

## 25 YEARS FROM THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ECONOMIC POLICY IN TARTU-VÄRSKA (1996)

The undersigned got the idea of making our conference international in spring 1995 and in September of the same year during his stay in the Federal Republic of Germany. We had held already three conferences by that time:

- the Ship Conference – in 1984: Tartu–Värška–Pskov–Värška–Tartu;
- then, after a longer interval of 10 years, in 1994: Tartu–Värška, and
- in 1995: Tartu–Värška.

The undersigned namely had his fellowship at the universities of the Federal Republic of Germany, first in spring 1995 for three months (April-July) in Kiel-Osnabrück-Paderborn-Kiel, and in autumn for one and a half months (September-October) in Kiel again.

Before the fellowship in autumn I visited Germany and Switzerland for more than a week for practical business purposes with the management of a top Estonian company and then met my friend and colleague Professor Dr. Manfred O. E. Hennies<sup>1</sup> (Kiel University of Applied Sciences) in Frankfurt (Main) to discuss further cooperation.

During that meeting I also talked about the scientific conferences on economic policy held here in Estonia and we both agreed that also Germans could participate in the next, **fourth conference** in 1996. The idea of joint organisation of the conference was also supported a few days later in Kiel by my long-term good colleague from the Kiel University of Applied Sciences Professor Dr. Toni Schulz.<sup>2</sup>

The conference took place on two days, on 28–29 June 1996. We started with the Plenary Session in Tartu, in the University of Tartu Museum on Toome Hill. After lunch we travelled to Värška where both the conference work and the catering and accommodation were in the Värška Spa for the first time. The conference was organised on the part of Tallinn – by the Chair of Economic Policy of the Tallinn University of Technology (Head of the Chair Matti Raudjärv) and in Tartu – by the Chair of Economic Policy of the University of Tartu (Head of the Chair Jüri Sepp). Conduction of the conference and publishing of the collection of papers was supported and assisted also by 12 Estonian businesses and organisations.

The presentations and papers were published in a collection of conference materials (the precursor of the current journal) in two parts (in total: 411 pp.), from more than 50 authors (49 papers)<sup>3</sup>. Presentations were made at the conference also by authors without

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<sup>1</sup> *Professor Dr. Manfred O. E. Hennies passed away at his home in Warder, Germany, in October 2019 at the age of 82.*

<sup>2</sup> *Professor Dr. Toni Schulz passed away already for almost twenty years ago, in Germany.*

<sup>3</sup> See: *Aktuaalsed majanduspoliitika küsimused Euroopa Liidu riikides ja Eesti Vabariigis / Aktuelle wirtschaftspolitische Fragen in den Ländern der Europäischen Union und in der Republik Estland / Topical problems of economic policy in the Member States of the European Union and the Republic of Estonia. Reports-articles of the scientific and educational conference (Tartu–Värška–Tartu, 28–29 June 1996). I–II. Tallinn: Tallinn Technical University, University of Tartu, Mattimar, 1996, 411 pp.*

papers. The IV Conference did not have the cultural and nature programme which was included in the subsequent three-day conferences as this was a two-day conference full of intense work. The sections of the conference worked in the conference rooms of the Väraska Spa in Estonian, German and English.

10 colleagues from four other countries were authors of papers and made presentations (in addition colleagues from **Estonian** institutions of higher education – universities and institutes):

- **Germany** (*Peter Dobias*, University of Paderborn; *Manfred O. E. Hennies*, Kiel University of Applied Sciences; *Toni Schulz*, Kiel University of Applied Sciences; *Bernhard Seliger*, University of Kiel; *Ralph Wrobel*, University of Kiel);
- **Finland** (*Jouko Siremn*, Scientific Research Institute of Agricultural Economics);
- **Lithuania** (*Bronislavas Cereška*, University of Vilnius; *Arvydas Pajuodis*, University of Vilnius);
- **Poland** (*Antoni Kozuch*, University of Siedlce; *Barbara Kozuch*, University of Warsaw).

The first international scientific conference on economic policy surely gave an impetus to even more thorough reviewing of papers not only by editors but a little later also by doctoral students and then by peer reviewers with doctoral degrees and peer reviewers from other countries. As a result, the quality of the papers has improved.

The conference (already the fourth) was rich in substance and was interesting for both foreign guests and Estonian participants and deserved continuation. All this has continued until now despite some problems-obstacles. The participants and authors of papers, also the organising committees and the undersigned, have been satisfied with the activities<sup>4</sup> and have remained waiting for the next meetings both at conferences and on the pages of the journal<sup>5</sup>!

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<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, in the following years, efforts have been made to develop the quality of both the organisation of the conference and the journal, for instance:

introduction of the so-called round table at the *conference* where the Estonian business people and politicians have actively participated; more varied spare time activities on the conference days (including application for Russian visas and visiting of the Pskovo-Pechersky Monastery, several Estonian bogs and mires, use of spa services at Väraska and the smoke sauna in the Seto Farm Museum, concerts of Seto singers and several musicians of the Estonian Concert, etc.), etc.;

finding peer reviewers with an as high qualification as possible in publishing the *journal*; finding more varied materials for the chronicles (incl. scientific events, In memoriam); publishing of special issues (granting the emeritus status, jubilees); more flexible publishing (two issues combined and up to four issues annually); taking CDs into use; use of coloured photos in printing technology, etc.;

pointing out and focusing on some more important events of economic policy and other events in the world, Europe and Estonia both at the *conferences* and in the *journal* (“Introductory thoughts on the current situation”, on the initiative of colleague Manfred O. E. Hennies together with the undersigned), etc.

<sup>5</sup> See in addition also “Information from the Editorial Board of the journal” at the end of this journal.

From among participants of conferences from other countries, Germans have been the most numerous:

- Professor Emeritus Dr. Armin Rohde (University of Greifswald) for 20 times;
- Professor Emeritus Dr. Manfred O. E. Hennies (Kiel University of Applied Sciences) for more than 15 times and
- Professor Emeritus Dr. Peter Friedrich (Bundeswehr University Munich, University of Tartu) for more than 10 times.

It would certainly be interesting to organise a ship conference again. But for that we would need a ship that would meet our needs (firstly, the work in several sections, which was possible at the first conference!) on the Emajõgi River and lakes Peipsi-Pskov and would also be affordable for us! Both circumstances are unfortunately out of our control. A conference on large Baltic Sea ferries would probably not be so attractive as working on a suitable ship on Estonian inland waters for nostalgic purposes!?

We have currently planned both the organisation of conferences (37th time) and publishing of the journal (37th annual volume) as a vision already until 2029<sup>6</sup>. Time will tell whether we will succeed. If not the current editorial boards, perhaps with new and younger members and also with changing the location of the conference, if necessary<sup>7</sup>!

August 2020 – August 2021  
At Piritä-Kose in Tallinn

Sincerely,

Yours, Matti Raudjärv (initiator-main organiser of the series of conferences and founder-chief editor of the journal)

P.S. Although we sent out the Information letters 2021 of the conference and the journal to colleagues in October 2020, we were very worried still – would we manage to organise the XXIX Conference at the beginning of July in 2021, as the second wave of the coronavirus had gained a lot of impetus both in Estonia and in the rest of the world, being more threatening than the first one? We adopted with the organising committees already then (in autumn 2020) a preliminary decision – if the situation is unfavourable in March 2021, we will decide to cancel the conference of 2021 and inform the potential participants in due time.

Unfortunately, also the conference of 2021 had to be cancelled and the next hopes are for the organisation of the conference in summer 2022. In May-June 2021 there were sometimes talks about already the third and even the fifth wave of the coronavirus. Time will tell!?

In mid-July the Estonian media (ERR News) hinted that the third wave had probably started (the number of infections had constantly declined and started to increase) and that the situation would deteriorate again in autumn (people were invited to get vaccinated fast). On the other hand,

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<sup>6</sup> In case of living in good health, the undersigned would be 80 by 2029 and would celebrate the 45th anniversary of the so-called Ship Conference and the birth of the journal, 35th anniversary of the second conference and 33rd anniversary of the organisation of the first international scientific conference.

<sup>7</sup> The conference of 2021 would have been the 39th already, of which 20 were held at Värskä, and the ninth already now at Jänedä.

according to the news from Spain there were already signs of the fourth-fifth wave! More strict restrictions and virus control were imposed in Greece, France, and Germany.

Conduction of the conference online, through the internet, would not be very fruitful compared to direct communication, the undersigned has personally experienced it for a few times in 2021 (incl. an international conference organised by Kuban State University in Krasnodar, Russia; also, the collection of papers in four parts was published very soon on the internet; while the conference was substantive and efficient, it was conducted remotely after all).

(M. R.)