

## **CONFERENCE – IT IS INTELLECTUAL COMMUNICATION WITHOUT BORDERS**

I would regard participation in the XXII International Scientific Conference on Economic Policy in Estonia on 26–28 June 2014, in an old historical complex of manor buildings at Jäneda, which was dedicated to the treatment and discussion of the economic policy of above all Estonia but also other countries and the European Union, as continuation of good traditions in the relations between Estonian and Russian universities. They started already years ago, at the end of the 70s of the last century, when economists of the Kuban State University organised the School of Young Economists in order to expand scientific contacts between universities of the different regions and republics of the former Soviet Union. We were interested in the exchange of scientific information, becoming familiar with actual situations, good practice and the people who worked in the areas of theoretical and applied economics and management. Representatives of different establishments of higher education from Russia (Moscow, St. Petersburg, Voronezh, Kazan, Tyumen, Rostov-na-Donu, etc.), Armenia, Estonia, Georgia, Lithuania, Ukraine gathered annually in the small Kudepsta town in the Sochi area. The most frequent representatives of Estonia among participants in the Sochi School were Matti Raudjärv (ten times in the years 1979–1989) and also Jüri Kats, Sulev Mäeltsemees and Mare Viies.

No one thought that such scientific cooperation between establishments of higher education could become so long-term and effective that even after many years, independently of the changes in both the countries and personal lives of each person after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the professional communication may remain very viable indeed.

In modern terms we can safely say that such cooperation creates social capital which is based on scientific interest, mutual understanding, openness and trust and readiness for a dialogue.

The range of problems of economic policy represented in the presentations of the XXII International Conference in Estonia turned out to be extremely topical. There was a lot of interest in presentations which treated the issues of regional development, local government, competitiveness of regions and measures of economic policy. Sharing good practice in the solution of actual problems in local government agencies of Germany and Estonia was of particular interest for participants. It was very useful that the organisers had invited also economic specialists who are doing practical work and heads of municipal agencies. The conference was held in the spirit of constructive dialogues, not just passive listening to presentations. I would like to point out the high professional standards of the participants in the conference and the high quality of the excellent content of their materials and articles which will be also partly published in this international research journal.

I would like to thank the organisers of the conference very much also for taking care of the spare time of the participants in the conference. Picturesque landscapes around the Jäneda Manor, also tours in Estonia – these left the best impressions of the country and its people, their taking good care of the natural environment. For instance, as a person from South Russia, I had unforgettable impressions from the walking tour in the bog.

Professional communication during these few days of conference work created fruitful opportunities for the development of contacts with representatives of different countries. For instance, communication with colleagues led to some ideas of possible areas of cooperation between establishments of higher education from Estonia and Kuban, and also other Russian establishments of higher education.

For instance, a new research orientation called Development of Local Clusters has been developed in the Faculty of Management and Psychology of the Kuban State University since the beginning of 1990s. This covers the economic development of local clusters (institutions, organisations, etc.), problems of organisation of the activities of local governments, strategic planning of local development, territorial marketing, issues of regional competitiveness, peculiarities of rural development, etc. Most problems from the areas listed were also among subjects discussed at the conference, above all between the Estonian and German colleagues.

All this creates interest in mutual cooperation and active interactions both in the area of education and research between the Kuban State University and Estonian universities and other Russian establishments of higher education. I hope that good and continuing work-related contacts will develop here in the next few years.

I would particularly like to thank Matti Raudjärv as the main organiser for the invitation to the conference and organisational efforts related to the conference.

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