

THE SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TARTU CELEBRATED ITS 80TH ANNIVERSARY

On November 30, 2018, the School of Economics and Business Administration (SEBA) at the University of Tartu celebrated its 80th anniversary.

The 387-year history of the University of Tartu (UT) is also the history of Estonian economic education and science. At the University of Tartu, founded in 1632, economics first considered as a component of other specialties (mainly mathematics). At the University, which was reopened in 1802 by Russian Empire, economics became both, a separate discipline and an institution. The Chair of Cameralistics, Finance and Commerce, founded in 1803, can be considered the forerunner of many of today's chairs and departments of the SEBA.

In the activities of the SEBA we can distinguish three periods:

- First period of the Republic of Estonia
- Soviet period
- The period of the newly independent Estonia.

Interest in economic studies has been great at all stages of history. This was also the case during the **first Republic of Estonia** from the establishment of the Department of Commerce at the Faculty of Law in 1920. The number of students in economics was the highest in 1926 (936), it subsequently decreased, being mainly within the range of 500-600. As interest in economic studies grew, the Faculty of Economics of the UT was established and started its activities on January 1, 1938. after leaving the Faculty of Law. Eduard Poom, professor of business administration, served as the first dean.

In the autumn of 1940, the training of economists was transferred from Tartu to the Tallinn Polytechnic Institute (TPI). During the German occupation, the Faculty of Economics was brought back from Tallinn in 1941 to UT. The Faculty of Economics in Tartu was closed again in 1944 and it was reopened at TPI.

In this period the Faculty also gave the Tartu University one rector, Edgar Kant, who was the rector of the university from 1941 till 1944.

In the Soviet period economics studies returned to Tartu in the autumn of 1954, when 60 daily students of the Department of Commerce and 79 part time students started their studies again at UT. Following the historical traditions, the studies in economics started within the Faculty of Law.

For the second time, a "divorce" from the Faculty of Law took place in 1968. when the Faculty of Economics started to operate on September 1, 1968. Associate Professor Valner Krinal was elected to the position of the Dean.

From the very beginning, the faculty focus was on publishing textbooks and also the number of scientific papers began to increase. The scientific qualification of the teaching

staff also started to increase. As early as the 1970s, the share of lecturers with scientific degrees was over 50%.

The faculty actively contributed to the economic liberalization of the second half of the 1980s. The Faculty of Economics supported the idea of Self-Managing Estonia (IME) by awarding the authors a special award in 1987. The colleagues actively participated in the development of the IME concept and related public debates. In 1989 a new major – International business – was opened to meet the needs of economic development of Estonia. The systematic reorganization of study curricula began in the same year.

For the better preparation of economists in **Estonia, regaining the independence** in 1991, and for setting the respective goals, the Strategic Development Plan of the SEBA (with more 200 pages) was prepared. This Plan, which was passed by the UT Council in Fall 1993, was the first strategic development plan for the entire UT. In the development plan, the faculty set a number of ambitious goals, which were carefully pursued and the principles are followed up to this day.

Firstly, to increase the responsibility of the teaching staff for the quality of teaching.

Second, to equip students with quality study materials. In 1995 the publication of a series of textbooks for the SEBA began. Over the next 20 years, over 100 titles of textbooks were published in this series. In 1999, also the publication of a series of scientific monographs began, with 36 titles to date.

Third, increase the responsibility of the teaching staff for continuously improving their scientific excellence. As early as the mid-1990s, the publishing activity of lecturers was taken into account in the incentive system of the SEBA.

Fourth, to create motivation for staff to devote themselves fully to academic work. Teaching, research and administrative activities were integrated into an integral remuneration and incentive system for the teaching staff.

Fifth, to launch retraining for practice people to get additional work and money. SEBA opened the first fee-based university curricula in 1995. In the first decade of the 2000s, the number of fee-based students was significantly bigger than the number of students in state-funded places. This made it possible to survive the minimization of public funding in the meantime.

The faculty played a constructive role in the university's structural and management reform in the mid-2010s. As a result, the FEBA as a faculty was retained, although within the broad field of social sciences.

With the support of the abovementioned activities, we were able to renew our curricula in the early 1990s in 4 years (bachelor) +2 years (master) and later in the 3 + 2 (Bologna) system, and to launch doctoral studies in economics.

Over the years, more than 9,000 people have graduated in economics. It is a pleasure to admit that the alumni of the faculty have helped to advance the life of Estonia by conducting and investigating economy and organizations, making politics and reflecting it in the media.

But at the International National University, research is the driving force for teaching. Science is always international. In early November 2019, the international Times Higher Education (THE) published another special ranking, where the University of Tartu specializations (majors) in business and economics have succeeded 201-250. places – the highest achieved by the economics faculties of Estonian universities.

We hope that our fruitful cooperation will continue over the coming decades.

We are very grateful to

- all colleagues, who have collaborated to form the faculty and face of today's faculty;
- alumni who have spread the spirit of Tartu around Estonia and beyond;
- students, as they bring the faculty's current activities and knowledge to the development of Estonia in the coming years.

In Tartu, November 2019

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