

TALLINN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY 100¹

The Republic of Estonia was declared on 24 February 1918. Six months later, on 17 September, the Estonian Engineering Society whose members were technology intellectuals who had acquired university education mainly in Riga or St. Petersburg, started to provide special engineering courses. This date is also regarded as the birthday of technical higher education in Estonia and of the Tallinn University of Technology. After gaining independence, the country increasingly needed engineers, architects and technicians. In 1919 the activities continued in the private school called Tallinn College of Engineering, which was nationalised in 1920 to promote its further development.

In 1936 the school was renamed the Tallinn Technical Institute. During the Soviet period (1945–1990) the name of the school was Tallinn Polytechnical Institute (TPI) and its activities were deemed to have been started in 1936, although already in 1938 the school had been renamed into Tallinn University of Technology (TUT, now TalTech). The name Tallinn University of Technology was taken into use again only in 1989 in the course of restoration of the independent statehood of Estonia.

One of the first reorganisations of the Soviet power in Estonian higher education was the transfer of the Faculty of Economics from the University of Tartu to the technical university in Tallinn in 1940. It was namely found then that it is more expedient to develop higher education in the field of economics in the capital city on the grounds that Tallinn as the most important Estonian industrial centre and location of government ministries needed experts in, economics most of all. This was to create better preconditions for the cooperation of the academic staff with practitioners. Most students of the Faculty of Economics of the University of Tartu also lived permanently in Tallinn. The Decree on the Establishment of the Faculty of Economics of the Technical University was issued in September 1940. In November, the structure of the Faculty of Economics was approved, with chairs of Political Economy, Public Finance and Credits, Civil and Labour Law, History of National Economy, Organisation and Planning of Enterprises, and Science of Commodities. The autumn semester of 1940 was spent on organisational activities and the sessional work started in February 1941. The Faculty of Economics was the largest faculty of the technical university at that time, with approximately 600 students listed in January 1941.

The war that started broke off the activities of the Faculty of Economics and in autumn 1941 the Faculty of Economics was transferred back to the University of Tartu. In autumn 1944, during the Soviet power, the Faculty of Economics was brought back to Tallinn. After that the Faculty of Economics was for ten years the only trainer of specialists of economics with higher education for the Estonian industry, trade and finance until 1954 when some of the specialities (Trade Economics and Finance) were transferred to the Faculty of Law of the University of Tartu.

¹ This brief article characterises the Tallinn University of Technology above all from the aspects of the institutions which have been related to the Journal of Economic Policy and the conduction of the respective international conferences.

In 1953, training of specialists of a new area – economic engineers, or engineers-economists according to the professional title used at that time – started for the first time in Estonia. A new stage in the training of specialists in economics started in 1960 with the reestablishment of the Faculty of Engineering Economics which was renamed into the Faculty of Economics in 1964.

Several important changes were made in the structure of the Faculty of Economics in the following years. In connection with the Journal of Economic Policy and international conference we will mention here only the Chair of Service Economy. The Tallinn Polytechnical Institute was one of the first ones in the Soviet Union to start the admission of students to the 5-year speciality of Economic Engineers in the field of Economics and Organisation of Services in the academic year of 1968/69. This became at once a speciality with one of the highest application rates at the university. The initiator of opening the new speciality (1968) and establishment of the Chair of Service Economics (1970) and the first Head of the Chair (1970–1978) was Associate Professor (Docent) Juhani Väljataga. Matti Raudjärv defended his thesis of the Candidate of Economics (current PhD) in 1982 under his supervision and also stayed at the same chair to work after graduation from the TPI in the same speciality (1974). In 1978, Associate Professor (Docent) Sulev Mäeltsemees was elected as the Head of the Chair.

In summer 1992 the Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences was established in the Faculty of General Theoretical Subjects to reflect the reforms accompanied by the regaining of independent statehood of Estonia. The Institute started to train officials for the needs of the democratic country according to curricula of Public Administration. In spring 1994 the Faculty of Humanities was set up and the Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences was established within the structure of the Faculty.

Ten years later, in 2004, Prof Sulev Mäeltsemees was elected as the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities. More fundamental changes in the reorganisation of the structure of the faculty were made in 2008 when the Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences was renamed into the Institute of Public Administration in the autumn. At the beginning of 2009 the Faculty of Humanities was renamed into the Faculty of Social Sciences. It was intended to add also Law as a branch of Social Sciences to the faculty.

A radical change was made in the administrative structure of TUT in 2017 when four schools remained instead of eight faculties – schools of Information Technologies, Engineering, Science, and Business and Governance. The latter was set up by joining the former Faculty of Economics with the Faculty of Social Sciences, the youngest faculty of the TUT, set up 23 years earlier. The faculty was named the Faculty of Economics. Four institutes were set up within the faculty: Department of Economics and Finance, Department of Business Administration, Ragnar Nurkse Department of Innovation and Governance, and Department of Law. In the education provided by the current TalTech (TUT) Department of Economics, theoretical knowledge is well balanced with practical skills required, the academic staff consists of internationally known world class researchers and outstanding practical specialists not only from Estonia but also from foreign countries. Approximately 900 foreign students from more than 40 countries confirm the attractiveness of the department also in the international

educational landscape. At the beginning of 2017 the department consisted of the academic staff of 178 persons, including 25 professors and 33 assoc. professors (docents). There were 120 doctoral students and 12 doctoral theses were defended at the department in 2016.

In Tallinn, in September 2018

Sulev Mäeltsemees
TalTech Professor Emeritus

Matti Raudjärv
TalTech graduate of 1974 – Alumni;
Visiting Professor of Georgian Technical University and Tbilisi State University
in the academic year 2018/19;
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