

# DIALOGUE



## THE UKRAINIAN EDITION

### Friendship through English

Nadiya Ivanenko, Chair of ESU Ukraine, on the ESU's vital role

### Ukraine revealed

10 things you didn't know

### PLUS: 'An overwhelming thank you'

Exchange students on their life-changing year in the US



ENGLISH-SPEAKING UNION

discovering voices





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FUN, ENGAGING WORKSHOPS TO  
HELP STUDENTS COMMUNICATE  
MORE EFFECTIVELY

Our fun and engaging workshops for both primary and secondary schools help students communicate more effectively with others, developing their ability to think critically, build cohesive arguments, and improving their delivery, listening and response skills. The workshops are mapped against the national curriculum's spoken language statutory requirements and are customisable to specific curriculum areas or projects.

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(Advanced)'. All are led by our team of friendly, inspiring university under- and post-graduates, all of whom are experienced debaters and public speakers. Costs start at £325 for a half-day workshop for a class of 24 students or £495 for a full-day session.

**If you or your branch would like to sponsor a session for a local state school, please contact [fundraising@esu.org](mailto:fundraising@esu.org). By doing so, you will be helping ensure that more young people have the speaking and listening skills and cross-cultural understanding they need to thrive.**



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*'I felt my voice mattered'*

MORGAN, YEAR 7 DISCOVER YOUR VOICE PARTICIPANT

WELCOME

## A message from our DIRECTOR-GENERAL



**A**s *Dialogue* goes to press it has been just over eight months since the start of the Russian invasion in Ukraine. In that time, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has verified that at least 6,374 Ukrainian civilians have been killed and more than 13 million displaced. Ukraine estimates its military death toll at over 9,000; in September the MoD estimated that there had been around 25,000 Russian military casualties – many of them privates from ethnic minorities in rural parts of Russia. Already struggling with the fallout from Covid, Ukraine's GDP is forecast to drop by 30 per cent this year. A global recession is imminent, and the UN warns that rising prices could cause widespread food insecurity and social unrest; and geopolitical fragmentation may impede global trade and cooperation.

Sadly, we have been here before. The ESU was formed in a time of similar constraints. As the first world war raged and as news of the first cases of the influenza epidemic, which was to kill tens of millions, started to surface – so our founders came together to see what they could do to promote better understanding between nations.

Their hope was that by doing so, we could build a solid foundation for enduring peace. Clearly there is still much to be done, and the fact that we once again find ourselves in such a perilous situation only serves to underline the need for the work we do. We work in schools and with young people to promote oracy, critical thinking and the value of debate. We do this not solely for the manifold personal advantages these skills impart. We do it because we believe in the importance of understanding opposing viewpoints; and the importance of building relationships; relationships which will allow

us to disagree agreeably, to collaborate and work out an acceptable solution despite individual differences.

As our former chair Lord Boateng, who kindly hosted our afternoon tea at the House of Lords earlier this year, so powerfully said in his speech there, 'the ESU is built on relationships. It is about the relationships we have with schools and our amazing volunteers who enable our competitions to take place. It is about the friendships that participants in our competitions or programmes such as Debate Academy or the SSE can forge with others whom they may never otherwise have met.

And it is about the relationships and friendships between members across the organisation both within local branches and around the world.

'Thanks to these relationships we can say that we stand with Nadiya Ivanenko, (Chair of ESU Ukraine) and with the people of Ukraine at this time. We know what you are experiencing, we know the threat under which you and our colleagues in other former Soviet states live, we know it all the more because we know one another as friends.'

As Lord Boateng said, 'There's never been a more important time to argue the case for relationships between people and between nations. Because to bring about real change, you have to change not just people's minds, but their hearts.' And hearts can only change when we know one another as friends.

I'm so pleased that our friend Nadiya agreed to talk to us for this issue (page 12) – and I hope many of our friends old and new will be able to join us at Dartmouth House for some of our forthcoming events – please see page 11 for details.

JANE EASTON, DIRECTOR-GENERAL



HM QUEEN ELIZABETH II  
1926–2022

Members of the ESU are deeply saddened by the death of Her Majesty The Queen, Patron of the English-Speaking Union. We are hugely grateful for all she has done and pay tribute to her dedication and support for the charity over 70 years.





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This issue's cover is illustrated by Ukrainian artist Lesia Korol (pictured right). Originally from Lviv in western Ukraine, she lost her job after the start of the war and moved to Poland where she is now freelancing. She is currently trying to get a visa for the UK under the Ukrainian Sponsorship Scheme.

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# NEWS THE LATEST NEWS AND EVENTS FROM THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING UNION



'Loved it. Life-changing. I didn't want to leave.' These are just some of the many positive comments following our week-long Debate Academy at Stamford School in August. Over 60 students attended, enjoying a packed academic and social schedule including debate tuition from some of the best debaters and debate coaches in the country, as well as the chance to discuss international

issues, sharpen their analytical, reasoning and public speaking skills, and spar with other students from all over the world in competitive debates. Our thanks too to the branches that sponsored places – London, Lincolnshire and Ouse Valley – enabling students who would otherwise not have been able to attend to take part. 'Intelligence, rationale and argument generating all matter here, and it was amazing to know that no matter what GCSE grades I get, I would still be able to come here and that it would be a really good learning experience,' says Nishna from Belper School, Derbyshire, who was sponsored by Lincolnshire Branch. 'We were delighted to be able to encourage a rare talent,' says Steph Thorne, Lincolnshire Branch committee member, who set the ball rolling after Nishna's impressive performance in the regional heats for the ESU-Churchill Public Speaking Competition this year. 'Helped by her English teacher, Nishna now hopes to spread the word about debating and the ESU so we also see this as an opportunity to promote a long-term relationship with a school in an area where we haven't much presence.'

## ESU ON AIR

We were thrilled to be mentioned recently in Rory Stewart's engrossing BBC Radio 4 programme *The Long History of Argument*.

In the first episode, entitled 'From Socrates to Social Media', Rory interviewed Patrick Clarke and James Thompson, two of our Schools' Mace alumni, about the benefits of debating and why they think it's a skill worth learning. 'I've never heard the arguments for a rhetorical training made more powerfully,' says Rory, adding that 'debating societies are extra-curricular, demanding a



huge amount of time and commitment but the principles they embody were once central to our education system,' which is of course the belief that underlies much of our oracy work. The series is available on BBC Sounds.

## A warm welcome



We are delighted to welcome Annabel Thomas MacGregor (right) who has joined the ESU as our Director of Education. She heads up a rapidly expanding team in which recent recruits include Education Programmes Officers Jessica Holifield and Chelsea Smith and Engagement and Education Officer Sophia Taylor. We also welcome Sarah Harding, an ESU alumna and chartered accountant, and membership engagement expert Madeleine Milne, who have been co-opted to the board.





*‘Our revels now are ended’*

Shakespeare’s Globe was the fitting venue for the grand final of this year’s Performing Shakespeare Competition in June. A powerful rendition of *Lady Macbeth (Macbeth)* by Connie McMillan, a Year 8 student from Caterham School, Surrey, was the winning act, with Louis Hogan-Tricks, a Year 9 student at City of London Academy, Shoreditch Park awarded runner-up for his touching take on Jacques (*As You Like It*). The Don Miller Award, voted for by the audience, went to Ila Hinduja-Francis, from Manchester High School for Girls.

The event was brilliantly compered by actor Jen Stone, with actor, composer and theatre director John Pfumojena delivering a feedback session which was itself a masterclass in performance. Jacqui O’Hanlon, chair of the judges, said, ‘We have been incredibly moved and incredibly inspired by each of the young actors here today. As actors ourselves, we want to come to these plays as if the ink is still wet on the page. We want to treat them as new words, newly minted. And we really saw and heard that today.’

CHINA COMES TOP

Congratulations to Yang Kangqi from the People’s Republic of China who beat entrants from 31 other countries/regions to win this year’s online International Public Speaking Competition. Her speech entitled ‘A superhero movie that needs to end’ eloquently tackled the glorification of the sacrifices of motherhood.



AND...ACTION!

The ESU is launching a ground-breaking ‘action research’ project in conjunction with leading academics from the University of Sussex. Action research is particularly valuable in education because it helps teachers to adopt or craft the most appropriate strategies for their settings, leading to measurable positive outcomes for their students. The ESU’s Oracy Researching Practice Programme is designed to support schools to develop their in-house research capacity and contribute to collective understanding of ‘what works’ in oracy-based classroom practice. Co-designed and co-led by Dr Arlene Holmes-Henderson (pictured), practising academic at the Universities of Oxford, Sussex and King’s College London, and Dr Tom Wright, University of Sussex and Principal Investigator on ‘Speaking Citizens: The Politics of Speech Education’, this promises to be an exciting and pivotal addition to the ESU’s education programmes, positioning us at the forefront of oracy practice and research.



DYV Relaunch

Now that so many schools are having to support educational catch-up and close widening word gaps, the education team has relaunched our range of Discover Your Voice workshops to meet the needs of current learners.

The workshops are tailored to learners of all ages and abilities and mapped against the national curriculum’s spoken language statutory requirements providing opportunities for pupils to work independently and in groups of different sizes. Customisable to specific curriculum areas or projects, they all build students’ ability to communicate and reason effectively, to listen, and to understand and respond to other points of view.

*New primary programme pilot*

The ESU is soon to launch a brand-new programme of primary school lesson plans and materials for Key Stage 2 (Years 3–6). Developed with practitioners to support spoken language development and vocabulary acquisition across the academic year, it equips teachers with ready-made lesson plans that require no further preparation.

To test its impact, a pilot ran throughout June and July, involving 20 teachers and 518 students in seven schools across Bradford and Taunton with disproportionately high rates of FSM and EAL pupils (98 per cent in one case). Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive and the scheme (whose name is still under wraps ready for the big reveal!) will be rolled out from January 2023.



FEEDBACK HIGHLIGHTS

TEACHERS

100%

of teachers are likely/very likely to recommend the programme to other schools

100%

rate it as somewhat or very valuable for their career development and growth

90%

agree/strongly agree that it entailed no increase to their workload

PUPILS

90%

report feeling better at listening to the opinions of others

85%

learned new ways of working together as a team

76%

agreed/strongly agreed that they could organise their ideas better

*Pinnacle of success*

Congratulations to Oxford Spires Academy, the winner of this year’s ESU Oracy Culture Award. Highly commended by the judges in 2020, the state school in East Oxford impressed with its numerous and far-reaching oracy activities in which 20 per cent of the students now participate – a five-fold increase over the last two years.

Chair of judges, Gavin Illsley, ESU Head of Programmes, said, ‘Two aspects of Oxford Spires Academy’s oracy work stood out in particular. First is the way in which the teaching body makes a real effort to identify able but less confident speakers who may be reticent to put themselves forward for competitions. And second is the school’s emphasis on student coaching, recognising that this builds not only students’ oracy skills but also their mentoring and teaching capabilities too.’



PRIMARY PROGRESS

Around 100 people turned up to watch this year’s Ouse Valley Branch Primary Public Speaking Competition. Of the 12 local schools taking part, Brickhill Primary School was judged to be the overall winner, with Scott Primary School the runners-up.

‘It was wonderful being back in person after our Zoom competition last year,’ says acting branch chair Ellen Punter. ‘As always, the children rose to the occasion, delivering well-researched, thought-provoking motions on a variety of topics, most of them linked to the school curriculum.’



KEYS TO SUCCESS

Would you like to help us to upgrade the piano at Dartmouth House? Doing so will not only help our music scholars and visiting musicians to put on the very best entertainment, it will also help us to raise more money for our charitable work. Whether you would like to gift an instrument or to make a monetary donation, we’d love to hear from you. Please contact [fundraising@esu.org](mailto:fundraising@esu.org)



# STOP PRESS

782 schools have signed up for our 22/23 competitions – an increase of nearly 12 per cent!

## 5 MINUTES WITH...

### George Pratt, ESU US Luard Morse Scholar

#### Where are you studying?

I study at Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia, where I am a third year history and religion double major and leadership studies minor. Earlier this year I spent a semester at Manchester University on the Luard Morse Scholarship, awarded to deserving students attending historically black colleges and universities.

#### How did you find your time in Manchester?

I truly enjoyed it. I took courses in sociology and religion and although the collegiate educational system is slightly different, I appreciated the emphasis on independent learning and on essay writing and analysis. At Morehouse I'm a very involved student so don't have as much time to read and dig into my research, but I feel I matured as a burgeoning scholar during my time in Manchester, writing two essays that I submitted to undergraduate journals and

presenting research at an undergraduate symposium. Being on my own in a place that's not familiar and having a different type of independence and freedom has helped me to find my niche in being able to really delve into my intellectual queries and curiosities.

#### What was the greatest challenge?

Adjusting to the time difference – it took me about a month and a half in total – and to the weather. I'm a native Floridian and Georgia is mostly hot and humid. I thrive with the sun and usually do yoga outside in the morning so I had to adjust some of my daily routines and practices.

#### Did you have the chance to explore much of England and Europe?

Yes, I'd never been across the pond before and I took full advantage. As well as exploring the parks and museums of Manchester, which I loved, I used the spring break to visit



Image: Roger Harris

London, Amsterdam and Paris which was completely fantastic. I went to the National Gallery and a West End show in London; to the Rijksmuseum and the Van Gogh Museum in the Netherlands; and to the Louvre, Notre Dame, Sainte-Chapelle and the Eiffel Tower in Paris.

#### You kindly helped judge the final of the PSC at Churchill College Cambridge – tell us what you made of it.

The standard of speeches was beyond excellent and I really enjoyed observing the collegiality between the teams. While the teams were diverse in both background and the content of their speeches, it was a sight to see how beautifully the students interacted with each other, exchanging ideas civilly and respectfully.



## PLAYS IN MARSEILLE

Inaugurated only in May, the Aix-Marseille branch, led by its President Nicholas Hill, has already signed up over 40 members

and launched its first educational programmes. Following a successful summer school partnership with Ph'Art et Balises, an association providing theatre and cinema training to young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in the poorer, northern suburbs of Marseille, the branch is now expanding this activity over the coming months with a view to putting on a theatrical review next summer.

'The beauty of theatre is that it provides a purpose for speaking – and practising

– English,' says Nick, himself a former actor. 'We really hope that the programme will help these young people to realise that there are opportunities out there and that they need not be limited by their environment. We also very much hope to involve them in other ESU activities: social, cultural and educational.' The branch is also keen to promote the IPSC to schools in the area and is currently working closely with two lycées. 'We hope to get four or five in our first year,' says Nick.



After nearly two years of closure, predominantly due to the pandemic, we are delighted that we will soon be able to throw open our doors to members once again. We hope many of you will return with your friends to help make Dartmouth House the vibrant and inclusive centre for the ESU's charitable work it has always been.

The enforced downtime of Covid provided the opportunity to refresh the offering at Dartmouth House and we are now working on reviewing the wider membership proposal, with the aim of establishing a sustainable model in order to support the benevolent activities of the ESU. Our intention

is to have an improved offering by July 2023 which will not only appeal to you as an existing member, but which will also attract new people, thus enlivening the organisation for everyone.

In the meantime, to ensure we can provide you with a top-class catering service when you visit, we welcome Graysons, our new in-house caterers (see page 23) who will also be supporting us in this process. While you may have already provided input and feedback on your membership experience with the organisation,

for which we are grateful, we want to be clear that any comments or suggestions are still very welcome. Please email [MWG.ESU@esu.org](mailto:MWG.ESU@esu.org) to share your thoughts.

Dartmouth House will reopen to members on Monday, 9 January, Monday – Friday, 9am – 6pm



## YOU ARE INVITED!

We hope as many members as possible will join us to for a Champagne and Canapés reception to celebrate the Dartmouth House relaunch in support of the ESU's vital work in January next year. This social is your first chance to meet the Graysons' team, including Group Hospitality and Events Manager Adrien Canipel, and our new, dedicated concierge who will be on site daily to look after you. It is also an opportunity to get a taste for Graysons' culinary expertise and friendly, impeccable service. Further details will be sent via email and posted at [esu.org/events](http://esu.org/events)





# EVENT Report

WHAT  
London Branch Sanctions Debate

WHEN  
Monday, 5 September

MOTION (not carried)  
*This house believes that sanctioning private individuals in order to pressure foreign states is not only legally questionable, it is also ineffective*

## FOR THE PROPOSITION

**Ahmed Al-Sammak**, strategy consultant at Montfort Communications and currently ranked as the fifth best debater in the world

**Daniele Scanio**, ESU debating mentor and judge who was called to the Bar in 2018 and is currently undertaking his PhD in law at Durham University

**Elo Esalomi**, sixth-form student, one of the winning team at the ESU Schools' Mace 2022



## FOR THE OPPOSITION

**Christopher Steele**, former MI6 Officer who ran the Russia desk before co-founding a private intelligence firm

**Bill Browder**, American hedge fund manager, anti-corruption campaigner, and leading lobbyist of the Magnitsky Act authorising the US government to sanction foreign government officials worldwide deemed to be human rights offenders

**Anna De Vilder**, sixth-form student, one of the winning team at the ESU Schools' Mace 2022

## IN THE CHAIR

**Eleanor Winton**, Director of Foresightfully Limited and a senior consultant of Corporate DNA Consulting



## IN SUMMARY

A fabulously buzzy evening which attracted a highly engaged, cross-generational audience of over 80 people ranging from 16 to 60+. 'We wanted to do something really topical given the Russia/Ukraine situation,' says Creagh Factor, secretary of the London Branch Speech and Debate Committee. 'Our debates are there to promote critical thinking and topical discourse on interesting subjects, and also to show the impact of the ESU through inviting back ESU competition winners and alumni. We want them to act as a means of bringing people together and igniting that desire to meet again.' Funds raised, which included a significant donation, went to the Schools' Mace.

## FABULOUS AT 50

The ESU was delighted to once again support the ESU-Essex Court Chambers National Mooting Competition, this year marking its 50th anniversary. A specialised form of debating, mooting simulates a court hearing (usually an appeal against a final decision), and participants are expected to analyse a problem, research the relevant law, prepare written submissions, and present an oral argument. After the semi-finals at Dartmouth House (left), the judges at the grand final at the Supreme Court awarded the prize to Oxford Brookes University, represented by Robert Watt and J Ockenden. They will have their names engraved on the silver mace as well as being awarded prizes of £1,000 each, courtesy of Essex Court Chambers.



Images: Jean-Jacques Girodroux, Gigi Giannella

## ESU EVENTS

# DIARY DATES

Save the date for our unmissable events, from a festive Christmas quiz to a special dinner at the House of Commons. We hope to see you soon!

## ESU AGM

Tuesday, 6 December, 5pm  
The 103rd Annual General Meeting of the English-Speaking Union of the Commonwealth.  
**Dartmouth House, 37 Charles Street, London W1J 5ED**  
Free

## QUIZMAS AT DARTMOUTH HOUSE

Tuesday, 6 December, 7pm  
Brush up on your general knowledge and get ready to prove your status as a 'snow-it-all' at the ESU's fabulously festive Christmas quiz! Ten teams of up to eight people will battle it out to win the top prize of the evening, tackling a variety of topics across themed rounds.  
**Entry is £40 per team and the bar will be open from 6pm**

## PATRONAGE & TASTE

Wednesday, 15 February, 10am  
Salisbury Branch extends a warm welcome to all members and first-time visitors for this talk by Nicola Turner Inman, Assistant Curator of Decorative Arts (Projects) at the Royal Collection Trust. From masterpieces in paint to porcelain, from furniture to Fabergé, she will delve into many of the treasures within the Royal Collection, exploring the artworks as well as the monarchs who commissioned and purchased them.  
**The White Hart Hotel, 1 St John's Street, Salisbury, SP1 2SD**  
**Members £20; guests £22; talk only £10, free for first-time visitors**



6 December, Quizmas at Dartmouth House

## THE KURSK RUSSIAN SUBMARINE RESCUE

Tuesday, 21 February, 12 noon  
Ouse Valley Branch welcomes members old, new and potential to this talk about the 2000 Kursk submarine disaster and why, ultimately, efforts to rescue the sailors were unsuccessful. The talk is given by Royal Navy veteran Sir David Russell, the first Commanding Officer of HMS Vanguard, the UK's lead Trident submarine.  
**King's House, 245 Amptill Road Bedford, MK42 9AZ**  
**Members £25; guests £28; talk only £10**

## DINNER AT THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, 9 March, 7pm  
Join us in celebration and support of our international exchange programmes with a very special dinner at the House of Commons. Speaker to be confirmed.  
**Members £200; guests £250; under 35s; £125**



15 February, Patronage & Taste



9 March, Dinner at the House of Commons

## IPSC GRAND FINAL

Friday, 12 May, time tbc  
Save the date for the finale of the International Public Speaking Competition, back in person for the first time since 2019! Following a week of cultural exchange and intense competition, our finalists will present their speeches to the audience at the Royal Institution in Mayfair, in what is always an uplifting and energising event. More details to follow.



# 'We need to continue strengthening peace, understanding and friendship globally through the English language'

**Nadiya Ivanenko, Chair of ESU Ukraine, on how the Russian invasion has upended her life, and renewed her belief in everything the ESU stands for**

## Tell us about your life before the Russian invasion.

I was a university professor, teaching English to future English teachers, interpreters and translators at the Central Ukrainian State Pedagogical University in Kropyvnytskyi, a small city about halfway between Kyiv and Odesa. My 13-year-old daughter Yuliia and I had a very normal life. She went to school and I worked hard at my job, which I loved, and at my role as Chair of the ESU. We knew the situation with Russia was tense but we never thought they would invade, certainly not the central part of Ukraine or the capital. It was a total shock.

## Tell us about the work of ESU Ukraine

ESU Ukraine was founded in 2008 and I've been involved since the very beginning, along with the former chair Margarita Danilko. Until now we've run three main competitions – the Public Speaking Competition; the Performing Shakespeare Competition; and an essay writing competition. We've also run a number of smaller projects too, including an English-language movie club, and conversation classes for foreign students who need

to improve their English. My work at the university really helped. The students in the faculty were of course interested in improving their English so attracting young people was never a problem.

## Why did you want to do this work?

I was very inspired by my first English teacher. In those days Ukraine was still part of the Soviet Union and, even though it was not allowed, she always used different books to the set text books and encouraged us to read fiction and poetry, as well as insisting we watched BBC news once a week. I want to instill that same love of English in my students. After all, English is the key to all the doors in the world! If you speak English you can study abroad, you can travel, you can feel free, absolutely free. With what's happening with the war now, young people in Ukraine can see more than ever the benefits of having the chance to meet international people and make international friends.

## When did you know there was a war?

It was about 5.30am on Thursday, 24 February. We'd gone to bed as usual – I was planning for the final of our national public speaking competition which was due to take place that Saturday. I was woken up by awful whooshing sounds – what I think now were the sounds of military aircraft on their way to Kyiv. We switched on the TV – even the newscasters didn't really seem to know what was going on,

but we understood it was an invasion – we could hear the explosions near the TV studio. All our relatives are in a different city – we didn't know what to do about work or

schools. It's difficult to describe what the first few hours were like, everyone was just at a loss.

## When did you decide to leave?

Those last days of February were so scary. Normal life was finished – I was volunteering as a translator; collecting supplies with my students for Ukrainian soldiers; helping to >

**'We knew the situation with Russia was tense but we never thought they would invade'**



## Journey to safety

### 26 February

With just two small bags, Nadiya and her daughter Yuliia leave Kropyvnytskyi with a friend.

### 27 February

After a terrifying journey via Odesa and Moldova they arrive in Romania at nearly midnight and fly on to Vienna the following day.

### 5 March

Unable to find housing in Vienna, Nadiya and Yuliia travel to Slovakia where friends of a friend help them find a flat.

### 10 April

They arrive in the UK on the Homes for Ukrainians scheme and proceed to Salisbury to stay with ESU member Jan Stanbury.



## INTERNATIONAL FRIENDSHIP

raise money for medical kits to be sent to the front line and working to find accommodation and clothes for displaced people in the east of Ukraine. There were air raid sirens all the time and we were told to go to shelters but the nearest one to us was still 10 minutes away and very overcrowded. We live on the seventh floor of our apartment block and we were told to sleep in the corridors – not close to the windows – and were advised to pack bags with all our documents in case we had to leave in a hurry. Yuliia and I slept fully dressed, though we hardly slept at all.

The point at which I understood that it was unsafe for my child was when there was an attempt to destroy the military airbase which is quite close to our home. We returned home from a shelter and there was a huge crack in one of the windowpanes. We had seen the explosions and suffering in Kyiv and Kharkiv and I knew it was too dangerous to stay. The question was where to go, and how? I saw on TV there were long queues at the Polish border. I can't drive and to go by train was very dangerous because of the threat of missile strikes.

### What was the journey like?

My friend Natascha called me and said she was in the city centre and ready to leave with her son, and that we were welcome to go with her. I gave my keys to a neighbour, and Yuliia and I just grabbed two small bags and went to meet her.

We decided to head for the Moldovan border because, even though it meant travelling south, towards Odesa which was more

dangerous, it was easier to cross. We stuck to the smaller village roads but when we reached Odesa we saw tanks and we were literally the only car heading into the city, everyone else was heading out and signalling at us to turn around. The city already had a curfew and we spent a night in a deserted hotel, just listening to the noises of war all around us as our children tried to sleep.

The next day we had to make a 200km detour as we heard one of the bridges was already occupied but we eventually made it to the border and then drove directly on to Romania which we felt was safer because it is in the EU. Natascha had some work connections in Vienna who had contacted her en route and so we

**'We spent a night in a deserted hotel, just listening to the noises of war all around us as our children tried to sleep'**

had made a plan to fly there from Bucharest. When we learnt that all the flights from Bucharest were booked, we diverted to Iași from where we managed to get a flight for the four of us.

Our initial idea was to rent a flat in Vienna but it was not possible to do so for just a few weeks and so, through friends of a friend, I eventually managed to find a place to stay in a small town two hours from Bratislava in Slovakia. Those people were so helpful and welcoming to us.

### When did you decide to come to the UK?

On about 20 March I heard from Paul Boateng, a former chair of the ESU, about the Homes for Ukrainians scheme, which enables Ukrainians without UK relatives to come to the country. By that time, I had realised that I was not going to be able to return to Ukraine any time



soon and had started applying for jobs in Germany and in the Czech Republic and indeed that very day I received an offer of a placement at a German university. But I don't speak German or Czech and I could see already how difficult that was going to be, whereas I had lived in the UK – I studied at Oxford for a year during my PhD – and know people here. Then Jan Stanbury, a British member of ESU St Petersburg whom I had met at a couple of International Council Meetings kindly offered to host me at her home in Salisbury and I thought yes, perhaps this would be a better solution. My daughter and I received our letters of invitation on 8 April and we flew here from Bratislava two days later, with some help from a friend, ESU US member Donald Best.

### What has life been like for you since getting here?

As soon as I arrived in the UK, my ESU family has been by my side. Director-General Jane Easton was the



Clockwise from top left: Yuliia with her new 'family', Michael and Emily Tulloch, in Oxford after her successful school admission interview; happy days in Salisbury; Yuliia's first taste of fish and chips on a visit to Bath for a permit appointment

first person to message me on 24 February to see if I was ok, and since we've been here, she has always kept an eye on us, acting as a true mentor and friend. Lucia Dumont (a former Chair of ESU France) kindly visited us in Salisbury; Marina Tsitsishvili (Chair of ESU Georgia) and Branka Panic (Chair of ESU Serbia) invited us to spend a weekend in London with them; and Sarah Hawkins (ESU London branch) invited us to the Jubilee Tea at Dartmouth House where we were delighted to see our old ESU friends and to meet new ones. Alina Maciag (Chair of the ESU Poland) has been in touch many times with offers of help for me and other displaced Ukrainians in Poland, and I am also thankful for the countless telephone calls and advice from Karen Blair (ESU USA). Sometimes her calls or emails saved me from fear or tears for hours.

Michael Tulloch, Chair of ESU Salisbury, and his wife Emily, have become like a second family to me, and Professor James Raven, a former

## INTERNATIONAL FRIENDSHIP

ESU chair, invited me and Yuliia to Cambridge for a few days for a break. While there, he introduced me to some other professors who talked to me about how best to apply for jobs in British universities through CARA – the Council for At Risk Academics. After quite a long application process I learnt that I have been awarded a Research Fellowship at Oxford University looking at how to train students in critical thinking through their English language studies.

Most importantly, my daughter has been able to sleep at night and is not waking up and calling me anymore. Over summer, she took part in an English language summer school and at last, she started to smile again. While we were waiting to move to Oxford, Michael and Emily (with whom we were then staying) encouraged me to register Yuliia at school there and I'm thrilled to say that she has won a full scholarship to a top-ranked independent school which she is loving. She's very busy with sports, music, drama and design, and is absolutely flourishing, particularly in Maths, Spanish and German.

I'd like to say a heartfelt thank you to all my ESU friends worldwide for all you have done and continue doing for me and my daughter. Words are powerless to express our gratitude.

### What is the situation in your hometown now?

My friends say I will never again see it as it was. The airport and military base have been destroyed and the railway has been damaged. Many people left the city, but around 100,000 have arrived from further east. There have been missile strikes and air raid sirens are now common.

### For what do you hope?

I hope for the end of the war as soon as possible – that is my greatest wish. This opportunity to work at Oxford University is a very great chance for me professionally, and also for Yuliia to improve her English skills, and one that I am honoured to have been awarded, but of course we would like to go back home. I was so happy living there and to have everything I had – my relatives, my home, my job, my students – but in one moment, we had to leave everything.

### Do you think anything could have prevented the war?

At the start of the war, many young Russians were protesting, standing with signs saying 'Stop the war' – so they did understand it was a war – but of course they were arrested and imprisoned. I appreciate it's difficult for Russians to speak out against their government but it's a big country with a large population and I think if people hadn't been so brainwashed with propaganda and lies, they might have stopped it.

That I think is the main difference with Ukrainian society. In 2004 during the Orange Revolution, and in 2014 when President Yanukovych was actively supported by Russia, Ukrainians went out into the street and they changed the situation.

That's why I want to say to all the ESUs around the world – please continue what you're doing because it's not in vain. We need to raise young people who are not afraid to have their voices heard but who also know how to listen to and respect other people's views. We need to teach them how to be critical thinkers and engaged citizens, and we need to continue strengthening peace, understanding and friendship globally through the English language. ●





# Diversity IN DEBATE

Elo Esalomi, part of the winning team in this year's Schools' Mace competition, tells us why, when it comes to debate, all voices need to be heard

**T**o have diversity of opinion in the debate strengthens the outcome and you get a better result.' These are the words of Nancy Pelosi, the current speaker of the US House of Representatives.

Debating is a critical driver for success in any profession. It develops key skills such as public speaking, critical thinking, research, communication, presentation skills – the list goes on. It has changed the course of history, decided the outcomes of wars, and shifted the course of national and international controversies over economic and social policy, culture, identity and politics which have impacted the lives of billions. Debating has changed people's lives for the better.

Unfortunately, these benefits do not reach everybody. For many years, debating has been considered to be an exclusive 'club', filled with privileged men from a narrow social clique.

At least, that is the common perception. I am one of those for whom the world of debating seemed an unattainable dream.

I was born in Nigeria and moved to the UK at the age of three, my parents having been attracted to this country by the prospect not only of greater professional opportunities for themselves but also of an improved educational system for me (and later for my younger sisters).

Instead, I was placed in an underfunded school with 30 other children, most of us the children of recent immigrants. There were not enough books for us to read, let alone any encouragement to speak and voice our own opinions in class. I retreated into my shell at the back of the classroom and teachers, exasperated by my silence, believed I had a learning disability.

I eventually moved to another school where, by chance, I was encouraged to join the debating club – an informal after-school activity. Initially, I was quiet, and would merely write arguments on whiteboards,

giving them to my teammates to voice. But with the help of an encouraging English teacher, I slowly began to speak in front of my peers. My confidence in my speaking abilities only grew at Tonbridge Grammar School, and with the help of my teammates and our amazing debating teacher, Mr Noel, I now feel comfortable enough to speak in front of anyone, even at the House of Lords in the presence of many distinguished guests, as I did this summer.

Looking back, my story almost seems like a fairy tale and unfortunately, for many people of my background, it is. I know that I am one of the lucky few who have reaped the benefits of debating and competitive debating, an activity that is only freely accessed by the most privileged in society. This has to change. Increasing ethnic, gender and socio-economic representation is imperative because it can encourage healthier and more fulfilling discussions about the world that we all share; inspire others through seeing themselves in certain spaces; and give minorities the opportunities that they have lacked for so long.

On the first point, increasing diversity in debate positively impacts everyone involved, boosting as it does diversity of thought. For many of my friends and me, the best part of the debating process is the post-debate discussion. These informal sessions are so valuable and eye-opening because we all have very different backgrounds and stories that shape our ideas and make us who we are today. Away from the rigours of the format, we are able to bring different perspectives to the table, introducing varied opinions that we may never have considered individually.

The second reason to increase diversity within debate is because of the benefits for historically marginalised groups seeing themselves represented within debating spaces. Just as I had always felt that classical music was not for me – until I heard Sheku Kanneh-Mason, BBC Young Musician of the Year 2016, play – many people believe debating cannot be for them because they do not see anyone like them who debates. Increasing diversity in debate eliminates that notion and inspires others to follow in their footsteps.

'We all have different backgrounds and stories that shape our ideas. Informal post-debate discussions enable us to air varied opinions that we may never have considered individually'

Finally, the most important reason diversity in debate matters, is because it gives minorities the self-belief to pursue certain careers which are traditionally related to public speaking and debating, but which have also been historically exclusive.

Though three per cent of UK barristers now are black (and three per cent of the UK population is black) among the 1,838 KCs only 22 (1.3 per cent) are black. Obviously, there are many nuanced reasons as to why this is the case, but one reason for this shocking statistic may be because this job is often interlinked with debate and public speaking, which historically has not been accessible to black people. This is also true in politics – though ethnic minorities make up 15 per cent of the UK population, only eight per cent of MPs are from this group. However, if we all make an effort to increase the participation of minority groups within debate, it gives minorities the chance to realise that these career paths such as law, politics and journalism are open to them and are not reserved for a clique to which they do not belong.

So how can we increase diversity in debate? The easiest solution is to change the narrative surrounding debate and who can and cannot access it. Everyone has an opinion and everyone, no matter where you come from, has a right to voice it. Changing the narrative around debating from an exclusive event to an all-inclusive, friendly activity demystifies debating and creates a kinder and more welcoming community. From holding public speaking and debating events in underprivileged schools, to merely highlighting debaters from ethnically diverse backgrounds, we are changing the narrative for the better. This is something we all must strive for.

I would like to thank the ESU for championing diversity and actively helping children by showing them that their voice does matter. But I know that collectively we can do more to welcome others, be role models and create a space that anyone can comfortably inhabit, which was my main reason for joining the ESU as a young member. I believe that if each of us could inspire just one child from a minority background to take up debating, that would be an amazing achievement in itself. ■

*This is an edited extract of Elo's speech given at the ESU's House of Lords Tea in July.*

'Ethnic minorities make up 15 per cent of the UK population, yet only eight per cent of MPs are from this group'





# AMERICAN JOY

CULTURAL EXCHANGE

THREE OF OUR 21/22 SECONDARY SCHOOL EXCHANGE SCHOLARS TELL US ABOUT THEIR LIFE-CHANGING YEAR ABROAD

## THOMAS TENNETT

The Bishop Wordsworth's School, Salisbury, to The Governor's Academy, Massachusetts

'As soon as I heard about the SSE I knew I wanted to go. The chance to spend a year in America, to travel and to meet new people all sounded amazing and also – having been shoehorned into just four A levels – the chance to study a bit more broadly really appealed to me, too.

The Governor's Academy – a liberal, co-ed boarding school an hour out of Boston with every facility you could possibly imagine – was a world away from my all-boys, rugby-orientated grammar school but it could not have been more fun and exciting. Every class was amazing but what made Governor's so special was the



relationships between the teachers and the students. Mr Satow's Advanced Placement government and politics classes were unfailingly interesting. Likewise my AP world history class with Mr 'Hot Rod' McLain – a former Olympian canoeist – was an absolute bellyful of laughs and even Dr Quinby, the headmaster, played ice hockey with us several times, even though my teammates and I were rank beginners.

My year in America also changed the way I saw the world. I was shocked by the number of homeless black people in Boston and I think one of the most moving points of my life was going to the site of the battle of Gettysburg. Learning about the terrible things that happened on both sides, I realised that there's good and evil but there's also so much grey in the world.

I can talk to anyone now, too. On a trip to Charleston we had some fascinating conversations with nurses and people from the veterans' affairs hospital opposite where we were staying, and everyone – not just there but throughout the whole year – was absolutely lovely. The SSE was undoubtedly the best year of my life so far and I'd urge everyone to apply!



## TAPIWA CRONIN

Clapton Girls Academy, Hackney, to The Ethel Walker School, Connecticut

'I first heard about the Secondary School Exchange through the ESU's Public Speaking Competition and just kept hold of the idea. I'd grown up on high school musicals and I think we all have American dreams because of the media we consume.

My time in the US was fascinating because I learned that what we consider to be the American experience is a lot more nuanced, and that the 'American Dream' only exists for some. I realised that the schools we attended were originally for a certain community, and

for a long time there wasn't the diversity that is now celebrated.

I'd done debating at school here and also attended the ESU's Debate Academy in 2018 and so I was happy to be able to continue that in the US. One of my academic highlights was debating that Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* [a urinal] was not a work of art, a debate which I won, and which had the class in stitches.

Socially, I loved being a part of my varsity swimming team and was thrilled to have a letterman jacket and a team and a mascot to cheer for, and I also had the opportunity to see one of my favourite artists, 070 Shake, in concert, which was amazing.

It was the support from the ESU which meant I could travel like this and I'm deeply appreciative. The SSE didn't just give me an American experience, it gave me a coming-of-age experience and I think I'm a stronger and more resilient person as a result. It's changed me and I hope I can do something with this opportunity and everything it's given me – I just want to give back in any way I can.'

## OLIVIA THOMAS

Colyton Grammar School, Devon, to Western Reserve Academy, Ohio

'I'd like to say an overwhelming thank you to the ESU members and to the Exeter Branch in particular for the opportunity itself and the financial support I was offered, without which I would not have been able to take up my place. The SSE was a unique, hugely enriching experience which has made a massive difference to my life and how I view things, not least because I'm now hoping to switch my degree (in politics, philosophy and



'An overwhelming thank you for making this year possible'

economics at the University of Exeter) to include drama.

I hadn't done any drama since about the age of 13 but I did two semesters' worth in the US and loved every second. We put on a number of shows but performing in *Rumors* by Neil Simon was my best memory of the whole exchange. The atmosphere on opening night was just incredible.

My year there also helped me realise that the middle ground in American politics is far larger than the media portrays. We're often shown a very polarised view, from the anarchic Capitol Hill Autonomous Zone in Seattle that existed briefly in 2020, to the flag and faith conservatives with guns and eagles on their arms, whereas I discovered a huge, thoroughly reasonable section that no one talks about. I did meet moderate Republicans. Not all Republicans are pro-Trump, in fact many of them are not. You meet Democrats who aren't just about taxing the rich and tearing down the

establishment. And on a lighter note, I was surprised at just how friendly Midwesterners are – they'll happily open their doors to anyone.

Overall, the year has made me more confident and more comfortable in my skin and, even more importantly, it has reminded me to enjoy life to the full. I think the English school system can sometimes lead you to be too focused on your CV whereas this has taught me to live in the moment and to say yes to opportunities that come my way.' ●

## DONATE TO THE SSE

Though the scholarships cover board and tuition fees, additional costs including travel, insurance etc. must still be met and the ESU is pleased to offer financial assistance to scholars who would otherwise be unable to take up their place. To donate to this fund and contribute to a life-changing experience for a young person, please contact [fundraising@esu.org](mailto:fundraising@esu.org)



# A Mystery SOLVED

A random phone call has led to us unearthing the winner of the 1986 IPSC, previously lost to the mists of time. Our newly found champion **Anne Johnson**, now a lawyer in Dallas, takes up the tale....



## The call

Earlier this year I received a call from someone from the Dallas chapter of the ESU. She said, 'one of your former high school teachers tells me that you won the ESU's International Public Speaking Competition in 1986', which I agreed I had. 'Well, I looked on the website, and it says the 1986 winner is "unknown". Should that be you?' I believe it should and, while hard evidence is lost to history, I'd like to make my case.



## The case, part one: the PSC

My parents were American expats who travelled all over the world as teachers on American military bases. In 1969 they settled in Suffolk, where I was born (as Anne Marie McGowan), and I attended Lakenheath American High School. It was a true American school but we were very connected to the British community, not least through the English-Speaking Union's public speaking competitions.

We loved the ESU format. It was so uniquely British, with the chair, the speaker and [back then] the proposer of the vote of thanks. In 1986 I was chosen as the speaker for our team, with my older brother, Richard, as chair, and our friend Billy Henry handling the vote of thanks. We made our way through all the heats and regional competitions, with me giving a different speech each time. I was a very earnest 15-year-old girl and tended towards more serious topics than most

of the other competitors, though they seemed to go over well. Eventually, we found out that we'd made it into the final, which was to be held at the impossibly fancy sounding Café Royal in London, with *The Times* columnist, Bernard Levin as chair of judges. We were terribly excited.

My speech at the final was 'Patriotism vs. Nationalism'. A member of the audience asked what I thought of the Falklands War – was that an example of patriotism or nationalism? It put me in a tricky spot as an American, goading me into answering that the British were nationalists for defending this little island. But I took advantage of the ambiguity in the question and quickly answered: 'Well of course it was a blatant example of nationalism... How dare the Argentinians believe they can invade British soil?' Everyone erupted into laughter, the questioner smiled and I was named Best Speaker.

That really encapsulated what I loved about the ESU: competitors were rewarded for being entertaining and clever in answering questions.



## The case, part two: the IPSC

Following the PSC, I and the speaker from the winning team were invited to represent England at the International Public Speaking Competition later that year.

The competition was in the evening at the American Embassy. As the Australian competitor gave his highly entertaining speech about the joys of cricket, I remember thinking, again, that mine was going to be such a downer compared to everyone else's more light-hearted topics. My subject was 'The Right of Dissent', inspired by my experience of driving past protesters outside the US Air Force base on my way to school. I deeply

admired them. I also deeply admired the American soldiers on our base. I had a lot to say about this, and it was not funny.

I was gobsmacked when the judges called my name, and my dad was over the moon. Then the auditorium doors opened and we walked through into a reception space where a waiter with a huge tray laden with glasses said to me, 'Champagne, Madam?' With my father's consent, I took one.



## The corroboration: Richard McGowan, Anne's brother

'Sadly, I only remember bits of the IPSC. It was the first and only time I ever went to the American Embassy. Anne and I lived in rural Suffolk and trips to London were infrequent. My father loaded Anne, Billy and I into his Volvo estate and took us to dinner, making sure afterwards to walk us through Grosvenor Square to see the statues of his heroes General Dwight Eisenhower and Franklin D. Roosevelt. I must admit that I have very few memories of the actual speeches, except that one was about sports. I didn't really listen to my sister's, I had heard it so often as she rehearsed, but I know she was shocked when she won.

I realise none of this offers any real proof and quite honestly Anne's name being lost to history is so very fitting it makes me laugh. Anne was an expert at losing things in high school and it is too funny to think that her name was lost in an event she won.'



## IPSC 2023

We are thrilled that the IPSC will once again be held in-person next year after two years as a virtual competition.

We look forward to welcoming PSC winners from dozens of countries to London for a week of cultural exchange, good-natured competition and the chance to make lifelong friendships and memories.



## The evidence

Please see the feature in *The Thetford & Watton Times* (left), which proves my victory at the PSC at least. Note the headline. I showed it to my 17-year-old daughter and she was horrified, 'They're totally objectifying you,' she screeched. 'It was the 80s,' I told her.



## The outcome

Something I learned through the ESU was that you can talk about serious,


challenging topics all you want, but you have to make it interesting. Your audience will forgive you for losing your place, or for stumbling over a question, but they will not forgive you for being boring. Those lessons have served me very well in the legal profession where I do a fair amount of public speaking, both in and out of court. Building a rapport with an audience, answering questions and thinking on my feet, and presenting my clients' cases in a compelling way – these are all skills I started to learn as a girl through the ESU.


This trip down memory lane has been such a joy. I have such warm, fond memories of the ESU and everything it did for me and my brother (an acclaimed public speaker himself, and now an esteemed teacher). I only wish my father were still alive – he died last year, and he would have loved recalling our trip to the American Embassy in 1986. I think he would have remembered the details better than any of us! ●




# 10 THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT Ukraine

 Ukraine is the largest country in Europe, stretching from Russia to Slovakia and taking up almost half of the land mass between the Baltic and the Black Sea.

 Many people will know about the accident at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant in 1986, but did you know that the area has since been declared an Ecological Biosphere Reserve? Covering c2600 km<sup>2</sup> it is home to around 1,500 species of plants and animals, many of them rare or endangered – including wolves, lynx and Przewalski's horses, the last truly wild horse.


 'A word is not a sparrow – once it flies you can't catch it' is a translation of a Ukrainian proverb warning speakers to think carefully about what they want to say. Once uttered, words cannot be taken back.


 Ukraine is the home to one of the world's first ever constitutions, written by a Ukrainian Cossack Pylyp Orlyk in 1710. It established a democratic standard for the separation between the legislative, executive and judiciary powers in government.

 The Ukrainian alphabet consists of 33 letters, of which P is the most common. F is the rarest.

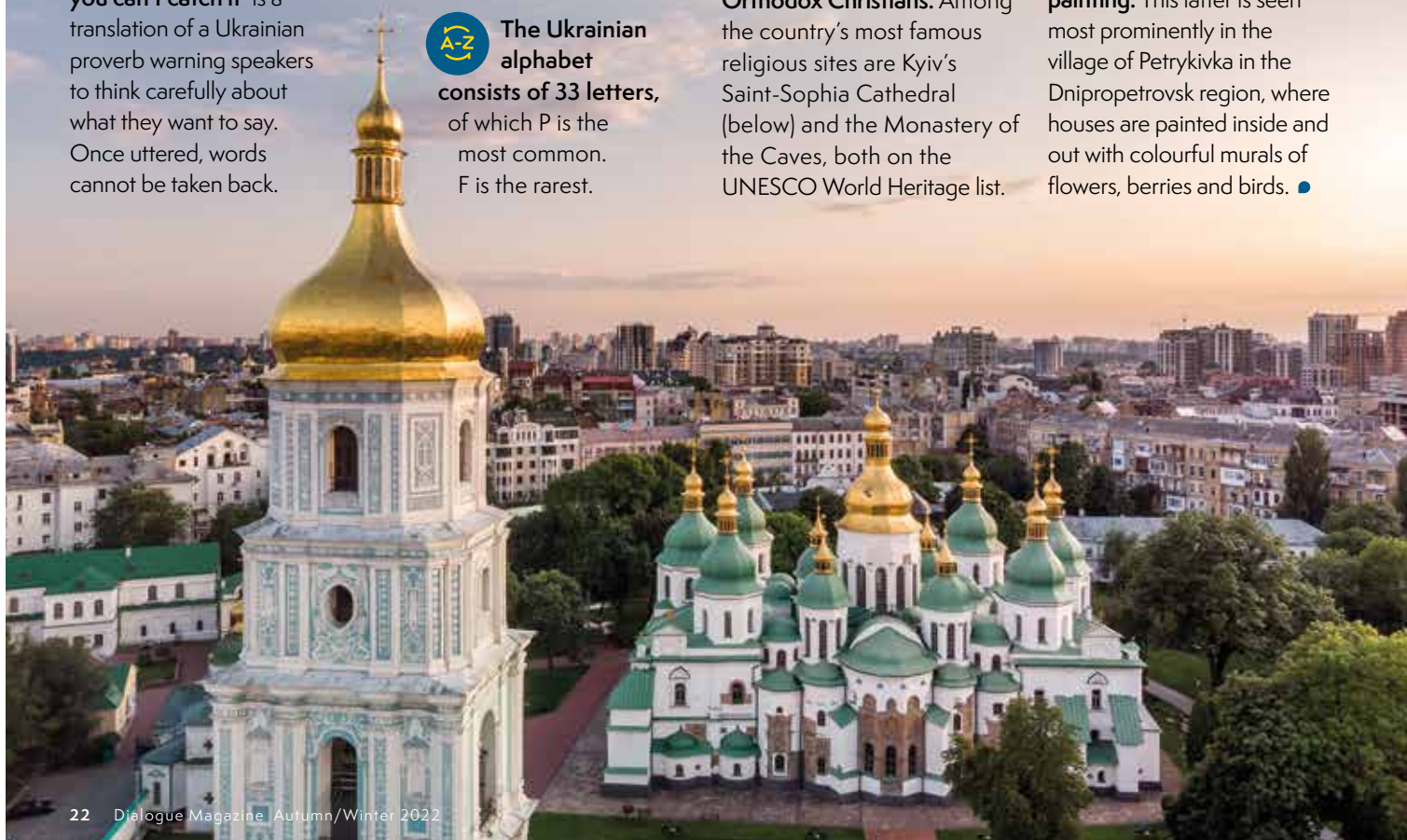
 The blue and yellow bands of the Ukrainian flag symbolise a summer sky over a field of ripe wheat – echoing Ukraine's role as the 'breadbasket of Europe'.

 Despite Soviet attempts to stamp out religion, most of Ukraine's population are Orthodox Christians. Among the country's most famous religious sites are Kyiv's Saint-Sophia Cathedral (below) and the Monastery of the Caves, both on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

 It is well known that Ukraine's president Volodymyr Zelenskyy is a former actor who played the role of the president of Ukraine in the television series *Servant of the People*. Did you know that the current mayor of Kyiv, Vitali Klitschko, is a former boxer nicknamed Dr Ironfist?

 Ukrainians love to dance. Among the many folk dances, Hopak, a Cossack dance originating in the early 16th century, is often referred to as the National Dance of Ukraine.

 Ukraine has a thriving culture of folk art including patterned Easter eggs (*pysanka*), weaving, embroidery and decorative painting. This latter is seen most prominently in the village of Petrykivka in the Dnipropetrovsk region, where houses are painted inside and out with colourful murals of flowers, berries and birds. ●



# INTRODUCING GRAYSONS

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Graysons will deliver a new delicious, sustainable-forward menu at Dartmouth House, with a strong commitment to seasonal and local culture which will be served daily in the Revelstoke Lounge. ESU Members will also be able to order and pay via a new members' app.

You can expect fabulous, fresh food cooked with the best quality British ingredients celebrating the classics we all know and love, as well as the latest London trends and contemporary flavours. The menus will change seasonally and will feature superb options for vegetarian and plant-based eaters.

We will take an approach to reduce carbon at Dartmouth House by sourcing local, seasonal, biodiverse produce from sustainable producers and work with farmers who protect soil health for future generations through regenerative and organic practices.

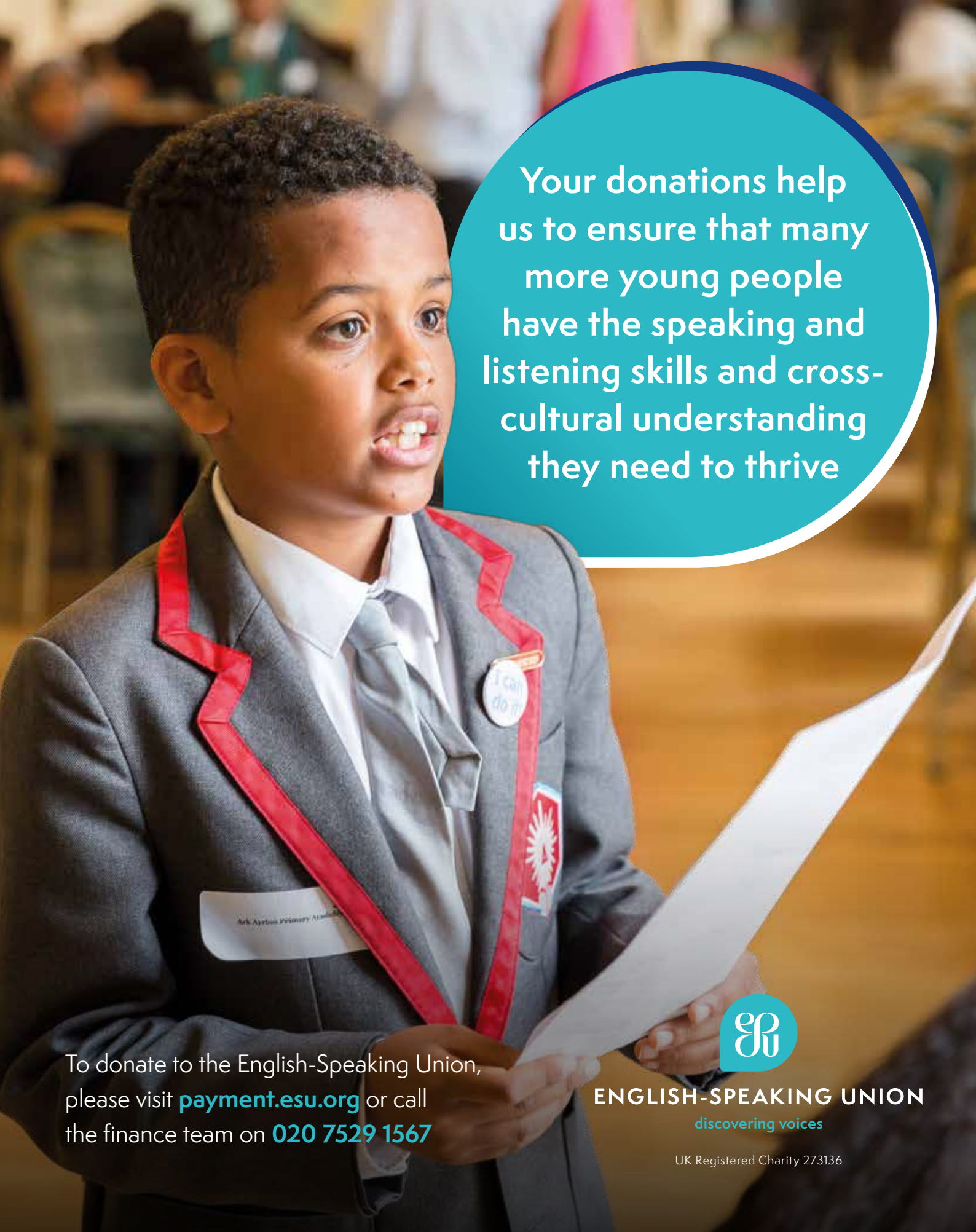
We will also be introducing a series of members' food and drink events.

Whether you are visiting the venue to meet colleagues, have breakfast, brunch or lunch, or you would like to book one of the fantastic spaces for a private event, Graysons will be delighted to welcome you at Dartmouth House.

## INTRODUCING THE TEAM







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