

PILOT PROJECT: COURSE ON HEALTH DIPLOMACY

22 May 2006 – 06 September 2006

Belgrade – Online – Geneva

By

Eva Tanner

Mina Mudric

Roberta Ritson

1. INTRODUCTION

Health Diplomacy is the last in a series of courses (the others included Internet Governance, Humanitarian Law and Human Rights) organised by DiploFoundation (Diplo) and the Diplomatic Academy in Belgrade with the support of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. The central aim of Diplo has been to provide distance-learning courses in diplomatic studies, particularly for those from countries with limited financial and human resources.

Diplo over the years has combined its expertise in online course delivery with traditional face-to-face teaching to create its “blended learning” methodology. In this project, *Health Diplomacy*, Diplo has linked the study of traditional diplomatic studies with global health issues. With the world’s focus on international health measures, such as the global responses to epidemic diseases, starvation, lack of access to appropriate drugs and the global economic effects of such diseases as SARS and Avian Flu. It is crucial for countries to provide training for their health care workers and government officials alike on --the interplay and implications of diplomatic and multilateral processes on health.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) identify specifically three goals in health with several others addressing the social determinants to health. In order to advance in the achievement of the MDGs by 2015, there must be a concerted effort at all levels to improve the access to healthcare information. In addition, health issues may often lead to innovative openings in conflict resolution and peace building. Using “health as a bridge to peace” has allowed international organisations, governments and other important actors to provide health and humanitarian assistance in conflict situations, and, in turn, contributing to the peacebuilding processes. Many countries, for example, have seen warring factions stop their fighting temporarily in order for vaccine drives to be conducted.

At the international level, health is intricately related with labour, human rights, trade, and intellectual property. With Geneva being the diplomatic base for discussions of these global issues with UN specialised agencies (such as ILO, WHO, OHCHR, UNHCR, WTO and WIPO), it is a natural meeting point for practitioners, researchers, experts and officials to come together to share their knowledge and experience. With the importance of Geneva in humanitarian and health related fields, its importance as a centre for in-depth meetings and discussions regarding specialised research in health care cannot be overstressed.

The particular project discussed here concentrated on Serbia, a country in transition, which has an excellent pool of health workers and officials, but which lacks the opportunity to send them to learn and interact internationally. By concentrating on research as a means of training and capacity building, participants were able to work in-depth on specific issues relevant to Serbia and, in turn, to produce well-researched portals available for public use in policy debates and objectives.

1.1 Course Objectives

The course discussed here had a number of objectives:

- to include participants from diverse backgrounds in a multi-stakeholder approach to understanding the international aspects of health care;
- to facilitate awareness building in Serbia of international health care;
- to increase participant understanding of the multilateral processes involved with health crises and issues, and their relationships with national and regional health policies;
- to link the field of diplomatic studies with health issues.

The course included several unique features:

- a methodology combining knowledge acquisition and skills transfer;
- a focus on international aspects of health;
- a multi-stakeholder approach involving various actors in the training phase;
- an organisation of the course in three phases (Belgrade – online phase – Geneva).

1.2 Topics Covered During the Course

The course included a number of topics:

- International and National Communicable Disease Control – Threat of Flu Pandemics
- The Growing Mental Health Epidemic
- Emergency and Essential Surgical Care – International Collaboration
- Consequences of NATO Bombing on the Environment
- Health of Ageing Populations and Economic and Political Impact
- Health Financing
- Complying with International Standards in Food Safety
- Women's Health
- Prevalence of Health
- Violence and its Health Impact
- The Role of International Organisations and Governmental Institutions in Fighting HIV/AIDS
- Cardiovascular Disease as a Phenomenon of Non-Communicable Epidemiology Threat
- Private/Public Mix in Health Care
- Environmental Health - Air Pollution
- Health Systems – Reform/Development and Health Policy
- International Co-operation on Humanitarian Emergencies and Disasters, National Strategy on Disasters
- Health Tourism in Serbia - The Significant role of Diplomacy
- Monitoring and Evaluation of National Response on HIV/AIDS

2. LECTURES/STAFF

NAME	ROLE
Mr Aleksandar Đukić	Introductory Workshop: Public Diplomacy
Dr. Dejana Vuković	Introductory Workshop: Public Health Strategies in South Eastern Europe
Dr. Dev K. Ray	Introductory Workshop: International Fora: WHO, UN, WTO, ILO / Policy Making at WHO Financing: Current Situation in Countries; Private/Public Mix; Insurance International Trade and Health International Health and Policy Making Overview of Health Situation and WHO International Health Issues: Avian Flu Human Resources: Current Situation, Brain Drain Online Phase: Mentoring participant research projects
Mrs Eva Tanner	Project Development and Coordination Conception, development and Geneva phase
Dr. Jelena Milić	Introductory Workshop: Risk Management Online Phase: Academic and technical guidance
Ms Mina Mudrić	Coordination: Introductory Workshop, online phase, and Geneva phase
Mr Nikola Krstić	Introductory Workshop: Introduction to Online Learning
Mr Vladimir Radunović	Introductory Workshop: Introduction to Online Learning

3. PARTICIPANTS

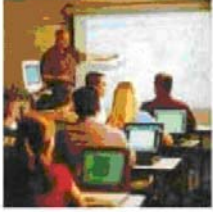
3. 1 Initial List of Participants at the Introductory Workshop in Belgrade

NAME	ORGANISATION	SECTOR
Ljubiša Perišić	Ministry of Health, Republic of Serbia	Government
Dragana Stojanović	Emergency Medical Centre, Zrenjanin	Government
Maja Sandić	Food Inspection Reform Project	NGO
Marija Petrović	Medical Faculty, University of Belgrade	Academia
Ana Božanić	Medical Faculty, University of Belgrade	Academia
Marina Milutinović	Faculty of Economics, University of Belgrade	Academia
Tijana Plećaš	Clinical Centre of Serbia, Surgical Clinic-Emergency Room	Government
Oliver Bačlić	Medical Faculty, University of Belgrade	Academia
Danka Forcan Jovović	Private polyclinic “Ristic”	Private/ Business
Vesna Dadić Živojinović	Institute of Public Health	Government
Zoran Vesić	Health Insurance Fund	Government
Sanja Dimić	Medical Faculty, University of Belgrade	Academia
Irena Stanojević	Ministry of Health, Republic of Serbia	Government
Farida Bassioni Stameniće	Institute of public Health of Serbia “Dr. Milan Jovanović Batut”	Government
Tanja Novaković	Galenika Pharmaceutical Co	Business
Aleksandar Bojović	Institute of public Health of Serbia “Dr. Milan Jovanović Batut”	Government
Rastko Radoičić	Belgrade Open School	NGO
Olivera Todorović	Faculty of Biology, University of Belgrade	Academia
Ivana Drulović	Institute of Orthopaedic Surgery and Traumatology	Government
Milutin Delić	Medical Faculty, University of Belgrade	Academia
Viktor Ognjenović	“Bel Medic” General Hospital	Private / Business
Mirjana Dejanović	Private polyclinic “Ristic”	Private / Business
Jovana Vujasinović	Health magazine “Viva”	Media
Vesna Tomić Spirić	Clinical centre of Serbia, Institute for Allergology and Immunology	Government
Vesna Petković	People-to-People Health Foundation	NGO

3. 2 “The Geneva Group” (selected participants for study visit to Geneva)

NAME	ORGANISATION	SECTOR
Mirjana Dejanović	Private polyclinic “Ristic”	Private / Business
Dragana Stojanović	Emergency Medical Centre, Zrenjanin	Government
Maja Sandić	Food Inspection Reform Project	NGO
Ivana Drulović	Institute of Orthopaedic Surgery and Traumatology	Government
Marija Petrović	Medical Faculty, University of Belgrade	Academia
Ana Božanić	Medical Faculty, University of Belgrade	Academia
Sanja Dimić	Medical Faculty, University of Belgrade	Academia
Tijana Plećaš	Clinical Centre of Serbia, Surgical Clinic-Emergency Room	Government
Oliver Bačić	Medical Faculty, University of Belgrade	Academia
Danka Forcan Jovović	Private polyclinic “Ristic”	Private / Business
Vesna Dadić Živojinović	Institute of Public Health	Government
Tanja Novaković	Galenika Pharmaceutical Co	Business

4. COURSE PROGRAMME

<p>BELGRADE PHASE May 22 - 25</p> 	June – July	Aug. 27 – Sept. 6
Physical Presence	Online Learning	Geneva Phase
<p>Face-to-face learning</p> <p><i>Objectives:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) introduction to the course methodology b) introduction to the main subjects c) community building and the development of a group spirit d) acquisition of necessary skills for the course 	<p>Conducted via Internet</p> <p><i>Includes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) knowledge building b) skills acquisition 	<p>Skill improvement activities (based on knowledge acquired in the previous two phases)</p> <p><i>Includes:</i> observation and participation in the <i>Geneva Forum – Towards Global Access to Health</i>; visits to international organisations and NGOs involved in international health and humanitarian care</p>

4. 1 Introductory Workshop - Belgrade Phase

The introductory workshop was held at the Diplomatic Academy in Belgrade. The opening session was attended by Prof. Đerđ Matković, Deputy General Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Dev Ray, Project Manager in the Staff and Leadership Development, WHO (retired), Ms Mirjana Milosavljević, Assistant Director of the Diplomatic Academy of the MFA, as well as representatives of DiploFoundation in Belgrade.

DATE	ACTIVITY
22 May 2006 – Monday	
09.00 – 10.30	Official Opening
10.30 – 11.00	Course introduction: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of lecturers and Diplo team • Course objectives and methodology
11.00 – 12.30	Overview of Health Situation and WHO (Dev Ray)
12.30 – 14.00	Lunch Break
14.00 – 15.30	International Health Issues: Avian Flu (Dev Ray)
15.30 – 16.00	Coffee Break
16.30 – 17.30	International Fora: WHO, UN, WTO, ILO; Policy-Making at WHO (Dev Ray)
23 May 2006 – Tuesday	
09.00 – 10.30	Human Resources: Current Situation, Brain Drain (Dev Ray)
10.30 – 11.00	Coffee Break
11.00 – 12.30	Financing: Current Situation in Countries, Private/Public Mix, Insurance (Dev Ray)
12.30 – 14.00	Lunch Break
14.00 – 15.30	Public Health Strategies in South Eastern Europe (Dr. Dejana Vuković)
15.30 – 16.00	Coffee Break
16.30 – 17.30	International Trade and Health (Dev Ray)
24 May 2006 – Wednesday	
09.00 – 10.30	International Health and Policy-Making (Dev Ray)
10.30 – 11.00	Coffee Break
11.00 – 12.30	Discussion on research topics of interest (Dev Ray)
12.30 – 14.00	Lunch Break
14.00 – 15.30	Risk Management (Dr. Jelena Milić)
15.30 – 16.00	Coffee Break
16.30 – 17.30	Risk Management (Dr. Jelena Milić)
25 May 2006 – Thursday	
9.00 – 10.45	Exercise – group work
10.45 – 11.00	Coffee Break
11.00 – 12.45	Exercise – group work
12.45 – 14.00	Lunch Break
14.00 – 15.30	Public Diplomacy (Aleksandar Đukić)
15.30 – 16.00	Coffee Break
16.00 – 18.00	Closing Session (Dr. Jelena Milić)

4. 2 Online Research Phase

During the online research phase, participants were guided throughout the research process, which resulted in the development of a series of portals on health issues selected by the participants.

The calendar of activities during the online phase:

DATE	ACTIVITY
02 June 2006	Completing and Posting Portal Structures
20 June 2006	First Official Check
10 July 2006	Second Official Check
21 July 2006.	Final Review Date
23 July 2006	Selection of participants for the Geneva Phase

The internet phase was an exceptional learning experience, and I am deeply grateful to the Diplo Foundation for enabling me to learn using portal making for a research project. It was a phase that included the most work for the participants, but it was definitely worthwhile. I found this phase excellent because it offered freedom, inventiveness and the opportunity to research topics of our personal preference, for we solely chose the research topics. The mentorship throughout this phase was of enormous assistance

Ms Maja Sandić

Personally, this was unique experience, completely different from traditional approach to research, that I am used to. It is more creative, allows easier gain of information throughout research and permanent possibility to innovate and up-date. Also, mentor has insight view during every phase of portal development (research), which diminishes influence of time-consuming mentor to student consultations on time progress of research. I would like to see that research principle prevail over the traditional one.

Sanja Dimić MD, MSc

4.3. Geneva Phase

Based on performances demonstrated throughout the introductory workshop and the online phase, twelve of the best participants were selected to take part in the Geneva Phase. This Phase involved study visits to selected international organisations and to relevant non-governmental humanitarian and health organisations such as the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC), Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Federation. In addition, participants attended the first Geneva *Forum – Towards Global Access to Health*.

5. RESEARCH PROJECTS

The research projects and related portals that were created were quite varied and are available publicly.

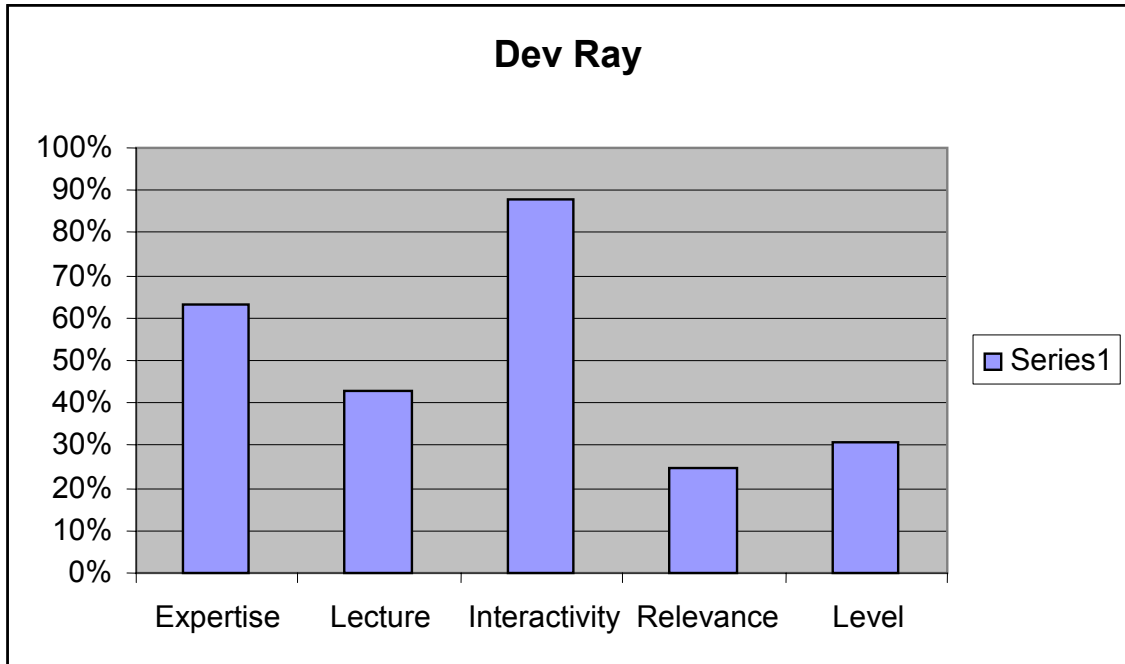
Ana Božanić Substance Abuse as a Public Health Issue http://textus.diplomacy.edu/Textusbin/portal/Ghome.asp?IDspace=98
Dragana Stojanović Natural Disasters – International Cooperation in Prevention and Alleviation of Consequences http://textus.diplomacy.edu/Textusbin/portal/Ghome.asp?IDspace=108
Danka Forcan Jovović Private/Public Mix in Health Care http://textus.diplomacy.edu/Textusbin/portal/Ghome.asp?IDspace=114
Ivana Drulović Health Tourism in Serbia – The Significant Role of Diplomacy http://textus.diplomacy.edu/Textusbin/portal/Ghome.asp?IDspace=109
Maja Sandić Complying with International Standards in Food Safety http://textus.diplomacy.edu/Textusbin/portal/Ghome.asp?IDspace=100
Marija Petrović Health of Ageing Populations and Its Economic and Political Impact http://textus.diplomacy.edu/Textusbin/portal/Ghome.asp?IDspace=99
Mirjana Dejanović Cardiovascular diseases as a Phenomenon of Non-Communicable Epidemiological Threat http://textus.diplomacy.edu/Textusbin/portal/Ghome.asp?IDspace=113
Oliver Bačlić Influence of Diplomacy and International Interventions on National Health System Reforms and Health Policy Building http://textus.diplomacy.edu/Textusbin/portal/Ghome.asp?IDspace=107
Sanja Dimić Gender, Women and Health http://textus.diplomacy.edu/Textusbin/portal/Ghome.asp?IDspace=101
Tijana Plečaš Road Safety: Prevention, Essential Surgical Care – International Collaboration http://textus.diplomacy.edu/Textusbin/portal/Ghome.asp?IDspace=102
Tanja Novaković The Growing Mental Health Epidemics http://textus.diplomacy.edu/Textusbin/portal/Ghome.asp?IDspace=97
Vesna Dadić Živojinović Consequences of NATO Bombing on the Environment http://textus.diplomacy.edu/Textusbin/portal/Ghome.asp?IDspace=96

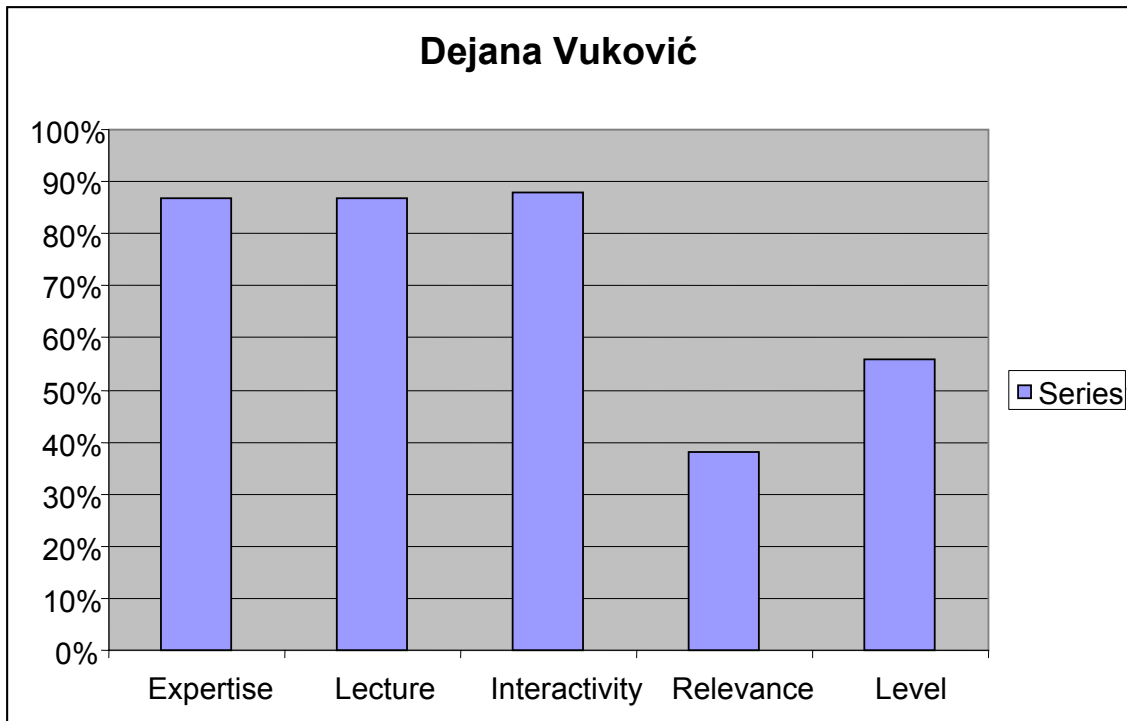
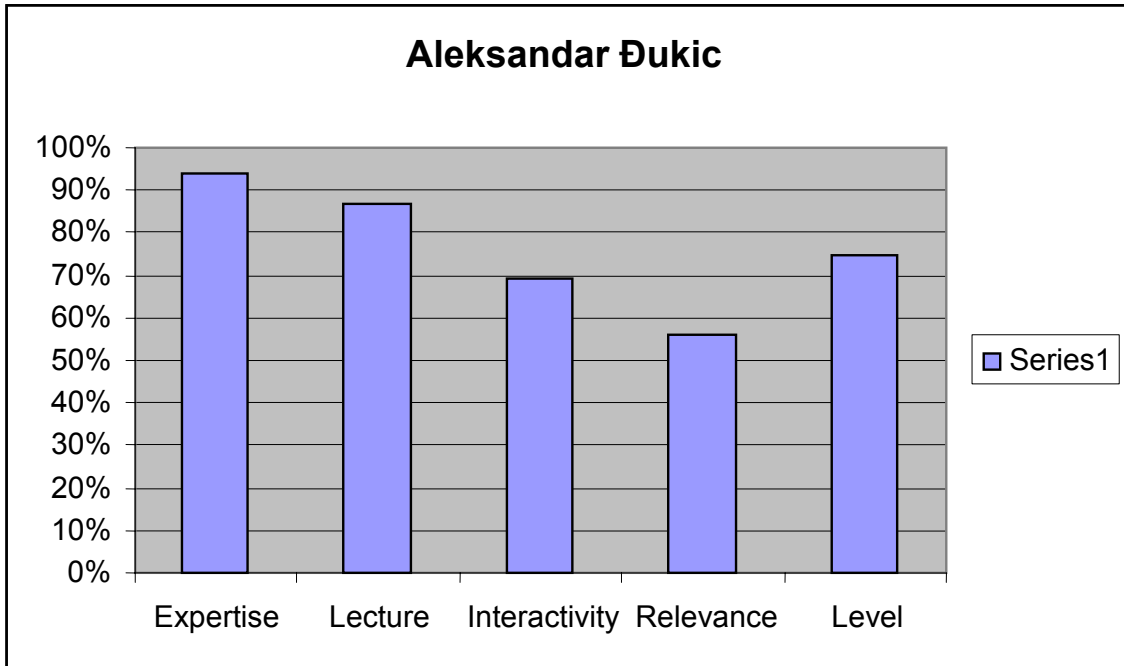
6. EVALUATION

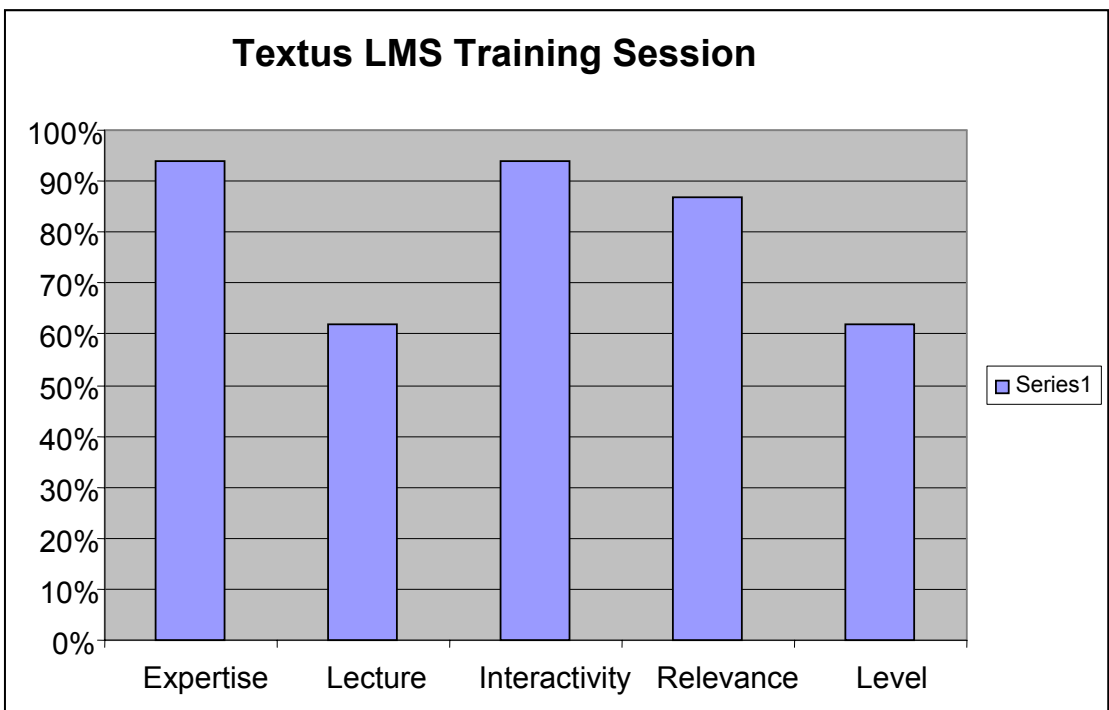
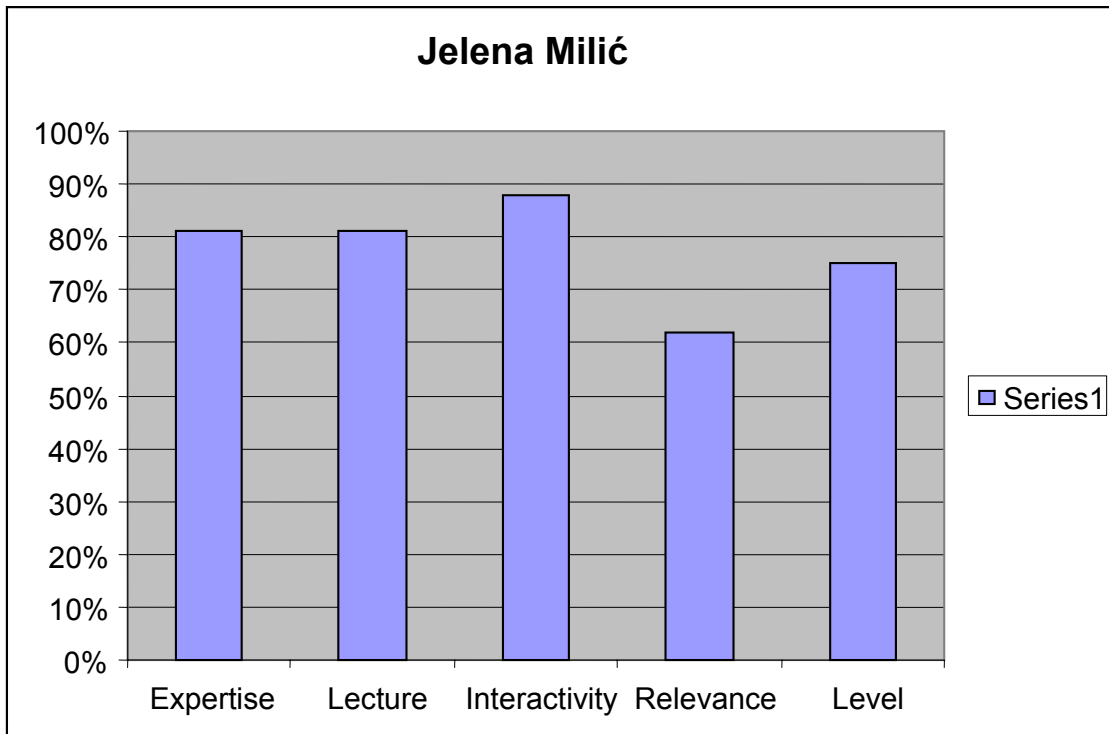
6.1 Lecturers

The following graphs represent the averaged evaluations of lecturers, collected from the participants during the Introductory Workshop. Participants used five-point scales to express their judgements about the lecturers on five relevant issues:

- **Expertise** - the level of the lecturer's expertise regarding the topic presented;
- **Lecture** - the overall quality of the lecturer's presentation;
- **Interactivity** - the lecturer's preparedness to discuss, explain, and answer questions; to what degree the lecturer was open to an interactive approach;
- **Relevance** - the relevance of material presented during the lecture;
- **Level** - the adjustment of the information to the participant's level of prior knowledge about the topic.







7. GRADUATION

On December 6, 2006, officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Serbia, the Diplomatic Academy of Serbia and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation were together to present the certificates of successful completion of the Diplo course. During this ceremony, several participants were able to present their research portals, stressing the need for greater research work on these topics and eventual implementation of the findings within Serbia. All had expressed the view of the importance of the use of the Internet in their research and, more importantly, how they are able to present their work publicly and how ICTs should be an integral part of any research programme.



Officials residing over the presentation of Diplofoundation Certificates



Presentations of Research Portals by Several Participants

8. CONCLUSION

Health Diplomacy will continue to be an important area of study, given the number of natural disasters and conflicts arising throughout the world. Diplomatic efforts in

conflict resolution and peace building is often constrained and hampered by political reasons. It is in global public health and humanitarian actions where governments and conflicting parties may be able to reach an agreement mainly because these actions are usually less politically motivated. Health-related issues can also stir the global community to action in alleviating potential health disasters and unnecessary human suffering.

Viewing the importance of health in diplomatic studies, this course was launched and conducted within six months of its inception and is a pilot project for Diplo. It has been a challenging programme, combining relevant research for Serbia in health issues and linking it with the work of such international organisation as the World Health Organization (WHO). Promotion of contacts between participants and health specialists was one of the main objectives of this course and was met successfully within the limited period of study.

Judging from the comments of the participants, the *Geneva Forum: Towards Global Access to Health* was an important event to which to expose them. The range of topics discussed at the conference was exhaustive and was an opportunity for the participants to learn and hear about work done by specialists worldwide. Seeing this, Diplo realises the need to anchor any of its blended learning courses to a major conference or meeting in Geneva or elsewhere in the world.

The research portals by the participants are excellent and are publicly accessible on the Internet. Each research topic may be further developed into its own specialised course, for example, private-public partnerships, gender issues and health, and mental health. These are areas of great interest at national, regional, and international levels, with many organisations expressing interest in collaborating and hearing more about the participants' continuing work.

Knowledge-sharing and community-building were achieved in this course. This time, capacity-building activities were directed to Serbia alone, but the prospect of broadening this course to a regional and global level should be considered. One important outcome of this project is the understanding of the role of academic study and research in examining and developing possible strategies for influencing diplomatic policies and health policy outcomes.

There are a number of possible follow-up activities to this project. One possibility would be to maintain the current group and to continue their research activities by bringing in further expert advisors to oversee and co-author their research for publication. Another possibility would be to broaden this blended learning course to a regional level, specifically to countries from former Yugoslavia. Many participants felt that this was an excellent idea to promote experience sharing and building regional partnerships in view of the region's troubled history.

In the future, more in-depth training should be done combining diplomatic studies with public health issues. By increasing the course to a six month period with a three month training period followed by a research period before a final study visit to Geneva or elsewhere. This model can be adapted to any region or groupings in the world and would help in global efforts to provide health care information to all.

Annex I

Report on the Geneva Phase of the Course

August 27 - September 6, 2006

Geneva phase

Twelve participants from the online research phase were selected to take part in the Geneva phase of the course. The candidates were selected on the basis of the quality of their research study, its relevance to health diplomacy, and its potential for strengthening Serbian national health institutions or Serbian human resources for health.

Geneva Forum: Towards Global Access to Health

The Global Forum was organised by the Geneva University Hospitals and the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Geneva, in collaboration with a number of international organisations based in Geneva, such as WHO and the ICRC, and under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland amongst many others. Broad support for the Forum was also received from such sponsors as the International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers (IFPMA), the Canton and City of Geneva, and several NGOs and private enterprises. The forum was attended by 1000 participants. During the opening session, the keynote speakers were Mme Micheline Calme Ray from the Swiss MFA, Mr. Jakob Kellenberger from ICRC and Mary Robinson, former High Commissioner for Human Rights and currently from the NGO “Realizing Rights.”

The aim of the Forum was to examine how health systems and new technologies can respond to the growing and urgent needs in global public health, in reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. The Forum’s agenda focused broadly on how to improve access to health services and technologies, and how to ensure access to essential drugs, vaccinations, clean water and sanitation, as well as health information and training. There was particular emphasis on the most vulnerable populations and the interrelationship between health and other important issues such as trade, human rights, and labour.



Geneva Forum - Opening Session

Besides the plenary sessions dealing with the issues on access to health, the Forum had parallel sessions divided into five tracks:

1. Access to Health Systems
2. Health and Inequities
3. Access to Drugs, Vaccines, and Diagnosis
4. Civil Society and Social Issues in Health
5. Capacity Building and Partnerships

All the participants attended the conference every day, hearing the twice-daily plenary sessions presented by internationally-known public health experts drawn from a range of public and private sector institutions, as well as civil society. The plenary sessions on August 31 focused on how to achieve equity in access to health, and on the framework for public/private partnerships in health. There was also a



Geneva Forum - Opening Session

plenary session with a critical overview of the role of hospitals in increasing access to health.

On September 1, the plenary session focused on global gaps in research, capacity building, and human resources, closing with a plenary presentation on the future agenda for improving global access to health.

On each day of the Global Forum, other informal, parallel sessions addressed specific strategies for improving access to health, especially for vulnerable communities. These parallel tracks covered health care financing; how to address health inequalities; improving access to drugs and neglected diseases; as well as research targets and the need for improved access to information and training in medicine and public health. The participants selected which parallel sessions they wished to attend, focused on their health research topic or professional interest. The parallel track sessions were organised on a much more informal basis and provided for dialogue and exchanges of opinion between the podium and participants. Several participants benefited from personal contact with some of the speakers, both from NGOs and public health institutions. A number of useful contacts were made, with plans for follow-up, in technical fields such as growing epidemics in non-communicable disease, and gender and health issues.

In addition to the parallel track sessions, the Global Forum also organised each day a “market place” of information stands manned by representatives of pharmaceutical companies, private health care providers, international organizations and other major players in international health. The market place concept was an excellent opportunity for the participants to network with other health professionals from a range of European and other countries including the USA, and many of the group reported on important contacts which they had made.

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

The group were shown a film called *Panorama*, which gave an overview of the international humanitarian work of the Red Cross. This was followed by a presentation by Mr. Hervé le Guillouzic, Head of the Health Services Unit, Assistance Division, who outlined the mandate and activities of the ICRC within the framework of the Geneva Conventions and humanitarian law. The presentation was followed by a visit to the Red Cross Museum.

United Nations visiting tour

A conducted and commentated tour was organised for the group, which gave an insight into the global work of the United Nations, and its role in international humanitarian and development work.

World Health Organization

A programme of presentations by WHO technical staff had been arranged, focused on health technical fields of interest to the participants, as follows:

Non-communicable Diseases and Mental Health

- Mental Health Epidemic: Dr. E.Faydi
- Substance Abuse as a Public Health Issue: Dr. I.Obot
- Cardiovascular Disease: Dr. S.Mendis
- Road Safety: Dr. M.Khayesi

Evidence and Information for Health Policy

- National Health Reforms and Public/Private Mix in Healthcare:
- Dr. P. Travis

Family and Community Health

- Gender, Women, and Health:
- Dr. C. Reis

Health Action in Crises

- Dr. Khalid Shibib

The morning presentations on technical themes were followed by informal meetings with two specialist WHO staff:

Dr. P.Travis and Dr. J.Zupan. Dr. Travis answered the many questions on health system reform and design, including case studies on the public/private mix in health care. Dr.Zupan is a Slovenian national and specialist in reproductive health who outlined her practical experiences in public health in the European Region, both with WHO's Regional Office in Copenhagen and Geneva headquarters. These sessions were opportunities to make personal contacts with WHO staff and to arrange follow-up information exchanges and support.



World Health Organisation

Health as a Bridge to Peace

Dr. Mukesh Kapila

Dr. Kapila was formerly Director of WHO's Health Action in Crises Programme and had just been appointed Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the Red Cross. Dr. Kapila described the work of health action in crises, both humanitarian disasters and conflict situations, and the concept of health as a bridge to peace. He had worked for the UK Department for International Development (DFID) before serving as UNDP's representative in crisis-stricken Sudan. As Director of WHO's Health Action in Crises programme, he had led the health response to the humanitarian disasters in several field operations.

Many of the participants had personal experience of health emergencies during the Serbian conflict and its aftermath and took the opportunity to pose searching questions relating to both ethical and practical issues in health emergencies.

US Mission to the United Nations

The group was welcomed to the US Mission to the UN by the Health Attaché, Mr. David Hohman, who spoke about his day-to-day work as a health attaché responsible for liaison with Geneva-based international organizations working in health and development. His presentation gave a diplomatic insight into the political background to his work and highlighted the importance of diplomatic skills and international co-operation between countries and their partners in dealing with health issues and policies.

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)

A presentation on the international humanitarian work of this organisation in areas of conflict, post-conflict and natural catastrophe was organised. Mr. Emmanuel Tronc, Policy Coordinator from MSF emphasised the need for the UN system, civil society, and all partners in the humanitarian and emergency relief field to co-ordinate their response to both natural and man-made disasters. The participants were particularly interested in the organisation's practical approach to field operations.

The MSF had recently launched, together with the Pasteur Institute, the Drugs for Neglected Diseases Initiative (DNDI), to improve access to essential medicines and promote research into most needed new drugs. This initiative echoed the emphasis of the Global Forum on the vital need for research into neglected diseases and essential medicines.

International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC)

The group visited the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) headquarters, where they saw a film on the international humanitarian work of the organisation. This was followed by a presentation by Mr. Lasha Gogvadze, a Georgian national who first joined Red Cross operations as a local recruit. Mr. Gogvadze is now the head of health projects at the IFRC and responsible for the coordination of IFRC work in more than seventy countries.

There was significant dialogue between the Belgrade participants and Mr. Gogvadze, as many of the participants had personal experience of working with the Red Cross operations in Serbia. The group was also particularly interested to hear about the code of conduct of IFRC staff and the neutrality and independence of its work. The IFRC was wholly funded by contributions from its member states, of which Serbia would soon become an independent member country.

Serbia Mission to the UN

The newly appointed ambassador of Serbia at the UN European Bureau in Geneva, his Excellency Slobodan Vučković, hosted our group at the end of our study visit. He was very open to discussion.

Feedback and Evaluation from Belgrade participants

Most of the feedback from the participants was positive, emphasising the opportunity of the Geneva phase for exposure to current issues and concepts in public health outside their own national frontiers. In particular, the participants appreciated the opportunity to listen to technical specialists from the Red Cross, WHO and MSF as well as the presentations in plenary from internationally recognised experts. Personal contacts were seen as particularly valuable for the participants' own professional development, as well as strengthening Serbian national health institutions.

Many participants felt that the tight schedule of meetings and presentations was relatively tiring and demanding, but worthwhile. Many would have liked greater opportunity to raise questions and exchange views with international health staff. However, the time constraints and formality of the setting did not always facilitate this.

Insights into the political background to the work of the United States Mission to the international organisations in Geneva were also very useful. The US health attaché enlightened the group on the need for diplomatic and negotiating skills while working in this context. Many of the other exchanges with international staff in Geneva also underlined the importance of international co-operation to achieve national goals. The Geneva phase of the project had clearly highlighted the need for interpersonal, communication, and advocacy skills as an important tool.

*Meeting with Dr. Jovan Kurbalija,
Director of the Diplo Foundation in Geneva*

Dr. Kurbalija led an informal dialogue with participants from the Belgrade group, giving them an insight into the concept of health diplomacy and the innovative nature of this, the first course organised by DiploFoundation on diplomacy in health. Participants in the current course were pioneers in both the format and the content of this initiative to promote diplomacy in health, and were contributing to the future direction and success of this initiative.

Dr. Kurbalija congratulated the twelve participants on the high quality of their research projects and on selection to represent Serbia during the Geneva phase. He also emphasised the experimental nature of the on-line research work using electronic portals and publicly-posted research findings. Not only the format of the health diplomacy course was highlighted, but also the need to promote the growth of a critical mass of experts thinkers who could point to the future growth and development of Serbia.

GROUP EXPECTATIONS

The group had a number of expectations. They expected to have:

- the opportunity to learn more about specific issues;
- the opportunity to meet experts and individuals with the same interests;
- the opportunity to observe the negotiation and decision-making processes at the Global Forum;
- the opportunity to experience a new country and a new culture;
- the opportunity to closely observe the functioning of UN bodies/agencies/working groups.

GROUP IMPRESSIONS

- Visits to ICRC, MSF, and WHO were very informative and concise;
- US Mission Health Attaché gave a good oversight on health diplomacy in practice.



Geneva Group

Annex II

Participants' Quotes



I have profited a great deal from the Course. I have met interesting, bright, educated people and I have been given the opportunity to listen and to be heard in various fora and organizations. I have learned a new way in using the Web, which was quite a challenge.

Ms Vesna Dadić Živojinović

Course participants benefit in numerous ways: increase knowledge and share professional experiences and information; being introduced to new research model and gain new internet skills; have insight view of work and activities of major international health actors; make valuable contacts, useful for their career goals.

Networking in the health field, new ideas and experience gained from this course can be beneficial for the country as well, considering government efforts to reform national health system in the process towards EU.

This was unique experience and I would like to thank organizers for this wonderful opportunity.



Sanja Dimić MD, MSc



I believe courses such as this one can prove to be extremely beneficial for the country since many of the activities relating to the health sector are in Serbia greatly influenced and to a large extent driven by external actors. Networking in the area of health with better articulation of national interests and coordination of efforts within the national health system reform could facilitate the accession process towards the EU. I would also like to acknowledge a very kind and hospitable attitude from the Diplo team and that I have enjoyed working with them enormously.

Oliver Bačlić MD MSc