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International scientific conference EU-Russia common spaces : current challenges and ways of tackling, Veliky Novgorod, 25-26 May 2012

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International Scientific Conference “EU–Russia Common Spaces: Current Challenges and Ways of Tackling”, Veliky Novgorod, 25–26 May 2012

On May 25–26, 2012 in Veliky Novgorod (Russia) there was held an international scientific conference “EU–Russia Common Spaces: Current Challenges and Ways of Tackling”. The conference was organized in cooperation with the EU Centre at the Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University, the Yaroslav-the-Wise Novgorod State University, Association of European Studies and Baltic Regional Branch of the Russian Political Science Association. In the conference participated representatives of the Institute of Political Science of the University of Warmia and Mazuria in Olsztyn: Dr. Marcin Chełminiak, Dr. Wojciech Kotowicz, and Dr. Krzysztof Żęgota.

On the first day of the conference, held at the Veliky Novgorod City Hall, guests were greeted by representatives of the organizers and local authorities: Rector of the Yaroslav-the-Wise Novgorod State University, Prof. Anatoly Leonovich Gavrikov, director of the EU Centre at the Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University, Dr. Anna Vladimirovna Barsukova, representatives of the Veliky Novgorod local authorities, representatives of the Veliky Novgorod oblast and guests from Moscow State Institute of International Relations – Prof. Oleg Nikolaevich Barabanov and Dr. Mariusz Sielski. The speakers emphasized the importance of the relationship between the Russian Federation and the European Union and discussed the prospects of cooperation with the EU and other actors of international relations.

Subsequently took the floor participants of the first conference session “Challenges of Building Regular Base for Russia–EU Cooperation”. Within the framework of this session the speakers presented the main problems in developing the legal basis of cooperation between Russia and the European Union. Dr. Cedric Ryngaert from the Catholic University of Leuven (Belgium) discussed the differences in the Russian and EU legislation, in particular the mechanisms of democracy and civil society. Next, Dr. Eugenio Zaniboni from the University of Foggia (Italy) presented the key issues relating to human rights in the common area of the EU and Russia. Harassment issues and respect for workers’ rights in Serbia were presented in speech of Prof. Goran Obradovic from the University of Nis (Serbia).

Within the framework of the second session “Political Dimension of Common Space Building” participants of the conference presented various initiatives aimed at deepening cooperation between the EU and Russia, as well as discussed alternative solutions for enhanced integration in the Eurasian space. Dr. Ria Laenen from the Catholic University of Leuven (Belgium) presented the issue of the involvement of Russia in the Eurasian integration projects. Dr. Mikhail Vladimirovich Berendeev from the Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University in Kaliningrad (Russia) discussed the main challenges and threats of cooperation between the EU and Russia in the post-Soviet area. An important voice in the discussion was the speech of Oleg Korneev from the European University Institute in Florence (Italy) about the possibilities of cooperation between Russia and the European Union with regard to a common migration policy. Representing the University of Warmia and Mazuria in Olsztyn (Poland) Dr. Marcin Chełminiak and Dr. Wojciech Kotowicz discussed the importance of the Kaliningrad oblast in Polish foreign policy and the place of the Kaliningrad question in the Polish political parties programs. The issues of business opportunities for cooperation at the external borders of the European Union were presented by Prof. Milena Jovanovic-Zattila from the University of Nis (Serbia). The participants of the session emphasized the significant

opportunities and potential in the field of EU–Russia cooperation, as well as recognized the important political barriers to the construction of the European-Russian common area.

The third session “Russia and EU in Baltic Sea Regional Studies” was dedicated to the issues of cooperation at the external borders of the European Union, based on examples of solutions in the Baltic Sea region. Dr. Ivan Sergeevich Gumenyuk from the Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University in Kaliningrad (Russia) in his speech about problems and prospects of development of maritime transport in the EU–Russia cooperation emphasized large and still untapped potential of the Baltic Sea ports in the development of economic cooperation in the European-Russian common area. Next, Dr. Juris Gromovs from the University of Latvia in Riga (Latvia) discussed the role of migration legislation in Latvia in shaping state policy of foreign investment. Problems in mutual understanding of Russia and its western neighbors presented in his speech Dr. Sergey Vyacheslavovich Khomutinkin from Tambov State University (Russia). The most important conclusion from the discussion at the end of the session was the statement that EU–Russia cooperation in the Baltic Sea region has a thorough institutional ground and tradition, and in the future may become a permanent basis for building a European-Russian common political and economic space.

On the second day of the conference participants took part in the round table discussion “Burning Issues of Local Border Traffic Legislation at the Russia-EU Level”. Representing the Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University in Kaliningrad (Russia), Dr. Vladimir Valentinovich Voinikov discussed the most important issues in implementation of the regulations of local border traffic at the Polish-Russian border. Dr. Tomasz Dubowski from the University of Białystok (Poland) presented the latest achievements of implementation mechanisms of the local border traffic from the Polish and Russian point of view. Next, Dr. Krzysztof Żęgota from the University of Warmia and Mazuria in Olsztyn (Poland) described the importance of the Polish-Russian agreement on local border traffic in the context of EU–Russia relations. The debaters recognised the importance of local border traffic as an effective mechanism to break the barriers at the external borders of the European Union. Participants of the conference also expressed the hope that the agreement on local border traffic will be announcement of visa-free regime between the European Union and Russia.

At the end of the conference, representing the Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University in Kaliningrad (Russia) Anna Valerevna Belova presented the experience of the Kaliningrad University in the implementation of international research projects with the involvement of institutions from the European Union. Representatives of the Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University invited other participants to take part in joint activities aimed at integration of the European and Russian scientific society and implementation of joint research initiatives. Noteworthy is particularly the experience of Kaliningrad University in research collaboration with the Polish scientific community, in particular with the University of Warmia and Mazuria in Olsztyn. This Polish-Russian scientific experience was emphasized by all participants of the conference. Discussants noted that current scientific cooperation between Kaliningrad and Olsztyn can be a positive example of breaking down barriers and building a network of cooperation between the European Union and Russia.

During the conference were discussed issues related to current challenges in Russian-European relations. In discussing the current situation in these relations, both from a legal and political point of view, the participants of the conference paid special attention to the legal basis for cooperation between Russia and the European Union (legal norms, human

rights, cooperation in the area of migrations). As part of the round table was discussed the question of local border traffic, with the participation of Russian and Polish scientists.

Special contribution to the organization of the conference brought representatives of the Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University: Dr. Vladimir Valentinovich Voinikov, Dr. Anna Vladimirovna Barsukova and Anna Valerevna Belova, representatives of Veliky Novgorod local authorities and participants from the Yaroslav-the-Wise Novgorod State University: Dr. Valentina Vladimirovna Grokhotova, Dr. Anatoly Viktorovich Gusev and other representatives of the Faculty of Law of the Novgorod university.

Krzysztof Żęgota (University of Warmia and Mazuria in Olsztyn)

International Polar Year 2012 Conference: “From Knowledge to Action” – Report

Under the auspices of the International Polar Year, co-sponsored by the International Council for Science and the World Meteorological Organization, more than 3,000 participants came together to Montreal, Canada, during the International Polar Year 2012 “From Knowledge to Action” Conference (22–27 April 2012). Participants included Arctic and Antarctic researchers from all over the world and various fields of expertise such as policy and decision making, law, academia, industry and environment, representatives of non-governmental and non-profit organizations and circumpolar communities, including indigenous peoples from Russia and Northern Canada.

The Conference was the final event of International Polar Year 2007–2008, the largest international program of interdisciplinary polar research ever undertaken¹³. The conference

¹³ International Polar Year (IPY) was initiated as international cooperation and for the first time was introduced in 1882–1883. Its main objective was and still is, to provide scientific information about the fundamentals of meteorology and geophysics as well as to enhance all people’s knowledge and awareness about Polar Regions and associated, ongoing changes in both, opposite poles. Many of the earth’s unique phenomena, such as circulatory systems for air and water and the Earth’s magnetic field lines reach the surface in the polar areas. In addition, thick glaciers have trapped air and water from ancient times, which makes it easiest to observe these phenomena near the poles. The initial idea of international cooperative polar research came from an Austro–Hungarian explorer and naval officer Lt. Karl Weyprecht who was a scientist and co-commander of the Austro–Hungarian Polar Expedition of 1872–1874. Weyprecht, realized that a comprehensive polar research could not be a task of one nation only, but should involve a coordinated international effort. He recognized that a time of mere geographical discovery had passed and a series of coordinated expeditions dedicated to scientific research should be undertaken to further people’s understanding of fundamentals of meteorology and geophysics. Unfortunately, he died before the international research became a reality, but his inspiration led to an establishment of the largest coordinated series of scientific expeditions ever undertaken in the Arctic during the 19th century, or to what is now known as the First International Polar Year. The first IPY was announced between the years of 1881–1883, when eleven nations came together to establish fourteen principal research stations across the Polar Regions. The Second IPY, which took place in 1932–1933, was both proposed and promoted by the International Meteorological Committee. The main objective