**2021 Report**

**of the CAS Representative to ICCEES**

(International Council for Central and East European Studies)

1 August 2021

– Preliminary Draft –

1. Mission accomplished: ICCEES World Congress 2021 (virtual) is ready to go.

 Respectfully submitted,

 Andrii Krawchuk

V.1, 1/8/2021

PS:

The full story of the challenges and solutions, communications and negotiations, organization and planning may be reconstructed some day from the reports, thousands of emails, and hundreds of meetings over some six or seven years – live, via Skype, and Zoom. Highlights will include:

1. After its second expression of interest and bid (our first bid was defeated by Japan, which hosted the World Congress in 2015), CAS had to be convinced that its commitment to an activity with an operating budget estimated at $500k would not destroy the organization. A preliminary study was done to show how this was possible.

2. Bids were solicited, received (Montreal, Toronto) and assessed in view of a final balanced budget. Costly options (Palais des Congrès, professional congress organizers) were identified and eliminated in favor of a partnership with Concordia (McGill was also explored but partnership did not materialize). The Concordia–ICCEES Congress partnership was signed, and seed money was obtained from Tourisme Montréal. CAS provided invaluable support, with assistance from an ad hoc academic program committee and course release for Alison in the final, high-intensity year.

3. Some personal risks could not be avoided -- such as signing off on hotel block reservations.

4. With the outbreak of COVID, the decision (obvious now, but difficult at the time) was made to postpone the World Congress from 2020 to 2021. With all the attendant adjustments, we literally experienced two final years of preparation. Complicating things further was another major shift in planning. Initially, the postponed Congress was envisioned as “hybrid” (combining both on-site and virtual components). But as the uncertainties of the pandemic continued, a second, excruciating decision was made to go all-virtual. At the time, there was no assurance that these were the right decisions. All we could do was navigate the balance of probabilities.

5. With the monumental home stretch completed, the Congress is set to take place, with over 400 scheduled events, including 350 panels, roundtables, and lectures. Many thanks to CAS President Alison Rowley and to CAS, the team at Concordia, and ICCEES.