Project Title: Crowdsourcing Diplomacy and Foreign Policy in a Digital World: Strategies for Small and Post-conflict Countries

Client/Host Agency: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Kosovo

http://www.mfa-ks.net/?page=2,1

Background: Arbolis Consultants Ltd. is partnering with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kosovo to develop a strategic policy study that links public diplomacy, social media and the World Wide Web and post-conflict development.

Nowadays, more than ever before, the content on websites, online fora and internet news portals shape the image of states and influence their international standing. In particular, the development of small post-conflict countries is suffering from lack of positive web content and active presence on the internet. Countries like the United States, China or Russia can afford to run full-fledged e-diplomacy campaigns, whereas small post-conflict countries need to find alternative means to make themselves heard and seen.

In the case of the Balkans, the Republic of Kosovo remains without an official web-domain. Major transnational companies such as Google and Facebook do not recognize Kosovo as a country, while Twitter and LinkedIn have recently included Kosovo. However, Kosovo can still not be found as a destination on online shopping portals and airline companies’ websites. Unfortunately, Kosovo hits the headlines of Google Alerts mainly with negative news despite the gradual progress through economic and political reforms.

The Republic of Kosovo is the youngest state in Europe. Kosovo declared its independence from Serbia in February 2008. On July 22, 2010, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled in an advisory opinion that Kosovo’s declaration of independence did not violate international law. To date, Kosovo has been recognized by 104 of 193 United Nations member
states. The largest supporters of Kosovo’s independence are the United States, the Western European countries and Turkey. Amongst the opponents are Serbia, Russian Federation, Spain, Greece, Romania, China, Brazil and India. Being a young country which has recently celebrated its fifth year of independence, Kosovo’s public diplomacy efforts are still at the beginning. As Kosovo is not yet acknowledged by all states worldwide, its international limbo poses immense challenges: Kosovo has to gain a reputation abroad as well as overcome its negative image as a post-war country.

The Republic of Kosovo has undertaken several public diplomacy initiatives since 2010, the first one being “The Kosovo Young Europeans” nation-branding campaign. The Kosovo Government is currently implementing its National Digital Diplomacy Strategy, which it developed jointly with the UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office, and the Norwegian Royal Embassy in Kosovo. The Government has already initiated a few internet-based initiatives. The most recent activity is Digital Kosovo, a platform for citizens to lobby online for the recognition of Kosovo by internet entities. Another was an initiative called App Camp Kosova, aiming to encourage apps development about Kosovo. Two other initiatives aimed at enabling individuals to generate online content about Kosovo: WikiAcademy and #InstaKosova.

Although governmental policies have been drafted and are partly executed, further creative outside-of-the-box policy ideas for implementing the proposed digital diplomacy strategies are still much needed. Besides Kosovo, this challenge is shared by other small developing countries around the globe in Africa, Latin America and Asia.

**Objective:**

The objective of this project is to assess the current e-diplomacy policy framework of the Republic of Kosovo, while providing strategic guidance on how to improve it. The project should identify practical solutions for strengthening Kosovo’s e-diplomacy efforts, taking into consideration limitations due to the ongoing state recognition process and post-conflict financial constraints. The project should also pinpoint creative policy options that could link Kosovo’s web-based diplomacy with boosting global outreach of a small country to eventually enable economic development.

The project directly supports the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in its strategic planning and institutional capacity building programs.

**Deliverables:** Working in close partnership with the clients, the SIPA workshop team is
expected to produce (1) a detailed work-plan; (2) a draft outline of the team’s final report; (3) a draft final report; (4) a final report; (5) a presentation of preliminary findings to Arbolis and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the end of the team’s March field trip; and (6) a final presentation of the team’s findings and recommendations at SIPA in early May 2014. (A final presentation to the Ministry could be made through a conference call.)

The final report should include the following components:

1. Conceptual review of the existing literature on e-diplomacy (e.g., how is diplomacy changing in the digital world? how does the power of the individual differ regarding nation branding, shaping the image of a country and policymaking in times of social media? what are the new tools of diplomacy available in the current digital world?);

2. Collection of comparative e-diplomacy good practice examples (short summaries), in particular those of small and post-conflict countries (e.g., Estonia, Israel, Rwanda, and the Balkans);

3. Analysis of past e-diplomacy efforts of the Republic of Kosovo (e.g., mapping of past activities, evaluation of success, identification of missed opportunities and unused potential); and

4. Development of concrete policy options to enhance Kosovo’s e-diplomacy efforts (ideally including creative, outside-the-box ideas that are also feasible for small and post-conflict countries).

Each section should be accompanied by policy info-graphics that capture the essence of each chapter in a condensed yet precise illustration.

Requirements: Ideal candidates for the project team (of approximately six students) should have the following interests, experience and skills:

- Familiarity with e-diplomacy, public diplomacy, institution building, policy strategic planning, crowdsourcing, and/or post-conflict economic development;

- Excellent practical research skills and ability to write succinctly and persuasively;

- Regional expertise about the Balkans preferred, but not required (any other comparative experience in e-diplomacy and post-conflict development much welcomed);
- Excellent teamwork skills (capability of working in an intercultural setting); and

- GIS mapping, info-graphic and layout design skills are a plus.

**Logistics:**

The timeframe and milestones for the project are the following:

1. Comprehensive desk research in November 2013 - February 2014;

2. Interviews and informal consultations (e.g., by skype and phone) with experts in January - March 2014;

3. Consultations with stakeholders and governmental officials, experts and opposition parties in Kosovo in March 2014; and


Arbolis will provide detailed guidance for the team throughout the process. One of the client contacts is a former SIPA student, and professional care and mentoring will be assured.

Arbolis will coordinate logistical support during the fieldwork in Kosovo, which will be supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Arbolis and/or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will also cover the team’s local costs, including local accommodation and transport.

While the SIPA team’s study is intended for the use of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, due credit and acknowledgment will be given to the SIPA team in any final published policy study.