

***REPORT ON***

***“METEKHI” PUBLIC UNIVERSITY***

***TBILISI, GEORGIA***  
***October 18 to 23, 2008***

**SALZBURG GLOBAL SEMINAR**

**VISITING ADVISORS PROGRAM**



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**Visiting Advisors Program**

**Summary Report of the Visit to the**  
**“Metekhi” Public University**  
**Tbilisi, Georgia**  
**October 18 to 23, 2008**

**Team Members:**

**Dr. Istvan Teplan** (Team Leader), Director-General, Hungarian Government Centre for Public Administration and Human Resource Services; former Senior Vice President, The Central European University, Budapest, Hungary

**Ms. Andrea Dee Harris**, President, East-West Executive Resource Group (EWER Group), Consulting; former Regional Vice President for the South Caucasus, The Eurasia Foundation, Washington DC, USA

**Professor Dr. Tapio Markkanen**, Professor, University of Helsinki; former Secretary General, Finnish Council of University Rectors, Helsinki, Finland

**Dr. Helene Kamensky**, Program Director, Salzburg Global Seminar, Austria

**I. Introduction**

This report is based on a series of meetings and discussions with senior university leadership, administrators, faculty members and students of the “Metekhi” Public University (hereafter referred to as “MPU” or “the University”). The University is situated in Tbilisi, the capital and the largest city in the Republic of Georgia. Tbilisi covers a territory of 726 square kilometers, with a population of more than one million. The University is located in one of the oldest and most picturesque parts of Tbilisi in the vicinity of the oldest “Metekhi” church and the magnificent “Sameba”, Tbilisi Holy Trinity Cathedral. MPU was named after the ancient “Metekhi” church by founders of the University, i.e. the Rector Prof. Dr. Manana Kirtbaia and Dr. Eka Gogorishvili.

MPU is one of the youngest private higher education institutions in Georgia. The University was established in May 2002. Since that time, MPU has developed into a dynamic, forward-looking institution. Currently it is a small higher educational (HE) establishment with a teaching staff of 85 and 1065 students. The University has links to HE institutions in several countries including University of Oradea, Romania; Zagreb School of Economics, Croatia; and the European Institute of Education (Malta), i.e. a government licensed institute, operating within the European Union. Collaboration between the “Metekhi” Public University and the European Institute of Education (EIE) resulted in the creation of the respective department within MPU, i.e. EIE International Center. The University offers double and joint degree programs with

the European Institute of Education, CNAM-International Institute of Management, Paris; and University of Nice Sophia Antipolis, France.

## **II. Visiting Advisors: Purpose of the Visit**

The MPU invited the team of Advisors to visit the University to review a variety of administrative and strategic issues selected by the university leadership. This visit has been conducted under the auspices of the Visiting Advisors Program (VAP) of the Salzburg Global Seminar, generously funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. The VAP program provides onsite consultation to rectors and presidents of universities to assist in the process of self-assessment and change. Started in 1998, the VAP has organized more than 80 visits in Central and Eastern Europe, CIS countries and the Russian Federation.

The VAP sessions included seminar-type discussions. The discussions were structured around four main themes identified by the leadership of MPU. They include:

- University Administration and Finance
- Academic Structure and Governance within the University
- The Role of University in the Emerging Civil Society; and
- Implementing the Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs: Strengthening the Role of the University as a Catalyst for Entrepreneurship and Innovation

Each theme was explored in a working group meeting lead by a working group leader from MPU. In addition, the team had a series of substantive discussions with the rector, vice-rectors, deans, department chairs, faculty members, IT staff and students.

Overall, the purpose of the Advisors' visit to MPU was to share observations and recommendations on the issues under discussion, i.e. not to perform a formal evaluation of the institution. The goal of the Team is to promote the well-being and further advancement of the University. Therefore, the visit was aimed at the exploration of University's aspirations and development plans, associated concerns and implementation strategy with the intention to provide respective advice to the rector and her team based on the solid experience of the Team members coming from different international settings.

At the end of the visit, the Team presented an oral report to the Rector Kirtbaia and her team with preliminary observation and findings. The written report elaborates on these observations and offers recommendations on specific issues that emerged as particularly relevant and timely from the point of view of the Visiting Advisors Team.

The Team would like to thank the Rector and the entire MPU staff, particularly, Professor Dr. Erekle Astakhishvili, for a very well organized visit and for the extraordinary hospitality. Ms. Maka Khvedelidze, the Head of the International Department, and her colleagues, took care of all the organizational details very efficiently. The social events and cultural program, including the tour of a historic city of Tbilisi, was most pleasant and informative, and provided a very special possibility

to become acquainted with the unique national culture of Georgia, the hospitable people, and gorgeous natural setting. The Advisors Team thanks all members of the University who contributed with their engaged participation in the discussions toward a very productive and most enjoyable experience.

### **III. Mission and Vision**

#### Mission Statement

The Team found that MPU has a relevant mission statement; however, the Team believes that MPU should articulate more clearly a statement of its core mission.

Effective mission statements should be concise and as specific as possible, outlining in a very few sentences: 1) the main goal of the organization 2) the specific focus of organization activities within that main goal, and 3) the tools/mechanisms used to achieve that focused goal.

In other words, the mission statement should articulate clearly and concisely:

- who you are
- what you do and why
- how you will do/are doing it

A possible example would be the following:

“Metekhi” Public University aims to educate and equip a talented new cadre of Georgian professionals for the fields of law, business, medical services, and communications. An elite private educational institution in Tbilisi, Georgia, Metekhi Public University offers high-quality education at the Bachelor’s, Master’s and Ph.D. levels, with full domestic accreditation. Metekhi focuses on providing its students and graduates with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in the marketplace, through a multi-disciplinary curriculum designed to address emerging needs of enterprise and professional fields in the Georgian economy and society. ”

#### Vision Statement

In addition to the mission statement, most successful contemporary organizations also design and use a “vision” statement that focuses on the outcome of its successful achievement of the mission and goals. We highly recommend that Metekhi Public University also write and use a vision statement as part of its public profile and outreach materials.

Ideally, this vision statement will be written in a clear and concise fashion. It should focus on how the University sees the future “fruits” of its own success – in this case, it is most likely to focus on the achievements and qualifications of its graduates (although that is by no means the only possible focus of a good university vision statement). It should address concerns of major stakeholders, such as parents and prospective employers, in describing what the University aspires to achieve in its core mission of educating a strong new cadre of Georgian professional leaders.

Attention to the key components of parent/applicant decision factors (outlined below) would be good to include in the vision statement.

Overall, the Team recognizes that:

- MPU successfully found a niche in the Georgian Higher Education (HE) system and identified a focus in practical training which is needed for the national economy.
- Fundamentals
  - business administration
  - pre-law courses
  - training for health care professionals
  - language training/communication/journalism
- Vocational training for pre-university middle school graduates

It is noteworthy that MPU has found a pool from which to recruit and market segments that falls between inexpensive state education and expensive private education.

According to MPU survey, the enrolled students consider the following priorities as they select MPU:

1. tuition
2. faculty quality
3. good physical conditions
4. secure accreditation
5. market relevant curriculum
6. good job opportunities
7. possible foreign exchange programs

It is evident that MPU is able to contribute towards good quality education with its small class size and greater attention to students.

### Recommendations

1. It is suggested that MPU articulate better and clearer how it sees the niche giving practical training for a new cadre of Georgian professionals.
2. Bachelor and master programs look quite adequate for MPU; however, the team recommends caution in extending doctoral programs because they are very expensive and require more resources than currently available at MPU.
3. The four fundamentals are sufficient and it is advised that further expansion is not currently necessary.
4. Elaborate MPU added value. The VAP Team suggests that these aspects of comparative advantage be pointed out more clearly in the MPU identity materials. They should consider branding "The Metekhi University Value Added" and outlining specifically what that is.

#### **IV. Governance**

The Team believes that the governing structure of MPU has the legal status required, which is a private company. It is registered under the current Higher Education (HE) Act of Georgia and the current Private Company Act of Georgia.

MPU has a *Representative Board* (RB) which acts as advisors to the Recto. The team recommends to extend the RB to include outside members from business and industry, NGOs and, most importantly, from MPU's alumni. This would establish better links with the clients of MPU. MPU would have greater feedback, advisors could provide input on curriculum design, and potential fundraising with prospective donors and supporters could be expanded. We recommend that the RB should establish its own by-laws to regulate its operation and clarify its role vis-à-vis the University administration.

MPU also has an *Academic Council* with ex-officio members of heads of departments and units. We recommend that the Council should have student members directly elected by the students, and we also recommend that at least two faculty members be elected to the Council. These two members would include one senior faculty and one junior faculty, each elected directly by their own constituency (i.e., the senior members and junior members of the faculty, respectively). We suggest having both senior and junior so that the conditions and interests of these two groups are equally represented.

We recommend that the Academic Council should also have its own by-laws and should develop two principal documents.

- *Students' Rights and Regulations* to spell out all student-related issues such as grading, exam, grievance, disciplinary matters, welfare, etc.
- *Faculty Compendium* to spell out expectations, teaching loads, salary scale, promotion process, and considerations, etc. for the members of the faculty.

In general, we recommend that longer contracts for the faculty (instead of the present nine month contract) be considered to give more stability and certainty to the core faculty. For example, four years contract with yearly renewal. (Note: addressing this issue is a condition for international accreditation)

#### **V. Budget**

We understand that MPU operates on a tight but sound financial basis and does not have any current or accumulated deficit or debt.

Income in local currency is approximately 500,000 Lari, which covers the yearly operating budget:

- 90% is tuition income paid by students
- 10% is government appropriation

Expenses equal the income with an approximate 5% profit margin.

- 25% of the expenses are for personnel costs, which is quite low in comparison with international norms. We think that in the long run, this proportion is not sustainable. However, we understand that increasing the income is currently constrained by state limitations and also by the market.
- 40% of the expenses are for the physical facilities rent maintenance etc., which is somewhat high and placing pressure on the budget.

We believe that in the long run it will be necessary to spend more on IT and the library, as well as student welfare to provide scholarships and discounts. MPU should put to use existing relationships with private companies and individuals as donors. Also, we believe that an *Office of Projects and Grants* should be established to facilitate grant applications by MPU to the European Union (EU) and Georgian and international foundations. This office could also assist the Rector-President with fundraising efforts.

## **VI. Physical plant**

The team recognized that MPU meets the state regulations of four square meters per enrolled student. We also acknowledge that MPU has sufficient library, computer laboratory, dining facilities, faculty and administrative offices, student and faculty lounges, and sport facilities. We understand that MPU does not have student dormitory because most of the students either live in Tbilisi or manage to find their own housing. Regardless of the above facts, we think that a housing office or a housing notice board could be of help for out of town/off-campus students.

## **VII. Teaching Quality and Quality Assurance**

The team observed that MPU has a modern and market-relevant curriculum and students chose MPU because of the high quality of teaching, which has the following attributes:

- excellent instructors
- small class size
- high attention to individual students
- relevant and usable curriculum

It is commendable that MPU is involved in pertinent projects such as “Connect Georgia” with the goal of enhancing students business experience and thereby, fostering the development of relevant skills and competencies.

### Recommendations

- implement advanced teaching and learning methods including *problem-based learning, project-based learning, case study method, etc.*
- develop efficient institutional assessment and evaluation strategy including regular *course evaluation*. At the end of every course, students should

complete an evaluation to help teachers to improve their courses and assist management to evaluate teachers.

- organize more *traineeships and practical trainings at potential employers* and make it part of the regular training
- link Quality Assurance to *industry skills requirements* more clearly. New membership in the Representative Board can assist in this process.
- consider having employers *rate the skills of MPU grads after one year of employment*, and to provide documentation of the success of graduates in the workplace.
- encourage more *study tours and exchange programs abroad*
- check the website of the “TUNING Educational Structures in Europe” as well as TUNING publications that contain a host of information on teaching, learning and assessment from the perspective of the effective implementation of the Bologna Process reform agenda and the Lisbon Strategy (<http://tuning.unideusto.org/tuningeu/>).

### **VIII. Students Services and Welfare**

The Student Liaison Office is functioning well regarding student life and social activities. However, the team recommends expanding the current functions of the Student Liaison Office.

#### *Recommended additions:*

- *Career placement should be institutionalized.* Students should be assisted with CV writing workshops, meetings with potential employers, interviewing skills, and setting up links with companies, etc.
- *Academic Record/Scholarship* to advise students on their current records and developments, issue transcripts and recommendations, and, most importantly, to help them to find scholarships in Georgia and abroad for further studies. In the meeting with students, this was clearly a goal of the group.
- *Student Welfare functions* to help students in need to find part time jobs, scholarship opportunities, and help them to find housing while they are at MPU.
- *Alumni Liaison* to keep contact with MPU graduates to network, help students to find jobs, facilitate fundraising, etc.
- *Extra Curricular Activities*, debate clubs, language clubs etc.

### **IX. Engaging with Civil Society**

Metheki Public University’s attention to engagement with actors in civil society is laudable. The University has both a proactive and forward-looking stance, which will continue to create a competitive edge for the educational approach the University offers. Building on this engagement—in line with the mandate of the Lisbon strategy to promote innovation and knowledge-based society via university life—is certain to increase MPU’s visibility and enhance the ‘value added’ aspect.

The team has several recommendations for MPU in this sphere:

1. **Define more clearly the University's understanding of civil society. Use this definition as a framework for building a strategy for deeper engagement.** When MPU made its presentation to the VAP team, it seemed that members of the MPU team each had a different understanding of the concept of civil society. The working definition can be quite broad—including citizen groups, nonprofit organizations, education institutions, even the media—but it does NOT include government or private business.
  
2. **Limit priorities for CS engagement to no more than three (3) key areas at first, and tie these areas to your curriculum development and research agenda.** If MPU plans to engage with post-conflict refugee issues, for example, tie-in the volunteer and other work that is being conducted by students and faculty with the pre-law curriculum (human rights, refugee rights, land ownership and compensation issues) or with the medical services curriculum (access to health care for IDPs). Then build a complementary student and faculty research plan that explores these same issues. If, on the other hand, social services is the highest priority, build curriculum links to key areas of Georgian industry—viticulture, tourism, construction, energy transport—and ask industry professionals for their input as the curriculum is built and related research agendas set. Efforts should be made to engage students studying journalism to cover these events in the University's newspaper!
  
3. **Links to key non-partisan NGOs or INGOs.** This is of crucial importance and provides a good parallel to building in linkages to industry advisors in the University's governance structure. Leading NGOs can provide recommendations to help design the curriculum and can provide an excellent outlet for practical internships for top students. Explore, for example, links with:
  - **CRRC (Caucasus Research Resource Centers)**  
(please see <http://www.crrc.ge/>)
  - **GYLA (Georgian Young Lawyers' Association)**
  - **APLR (Association for Protection of Landowners' Rights)**
  - **Georgian Young Economists Association**
  - **Professional associations in the medical field**
  - **Transparency International (Tbilisi office)**

Another international NGO to explore is the Talloires Network, a “collective of individuals and institutions committed to promoting the civic roles and social responsibilities of higher education” that is based at Tufts University in the United States. They should have a wide variety of innovative ideas on how to productively engage a university community into a partnership with wider civil society. Please visit their website at <http://www.tufts.edu/talloiresnetwork/>

4. **Use industry and civil sector inputs as focus of Faculty and Student research, and in turn as focus of University outreach.** For example, MPU could:

- engage students in data-gathering projects as a part of their practical skills training
- engage students and faculty in regional research (during summers) with a focus on Borjomi
- plan NGO-based student internships
- curriculum development expanded to include case-study writing, role-plays for students related to civil sector issues
- encourage faculty to write articles based on research and emerging issues identified in civil society partnership programs
- encourage faculty appearances on mass media programs (develop links with members of the press as needed)

## **X. Conclusion**

The Visiting Advisors Team would like to thank Rector, Vice Rectors, and all the staff and students who made this visit such a memorable, productive and mutually rewarding learning experience. We complete this visit convinced that we have gained at least as much as we have given. We understand that our observations are made after a minimal on-site time, and that we could possibly have missed critical information that might have led to different observations. We also recognize that MPU faces many challenges as universities everywhere, and the capacity of the university leadership to respond to our recommendations might be limited. Nevertheless, we hope that our advice will be useful to MPU on the way towards advancement of the University strategic capacity and direction, particularly, in the framework of efficient implementation of the Bologna Process reform agenda and the Lisbon Strategy. We were very impressed by the leadership of the Rector, Professor Dr. Manana Kirtbaia, and her determination to make a concentrated effort to implement the necessary changes and reforms for further enhancement of MPU's governance, administration and functioning. We believe that MPU has a promising future. We wish the University leadership, faculty, staff, and students of MPU the very best for the further development and continued advancement.

## Visiting Advisors:

### **Istvan TEPLAN (Team Leader)**

**Hungary**

Istvan Teplan is the director-general of the Hungarian Government Centre for Public Administration and Human Resource Services in Budapest, a position he has held since 2007. From 1992 to 2007, Dr. Teplan held a number of positions at the Central European University in Budapest including director of budgets and planning, executive vice president, and senior vice president. In these various capacities he was responsible for establishing the university's administrative and financial structure, long-term academic planning and development, and the strategic development, coordination and implementation of institutional relations with a variety of entities. Dr. Teplan has served on a variety of boards and advisory councils in the higher education, business, and governmental sectors. Dr. Teplan was educated at Eötvös Lóránd University; the State University of New York at Binghamton, where he received an M.A. in sociology; and the Budapest University of Economics, where he earned a Ph.D. in sociology. He has been involved with the Salzburg Global Seminar's Universities Project, Visiting Advisors Program and Russian Higher Education Program since 1999.



### **Andrea Dee HARRIS**

**USA**

Andrea Harris is president of East-West Executive Resource Group (EWER Group) Consulting. EWER Group offers a variety of services to public and nonprofit clients, ranging from strategic planning and organizational strengthening, to business development and effective governance systems. Ms. Harris has extensive expertise in strengthening the civil sector, conflict resolution, higher education and research capacity-building, strategic planning, governance, and public-private partnerships. From 1995 to 2007, Ms. Harris served in a variety of positions with the Eurasia Foundation. She was founding director of two major capacity-building initiatives, the Economics Education and Research Consortium (EERC) in Russia and Ukraine, and the Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC) in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia and from 2003 to 2007, she lived in Tbilisi, Georgia and served as the Eurasia Foundation's regional vice president for the South Caucasus where she lead Eurasia's grant making and operating programs for Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan.. Ms. Harris holds a B.A. in Russian Studies from Yale University and an M.B.A. from the Yale School of Management.



**Tapio MARKKANEN****Finland**

Tapio Markkanen served as the secretary general of the Finnish Council of University Rectors in Helsinki from 1992 until 2006. In this capacity he was involved in both national and European policies of research and higher education. Professor Markkanen is a member of the Finnish National Commission for United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization and has been highly active in the development of science education and communication in Finland. Widely published in the field of the history of science, Professor Markkanen has taught astronomy at the University of Helsinki and conducted research on galactic structure, magnetic fields, and star formation. Professor Markkanen received a M.Sc. and Ph.D. in astronomy from the University of Helsinki. He participated in one of the Salzburg Global Seminar's Visiting Advisor Program trips to Khazar University in Baku, Azerbaijan in 2006.

**Helene KAMENSKY****Austria**

Helene Kamensky is a program director at the Salzburg Global Seminar where she is responsible for the development and direction of academic programs and initiatives focused on collaboration between universities, businesses, industries, and governments to foster innovation and entrepreneurship. In this framework, Dr. Kamensky develops and implements international conferences, training sessions, and strategic meetings in Salzburg and elsewhere for senior leadership in government, academic, corporate, philanthropic, research, and NGO sectors. In addition, Dr. Kamensky is responsible for the Salzburg Global Seminar's Visiting Advisors Program, which has provided consultancy visits to senior university leadership in transition countries since 1997. Before joining the Salzburg Global Seminar, Dr. Kamensky served as an adjunct professor of philosophy at the Institutes of Philosophy at the University of Salzburg and the University of Vienna. Previously, she was research fellow at the Institute of Scientific Theory at the Salzburg International Research Center. Dr. Kamensky holds a Ph.D. in philosophy with a focus on logic and epistemology. Her area of research interest is higher education policy and management.



**Schedule:**

<b>October 18, Saturday, Arrival Day</b>	
	Team arrives
<b>October 19, Sunday</b>	
	Cultural program
<b>October 20, Monday, 1st Day of Program</b>	
10:00 – 11:30	Meeting with the Rector, Presentation of the program.
11:30 – 12:00	Coffee break
12:00 – 13:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working Group- <b>University Administration and Finance (general organizational issues; budgeting and accounting systems; allocation of budget resources)</b></li> </ul>
13:30 – 15:00	Lunch
15:00 – 16:30	Working Group - <b>Academic Structure and Governance within the University (developing of governing and advisory boards; general management issues faced by university administrators; university autonomy and academic freedom )</b>
16:30 – 17:00	Coffee break
17:00 – 18:00	Team Debriefing Meeting
19:00	Cultural Program
<b>October 21, Tuesday, 2nd Day of Program</b>	
10:00 – 11:30	Working Group - <b>The role of university in the emerging civil society (development of relations with other institutions of civil society;</b>
10:30 – 11:00	Coffee break
11:00 – 13:30	Working Group - <b>Implementing the Lisbon Strategy for growth and jobs: Strengthening the role of the university as catalyst for entrepreneurship and innovation (including the discussion of the Connect Georgia project)</b>
13:30 – 15:00	Lunch
15:00 – 16:30	Meeting with Students
16:30 – 17:00	Coffee break
17:00 – 18:00	Team Debriefing Meeting
18:00 – 19:00	Free Time
19:00	Cultural Program
<b>October 22, Wednesday, 3rd Day of Program</b>	
10:00 – 14:00	Team meets to prepare the Oral Report to the Rector
14:00 – 15:30	Lunch
15:30 – 17:00	Presentation of the Oral Report to the Rector and the University Team
17:00 – 19:00	Free Time
19:00	Farewell Dinner
<b>October 23, Thursday, Departure Day</b>	
	Team departs

## **THE UNIVERSITIES PROJECT OF THE SALZBURG GLOBAL SEMINAR**

Universities throughout the world are undergoing systemic changes in their governance, academic design, structure, and mission. From 1998 to 2003, the Salzburg Seminar's Universities Project focused on higher education reform in Central and East Europe, Russia, and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) as universities in these regions redefined their relationships with governments and try to become more integrated into the global intellectual community.

The Universities Project was a multi-year series of conferences and symposia convening senior representatives of higher education from the designated regions with their counterparts from North America and West Europe. Discussion in the Project's programs focused on the following themes:

- University Administration and Finance
- Academic Structure and Governance within the University
- Meeting Students' Needs, and the Role of Students in Institutional Affairs
- Technology in Higher Education
- The University and Civil Society

## **THE VISITING ADVISORS PROGRAM (VAP)**

The Salzburg Global Seminar launched this enhanced aspect of the Universities Project in the autumn of 1998. Under the VAP, teams of university presidents and higher education experts visit universities in Central and East Europe and Russia at the host institutions' request to assist in the process of institutional self-assessment and change. To date, eighty-four visits have been held at universities in Central and East Europe, Russia and CIS countries.

## **THE RUSSIAN HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAM (RHEP)**

In 2003, in response to the need for continued engagement, the Salzburg Global Seminar and the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation initiated a five-year partnership (2003-2008) designed to promote the exchange of knowledge and best practices between the higher education leadership of the Russian Federation and their counterparts from North America, Western Europe and Central-Eastern Europe, Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Eurasia. The Russian Higher Education Program consisted of two symposia per year, which took place in Salzburg and in the Russian Federation. Each symposium convened senior representatives of universities, higher education organizations, service organizations, governmental structures, and stakeholders. The Russian Higher Education Program centered around five main topics:

- Russian Program of Modernization in the Context of Global Education Reform
- Higher Education Governance Reform: Issues and Challenges
- Strengthening the Role of Russian Universities in Service to Society
- Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Sharing International Experience
- Higher Education and Research (Networks, Linkages, Best Practices)

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## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

For more information regarding Salzburg Global Seminar programs, please contact one of the Seminar's offices below.

Salzburg Global Seminar  
Schloss Leopoldskron  
Box 129  
A-5010 Salzburg, Austria  
Telephone: +43 662 839830  
Fax: +43 662 839837

Salzburg Global Seminar  
1828 L Street NW, Eleventh Floor  
Washington, DC 20036 USA  
Fax: +1 202 467 8865

Salzburg Global Seminar  
The Marble Works  
P.O. Box 886  
Middlebury, VT 05753 USA  
Telephone: +1 802 388 0007  
Fax: +1 802 388 1030

Salzburg Global Seminar website: [www.SalzburgGlobal.org](http://www.SalzburgGlobal.org)



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