



FOREWORD

The Winter Season is the perfect time to recall and evaluate your partnerships as universities are busy with postcards, gifts and thanksgiving letters. Some partnerships are new and promising, some are dusty but sentimental, others are empty and meaningless. The Pareto principle states that roughly 80% of achievements come from 20% of agreements and therefore we value and invest in our oldest and most devoted partnerships.

Networks are little bit different cases as you have to be interested in other members to ensure importance and value of the exact group of institutions for your own. President Kari Hypponen wrote an extensive history of networking in the Baltic Sea Region to describe rich pattern of cooperation and friendship throughout decades.

In 2021 we witnessed the 55th anniversary of cooperation between University of Turku and St. Petersburg State University, one of the oldest bilateral endeavors in the region. To mark this date we asked some of the members to share their oldest regional success stories.

BSRUN was very active in 2021 learning how to be useful to its members in the new disrupted world. We went online with our traditional seminars on Campus Management, SDGs in Universities and University Boards. The brand new endeavor was to trace future of faculties and universities of Business, Economics and Management.

We are eager to continue in 2022 and would like to take this opportunity to thank you for cooperation and wish you health and prosperity to your institutions!

Universities, networks and cooperation in the Baltic Sea region



Universities are very resilient organisations: through centuries they have managed through several natural and man-made catastrophies. In Europe, the ten oldest universities can be found in Italy, the UK, Spain, France, Portugal and the Czech Republic, starting with Bologna in 1088 and ending with Charles University in Prague in 1347.

In the Baltic Sea region the oldest are Rostock (1419), Greifswald (1456), Uppsala (1477), Copenhagen (1479), [Königsberg (1544)], Vilnius (1579), Tartu (1632), Turku/Helsinki (1640), Lund (1666) and St. Petersburg (1724). Further away from the Baltic coast one can find the Jagiellonian University in Krakow (1364) and Heidelberg (1385), though.

The Academy of Turku was moved to Helsinki in 1828 and the current University of Helsinki adopted the Turku year of foundation as its own. The Kaliningrad Pedagogical Institute (now Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University) started its activities in 1948 in the building of the Albertina of Königsberg when the German staff had moved to Germany during the last stages of the Second World War. Some of the oldest universities, e.g. Tartu and Vilnius, have also been closed for extensive periods of time (Vilnius in 1831-1919) for political reasons and wars.

Almost all of the oldest universities have the name of the city where they are located. The first one to differ from this pattern was the Jagiellonian University in Krakow. Later on universities were also named after rulers, famous scientists and scholars, politicians and members of a Royal or noble family. There are many examples of this in e.g. Germany, UK especially after 1992, when the polytechnics became “New Universities”, Russia and quite recently in Lithuania. When the Royal Academy of Turku/Åbo was moved to Helsinki in 1828, it became the Imperial Alexander’s University of Helsinki.

The golden age of establishing new universities is irrevocably over. In many countries governments have encouraged, also financially, the mergers of existing universities to create bigger and more competitive units. Therefore, the number of universities has diminished in some countries, but, at the same time, new types of universities like universities of applied sciences have appeared.

Recently, mergers have also created new names for existing universities. The merger of three universities in the Helsinki region in 2010 brought about Aalto University named after the famous Finnish architect Alvar Aalto. The Finnish word aalto happens to mean a wave which is not such a bad connotation for those who want to create something new.

In 1999, the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn (UWM) was created by merging three local institutions. In 2010, the University of Eastern Finland was born by merging the Universities of Kuopio and Joensuu. In 2010, the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences was created by the merger of two institutions. In 2012, the Petersburg State University of Economics and Finance (FINEC) was merged with two other local institutions (Service and Economics and Engineering and Economics) to establish St. Petersburg State University of Economics (UNECON).

In some mergers into more prestigious and famous institutions, the receiver's name does not change. When e.g. Aleksandras Stulginskis University (near Kaunas) and Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences (Vilnius) were merged in Lithuania in 2019 into Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas, it kept its old name.

University academic staff have their own individual networks and universities try and create strategic partnerships for themselves to be more competitive Internationally. Global, regional and national rankings have proliferated during the last decades and they are here to stay with all their problems and deficiencies whether we like it or not.

We tend to say that the Baltic Sea unites those around it. This is, of course, true, but works in practice only, if we really want it to do so. During the Cold War a dividing line went along the Baltic and now when the sea is almost an internal sea of the EU except for Russia another situation has developed in the current political climate.

Of the old cooperative networks in the region the Hanseatic League is probably the most famous endeavour to enhance international trade in the region. The Vikings crossed the sea already much earlier to the East and then down to the South in Russia. Therefore, places like Novgorod are still very well known especially in the Nordic countries outside Russia.

After the big political changes in the late 1980's and early 1990's started a period of enhanced networking with several new organisations and funding opportunities established in the Baltic Sea region, but also in Europe in general. Some of these organisations are still with us, but, when the enthusiasm slowed down and with the enlargement of the EU in 2004, some never really took off the ground or where closed down.



The Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) was established in 1992 on the initiative of the Danish and German foreign ministers and has now as members all the countries by the Baltic and also Norway, Ireland and the EU. CBSS made a very important contribution to the development of Higher Education in the region by providing funding for the EuroFaculties first in the 1990's in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and in 2001-2015 first in Kaliningrad and then in Pskov in Russia. At the moment, CBSS has the Project Support Facility (PSF) which can be used also for university projects. In addition, CBSS can offer its label and its contribution to the programmes of CBSS Summer Universities organised by universities.

The most important general organisation for universities in Europe is the European University Association (EUA). Its email address is quite telling: @eua.eu. It was created by a merger of the Association of European Universities (CRE) and the Confederation of EU Rectors' Conferences in 2001. CRE was founded in Göttingen in 1964 and it was for many decades an important organisation also for some universities from Central and Eastern Europe.

In the Baltic Sea region university rectors created an organisation of their own called Conference of Baltic University Rectors (CBUR) in Gdansk in 1990. By the conference in Tartu in 2001 (where e.g. a Baltic Sea Higher Education Area [BSHEA] was discussed) membership had reached 82 with six affiliate members in addition. Finland and Sweden had joined the EU in 1995 and when the next enlargement became first imminent and then reality in 2004, interest in the organisation diminished very quickly and CBUR ceased operation. Balticness was longer enough.

There are also examples of organisations and agreements which did not prove viable and did not survive in practice.

In 1999, the statutes of the Stephan Bathory Collegium with its secretariat at Vilnius University were signed in Vilnius. It brought together universities from Central and Eastern Europe in Prague, Budapest, Krakow, Kaliningrad, Brno, Vilnius and Warsaw (both UW and Warsaw School of Economics). Afterwards, the organisation has not been very much in public. It can no longer be found on Vilnius University web site.

An interesting regional effort was the resolution of the Plenary Assembly of the Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland, the delegation of the Russian Union of Rectors, the delegation of rectors from Ukraine and the delegation of rectors from Belarus on the establishment of East-European Net in 2004. The objective was to extend academic co-operation between the countries in the region. At that time, when the Baltic Sea Region University Network (BSRUN) already existed, this looked like a very interesting initiative to me. Unfortunately, I do not have any information on the practical application of the resolution.

Nordic cooperation has always been important for Finnish Higher Education. At the rectors' level there is the Association of Nordic University Rector's Conferences. A more recent development is the Nordic-Baltic University Rectors' Virtual Conference which was organised by Universities Finland Unifi (follower of the earlier national rectors' conference) in May 2021.

In addition to institutional organisations some organisations with individual memberships were established in the same period.

The Consortium of Higher Education Researchers (CHER) was founded in 1988 as a global organisation by a group of professors of Higher Education and related fields to enhance research links and doctoral training. The European Association for International Education (EAIE) provided in 1989 a new professional home for many international officers in Europe, since the early 1990's especially for universities located in Eastern Europe. Recently, the 31st Annual Conference of EAIE attracted an audience of 6222 from 95 countries.

The European Higher Education Society (EAIR) started its activities in 1979 as a European Forum for the American AIR (Association for Institutional Research) and became an independent organisation in 1989. The organisation's slogan is Linking Research, Policy and Practice with a membership of senior university administrators, researchers and policy makers. In the Baltic Sea region EAIR is most popular in the Nordic countries with some scattered members elsewhere.

For Nordic university administrators there has been NUAS (Nordic Association of University Administrators) since 1976. At the moment it has members from 65 universities and 14 interest groups based on different areas of university management. In the early 1990's NUAS was interested in

enhancing cooperation with university administrators in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and northwest Russia. As far as I can tell, no permanent cooperation arrangements exist at the moment.

There is also HUMANE (Heads of University Management and Administration Network in Europe) established in 1997, as its name implies, for a very limited group of prospective members at universities for their professional development.

The Baltic University Programme (BUP) of Uppsala University started its activities in 1991 as a teaching and research programme and now concentrates on the sustainable development of the Baltic Sea region. The number of participating universities is now 95 in 12 countries. Lately, the composition of the members has, however, changed considerably. At the moment the biggest contingents are Poland (29) and Ukraine (16) followed by Sweden (11) and Finland (9 of which 6 are now universities of applied sciences).

A much more recent endeavour is the Baltic Science Network (BSN) organised by the Hamburg Ministry of Science, Research and Equalities. It has created a policy-oriented network for Higher Education, Science and Research cooperation in the region consisting of partners and affiliates. Partners include ministries, government agencies and some universities which have received project funding. At the moment, BSN is looking for future project opportunities and funding.



When the University of Turku came up with the idea of a university network coordinated by Turku in the late 1990's, there were already quite a few new actors in the field. Turku had, however, already managed to establish good links with universities in Scandinavia, Germany, Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Russia. The university had also introduced a Baltic Sea Region Studies programme in 1997 and the Saaremaa University Centre was established also in 1997 in Kuressaare on Saaremaa in Estonia where the Continuing Education Centre had already been working since 1991. The endeavour was also supported by the (then) Finnish Ministry of Education and received also some funding from the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The oldest bilateral agreement of Turku in the region is with St. Petersburg (then Leningrad) State University (1966). The cities of Turku and St. Petersburg were twinned already in 1953. Elsewhere in the region, the links with Tartu started already in the 1920's (six professors from Finland were invited to Tartu to assist in the starting of teaching in Estonian in the national university established in 1919), but the first bilateral agreement was signed only in 1987 to be followed during the next decade by those with Riga (UL), Klaipeda, Vilnius, three universities in Gdansk, Poznan, Rostock, Kiel, Aarhus and Gothenberg.

The TEMPUS projects on various aspects of university management and administration in the 1990's had also shown that the new senior university managers in the region were interested in enhancing cooperation with their colleagues in the region.

From the very beginning the idea was to create a network for senior university managers and administrators. The idea was not to organise a teaching network to overlap with BUP. The idea was also discussed with the University of Helsinki with its important Aleksanteri Institute. No overlap was seen as problematic, since the Helsinki interest was then mainly Russia and not the rest of the prospective countries of the new network.

When the University of Turku and Åbo Akademi University joined the Coimbra group of old established universities in 1995 as one member (now they have to pay two membership fees) stating that they follow the spirit and history of the Royal Academy of Turku, the University of Helsinki was not amused.

How to choose an appropriate name? Starting with the Baltic was quite natural, since there were already two similar networks for the Mediterranean (UniMed 1991) and the Black Sea (BSUN 1998). A third one for the Adriatic followed soon (UniAdriion 2002).

The word Baltic used alone commonly refers to Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania (e.g. the Baltic Assembly, the Baltic States). There is, however, e.g. UBC (Union of Baltic Cities) which covers the whole region.

Before BUP there was an earlier Baltic University (in Exile) for Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian displaced persons and refugees after the second World War in Germany which started its activities in Hamburg. During its existence in 1946-49 the university produced 76 graduates, had a president and three national rectors and a teaching staff of a total of 170 professors. The three ministries which are partners in the recent BSN projects are also from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and the coordinator is from Hamburg.

So, just to make sure, both Sea and Region were added to the name of the Baltic Sea Region University Network in 2000, because we wanted to have the opportunity to accept members from the whole drainage area of the Baltic. It was also important to have our Russian partners involved from the early stages of the network. Quite soon also the first Belarusian universities located in Grodno joined the network.

It is only fair to add that the situation at the end of 1990's was quite different from the current one, since the membership of the EU has given many universities funding and other opportunities they

lacked earlier. The commitment of BSRUN to EU-non-EU cooperation is, however, a more general policy which should not be dictated by money, though in the current situation funding is more easily available for EU activities only. Very often European now means the EU only. BSRUN has a member institution which has its own network committed to the same policy as BSRUN: BUN (Border University Network) of the University of Bialystok.

The latest example is the European Universities Initiative of the EU (2017) which encourages the emergence by 2024 of some twenty "European Universities" consisting of university networks which enable students to obtain a degree by studying in several EU countries. In the first call of 2019 17 alliances involving 114 institutions from 24 member states were selected. In the 2020 call the corresponding figures were 24/165/26. The 41 alliances selected so far will test the concept and its potential to build a European Education Area. The initiative will continue during the next Erasmus programme in 2021-27.

As we know now, in the EU there are (at least) three eurosceptic countries (Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland) for whom it has been easier to accept from the EU financial aid for e.g. infrastructure (roads, railways, bridges and even university campuses) than some of its values. In the alliances approved in 2019-20 there is a total of 22 universities from these three countries. In the first call two from the Czech Republic, four from Hungary and four from Poland. In the 2020 call the corresponding figures are two CZ, six HU and four PL.

Usually, there is only one partner (or none) per approved alliance from these three countries with only one exception which is the 4EU+ Alliance with Sorbonne, Heidelberg, Copenhagen and Milan representing the old EU member states and Charles University in Prague and the University of Warsaw representing the eurosceptics. To me this looks like an ideal alliance to check what president Macron probably had in mind when he proposed the idea of these European Alliances. It will be interesting to see how students will move between the participating universities to obtain their degrees.

Some of the very best universities in Europe founded the League of European Research Universities (LERU) in 2002. It has currently 23 members and new members are not admitted easily especially from the same countries as the existing members. LERU has created LERU-CE7 structure for co-operation (with seven universities in Central Europe) where a group of LERU rectors meet with the CE7 rectors every six months. The University of Warsaw and the University of Tartu are in this group.

Another recent development is the Guild of Research Intensive Universities founded in 2016 which has now 21 members in 16 countries. The University of Tartu belongs to this group, too. Sometimes universities decide that in a bigger group also size matters: EU2S2 is a network for EU Universities of Small States. It is very popular in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

In recent years emphasis has been on the establishment of networks based on research excellence and potential. Global University Rankings often enhance this trend. Even for universities it is always nice to be invited or admitted to a club where the members are better than you are or at least your equals. In spite of this, many older university networks still continue their activities: e.g. the Coimbra Group, the Santander Group, UNICA (of universities from the capitals of Europe), UIIN (University-Industry Innovation Network, UArctic (University of the Arctic) and there is even ENUO which is, of course, an EU Network of University Orchestras.

If we exclude networks based on academic subjects or specialisation like Life Sciences, Technology or Business Studies, and if we define a network as something more than a project-based organisation, the Baltic Sea Region looks quite empty now. We still have the Baltic University Network of Uppsala, though also it is based now on sustainable development as an academic definition, but it can possibly change its direction in the future, if need be.

For the survival of BSRUN some Erasmus and other projects in the region have been important, because BSRUN members have been invited to join many projects, including staff and student mobilities EU-Russia and EU-Eastern Partnership countries, as partners.

Just to give an example using some of the Erasmus Mundus Action 2 projects of the University of Turku in 2008-17. The university coordinated in 2008-17 six EU-Russia projects and in 2011-16 two EU-Eastern Neighbourhood projects with a total budget of 30 412 825€. The total number of mobilities were 1772 consisting of EU-Russia 310, Russia-EU 1020, EU-EN 28 and EN-EU 414.

The challenge and the promise in this endeavour was how to meet the needs of the other 44 partners in the consortia in addition to those of the University of Turku itself. Turku coordinated at that time more Erasmus Mundus Action 2 projects (six consecutive) with Russia than any other EU university.

The map below shows the location of the partners in the projects mentioned above. As one can see, a conscious effort was made to cover also Russia as widely as possible and not to limit Russian partners to, say, Northwest Russia and Moscow only. Russia is the largest state in the world and it also has borders with more states (14?) than any other country.



In addition to coordinating the projects mentioned above, the University of Turku was a partner in twelve other Erasmus Mundus Action 2 projects and participated actively in FIRST (2003-17) and FIRST+ (2017-) (the Finnish-Russian Student and Teacher Exchange Programme) and in 2015-19 in the Erasmus International Credit Mobility Programme with several universities in Russia (10) and Belarus (4) (and Ukraine 3).

At the moment, such future funding opportunities are still somewhat open. Concentration on practical topics where the experiences of the network members and the expertise of outside experts can be taken up for discussion have still proved to be a viable way forward e.g. in Campus Management and Development and Sustainable Development. Enhanced cooperation in Business, Economics and Management has also had a good start with its first online event.

BSRUN has as its slogan: for Strategy and Practice. In practice, it is a network for the friends of cooperation in the Baltic Sea region. During the current pandemic also BSRUN moved online with its activities which turned out to be well attended. We are still an organisation for Governance, Management and Administration of universities. We started with the management, administration and organisational structures of universities when the network was established. Now, twenty years later we have been looking e.g. at the university governance reform and the new decision-making bodies in Poland and Latvia using the experiences of earlier reforms in practice in Finland and Estonia. That is what friends are for...



Kari Hyppönen

President of BSRUN

From Past to Future

The Baltic Sea region university network (BSRUN) was established at a time when Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland were on their way to joining the European Union, and it was vital to gain European experience in many issues related to university governance and to intensify international cooperation in the region. There was a similar interest from universities in Russia and Belarus. That was as well the basis for the creation of a regional network. The universities of the region were actively involved in both the development of bilateral relations and the exchange of knowledge between BSRUN universities. Many seminars were organized on both general governance issues and specific topics that appeared on the agenda of new universities in the region. The University of Latvia gained new experience in them, which was revived in the university's governance reforms and the creation of new administrative structures, mostly using the Finnish experience. An example is the strengthening of the administration of the faculties by creating an administrative position to support the deans' everyday duties – the executive director of the faculty, who took over the administrative functions and freed up time for the dean for academic matters. We also had a number of specialized seminars organized by the region's universities for finance officers, which allowed us to improve internal financial procedures, and the University PR and Media seminar, which was a completely new function in the region's universities at the beginning new millennium.



As many university staff as possible to be involved in the activities of BSRUN and gain new experience, the University of Latvia actively participated in the organization of on-site seminars at the University of Latvia, as it was also geographically advantageous for other participants. From the beginning, the most important seminars were like “Universities as the bridge between the East and the West”, “Educational legislation and economics”, “University-Business Cooperation for Regional Development”, etc. Even today, the University of Latvia is involved in organizing the exchange of knowledge in the region on important topics such as “University Governance Reforms – Expectations and Experiences”, “UN Sustainable Development Goals in Universities” and “Re-Inventing Student’ Housing”.

Regional cooperation has always been and is an important area of activity for our university. One of the strategic objectives of the University of Latvia internationalization policy is close collaboration with the universities around the Baltic Sea. Bilateral cooperation agreements, cooperation within Erasmus programme, Interreg programme, H 2020 or any other activity is a profound basis for intensive cooperation. University of Latvia has a long term fruitful bilateral partnership with Tartu and Vilnius universities. The exchanges of students and staff both academic and administrative are supplemented with joint Summer schools (e.g. “Baltic States and its Neighbouring Powers” in cooperation with Tartu University). Initiative of Three rectors (University of Latvia, University of Tartu and University of Vilnius) scholarship for students who study and already know three Baltic languages. Activities like Master degree programme “Baltic Sea Region Studies” and PhD School “European Integration and Baltic Sea Region Studies” – only some good example of good regional collaboration.

Interreg projects “Baltic Tram” and “TEST-4-SME” prove the University of Latvia involvement in research on a wide scale with institutions not only in Estonia and Lithuania. CBSS project “Mobilities for young researchers in BSR” including Schools for young researchers fosters the sustainable partnership.



Marcis Auzinsh

Chairman of Senate,
former rector
University of Latvia



Alina Grzibovska

Director of International
Relations Department
University of Latvia



Janis Stonis

Director of Institutional
Research
University of Latvia

Dear Colleagues,

The cooperation between St. Petersburg State University and the University of Turku started in 1966 when we signed our first agreement. From that time until today, for 55 years, we have been carrying out joint activities in a vast range of areas.

We are actively fostering our academic exchange programmes. Speaking about students from Finland, their most popular fields of study at St. Petersburg University are geology, international relations, management, and economics. As for Russian students, they choose general medicine, astronomy, and economics.

More than 80 scientific works in the top-rated periodicals indexed by Scopus represent the results of our joint research. Besides, St. Petersburg University and the University of Turku are currently interacting in the framework of the cross-border cooperation programme on the project “Getting Ready for the Cross-Border Challenges: Capacity Building in Sustainable Shore Use” (2019-2022) (GET READY). Its ultimate goal is to efficiently exploit and manage the coastal zone potential within the priority “Support to education, research, technological development, and innovations in the border region”.

Owing to colleagues from the University of Turku, the Baltic Sea Region University Network (BSRUN) came into existence in 2000. Today, the network unites 26 universities from the Baltic Sea region. St. Petersburg University was one of the first universities to support the initiative. Regularly, the network allows exchanging best practices in academic and research activities between the partners on the shared platform.

Here, at St. Petersburg University, we are proud of our close relations with a partner like the University of Turku. We are confident that our further cooperation will be just as stable and fruitful.



Nikolay Kropachev

Rector
St. Petersburg State University

The scientific cooperation agreement between St. Petersburg State University and the University of Turku dates back to autumn 1966. The signing process was a significant milestone based on twin-city cooperation, which was officially launched in 1953.

Together with St. Petersburg University, we have not only supported our bilateral contacts but also taken joint action as part of larger university communities to show our commitment for building a sustainable future based on academic research. Both universities are committed to tackle common challenges in our Arctic and Baltic regions and also support the education, research, and technological innovations of our joint neighborhood. Currently, we are working together to build a region of innovation, high qualifications, and top education as well as to support environmental protection, adaptation to climate change, and prevention and elimination of natural disasters through the GET READY project funded by the European Union, the Russian Federation, and the Republic of Finland.

St Petersburg State University joined the Baltic Sea Region University Network, which was initiated by the University of Turku over 20 years ago, and from the very beginning they showed a commitment to the importance of cross-border cooperation in the region. Our cooperation agreement is one of the oldest in the Baltic Sea Region and it is still actively in use. It has survived political, financial and other changes in the region and proved its worth till the present day.

During the past 55 years, hundreds of researchers, teachers, staff and students in different fields, eg. in Sociology, Astronomy, Geology, East-European studies, Management, Philosophy, and Russian and Finnish languages, have strengthened the bond between us. One of the most active fields in cooperation has been International Relations, especially European Studies. For decades, Jean Monnet Chair, Professor Esko Antola has been one of the most esteemed forerunners of European and (macro) regional integration. Both universities have also supported the Russian-Finnish-European relations for being active in large Erasmus Mundus Action 2/External Cooperation Window "Triple I" projects, coordinated by the University of Turku.

Despite the current challenges in international cooperation in general, we are confident that the scientific cooperation during the years to come will continue to prosper and we can jointly support the regional cooperation.



Jukka Kola

Rector
University of Turku

Professor Esko Antola, prominent Finnish scholar and educator

It is a great honor for us to celebrate the exceptional academic contribution Professor Esko Antola made to disciplines associated with international relations and studies carried out in previous decades both in Finland and in Russia.

The process of European integration commenced its influence on the Finnish and Russian foreign and domestic policies in the late 1980s, right after Michail Gorbachev had been appointed central position in the Soviet political system in March 1985. Fundamentally new, innovative foreign policies were developed to replace distinctive and highly informal security, political and economic relations that had existed between the two countries for over 40 years before. That was the time for new perspectives and challenges to emerge. One of the latter was the attitude towards the process of supranational European integration among Finnish political and business elites.

Being one of few experts on European studies in the Finnish academic community, professor of the University of Turku Esko Antola became the intellectual leader of the group. Although realistic assessment of immediate effects and long-term consequences of Finland's EU membership seemed to be the most challenging issue to tackle, academic research and public (media) activities of Professor Antola made it very short for Finland to reach consensus among all major political parties towards positive attitude to European integration and full membership in the EU.



In the early 1990s, Professor Antola suggested the governmental authorities “to take a chair at the EU table where important issues for Finnish security and economy were discussed”. The idea not delegate to somebody else making decisions on future of Finland, but to take over the responsibility for post-Cold War development of nations became well-known both in Finland and in Russia and is still being hailed as a milestone in the contemporary history of Finland.

When the USSR collapsed, Professor Antola continued his research on Russian-Finnish relations. Throughout the second half of the 20th century, economic ties influenced by the political factors between the countries had been seen as the indicator of the relations. Therefore, after 1991 the search of sustainable forms and attractive spheres for trade and investments became a real challenge for the countries elites. However, that mission was successfully accomplished by a group of Finnish scholars, where Esko Antola was invited.

Though after the Second World War, Finnish economy had been built on principles of competition and free market, its development had been dependent on relationship with the Soviet Union. Following the collapse of the USSR, Finnish leaders defined development of liberal economy, opening of domestic market for foreign goods and services as well as active promotion of Finnish production at global markets as their strategic priority. Such strategy required expertise, thus, Esko Antola became one of the founders of the Finnish school of political economy expertise in the period from the Cold War to the present time. Strong commitment of Professor Antola to values of liberal economy and competitive political system played a major role in development of conditions for the rapid socio-economic growth of Finland after 1995.

Before the beginning of the 1990s, the USSR largely benefited from the Finnish market. Apart from, having an easy, guaranteed access for raw materials and industrial goods to the Finnish market, The Soviet Government had agreed upon the barter trade, which meant that the USSR could and did purchase everything from technologies to clothes, furniture and even foodstuff. However, everything changed on the brink of 1990s, when Moscow deterred from the existing trade model and attempted to switch over to hard currency payments. Being accompanied by the reduction of global prices for the Russian Export, such a rapid change caused stagnation of the economic relations between the countries. Having to search for other markets, Finnish government made a decision to open domestic economy for cooperation with EU member states despite the risks they could face throughout the process. Professor Antola became a passionate supporter of U-turn of Finnish economy from East to the West.

In 1990s, Professor Antola played an significant role in debates over the most important issues of political and economic development of Finland: prospects of the Economic and Monetary Union in Europe and Finland and a member-state of the Eurozone; democratic deficit in the EU and growing power of European institutions; establishment of special relationship between Finland and NATO as powerful military block next to borders of the Russian Federation.

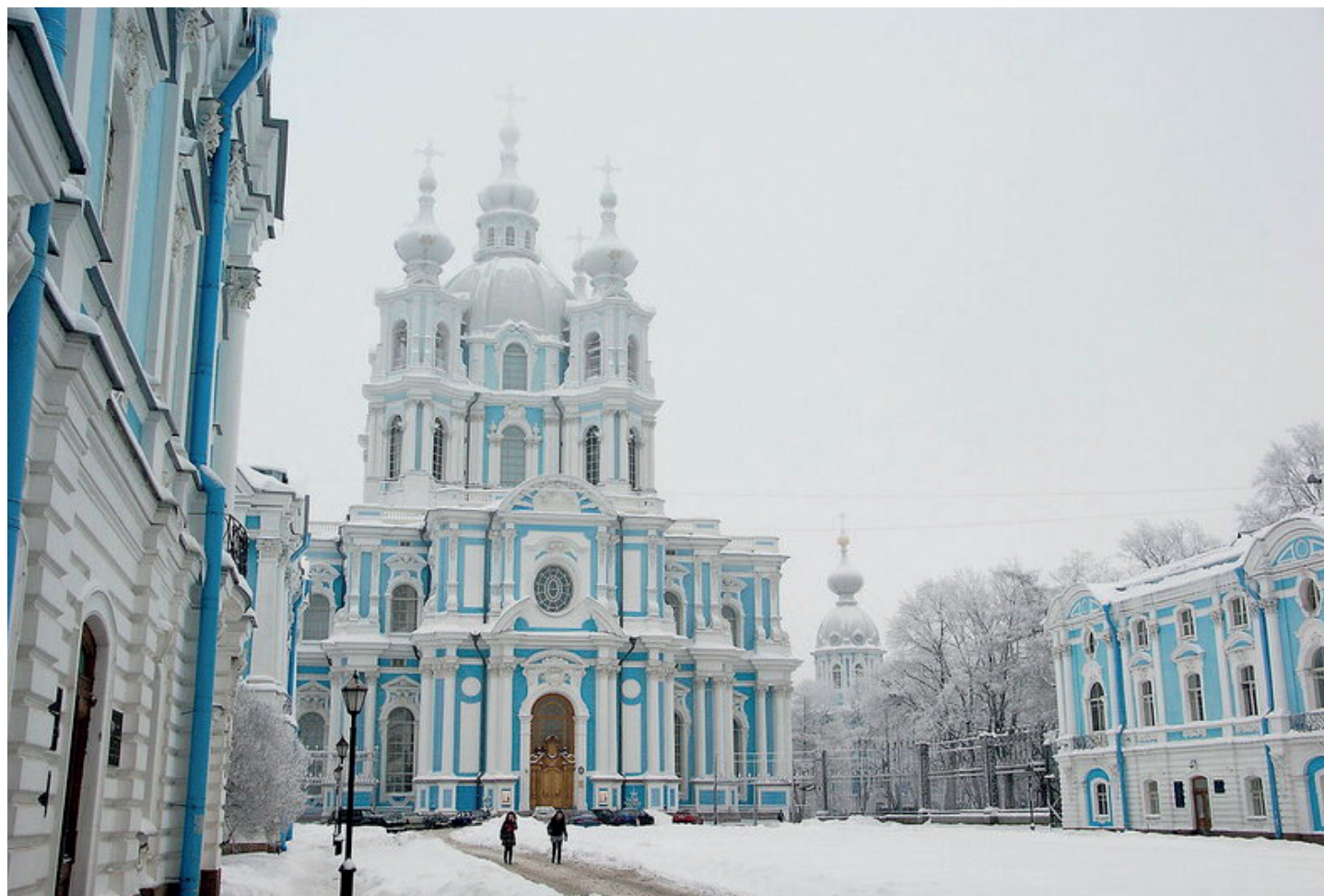


The Baltic Sea region has always been the main object of Professor Antola's research. He was the one who defined Baltic Sea region the first European macro region, which was followed by the European institutions approving a concept of the first macro-region in the European Union within a form of a common strategy, EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR), in 2009. The Strategy was designed to serve as a new model for other regions. In the Northern region of Europe the EUSBSR initiated intensive contacts between EU institutions (first of all with the European Commission), Russia, Norway and Iceland. The Baltic Sea region

got a chance to become a bridge between the EU member-states and those non-EU countries, that were in cultural and economic orbit of the European integration. Although perspectives European-Russian collaboration and development of the free-trade zone and common economic space has been extensively discussed, the conflict prevails over cooperation, leading to almost full disappearance of the positive heritage of 1990s.

Post-Soviet school of international studies was launched in Russia soon after the collapse of the USSR. Professor Esko Antola was playing an important role in the process, addressing a wide range of varied aspects of the Soviet foreign economy and foreign trade at different stages of his academic career. In 1993, when the School of International Relations was launched at the Saint Petersburg State University, it was the only institution of higher education in international relations, apart from the one in Moscow. Having started his collaboration with the University professors in 1996, since 1997 Professor Esko Antola has been involved into implementation of numerous research projects, dealing with studies of European monetary integration, trade in goods and services between the Baltic Rim states, energy cooperation of Finland and Russia as well as construction of transportation and logistics clusters along the borderline of Finland and Russia.

Cooperation with the academic experts from Turku, Helsinki, Tampere, Lahti, Rovaniemi led to implementation and further development of disciplines related to international relations and area studies in Saint Petersburg and North-Western regions of Russia. Moreover, this collaboration aided establishment of new academic links such as development and co-teaching of new courses, publication of research papers and academic articles. Esko Antola and his colleagues from the



University of Turku and from the Turku School of Economics supported the launch of following Master programs at the School of International Relations of the Saint Petersburg State University: the European studies, the Studies of Baltic and Nordic states, the Diplomacy of Russian Federation and foreign states. Other areas of joint Finnish-Russian research include the Bologna Process to ensure comparability in the standards and quality of higher-education qualifications; the Northern Dimension AS a policy framework for cooperation involving the EU, its Member States and partner countries Iceland, Norway and Russia; rotating Presidency of Finland at the Council of the European Union in 1999, 2006 and 2019.

Saint Petersburg and the nearest regions (Leningrad, Pskov and Novgorod) had always enjoyed a key role in the Russian politics and national economy, despite their small size and peripheral location from the leading industrial centers of the Soviet Union. Disintegration of the USSR and growth of trade between the EU and Russia dramatically changed geo-economics of the region. The beneficial strategic position allowed it to contribute considerably to Russia's external economic relations and international trade. After the breakup of the Soviet Union, the region became practically the only direct gateway to the Russia's most important economic partner of that period – Central and Western Europe. This alone made the region critically important for Russia and became a key factor for the future development of the region.

Holding the position of the Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence Director at the University of Turku in 2000 – 2007, Professor Esko Antola supported his colleagues from Saint-Petersburg in development of such innovative courses as “Challenges to European Integration”, “Regional Inter-Governmental Organization in Europe”, “Monetary Integration and Single European Currency”, “European Security”.

In 2010-2013, Master students of the programme “Diplomacy of Russian Federation and Foreign States” were able to travel from Saint-Petersburg to Helsinki and Turku for meetings with high-level Finnish diplomats at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Russian diplomats from the Embassy in Helsinki and the Consulate-General in Turku. Besides, they took part in meetings with leading scholars at the Finnish Institute of International Affairs, University of Turku and the Centrum Balticum (Turku), as well as with business leaders of Finland.

The visits described above were only possible due to the institutional cooperation and personal assistance of Kari Hyppönen, Director of Administration of the University of Turku, and Professor Esko Antola. Professor Antola touched upon foreign policy of Finland and the European Union, the Northern Dimension, decision-making at national and communitarian levels in his lectures.

For many years, Professor Esko Antola organized learning workshops for leading Finnish and foreign journalists as well as for representatives of Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defense. As a sign of academic freedom and intellectual endeavor, he often invited Russian academic experts to present their views on highly-disputed developments in Russian domestic and foreign policies. Due to his personal diplomatic style and deep knowledge, Professor Antola managed to keep workshops and following Q&A sessions positive. These workshops assisted to journalists and governmental officials in better understanding of motivations of Russian policies towards Finland and other European countries.

We would like to pay a special tribute to personal qualities of Esko Antola as a trusted colleague and a good friend to many experts all over the world. For many years, he has been interested in history, contemporary politics and economy, culture of Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine. Among Professor Antola’s partners and colleagues, there are many scholars and public people from all over the world. For all of us Professor Esko Antola is the Finnish “Mr. European Union”, a great scholar and a good friend.



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33 years of a special German-Russian friendship



The partnership between the UNECON in St. Petersburg and HWR Berlin (Berlin School of Economics and Law) is now entering its 33rd year. The recipe of the long term successful cooperation is based on the proper people. Over the course of three decades this partnership has been seen through on the Berlin side by the former rectors Prof. Dr. Franz Rieger and Prof. Dr. Bernd Reisert and today by president Prof. Dr. Andreas Zaby and on St. Petersburg side by the former rector Prof. Dr. Leonid Tarasevich and Prof. Dr. Igor Maksimtsev. The leaders from both sides not only valued collaboration as such but carefully passed it along three managerial generations.

Both partner universities were pioneers in building university partnerships between Russia and Germany in the divided pre-1990 world. The rectors based their partnership on the awareness of the very special historical relationship between the two countries in the 20th century and on strong mutual trust. They are committed to show that strong ties in civil society are possible and mutually beneficial even in politically difficult times. Collaborative research and teaching exchanges have been at the heart of this long-lasting partnership which has been a cornerstone of the UNECON and the HWR's global networks. For dozens of UNECON professors and researchers HWR became a gate to the Western market economy academic traditions. Over 200 alumni of academic exchange program build a sustainable club of internationally open and cooperative people.

The relationship is based on the great continuity and reliability of UNECON and HWR as partners. Cooperation as such rests on the shoulders of university coordinators, generations of devoted professors who saw their mission to build people-to-people contacts. Prof. Martin Kronauer (former professor in charge of the partnership) was impressed by how warmly HWR staff was always welcomed by the UNECON, remembering special guided tours like “Dostojewski’s St. Petersburg”. Vice versa many of UNECON students and professors warmly recall the early 90-ies when they were met and embraced by HWR coordinator Prof. Peter Ziewert, who helped the Post-Soviet people to integrate in Western academic world.

Regardless of the particular history between Russia and Germany and the ever-changing environmental conditions, the cooperation was always kept alive and formed part of the great tradition of German-Russian cooperation in sciences. The UNECON-HWR partnership was and is a great asset for every university and is also free of problems. There is only one problem, phrased by the former rector Prof. Tarasevitch as follows: “which of the two universities loves the other one most?” To this day, no answer has been found.



Birgitta Kröll

International Office
Berlin School of Economics and Law



Tatiana Nikitina

Russian-German Centre
St. Petersburg State University of Economics

BSRUN Members' Anniversaries in 2022

160

Riga Technical
University

225

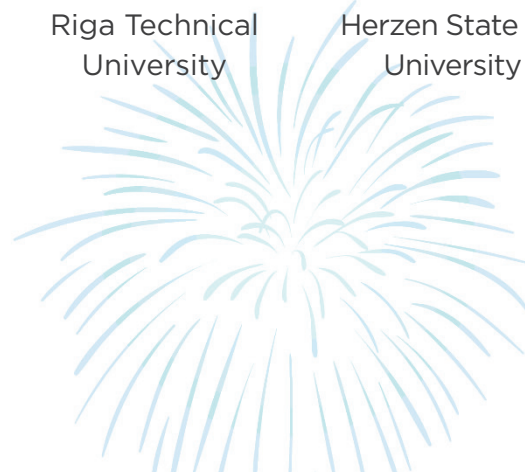
Herzen State Pedagogical
University of Russia

75

Immanuel Kant Baltic
Federal University

25

University
of Białystok



Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!



BSRUN would like to thank you for your cooperation and support on the way of enhancing partnership of universities in the Baltic Sea Region!