

Dear Director, *Ambassador Brix*,

Dear Faculty of the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna,

Dear Board of Trustees of the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna,

Dear DA community of faculty and students,

*Re: Diplomatic Academy Alumni Condemn Foreign Minister's Dancing with Putin*

As alumni of the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna, we would like to express our disappointment with the events reported in the international press about the participation of President Vladimir Putin in the wedding of Professor Karin Kneissl, a long-time professor associated with the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna, the current federal minister for foreign affairs.

While we understand Mr Putin accepted a private invitation, Minister Kneissl has sufficient diplomatic experience so as not to know that his participation, as well as the subservient gesture of Ms Kneissl, would amount to an incontrovertible political statement. Europe has read it as such, we have read it as such. This unfortunately and immediately taints the reputation of our esteemed school that both we, as stakeholders in the good DA name, as well as you, the current leadership, faculty and student body *should* not neglect.

Our studies at the Diplomatic Academy have infused us with core values, among which European and international cooperation are at the very centre. We learned to appreciate and learn from each other's perspectives, to respect one another and to absorb languages and cultures for the greater good. We were moved by the goals of fostering humanitarian values, human rights, and European values such as the solidarity of its people. Even more, we were taught to believe in certain inalienable truths: in the equality and dignity of man and the rule of law; in the value of free press; in the aim of societies to live in liberty and democracy.

These are not realities but mere fictions in President Putin's Russia. Moreover, his government has manifested its willingness to undermine the European Union as a whole and European democracies individually.

In this context, the proximity demonstrated by Minister Kneissl towards President Putin not only represents a deviation from historical Austrian neutrality and positions the country on a diplomatically perilous terrain. It furthermore puts Austria, the country currently holding the EU Council Presidency, in a position of distrust from many of the governments of the EU and their citizens. Austria, so it appears, does to some extent whitewash autocratic and imperialist statesmanship.

We further regard this from a historical perspective, by drawing a comparison with the traditionally esteemed Austrian school of diplomacy, which includes luminaries such as Leopold Figl or Erhard Busek.

Given the facts mentioned, we would like to invite you to consider protecting the Diplomatic Academy from any form of direct or indirect association with the stance taken by Minister Kneissl. How can the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna further retain its image as a training institution of international repute for diplomats, international professionals and global citizens if such an association persists?

In doing so, we would ask you not to invite the Minister to appear to any further lecture or event organised by or taking place at the Diplomatic Academy until the end of her mandate.

Finally, we would like to inform you that we intend to share this appeal with all the students of the Diplomatic Academy and mobilise them accordingly.

Yours sincerely, with love towards our Diplomatic Academy,

Davide Rubini, Italy, MAIS 2006

Nicolae Stefanuta, Romania, MAIS 2006

Magnus Bosse, Germany, SPIS 2005

Jean Constantinesco, France, MAIS 2006

Thomas Miller, USA, MAIS 2006

Sarah Hayes, United Kingdom, MAIS 2010

Jade Moussa, Canada, MAIS 2018

Marin Berket, Croatia, MAIS 2006

Grazina Raguckaja, Lithuania, MAIS 2006

Michal Mottl, Poland, SPIS 2005

Severine Renault, France, SPIS 2005

Joshua Ede, United Kingdom, MAIS 2013

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