

Good morning everybody, welcome to the Democracy Study Center at the end of its first academic year. We are privileged to have on our panel His Excellency the German Ambassador to Ukraine, Dr. Ernst Reichel, the Director of Dinu Patriciu Eurasia Center at the Atlantic Council and former Ambassador of the U.S. to Ukraine, John Herbst, Professor Ulrich Schlie, German career diplomat, historian and currently Chair in Diplomacy at the Faculty of International Relations, Andrassy University Budapest. We were fortunate enough to obtain Mrs Nataliya Gumenyuk, Head of HROMADSKE to moderate today's discussion. Sadly, Mrs Olena Zerkal due to an urgent governmental obligation is not able to participate, but has delegated Mr. Sayenko to speak on her behalf.

I would just like to say briefly that we, too, have had a dream, namely to make Our Kids Center not only benefit directly the children living here, but also young people by creating a permanent place for academic, sociopolitical education and training for them. A place where young activists and leaders in different spheres can learn from professionals, exchange ideas and create their own projects which will contribute to the democratic, economic and cultural development of their countries as a whole. That's why, with financial help from the German Foreign Office, we founded the DSC and, I must say, we are amazed ourselves at the great success we have had with it, and the high standard of the work which is being done here. We have all contributed to this success and that's why I want to say a big "thank you" to everybody who has supported us or participated here.

In particular, however, I should mention the Federal Foreign Office, without whose funding the project would never have got off the ground, zeichen zum Minister – thanks you so much, the project manager, Dr Iryna Chernysh and her management team with Yuliya Tychkivska and Alyona Permyakova, our senior fellows, Balazs Jarabik and Jens Adam, my Kyiv partner, Mykola Kniazhytsky, and Grzegorz Nocko at the Berlin end. Many thanks also to Professor Marek Belka our founding rector, our outstanding Advisory Board and to all the distinguished speakers we were fortunate to welcome here. Last but not least, my thanks go to the former project management team for recruiting such a great group of fellows from Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova and Russia. Dear fellows, it's wonderful to have you here with us today.

In the fall the DSC is organizing an international forum with the title "Pulse of Ukraine" and we are looking forward to welcoming all of you then.

Now I have the pleasure of handing over to his excellency the German Ambassador to speak to us.

Before the panel discussion starts I would like to ask one of our fellows Yuliya Kulykova to give a first-hand account of her experience here with this pilot project.

For my part, let me wish you a great day here with us today.

Barbara-Maria Monheim