

FELLOWSHIPS ABROAD AS AN EXPERIENCE ENHANCING RESEARCH AND ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

Fellowship opportunities in other countries are globally well-known and recognised periodic activities for the academic staff and researchers of different universities and other institutions of higher education to achieve self-education and acquire experience. Also the academic staff and researchers of Estonian institutions of higher education have often successfully used the opportunities and will probably do so effectively also in the future.

The undersigned had the first fellowship period abroad from the end of October 1989 until January 1990 at the Kiel University and the Frankfurt (Main) University of the Federal Republic of Germany.¹ The main activity was the work in libraries, also listening to some lectures, becoming familiar with these universities (incl. their curricula, programs, etc.), also delivering lectures, communication with local colleagues but also getting to know the local life, culture and everything else that was interesting. In addition also finding opportunities in Kiel (the undersigned stayed at the Kiel University for two months) for possible cooperation with German colleagues in some area.

Substantial meetings took place at the Rector's Office of the Kiel University of Applied Sciences in November 1989 with Professor Udo Lampe leading the discussions and then at the Faculty of Economics with all professors of the faculty in order to start cooperation. Also the fall of the Berlin Wall and its aftermaths were interesting. And the Christmas-time and coming of the New Year 1989/1990 in Kiel were very memorable! Which were followed by a month, January 1990, at the Institute of Business Education of the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration of the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main. Also the communication and cooperation with the management and experts of the Kiel Chamber of Commerce and Industry was very educating (with the objective of finding cooperation partners for Estonian companies in Germany – it was a success and the undersigned acquired excellent practical experience).

¹ This was followed by fellowship opportunities in 1990 (Oct-Dec; Kiel, Academy of Economics of Schleswig-Holstein); 1992 (July; Vienna University of Economics and Business); 1993 (July-August; Bergneustadt, Alfred Nau Academy); 1995 (April-July; Kiel University of Applied Sciences (Kiel UAS), Osnabrück University of Applied Sciences, Paderborn University, Kiel Institute for the World Economy (Kiel IWE); 1995 (Sept-Oct; Kiel IWE, Kiel UAS); 1998 (July-August; Kiel UAS, Kiel IWE, Paderborn University); 2001 (Oct-Nov; Greifswald University, Kiel IWE, Kiel UAS); 2006 (Nov-Dec; Greifswald University, Kiel IWE, Kiel UAS); 2010 (Nov-Dec; Kiel IWE, Kiel UAS); 2015–2016 (Nov–Dec, Jan; Kiel IWE, Kiel UAS). In addition, shorter stays/fellowships between the above-mentioned fellowship opportunities in Austria (Vienna, Innsbruck, Salzburg); Federal Republic of Germany (Bamberg, Berlin, Bremen, Frankfurt (Main), Greifswald, Hamburg, Heidelberg, Heilbronn, Kiel, Köln, Lübeck, Merseburg, Munich, Nuremberg, Rostock, Schleswig, Wismar, Wolfsburg, etc.); Switzerland (Lausanne, Geneva, Luzern, Zürich); Hungary (Budapest) etc. on the basis of research grants of the Estonian Science Fund and research contracts signed with Estonian ministries and companies.

In addition to the above-mentioned contacts, the undersigned soon found excellent contacts also with many other universities and training centres of the Federal Republic of Germany and chambers of commerce and industry of a few federal states, the Vienna University of Economics and Business and the Innsbruck University in Austria and certainly also with many people who worked for these institutions. In addition, there have been good opportunities for contacts with the institutions of higher education of other countries and colleagues from these institutions. For instance, with researchers and academic staff from the field of economics in Armenia, Czech Republic, Finland, Georgia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Slovakia, Ukraine, and other countries).

On the other hand, it is somewhat surprising that many younger (and unfortunately also older) colleagues in Estonia do not want to use these opportunities nowadays. But maybe these people are simply working at a wrong job, besides, many of them lack practical experience from working at an enterprise or some other organisation (or such experience is insufficient)?² We could also say that failure to use fellowship opportunities means restricting oneself and is even somewhat narrow-minded and superficial. Internet and the computer do not replace the experience and varied knowledge acquired from working at universities of other countries and active communication with the colleagues working there, becoming familiar with the people, homes, history, culture, traditions and nature of these countries. Particularly communication with other people should be valued and the computer does not replace that! If the above-mentioned factors are ignored and the opportunities offered are not used, people miss a lot and their life is therefore considerably poorer.³ Although the undersigned has offered fellowship opportunities at universities of the Federal Republic of Germany to many Estonian colleagues and has been ready to help them to acquire the grant (several German professors would need to invite them to their university), no one has expressed serious interest in it! There are several reasons for giving it up – related to their home, family and other factors (long absence from home, probably also lack of self-confidence and belief in coping the challenge?).

A serious problem was raised in 2017 at the University of Tartu and its regional colleges. Namely, it had been decided at the university already about 6–7 years earlier that starting from 2018 all members of the academic staff whose duties include delivering lectures to students, conduction of workshops and other important sessional work, should have a doctoral degree (PhD). It turned out that most of them had not written their thesis or

² As an aside, it can be noted (without wanting to emphasize it) that the undersigned has been working for Estonian universities as a member of the academic staff and researcher and has had short-term and longer-term fellowships at the universities of several other countries for 43 years already by spring 2018. Considering also the years as full-time student at the Tallinn Polytechnical Institute (the current Tallinn University of Technology) (and working at the same time part-time for different companies), the undersigned has had contacts/cooperation with universities already for 50 years in 2018.

³ As the undersigned, I hereby encourage everybody, both younger and not younger colleagues and also those at an intermediate age from all fields of study to use fellowship opportunities and to **communicate with people directly** (without underestimating the possibilities found online). I believe – you will not regret it!

defended their scientific degree (it was told by way of apology – not enough energy or time, not interested, etc.). If so, why do they cheat themselves, their colleagues, students and eventually the university? True enough, some of them have fortunately already left the university when the scandal broke out but time and many other things have been lost...?! In the opinion of the undersigned, also fellowship opportunities at the universities of other countries would surely have helped the people to prepare their thesis and defend the doctoral degree. Doctoral students (and not only they) often did not regard it necessary, however. Time will tell how the University of Tartu will solve this problem. But it has to be solved as it is an issue of the prestige for the university! This is not easy, however, as temporary solutions help only in the short-term and will not ensure the quality or stability of teaching or scientific research in the long term at the university.

In 1992, the first Chair of Economic Policy after regaining independence for Estonia was established in the Faculty of Economics of the Tallinn University of Technology on the initiative of the undersigned (as a result of a fellowship grant, by following the model of the universities of the Federal Republic of Germany) who was its first head of chair and professor. A year later the Chair of Economic Policy was established also at the Faculty of Economics of the University of Tartu.

It is very unfortunate that these chairs no longer exist in their original form. In the Tallinn University of Technology, the chair was liquidated already about six years ago (2012). The undersigned worked at the Chair of Economic Policy of the Tallinn University of Technology in 1992–1998. In 1996 the undersigned was invited to work also at the Chair of Economic Policy of the University of Tartu in parallel with the work at the Tallinn University of Technology. In 1998 the undersigned gave up the job at the Tallinn University of Technology and started to work full time at the University of Tartu. The successor was a person with the diploma in mechanical engineering from the same chair who was unable and probably also not competent enough to dedicate his efforts to the field of economic policy.

Two so-called “dried up” chairs were merged at the University of Tartu for reasons of dropping subjects from the curricula, expiry of employment contracts, leaving of members of the academic staff and probably also several other reasons (for instance, financial problems?) into the now relatively small Chair of Public Economics and Policy.

August 2015 – February 2018

In Estonia: *(at Pirita-Kose in Tallinn, in Kaasiku Farm in Lääne-Viru County and in Pärnu)*

In Germany: *in Kiel and in Warder*

Matti Raudjärv