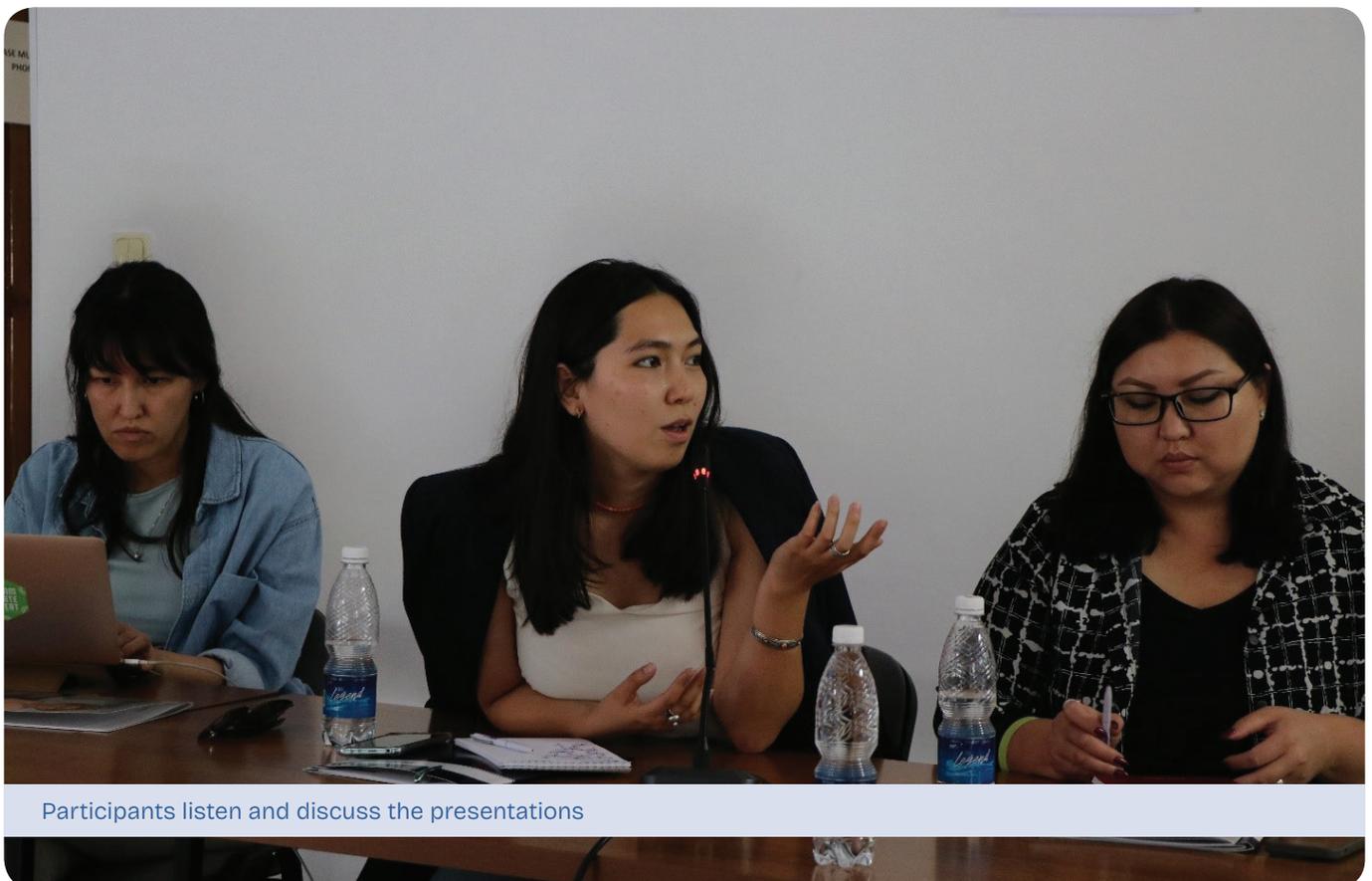
On 20-21 September 2024, the OSCE Academy conducted its annual Alumni Conference on the theme of “Economic Development of Central Asia” featuring three panels: Anti-Corruption, Green Economy and Digital Economy. During two days, participants discussed regional corruption issues and anti-corruption policies, sustainable economic practices, environmental stewardship, and addressed the way digitalization shapes and impacts the economy of Central Asia. A complementary part of the conference was the book launch “The EU as an Actor in Central Asia: External Impacts, Regional Responses” co-edited by Prof. Sebastian Mayer and Prof. Jakob Lempp.

The event was opened by Dr. Indira Satarkulova, Deputy Director of the OSCE Academy and Ms. Ekaterine Nakashidze, Deputy Head of the OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek. Dr. Satarkulova welcomed the distinguished experts, participants, guests and partners of the conference,

underlining the critical need for anticorruption measures, green economy development, and digitalization of Central Asian economies. On behalf of the OSCE Academy she then expressed words of gratitude to the Programme Office in Bishkek and the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, for their continuous support of the Academy’s Alumni Network. Ms. Nakashidze continued the opening highlighting the role of the Academy as a platform for academic dialogue and exchange, pointing out the importance of discussing the economic development within all three pillars of this conference. The conference was headlined by a keynote presentation by Dr. Maximilian Burger-Scheidlin, Senior Director, International Chamber of Commerce in Austria, on “The Commercial Approach to Anti-Corruption” Sub-Heading: “Increase Your Income, Reduce Risks – by Avoiding Corruption.” Dr. Burger-Scheidlin talked about the practical implications of anti-corruption measures, based on his experience in 85 countries.



Participants present their papers



Participants listen and discuss the presentations

The first panel of the conference on Anti-Corruption, moderated by Dr. Burger-Scheidlin, started with the presentation by Mr. Kodir Kuliev (alumnus of 2014), Adjunct Professor of Global Studies, Business, and Philosophy at Webster University in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, who spoke on “Anti-Corruption Initiatives and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Uzbekistan”. Following Mr. Kuliev’s presentation, Mr. Rasheed Qutbzadah (alumnus of 2017), joined online from Afghanistan to discuss “The Inevitable Link Between Corruption and Capitalism”. The final speaker of the first panel, Mrs. Nuripa Mukanova, the Secretary General of the Anti-Corruption Business Council under the President of the Kyrgyz Republic, covered “Kyrgyzstan’s Anti-Corruption Policy for 2025-2030”.

The second panel of the day on Green Economy was opened and moderated by Dr. Bedelbai Mamadiev, Head of the Research and Training Department of the OSCE Academy. Ms. Aria Rashidi (alumna of 2020), Microenterprise Business Counselor, International Rescue Committee in Afghanistan, started with a presentation on the “Impact of Climate Change on Economic Inequality”. This was followed by Mr. Akmaljon Abdullayev (alumnus of 2005), Project Analyst, UNDP, Uzbekistan, who spoke about “Balancing Growth and

Sustainability: Can Central Asian Fruit Production Meet Green Economy Goals?”. The third speaker of the panel, Aliaskar Adylov (alumnus of 2018), project coordinator and expert on Green Economy at GOPA AFC GmbH, presented “Energy Efficiency of Livestock Production in the Kyrgyz Republic”. The final speaker, Ms. Shoira Olimova (alumna of 2011), Community Organiser, International Accountability Project (IAP) in Tajikistan joined online and delivered a final presentation of the second panel on “The Environmental Footprint of Foreign Investments & Climate Change.”

The first day of the conference was concluded with the official launch of the book “The EU as an Actor in Central Asia: External Impacts, Regional Responses” by co-editors Prof. Sebastian Mayer, DAAD Associate Professor at the OSCE Academy and Prof. Jakob Lempp, Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences in Kleve, Germany. Part of the Palgrave Studies in European Union Politics series, the collection places an emphasis on the EU itself with its decision-making, preferences, and underlying drivers for its Central Asia policy, which have thus far remained underspecified in the literature. Four chapters on democratization, water cooperation, security provision, and EU action towards Central Asia, were presented at the event.



The Conference participants



Closing Lunch Ceremony

The second day of the conference was centered on the Digital Economy, and moderated by Dr. Burulcha Sulaimanova, Senior Lecturer, OSCE Academy. Mr. Daniel Dushmanov (alumnus of 2016), Senior Community Specialist, EPAM Kazakhstan, opened the panel with an online presentation on “Empowering Developers: Key Role in Digital Transformation”. The second speaker, Ms. Gulzhan Begeyeva (alumna of 2017), Research Assistant Funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation, Kazakhstan, presented on “Social Justice Going Viral: Charity and Digital Activism in Kazakhstan.” Tinatin Osmonova (alumna of 2020), International Expert, OSCE Mission to Montenegro explored the topic of “Defining and Advancing the Digital Economy in Central Asia: The Case of Kyrgyzstan.” Mr. Medet Suleimen (alumnus of 2013),

Programme Officer, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Kazakhstan discussed “The Attempt to ‘Green’ Nuclear Energy in Kazakhstan”. The final presentation was delivered by Dr. Rashid Gabdulhakov (alumnus of 2013), Assistant Professor, University of Groningen in the Netherlands, on “Understanding Media Landscapes and Practices Beyond Big Cities in Central Asia”. At the end of each session, participants could engage with the speakers in an open discussion shedding light on further insights and perspectives on the panel topics.

The Conference was generously funded by the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs – the OSCE Academy’s distinguished donor, partner and member of the Academy’s Board of Trustees.

Alumni Training

OSCE-DCAF Summer School: Human Security and Climate Change



From 1 till 5 July 2024 the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC), the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities (OCEEA) jointly with the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF) and the OSCE Academy conducted a Summer School on Human Security and Climate Change. Academy graduates from Central Asia, Mongolia and Afghanistan learned about the principles of a well-governed security sector, including a specific focus on the security implications stemming from climate change in Central Asia as a risk-multiplier for instability in the region. Together with the OSCE and DCAF experts, participants touched upon the holistic nature of Security Sector Governance/Reforms (SSG/R) and addressed matters of human security, with a specific focus on the nexus between climate, envi-

ronment, and security in high mountain areas, as well as how to address related issues through a gender-equality lens. This year the School was held in the Chunkurchak Gorge and included a field trip to the Ala-Archa Gorge to gain first-hand experience on the concrete consequences of climate change and environmental degradation.

The course was co-funded through the OSCE extra-budgetary projects “Support, capacity-building and awareness-raising for Security Sector Governance and Reform (SSG/R) within the OSCE: Phase III” and “Strengthening Responses to Security Risks from Climate Change in South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia”, as well as DCAF and the OSCE Academy, with support from the OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek.



Alumni/Student Summer School on Women, Girls and Children's Rights in Central Asia

On 10 June 2024, the OSCE Academy in Bishkek, with support of the Global Campus of Human Rights in Venice and Right Livelihood, launched its Alumni/Student Summer School at the picturesque lake Issyk-Kul, Kyrgyzstan, focused on "Women, Girls, and Children's Rights in Central Asia." The Summer School brought together graduates of the Academy's MA programmes, as well as students of the MA Programme in Human Rights and Sustainability from Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan aiming to expand their expertise in human rights.



Trainers of the Summer School

Throughout the week, 20 participants engaged in in-depth sessions with Prof. Dr. Anja Mihr, MAHRS Academic Supervisor; Prof. Elvis Fokala, Programme Manager, the Children's Rights Unit & Global Campus of Human Rights; Dr. Barbara Strasser, Children's Rights Project Manager, Global Campus of Human Rights, Venice, and Imke Steimann, Head of Office of the Secretary-General; Bermet Ubaidillaeva, Gender Mainstreaming Specialist,

UNDP in the Kyrgyz Republic; Aigerim Kussaiyn kyzy, Social and Gender Studies Center Researcher; and Dr. Kate Walker, Director of the OSCE Academy. The event also featured guest lectures from Dr. Sima Samar, a Nobel Peace Prize nominee and renowned human rights advocate; Ms. Ulziisureen Jamsran, UN Women Representative in Kyrgyzstan; and Ms. Karlygach Nurmanbetova, MAHRS Programme Specialist.



Participants of the Summer School

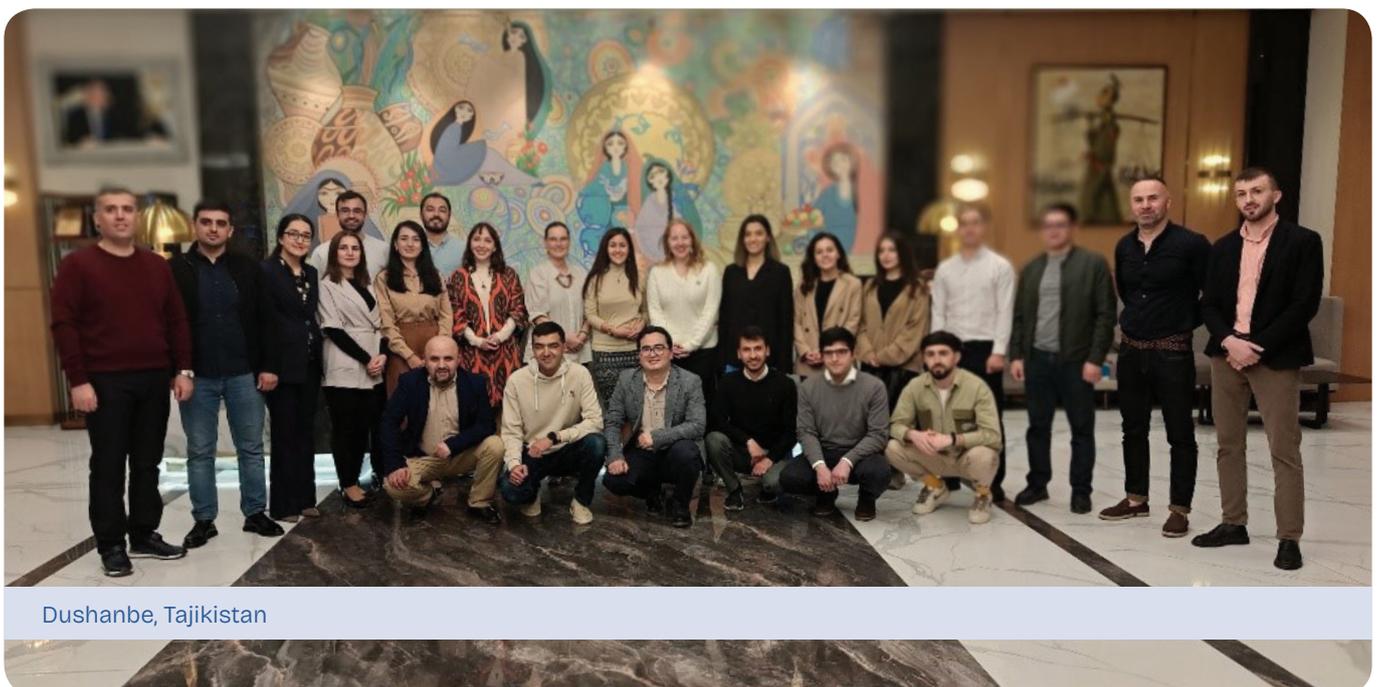
The Summer School covered a wide range of topics, including the UN Treaty-based System, gender rights and migration, the historical context of women and children's rights in Central Asia, and innovative methods for fostering these rights through artworks and critical thinking. The Summer School aimed to provide participants with insightful discussions, valuable networking opportunities, and the development of strategies to advance the rights of women, girls, and children in the region.



Trainers, Participants and Organizers of the Summer School

Alumni Chapter Meetings

On 03 April and 07 April 2024, Alumni Chapter Meetings were held in Astana, Kazakhstan, and Dushanbe, Tajikistan, respectively. The gatherings were joined by Dr. Kate Walker, Director of the OSCE Academy, and Dr. Anja Mihr, MAHRS Academic Supervisor, and served as platforms for alumni from different graduating years to network and exchange ideas. They also discussed the latest developments at the OSCE Academy, recent updates, and the notable achievements of alumni.



Alumni Achievements



Alumni of the Year 2024:

*Dilfuza Kurolova
&
Abdolvahhobi
Muminjoniyon*

Each year, the OSCE Academy celebrates the remarkable achievements of its alumni by awarding the title of **Alumnus/a of the Year**. This title is determined by the collective vote of all alumni, recognizing those who have made outstanding contributions to society throughout the year, embodying the values of the Academy.

This year, the voting process brought forward two exceptional candidates, both of whom demonstrated extraordinary dedication and impact in their respective fields. After a careful and thoughtful consideration, the Academy is proud to announce a special distinction: for the first time, the titles of Alumnus of the Year and Alumna of the Year will be awarded to two individuals – **Dilfuza Kurolova** and **Abdolvahhobi Muminjoniyon**.

Both Dilfuza and Abdolvahhobi have shown unwavering commitment to promoting positive change and advancing the development of their communities. Dilfuza Kurolova has been a passionate advocate for human rights and civil society in Uzbekistan, tirelessly working to defend women's rights and ensure greater freedoms for all. Meanwhile, Abdolvahhobi has played a key role in fostering cultural ties between Central Asian nationals who live and work in Vienna, Austria, contributing to the strengthening of regional cooperation.

In recognizing both of them this year, the OSCE Academy honors not only their individual achievements but also the collective impact they have had in shaping a more just, peaceful, and interconnected world. Their work exemplifies the values of service, leadership, and commitment to societal progress, making them both truly deserving of this esteemed recognition.

We had the privilege of speaking with Dilfuza Kurolova and Abdolvahhobi Muminjoniyon to gain deeper insights into their paths to success, the challenges they have faced, and the motivations that drive their dedication to making a positive difference in the world.



Let's begin with Dilfuza, whose unwavering commitment to women's rights has shaped her remarkable career in Uzbekistan:

Dilfuza Kurolova is an alumna of 2015, MA Programme in Politics and Security from Uzbekistan. Dilfuza is human rights defender (criminal and administrative cases) and professional mediator on civil and labor law cases. During 2022-2023 she was a part of her country's Senate working group on drafting the law protecting women and children from violence. And after a long fight of women's coalition inside of this group (she was a part of this coalition), finally the long-awaited law was adopted and domestic violence was criminalized in Uzbekistan. Apart from this, she actively promotes freedom of speech, association and gender equality in the country, and was admitted as top-20 most progressive Uzbekistani youth in 2023 and top-40 opinion leaders of the country in 2024.

For her distinguished fight for women's rights she was nominated by the EU Delegation in Uzbekistan and participated at the EU Visiting Program in 2024, a high-level tailor-made program where she visited the EU Parliament in Brussels and Strasbourg, the Venice Commission and the European Court of Human Rights. In 2023 she became Asia Global Fellow representing the CIS among other 13 participants around the globe, and researched human rights in Asia at Hong Kong University. In 2024, she passed her Bar exam and got the license on criminal and administrative cases, yet she still provides free legal consultations to GBV-victims.

Dilfuza, you are famous within our Alumni Network for your continuous contribution to researching Human Rights in Uzbekistan and beyond. Tell us how you came to realize you wanted to study this particular field.

I am grateful for the recognition reflected in such a high valuation; it is truly appreciated. My journey began many years ago, rooted in a deeply personal experience when my family endured severe injustice. Since then, I have had no tolerance for any form of unfairness. My interest in human rights grew during my time at law school, where I engaged deeply with issues concerning fundamental rights and freedoms. However, during an internship within Uzbekistan's judiciary system, I was confronted with the reality of pervasive corruption and systemic human rights violations.

At that time, advocating for human rights was particularly hazardous due to the prevailing political regime. Nonetheless, witnessing these injustices only strengthened my resolve to take meaningful action, as I have always been a person driven by deeds, not just words. Gradually, I found

the confidence to speak publicly about these issues and became involved in professional human rights initiatives.

A pivotal moment came in 2020, when I faced severe online harassment from radical religious groups. This experience galvanized my commitment to advancing women's rights and addressing gender-based violence in the country.

What supports you in these uneasy tasks?

I am profoundly grateful to my family—my husband, parents, siblings, and especially my daughter, who means the world to me. I also extend my gratitude to my friends, who support me even during moments when I may not be at my best. Most importantly, I am deeply committed to the impact of my work, particularly in promoting human rights and gender equality both in our society and across the region.

Today, my efforts have a global reach, and I focus on incorporating a human-centric approach into every project I undertake. While the challenges are significant, I firmly believe that no goal is unattainable.



This has become a rather traditional question by now – what role did the OSCE Academy play in your professional or perhaps even personal life?

The OSCE Academy has had a profound impact on both my personal and professional life. On a personal level, it introduced me to friends who eventually led me to meet my husband, himself an alumnus of the Academy. As such, the Academy holds a special place in my heart, almost like a member of my family.

Professionally, the Academy imparted one of the most crucial skills for any human rights defender: the ability to question everything and piece together a comprehensive understanding before drawing conclusions. This skill has been invaluable throughout my career, aiding me in negotiations with government representatives, collaboration with civil society organizations and activists, and engagement with the international community.

Moreover, I owe my first offer from an international organization to the Academy. My future supervisor explicitly mentioned that being an OSCE Academy graduate signified strong analytical abilities and proficiency in English writing. Reflecting on my decision to apply in 2014, I am grateful for the life-changing experience the Academy provided.





Abdulvahhobi Muminjoniyon is an alumnus of 2019, MA Programme in Economic Governance and Development from Tajikistan. He has impressed us with his efforts and enthusiasm in strengthening friendship among Central Asians who work at various International Organizations in Vienna. For example, he organizes informal “Plov meetings” at the OSCE and UN headquarters in Vienna. Abdulvahhobi was the initiator of the first Nawruz celebration in the OSCE Secretariat in 2023, also the first post-pandemic social gathering for staff, which further inspired other Central Asians and turned it to an annual celebration at the office. He also actively organized the Nawruz celebration in 2024 at the UN Headquarters in Vienna, as well as other cultural events in Austria involving musicians and dancers from Central Asia.

Despite an escalation of violence and conflict on the Tajik-Kyrgyz border, he and other Tajikistani OSCE Academy alumni who work in Vienna actively participated at the picnic on the bank of the Danube organized by the Kyrgyz Embassy in Austria and Kyrgyz compatriots in Vienna. We think that such actions and above-mentioned activities play an important role in peacebuilding among Central Asians. It is also known from his social media page that he is very active in sports. He regularly takes part in marathons related to social topics, e.g. such as against gender-based violence. During his studies at the OSCE Academy, he inspired many students to join running events in Bishkek and Almaty, and now it has become a good habit for many alumni.

Abdul, this year you received the award of Alumnus of the Year, what does that mean to you? And what role has the OSCE Academy played in your life?

Receiving the Alumnus of the Year award is an incredible honor that signifies not only personal achievement but also recognition of the values and principles instilled in me during my time at the OSCE Academy. This award reflects my commitment to applying the knowledge and skills I gained there to contribute positively to society. The OSCE Academy has been a pivotal part of my journey; it provided me with a robust academic foundation in economic governance and development, as well as invaluable networking opportunities with peers and professionals from diverse backgrounds. The faculty’s mentorship helped shape my critical thinking and analytical skills, which are essential in my current endeavors. Overall, this award serves as a reminder of my responsibilities to uphold the Academy’s mission and inspire future generations of students.

You are one of the most energetic and active OSCE AiB graduates and many alumni know you well by plenty of activities that you lead. Could you tell us your secret of vitality and constant strife for success?

My vitality stems from a deep passion for my work and a genuine desire to make a difference in my community. I believe that staying engaged with various initiatives—whether through volunteering, participating in workshops, or leading projects—fuels my energy levels. Setting clear goals helps maintain focus and motivation; I break down larger objectives into manageable tasks, celebrating small victories along the way. Additionally, surrounding myself with like-minded individuals who share similar aspirations creates an inspiring environment that encourages continuous growth. I also prioritize self-care practices such as regular exercises, mindfulness, and maintaining a healthy work-life balance, which are crucial for sustaining long-term energy and enthusiasm for my pursuits.

Let us talk about your OSCE Academy experience. What are your most precious memories from those times?

My time at the OSCE Academy is filled with cherished memories that shaped both my personal and professional development. One standout moment was participating in a simulation exercise on conflict resolution where we



Plov gathering of Central Asians at "Vienna International Centre"

had to negotiate peace agreements among conflicting parties—a practical application of our theoretical learning that was both challenging and rewarding. Another highlight was engaging with guest speakers from various fields who shared their insights on real-world issues; these interactions broadened my understanding of global dynamics significantly. Additionally, forming lifelong friendships with fellow students from different cultures enriched my perspective on international cooperation and collaboration. These experiences not only enhanced my academic journey but also fostered a sense of belonging within a vibrant community dedicated to making an impact in our respective fields.

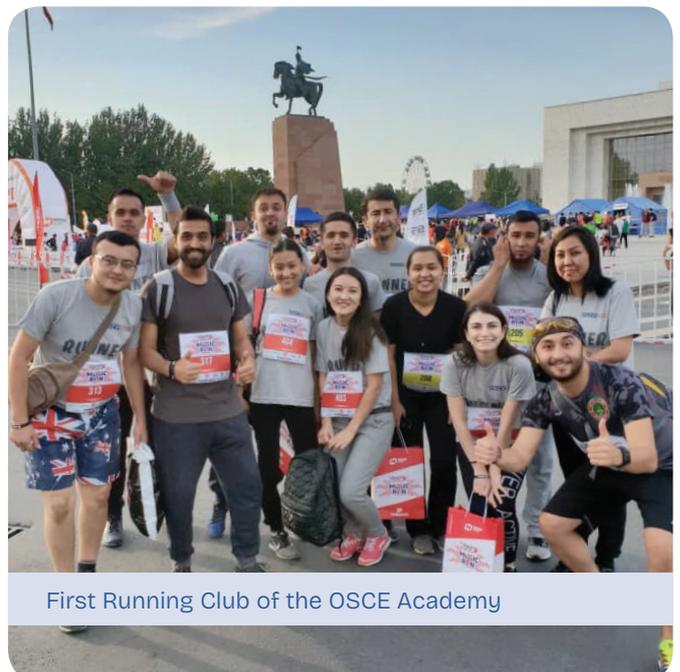
What are your aspirations for the future?

Looking ahead, I aspire to leverage my education and experiences to influence policy-making processes related to international security and human rights advocacy effectively. My goal is to work within organizations that focus on conflict prevention and resolution while promoting sustainable development initiatives in underrepresented regions. Furthermore, I am passionate about mentoring young professionals entering this field; sharing knowledge and fostering new talent is vital for creating impactful change in society. Ultimately, I envision myself contributing to global dialogues that address pressing challenges while advocating for inclusive policies that empower marginalized communities worldwide.

Finally, what would you like to advise our graduating class? Any professional tips?

To the graduating class, I would emphasize the importance of staying curious and open-minded as you embark

on your professional journeys. Embrace every opportunity for learning—whether through formal education or experiential learning—and don't hesitate to seek mentorship from those who have walked similar paths before you; their insights can be invaluable as you navigate your careers. Networking is equally crucial; build relationships across various sectors as these connections can lead to unexpected opportunities down the line. Lastly, remain resilient in facing challenges; setbacks are often stepping stones toward greater achievements if approached with determination and adaptability. Remember that your contributions matter—stay committed to making a positive impact wherever you go!



First Running Club of the OSCE Academy

Alumni Success Stories: Honoring Academic and Career Achievements

In this chapter, we celebrate the inspiring journeys of three exceptional OSCE Academy alumni who have made significant contributions in their respective fields. One has built a distinguished career advocating for gender equality, driving change and empowering marginalized voices. Another has successfully completed a PhD in Political Science, furthering his expertise in the complex dynamics of global diplomacy and foreign policy. Together, their stories reflect the Academy's mission to nurture leaders who make meaningful impacts in the world. Their achievements not only demonstrate personal determination and academic excellence but also highlight the diverse paths that OSCE Academy graduates take in shaping a more just and informed global community.

Shamima Oshurbekova is an alumna of the 2016, MA Programme in Politics and Security from Tajikistan

Shamima Oshurbekova, an outstanding alumna of the OSCE Academy, has made remarkable achievements in her academic and professional journey, dedicating herself to the empowerment of refugee and migrant voices, with a particular focus on women. Throughout her career, Shamima has been recognized for her leadership, resilience, and commitment to social change, earning prestigious honours such as the Civil Society Leadership Award (CSLA). Today, she continues to make a significant impact as a key advocate for refugees at the Ismaili Cultural Association in Paris, where she works to enforce the voices and rights of displaced communities. Her story is one of passion, dedication and tireless pursuit to make a positive difference in the world.

Shamima Oshurbekova's success story is a testament to her resilience, commitment to gender equality, and dedication to advocating for marginalized voices. With a background in international development, gender studies, and communications, Shamima has continuously leveraged her skills and education to make a meaningful impact across international and regional contexts.

After completing her MSc in International Development at Sciences Po Paris - where she was named a Student of Honor in the PSIA Class of 2023 - Shamima further honed her expertise in gender studies and project management. Her academic journey is marked by numerous achievements, including earning the prestigious Civil Society Leadership Award (CSLA) and excelling in her studies at the OSCE Academy in Bishkek, and KIMEP University in Kazakhstan. This strong foundation enabled her to take on impactful roles with prominent organizations, including the Aga-Khan Foundation, Geres, and UNFPA, as well as an internship with the OECD. In these roles, she led initiatives to



combat gender-based violence, enhance energy efficiency, and promote economic development across Central Asia.

In her current role as a Resource Officer with the Ismaili Cultural Association in Paris (an affiliate of AKDN), Shamima supports the integration of refugees in France, drawing on her extensive experience in cross-cultural understand-

ing and communication. She applies this expertise in her work with "AGENCY: Vote With Her," a project aimed at elevating the voices of migrant women in the European Parliament elections of 2024. This initiative, led by the European Network of Migrant Women (ENOMW) and femLENS, has trained over 50 women from 14 EU countries in storytelling and advocacy using tools like photovoice. Shamima's campaign exhibition in Paris, which took place on March 9, was a powerful demonstration of how documentary photography can bring visibility to shared experiences, hopes, and challenges among women with migrant backgrounds.



Shamima's advocacy work extends to sharing her story and expertise in global platforms such as TEDx and the European Gender Equality Forum. Her TEDx talk in Naryn, Kyrgyzstan highlighted the importance of cultural diversity and adaptation - a theme she resonates with deeply as a native of Khorog, Tajikistan. At the European Gender Equality Forum (December 10-11, 2024), she is scheduled to speak on a panel titled "Through Our Eyes: Young Migrant Women's Experiences in the EU," where she will share her insights and personal experiences, hoping to inspire and engage policymakers and the broader community. She has also addressed gender equality topics in multiple forums, including a John Smith Trust workshop on "Engaging Men and Boys to Tackle Harmful Gender Norms" in 2023, Central Asia Talks in 2021 where she discussed "Today's Self-Made Women in Central Asia: Traditions and Reality," and an OSCE Academy workshop in Bishkek in 2018, where she presented on gender issues in Central Asia.

Shamima's work is far from over, and her journey continues to inspire a new generation of advocates and changemakers who, like her, are driven by a vision of equity and inclusion.

Shamima's Changemakers AGENCY Project campaign:



Lasha Kantelashvili is an alumnus of the 2018, MA Programme in Politics and Security from Georgia

Lasha Kantelashvili, an accomplished alumnus of the OSCE Academy, has built an impressive academic and professional path in the field of political science. After completing his studies at the OSCE Academy, he went on to pursue a PhD in Political Science at Caucasus International University, further deepening his expertise in the realm of foreign policy and international relations. Lasha's academic journey has been shaped by his strong foundation in foreign policy within the framework of the OSCE, and his work continues to contribute to the ongoing dialogue on global security and diplomacy. His commitment to advancing knowledge in this critical area is a testament to his dedication and passion for international relations.

“Before discussing my academic pursuits, it is essential to highlight a rather unusual fact: I am the first and only individual from Georgia to study at the OSCE Academy, a distinction of which I am very proud. After graduating from the OSCE Academy, I returned to my home country and, in 2020, commenced my PhD in Political Science at Caucasus International University, the same institution where I obtained my bachelor’s degree.

While I possess a strong desire to pursue advanced academic qualifications, my intention has always been to engage comprehensively with the topics reflected in my Master’s Thesis. My exceptional learning experience at the OSCE Academy, enriched by highly qualified professors and a stimulating environment, solidified my commitment to the field of Political Science.

In my dissertation, I explored the foreign policies of the European Union and the United States within the framework of the OSCE, particularly concerning post-Soviet conflicts. I firmly believe that the primary purpose of research is to convey the truth and uncover facts and events for those who read our works or listen to our presentations. This is precisely what I aimed to accomplish, and I believe I did so successfully.

Georgia, located at the crossroads of European and Asian civilizations, has historically attracted significant interest from foreign actors. Understanding their genuine foreign policy objectives and discerning the realities behind their political narratives may seem like an insurmount-



able challenge. However, I successfully completed my research marathon, largely due to the research skills I acquired at the OSCE Academy. To even consider pursuing a PhD, initiating research, and successfully completing it, the OSCE Academy has played a pivotal role, for which I am sincerely grateful. Each time I return to Bishkek, I feel as though I am returning to my second home.”

Alumni Initiatives

Alumni Success Stories: Giving Back to the Academy

In this edition of the SalamAlum magazine, we are proud to highlight the remarkable contributions of our alumni who continue to make a positive impact on the OSCE Academy. Their dedication to advancing the Academy's mission and supporting future generations is truly inspiring. Two of our alumni have returned to teach, sharing their expertise with current students and enriching their academic experience. Additionally, one of our distinguished alumnae launched a course and generously allocated a free spot for a recent graduate, exemplifying the spirit of mentorship and support within our alumni community. These acts of giving back are a testament to the enduring bond between the Academy and its graduates.

Javlon Juraev is an alumnus of 2017, MA Programme in Economic Governance and Development from Uzbekistan

At the OSCE Academy, our community is not just about learning—it is about fostering connections among its members. We are proud when our graduates return to contribute in various capacities, whether as lecturers, experts, or mentors who support our students and recent graduates. Javlon Juraev is one of our dedicated Academy alumni. For two years he taught Economics to our undergraduate students and left only positive impressions and feedbacks of him.

“In economics, the concept of 'human capital' refers to the skills and qualifications of a nation's workforce. I believe it is one of the key drivers of a country's long-term economic prosperity. In my view, investing in education—particularly higher education—is the most valuable commitment a nation can make for its future.

With this perspective, I am proud to contribute to the development of human capital in Central Asia through my work as an educator. Over the past two years as a lecturer in the Economics BA programme at the OSCE Academy, I have witnessed firsthand the immense untapped potential among youth in the region. My students are passionate and driven, each motivated by a unique desire to study economics. Yet, they all share a common goal: they are not satisfied with the current living standards in their countries, and they aspire to be agents of positive change.

I hope I was able to meet my students' expectations by providing the high-quality education they deserve. Throughout this experience, I too have learned a great deal from them. Together, we have demonstrated that delivering top-tier education in Central Asia is not only possible but also met with enthusiasm. The students have shown themselves to be fully capable of embracing new—and often complex—ideas with openness and determination.”



Begimai Abdraeva is an alumna of 2015, MA Programme in Economic Governance and Development from Kyrgyzstan

Begimai Abdraeva has returned not as a student, but as a teacher—bringing her knowledge, experience, and passion for education back to the place that helped shape her professional path. Now teaching an Accounting class at the OSCE Academy, she embodies the spirit of giving back, showing that the Academy's impact extends far beyond graduation day. Her journey reflects the values of learning, mentorship, and the profound impact of education in shaping both personal and professional futures.



BA Students met Nurlan Alymkulov, Senior Backend Developer at Consensys, during their Accounting class, taught by Begimai Abdraeva

“In 2015 I graduated from the OSCE Academy with an MA in Economic Governance and Development. Since then I worked on different international projects and since 2017 I started my teaching career. I joined the OSCE Academy last academic year as a part-time Professor of the Accounting class.

As a proud alumna of the OSCE Academy’s EGD Programme, stepping back into the classroom—not as a student but as a faculty member—has been a truly rewarding experience. My time at the Academy was life-changing. It gave me a solid foundation in economics and governance, but more importantly, it nurtured my curiosity and passion for teaching.

Now, I have the privilege of teaching bachelor’s students in courses like Accounting, and Money and Banking. Every time I stand in front of my students, I’m reminded of

my own journey here. Teaching isn’t just about sharing knowledge—it’s about inspiring young minds, just as my professors once inspired me.

I’m especially proud to see how the OSCE Academy has evolved over the years. The launch of the new bachelor’s programme is such an exciting milestone. It’s opening doors for students from developing countries to access world-class, internationally recognized education. Watching this growth and being part of it makes me feel hopeful for the future of education in our region.

For me, being both an alumna and an educator at the Academy is something truly special. It’s a full-circle moment that I’ll always cherish—a chance to give back to the place that shaped me while contributing to the next generation of leaders.”

Assel Mussagaliyeva-Tang is an alumna of 2005, MA Programme in Politics and Security from Kazakhstan

Now we are thrilled to highlight the initiative of Assel Mussagaliyeva-Tang, who is now the Founder of EDUTech Future, an early-stage bootstrapping edtech startup in Singapore. Assel has established a full scholarship for aspiring students and alumni of the OSCE Academy to undergo courses at EDUTech Future.

One such beneficiary is Akylai Otkulbek kyzy, a recent graduate of our MA Programme in Politics and Security. With Assel's support, Akylai has started her journey into data analytics through the Break into Tech APAC programme. Here Akylai shares her experience.

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In Assel's own words:

"Throughout my life, I benefited a lot from scholarships. I explored the world through diverse cultures, meeting beautiful people, and learning about their lives and hopes for the future.

In 2021, I started my tech career and never looked back.

Peter Drucker said, "Culture eats strategy for breakfast." Sadly, many people and organisations struggle to build and nurture healthy workplace environments. I was lucky to be at Microsoft to follow my dreams and ambitions with freedom to be myself. People innovate in inclusive and psychologically safe environments, and most of us grow to become entrepreneurs.

I started EDUTech Future in August 2023 with full support from my colleagues and friends in the big tech community, coming from Microsoft, Google, AWS, Disney, IBM, SAP, and others. All of them, including my ex-boss, volunteered as jury members, guest and panel speakers, interviewers, and dedicated mentors - and I will never forget that.

Some of them came forward and sponsored Break into Tech scholarships - thank you Liz Butowicz, Eliza Quek, and Eleonore!

Now it is my time to give back to Asia. I have been doing so for 3+ years and will continue to educate and uplift our communities. We are a people-first, and business-second company.

In October 2023, the Ministry of Education Singapore appointed EDUTech Future as the Industry - School Partner, and I am proud to contribute to Singapore's nation-building efforts.

I am thankful to the OSCE Academy for the support, love, and incredible friendship since Day 1 as an MA student in Politics and Security. We forged lifelong friendships at the Academy and have been keeping in touch all these years!"



Assel Mussagaliyeva-Tang

Alumni Opportunities

Junior Public Officers (JPO) Programme

In support of the professional integration of alumni in the public service, starting from 2010 the OSCE Academy has run a Junior Public Officers Programme. This Programme provides an opportunity to the OSCE Academy's graduates from Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan to intern at the Ministry of Economy and Commerce of the Kyrgyz Republic, the National Investment Agency under the President of the Kyrgyz Republic, the Personal Data Protection Agency under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Kyrgyz Republic, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

In 2024 overall two alumni conducted their internships in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan:

Nurzhan Baetova, an alumna of 2024 from Kyrgyzstan at the National Investment Agency under the President of the Kyrgyz Republic

"During my JPO assignment, I significantly enhanced several key skills. My communication skills improved through managing official correspondence and translating materials between English and Russian, ensuring clear and effective communication with various stakeholders. I developed strong research and analytical skills by conducting in-depth studies on trade and investment cooperation, which supported strategic decision-making. My ability to create concise and informative memos and accurately document meetings with detailed minutes enhanced my organizational and documentation skills. Additionally, I honed my event planning and coordination abilities by assisting in organizing business forums. I also strengthened my problem-solving and adaptability skills by overcoming coordination challenges and managing information overload effectively. Overall, these experiences contributed to my professional growth in investment attraction.

Building on the skills and knowledge gained during my JPO assignment, I plan to pursue a career in international economic development, focusing on attracting foreign investments and fostering economic growth in developing regions. My goal is to work with international organizations where I can leverage my expertise in investment promotion, public-private partnerships, and economic analysis to create a favorable investment climate and support sustainable development initiatives."





**Tokzhan Atenbekova, an alumna of 2024 from Kazakhstan
at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan**

"My recent internship at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan provided a transformative experience in the world of diplomacy, where I worked directly under Ambassador-at-Large Alua Nadirkulova on special assignments. This opportunity gave me the chance to actively participate in policy analysis, diplomatic event coordination, and international law research, allowing me to immerse myself in the day-to-day workings of high-level international relations.

One of my core responsibilities was drafting analytical reports on pressing socio-political issues. These projects required extensive research, analytical thinking, and the ability to present insights in a clear and structured manner. I also worked closely with the Ministry's leadership on sensitive issues surrounding human rights, drafting response notes and conducting country-specific analyses that contributed to Kazakhstan's position on global platforms.

In addition to analytical skills, my role involved managing diplomatic correspondence, event planning, and public relations tasks. I prepared speeches, translated diplo-



matic notes, and coordinated events, which allowed me to develop my organisational abilities and an eye for detail. One of the highlights was working with international organisations and coordinating communications on topics related to children's rights, civil society, and women's empowerment in Kazakhstan. Attending seminars and roundtable discussions with officials from France and other countries exposed me to diverse perspectives and deepened my understanding of cross-cultural diplomacy.

This internship was not only a professional milestone but also a personal growth experience. Ambassador Nadirkulova's mentorship provided me with invaluable guidance, especially as I began exploring further academic opportunities. Her support allowed me to gain a clearer vision of my academic and career aspirations, which include further research on international legal frameworks and socio-political issues impacting Kazakhstan.

Reflecting on my time at the Ministry, I am profoundly grateful to the OSCE Academy for this opportunity, as well as to my mentors and colleagues for their unwavering support. This experience has solidified my commitment to a career in diplomacy and international law, and I am excited to continue building upon the skills and insights I gained during my time at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs."



Junior Teaching Fellowship (JTF) Programme

Universities across Central Asia are faced with the challenging job of providing quality education. The OSCE Academy in Bishkek being at the forefront of academic and research excellence in the region tends to bridge this gap by combining the Academy's graduates' potential and knowledge and delegating them to teach a course at local universities, the Academy could not only empower regional student communities but also help prepare stronger applications for the admission period at the OSCE Academy.

"Teach for Central Asia" aims to target regional universities and send Academy graduates to teach selected disciplines (relevant to the Academy's curriculum, e.g. Academic Writing, International Relations, Economics etc.). The programme is intended to further grow and foster the Academy's intellectual input into the region, and empower the Academy's alumni network by giving them the opportunity to become the agents of change in their communities.

One of the OSCE Academy alumni has successfully started the JTF Programme in Fall 2024. Below you can read about his current programme experience.

Nursultan Abdilov

Nursultan Abdilov is an alumnus of the 2017, MA Programme in Politics and Security from Kyrgyzstan. Nursultan is teaching the 'Introduction to Academic Writing' course at the Kyrgyz State University I. Arabaev, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

"As an alumnus of the OSCE Academy, I am privileged to share my knowledge with students at Arabaev University in Bishkek. Through the Junior Teaching Fellow (JTF) Programme, I guide third-year students in honing their writing skills. The programme offers a valuable opportunity for alumni to share their expertise with state university students, who are the future leaders and agents of change. I chose to teach a writing course because I believe that strong writing skills are essential for future professionals. Despite the advancement of AI and platforms like ChatGPT, the ability to write well will never become obsolete, even for those outside academia. Highly developed writing skills have always been and will continue to be in demand across various fields. As an instructor at Arabaev, my primary focus is to have students write as



many essays as possible, following a structured approach. This preparation is crucial for their future careers in academia and beyond. While most students already possess solid writing abilities, some may struggle to articulate their ideas in a well-organized essay. However, I have witnessed significant progress among students since the beginning of the semester. Teaching at the university has illuminated the importance of not only mastering the subject matter but also embodying a genuine commitment and sense of responsibility essential for effective teaching. I take pride in having studied at the OSCE Academy, where all instructors exemplify these qualities. I am grateful to the OSCE Academy for supporting me and other alumni in enhancing state university students' knowledge and skills through the JTF Programme."

One-Year-Stay at NUPI Fellowship

In 2024 two more alumni had a chance to continue their fellowships offered by the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI): Gavkharkhon Mamadzhanova, alumna of 2021 of the MA Programme in Economic Governance and Development, and Dastan Bekmuratov, alumnus of 2023 of the MA Programme in Politics and Security. Gavkharkhon and Dastan's fellowships have been extended for one more academic year due to their excellent academic performance. This Fellowship is exclusively targeted at the alumni of the OSCE Academy. This stay is an add-on to the MA degree from the OSCE Academy, and the purpose is to further prepare the two successful applicants for work in international affairs or continued study/research by deepening their practical and academic experience.

The Fellowship at NUPI is considered as a one-year add-on to the MA from the OSCE Academy in Bishkek. It appears, however, that few OSCE students and alumni are informed about the fabulous opportunities this fellowship grants. As opposed to the education process at the Academy which logically is focused more on theoretical and descriptive knowledge, the NUPI fellowship is almost entirely oriented on the acquisition of practical skills such as digital literacy, problem-solving, and critical thinking that many employers would ask about at job interviews. In addition, working at NUPI presents a wonderful opportunity to dive into a multi-cultural work environment, that too in Scandinavia, an experience that will look good not only on paper but also in daily life interactions. And, finally, the lucrative opportunity to get published in leading peer-reviewed journals is a wonderful start-up for one's academic career with potential of admission to the world's leading universities—if one plays one's cards right. All in all, life in Norway itself is a very pleasant experience, it is reinforced by close contact with top-notch scholars at NUPI and other organizations in Oslo. Without a degree of hesitation, we recommend applying for the NUPI Fellowship for anyone authentically interested in the post-modern world of research and academia.

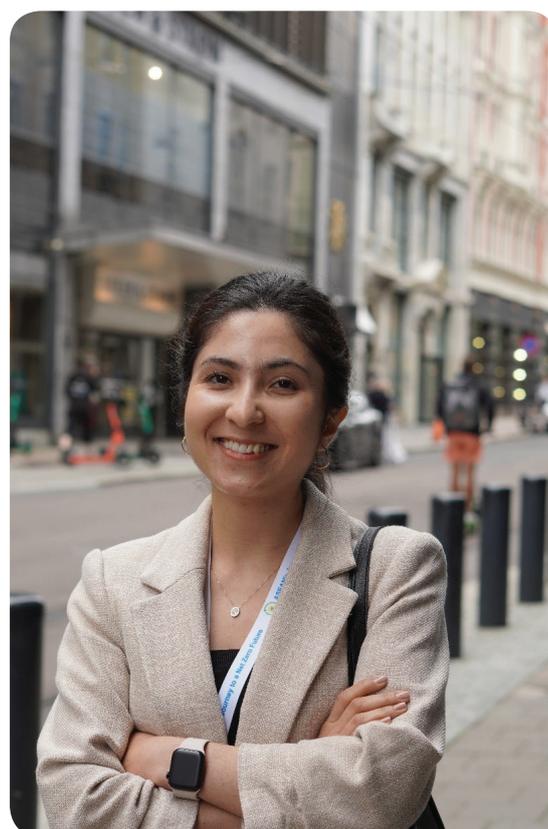
Here Gavkharkhon and Dastan shortly describe their second-year experience at NUPI.

Gavkharkhon Mamadzhanova

"In 2024, our fellowship was extended for an additional year due to outstanding work performance and delays related to the funding application.

The second year at NUPI greatly enriched my research experience, marked by numerous events that significantly contributed to my professional and personal growth. Beyond my daily responsibilities, I assisted in the organization and participated in key initiatives such as the NEXTRUSH project kick-off seminar in Bodø, Norway, the ASEAN Climate Change and Energy Project Phase II: An Energy-Climate Study Visit to Norway and Germany, and the ADB CAREC energy study tour in Oslo, Norway. Moreover, in collaboration with my colleagues, I co-authored two reports published by IRENA: "Constructing a Ranking of Critical Materials for the Global Energy Transition" and "Critical Materials for Renewable Energy: Improving Data Governance". Additionally, I was given an opportunity to attend a summer school on "Modelling and Forecasting Energy Markets". These activities not only expanded my local and international network but also deepened my practical knowledge in the energy sector.

The NUPI fellowship provides a unique platform for engaging in research and developing valuable skills in international affairs. I highly recommend this programme to the OSCE Academy alumni, as it can greatly benefit their academic and professional pursuits."





Dastan Bekmuratov

“My first-year research fellowship at NUPI was productive and fruitful and was prolonged for one more year. During the first year I was mainly involved in writing reports on critical minerals for energy transition in collaboration with the International Renewable Energy Agency and in 2024 our joint works were finally published. The second period was full of new insights. Since the beginning of 2024, I have been writing an article on national climate financing mechanisms with, Ida Dokk Smith, a senior researcher at NUPI. The work is still in progress. Additionally, I closely interacted with the interns from the OSCE Academy and worked on water scarcity issues in Central Asia. The results of this work were presented to the ambassadors of Finland, Norway, and Sweden in Central Asia.

Moreover, I had an opportunity to participate in the summer school on the scientific basis of energy transition organized by the physics department of the Autonomous University of Barcelona which enriched my social science background with insights from the physics perspective. That allowed me to look at the energy transition from a different angle. This fellowship programme offers a good opportunity for professional growth and a nice working environment at NUPI allows you to explore the fields that are specifically interesting for you. I thank my supervisor Indra Øverland for his constant support and professional guidance, and Elisabeth Librekt Olsen, for her administrative assistance during this period of my life. Lastly, I am sincerely grateful to Gavkharkhon Mamadzhanova for her companionship and support throughout this long period and to the OSCE Academy for providing me with this opportunity.”



MAS at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy

Every year one of the graduates of the OSCE Academy receives a European Scholarship for Central Asia to study at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP) and the Global Studies Institute (GSI) of the University of Geneva. In 2024 Aizhamal Dzhambekova, alumna of 2024 of the MA Programme in Politics and Security was accepted to strengthen her skills and knowledge in security studies.

“As I sit in the heart of International Geneva, surrounded by the bustling activity of over 36 international organizations and 400 NGOs, 2400 conferences held yearly I can't help but feel a sense of awe and excitement. I'm currently enrolled in the Leadership in International Security executive masters program at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP) in partnership with the University of Geneva, and it's been nothing short of transformative.

The programme is a melting pot of experience and wisdom. My classmates and I collectively bring over 400 years of security expertise to the table. Some have been in the field for more than three decades, while others, like myself, are building on a solid foundation of about 15 years. This diversity of experience creates a rich learning environment where we're not just taught – we learn from each other.

What sets this programme apart is its practical approach to leadership in international security. We are not just discussing theoretical concepts; we're engaging in real-time security dialogues that shape global policies. The curriculum is designed to reflect the current security landscape, addressing emerging challenges and evolving threats.

One of the most valuable aspects of this experience is the network we're building. Beyond the classroom, we're forging friendships and professional connections that will undoubtedly play a crucial role in future international cooperation. In a world where conflicts are on the rise, these relationships become instrumental in building lasting peace.

I am particularly excited about bringing the voice of Central Asia to these discussions. As a participant from this region, I feel a responsibility to enrich the dialogue with our unique perspectives and experiences. I'm filled with gratitude for the opportunities that have led me here. I am particularly thankful to the OSCE Academy for providing such a valuable stepping stone, and especially to Dr. Anja Mihr and Dr. Pal Dunay, whose support and motivation were instrumental in pushing me towards further academic and professional growth.

The programme goes beyond traditional learning methods. We are not just passive recipients of information; we're active participants in the security dialogue. Whether it's attending high-level conferences or engaging with Heads of International Organizations, Ambassadors of numerous states and Swiss government officials, we are at the forefront of international security discussions. As I navigate through this programme, I'm constantly reminded of why I embarked on this security journey years ago.



The GCSP executive masters is not just a degree; it's a gateway to becoming a part of the global security community. It's about developing the skills and network to make a real difference in the world. Every day brings new insights and challenges. One moment we are dissecting complex geopolitical issues, and the next, we're applying leadership principles to real-world scenarios.

In conclusion, my participation in this executive masters programme is not just about personal growth; it's about ensuring that the voice of Central Asia is heard and understood in shaping global security policies. It is about bridging the gap between regional realities and international strategies. As we face an increasingly complex security landscape, the inclusion of diverse viewpoints, including those from Central Asia, is not just beneficial – it is essential for crafting effective, inclusive, and sustainable global security solutions.”



Aizhamal Dzhanibekova with Helga Maria Schmid, Secretary General of the OSCE



Alumni Grant

The OSCE Academy Alumni Network, with the support of the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, offers travel grants to qualified OSCE Academy alumni to support their professional and academic development. This year, Davron Ishnazarov and Nurlan Kabdylkhak was awarded the Alumni Travel Grant in recognition of their academic and professional achievements.

Davron Ishnazarov is an alumnus of 2014, MA Programme in Economic Governance and Development from Uzbekistan



“In August 2024, I had the privilege of participating in the Doctoral School on Asian and Comparative Regionalism, jointly organized by the United Nations University Institute on Comparative Regional Integration Studies (UNU-CRIS) (Belgium), Airlangga University (Indonesia), the International School of Economics at Maqsut Narikbayev University (Kazakhstan), and the International Forum on the Future of Constitutionalism (North America). This opportunity was made possible by a generous Alumni Travel Grant from the OSCE Academy in Bishkek.

As I near the completion of my PhD thesis and continue working on its theoretical foundations and innovative aspects, this event was particularly enriching. It provided an excellent platform to present my research findings to renowned scholars, researchers, and peers in the field of comparative regionalism. During the panel and plenary sessions, I had the pleasure of expanding my professional network and exchanging ideas with notable scholars, such as Philippe De Lombaerde, Ikboljon Qorabayev, Lurong Chen, and Lelio Iapadre, among many other esteemed participants.

The interdisciplinary nature of the event brought together researchers specializing in various regions and aspects of comparative regionalism. Although my research focuses on the Political Economy of Regionalism in Central

Asia, with a particular emphasis on its interactions with regions such as South Asia, West Asia, Southeast Asia, and North Asia, as well as the influence of global superpowers on regional foreign policy formation, I found the presentations on legal aspects of regional cooperation and case studies on ASEAN, Mercosur, as well as other Latin American regional initiatives particularly insightful.

I recall participating in the inaugural summer school held online by these institutions in 2021, along with various international and regional conferences and workshops in the field of regional studies during my PhD journey. While international relations and comparative politics dominate the discourse in comparative regionalism, a more holistic and inclusive analysis could emerge by integrating cultural dimensions, such as “thick description,” alongside in-depth economic analysis. My first experience with interdisciplinary studies was in 2014, during the MA Programme in Economic Governance and Development at the OSCE Academy in Bishkek. In addition to standard courses on economics, the programme offered modules focusing on regional political, social, economic, and environmental challenges. Through all these experiences, I am increasingly convinced that incorporating more Area Studies perspectives is crucial for advancing the field of regional studies and social sciences as a whole.”

Nurlan Kabdylkhak is an alumnus of 2009, MA Programme Politics and Security from Kazakhstan

“On November 21-24, I participated in the 56th annual convention of the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies (ASEEES), held this year in Boston, MA. ASEEES is the largest and leading international organization dedicated to advancing scholarly knowledge about Central Asia, the Caucasus, Russia, and Eastern Europe. This year’s convention drew over 2,800 scholars from around the globe, representing various academic disciplines, and featured more than 600 sessions and events.

I presented my paper at the panel session “Tsarist and Muslim: Islam and State in Central Asia,” which I co-organized with a colleague. My paper, titled “Voices of the Faithful,” examined how tsarist Muslims navigated the preservation and expansion of their religious institutions amidst growing Islamophobia in late imperial Russia. Specifically, I explored the narrative strategies that Muslim communities used in their communications with the tsarist government. These strategies included expressions of loyalty and patriotism toward the Russian empire – frequently invoking the tsar by name and offering prayers for his “august royal family” – and strategic references to tsarist stereotypes, contrasting “naïve Kazakhs” with other Muslim communities in Central Asia. Furthermore, I challenged the view that tsarist Muslims were isolated from state structures. My research demonstrates that they were not only well-informed about the latest political developments in Russia but also adept at navigating the complexities of the tsarist bureaucracy, leveraging this knowledge to their advantage.

Our panel attracted a large audience that packed the conference room and active-



ly engaged in the post-presentation discussion. I received several thought-provoking questions and insightful comments, which will be invaluable as I further develop this paper into a dissertation chapter. My dissertation, currently in progress at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, explores the history of Muslim religious institutions on the Kazakh steppe under Russian rule. Participating in the ASEEES convention was an exceptional opportunity to share my research with scholars in the field and gather constructive feedback during this critical phase of my writing process.

I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to the OSCE Academy for supporting my research and for its exceptional work in maintaining a vibrant and active alumni network.”

Class of 2023-2025

MA Programme in Politics and Security



**Ahmad
Qasemy**

Afghanistan



**Aibek
Abdyvasiev**

Kyrgyzstan



**Aibek
Akchokoev**

Kyrgyzstan



**Aida
Yessimova**

Kazakhstan



**Alisher
Aripov**

Uzbekistan



**Alisho
Qonunov**

Tajikistan



**Assylbek
Assylkhanov**

Kazakhstan



**Dana
Soltangazimova**

Russian Federation



**Dana
Ubaidolla**

Kazakhstan



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Tsoi**

Kyrgyzstan



**Dilnaz
Kabysheva**

Kazakhstan



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Uraimova**

Kyrgyzstan



**Hilolov
Qadam**

Tajikistan



**Karina
Efimova**

Kyrgyzstan



**Muhayo
Abdulmajidova**

Tajikistan



**Nasiba
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Tajikistan



**Nazerke
Mukhamediya**

Kazakhstan



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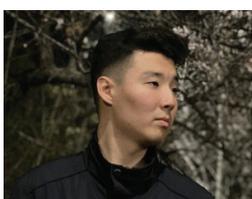
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Mirbozkhonova**

Tajikistan



**Salima
Abdumomun kyzy**

Kyrgyzstan



**Sanjar
Sopukeev**

Kyrgyzstan



**Shirin
Kimsanova**

Kyrgyzstan



**Tolgonai
Alaibekova**

Kyrgyzstan



**Tolgonai
Elemanova**

Kyrgyzstan



**Yasin
Khamosh**

Afghanistan

MA Programme in Economic Governance and Development



**Aina
Zhakypbekova**
Kyrgyzstan



**Aizat
Sabyrbek kyzy**
Kyrgyzstan



**Aizhamal
Duishonbekova**
Kyrgyzstan



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Kyrgyzstan



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Madymarova**
Kyrgyzstan



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Kyrgyzstan



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Kyrgyzstan



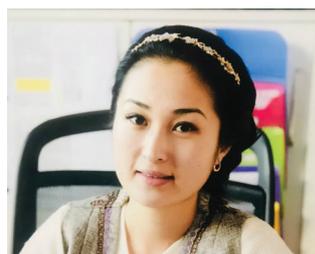
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Ashurova**
Tajikistan



**Baqir
Khawari**
Afghanistan



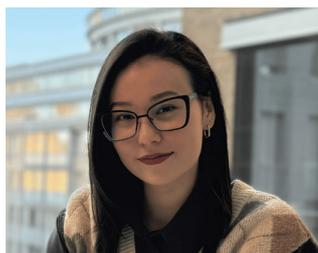
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Bapieva**
Kyrgyzstan



**Gulzhamiila
Orozobekova**
Kyrgyzstan



**Hadisa
Gigoeva**
Tajikistan



**Kamila
Beishembaeva**
Kyrgyzstan



**Kurmanbek
Mambetov**
Kyrgyzstan



**Sabrina
Gulmamadova**
Tajikistan



**Zohirsho
Rahmatshoev**
Tajikistan

Master of Liberal Arts in Human Rights and Sustainability (MAHRS)



**Aibike
Bekzat kyzy**
Kyrgyzstan



**Akylai
Tenizbaeva**
Kyrgyzstan



**Alina
Salakhunova**
Kazakhstan



**Beka
Tiulegenova**
Kyrgyzstan



**Ilya
Lomakin**
Russian Federation



**Javad
Mohammadi**
Afghanistan



**Jyldyz
Sarieva**
Kyrgyzstan



**Pokiza
Juraeva**
Uzbekistan



**Uulzhan
Bekturova**
Kyrgyzstan



**Zuhaylo
Zulfova**
Tajikistan

Welcome New Alumni



OSCE ACADEMY IN BISHKEK

1A, Botanichesky pereulok
720044 Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic
Tel: +996 312 54 32 00 (ext. 117)
E-mail: alumni@osce-academy.net