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International Standards and Local Flavour

Welcome to this first edition of the *Latvian European Community Studies Association Newsletter!*

The Newsletter aims at informing those interested in the development of European Studies in this country by reporting on conferences, seminars and workshops, by providing interviews and by fostering debate.

It is evident to most that higher education and research must respond to the challenges and effects of European Union enlargement. To meet these challenges and to establish a forum for dealing with them we launched the Latvian European Community Studies Association, LECSA, almost 5 years ago.

The development of interdisciplinary European Studies programmes at the university level is an obvious strategy for the higher education institutions. It provides students with an opportunity to acquire a solid knowledge about Europe and the European Union. Establishment of such programmes will also contribute to create a stimulating research environment of teachers with different methodological background but with focus in their research at the economic, social and political development of the European Union. One of the first activity of LECSA is European Studies masters' programme development at the University of Latvia, Faculty of Economics and Management. The programme is successful with approximately 100 students enrolling per year.

European Studies programmes in many universities are part of the *European Community Study Association (ECSA)*, a network for several hundred European Studies programmes at universities in all continents. ECSA is linked to the European Commission via the Jean Monnet Project. Another early activity of LECSA was membership of ECSA. In addition, several of LECSA's activities are supported by the Jean Monnet Project.

Now, after almost five years of activity LECSA is entering a new phase of its development. The Association has evolved from a bridge-type organisation, linking higher institutions of education in Latvia, to an umbrella-type organization and the Association has experienced fruitful cooperation in a number of projects that are focused on national as well as international aspects.

We look forward to inform our audience about news and events in this and coming newsletters. Hope you will find them interesting.

Tatyana Muravska
LECSA President

Morten Hansen
LECSA Vice-President



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ECSA World

LECSA is a member of the European Community Studies Association (ECSA) - <http://www.ecsanet.org>

ECSA brings together different National European Community Studies Associations around the World and is supported by the European Commission.

LECSA ACTIVITIES

Conference

YouREC

Young Researchers Enlargement Conferences

Riga, June 3 – 5, 2004, University of Latvia

In June 3 – 5 the 2nd YouREC project conference was held at University of Latvia.

The YouREC project provides a regional network that enables young researchers, mostly doctoral students, from the participating countries to present their research findings before audiences that are informed and critical as well. The network includes:

the [Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence of the Freie Universität Berlin](#) (coordinator),

the [Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence of the University of Sussex](#)

the [Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence, University of Szczecin](#), and

the [Centre for European and Transition Studies at the University of Latvia](#).

The YouREC project is sponsored by the European Commission. The Directorate-General for Education and Culture has granted the The Freie Universität Berlin's Centre of Excellence, as coordinator, and three other distinguished research institutions in Latvia, Poland and the United Kingdom support for a series of conferences on Political, Economic and Financial Dimensions of an Enlarging Eurozone which have started in fall 2003.

The conferences are organised 3-4 times per year, in each of the participating countries.

The first host of the conference has been the Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence in Szczecin, Poland (held from January 30, 2003 – February 1, 2004).

In June 3 -5, 2004 the 2nd YouREC conference took place at University of Latvia. 8 young researchers from Latvia, two—from Poland, two—from Germany and a PhD student from Great Britain were presenting their analysis. However, not only students from the involved institutions were introducing their thesis—researchers from Denmark, Estonia and the Netherlands were discussing their issues of interest with the audience.

The 3rd YouREC conference has taken place in November 25 – 27, 2004 in the Sussex European Institute, Great Britain. Three participants from Latvia—Ms. Līga Sondore, Ms. Evija Bleidele and Mr. Andris Kužnieks had a chance to present their research findings.

For more information please visit the home page: <http://www.yourec.org>

Seminar

Latvian European Community Studies Association (LECSA)

Seminar

Riga, June 12, 2004, European Information Centre

On Saturday, June 12, 2004 a seminar “Research and Knowledge Development within European Studies after the Accession”, organised by LECSA took place in Riga, at the European Information Centre.

Seminar dealt with themes on research development in European Studies in Latvia and their influence on competitiveness of Latvia in European Union. Discussion was arranged by invited experts and organisations involved or interested in involvement in development and teaching of European Studies programmes. Moreover, contacts between research participants on the basis of mutual profitability were made.

European Studies programme experts— Hanze University Groningen Professor Frans Somers and Professor Friedrich Lehmann from University of Bremen offered their experience in related issues of study process.

Although the seminar is annual, it was recognised by the European Commission and supported by the Jean Monnet Project.

Conference

“TOWARDS UNITED STATES OF EUROPE: FUTURE CHALLENGES AND POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS”

Riga, December 8-9, 2004, University of Latvia

In December 8-9, 2004 the Student Conference “Towards United States of Europe: Future Challenges and Potential Solutions” was held at University of Latvia.

The Conference was organised by the LECSA Student Forum, which is a part of LECSA and was founded in 2002/2003 academic year to follow European Studies programmes students interests.

The first day of the Conference was devoted to the presentations of the H.E. Emilio Lorenzo Sierra, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of Spain (“Position of Spain with Regards to the European Union”), Dr. Einars Semanis, Deputy State Secretary of Ministry of Foreign Affairs (“Challenges and Opportunities for Turkey Joining the European Union”), and Prof. Juris Bojārs, University of Latvia, Institute of International Relations (“The European Union: Nation or Confederation of States?”).

On the second day students from University of Latvia and other educational institutions were presenting their research results that were followed by discussion.

The Conference participants were European Studies Master Programmes’ students from University of Latvia, Riga Graduate School of Law, Stockholm School of Economics, Riga Stradins University.

The Conference was sponsored by the European Commission Jean Monnet Project and supported by University of Latvia.

For more information please visit the home page: <http://www.lu.lv/leksa/en/index.html>

EUROPEAN STUDIES MASTER PROGRAMME—VIEW FROM GRADUATES

Artis Puriņš—Graduate of the European Studies Master Programme, University of Latvia

Interview: Riga, 28 October 2004

What is your current occupation?

I am a Ph.D. student in political science, as well Director of European Union Information centre (EUIC).

Could you name the reasons to choose the European Studies Master Programme?

I entered it in 2002 - a time of pre-referendum. It was important to acquire knowledge for my job – besides studying I was Director of EUIC. Studies helped to manage my job better.

What are your brightest impressions from this Study Programme?

Definitely “the trip to Brussels” - thanks to it a possibility to get acquainted with institutions of the European Union was given. Besides, my memories are linked with great course-mates and “international dimension” offered via lectures. I want to note that half from all the lectures was in English.

You were at responsible post already while studying. How do you rate a possibility to combine studies at Master level and making progress in your career?

As I mentioned, studies helped me as a clear aim was nominated: studies had to supplement work and work – studies. On the whole there were no problems for me to combine both things. Of course, it was easier, since my work place was situated only ten minutes walk from Faculty.

Whom would you recommend to study in the European Studies Master Programme?

To those for whom it is meant – for people who have graduated programmes in political science, economics, law and who wish to look wider to European issues. The programme is adjusted for people interested in the EU problemacy. This programme can take nothing away from you, it can only give you a possibility to look at things related the EU from different perspective. If a work is connected with questions of the EU and there is a wish to deepen your knowledge in these issues, then it is an excellent choice.

What would you wish to next students of European Studies Master Programme?

In any case, to be active and to study with interest and motivation. Experience gained during the Soviet Union has left its marks and that is why everyone has to promote in oneself activity and positive thinking. It is important to develop your own “PR” and to think about

Mr. Andris Kužnieks—graduate of the European Studies Master Programme, University of Latvia

Interview: Riga, 10 November 2004

What is your current occupation?

I work in Ministry of Regional Development and Local Governments.

Could you name the reasons to choose the European Studies Master Programme?

I wanted to start my master studies in 2000. At that time it was a new programme offering opportunities to obtain knowledge and review actual questions in connection with the European Union (EU). The urgency of the programme was defined by Latvia's wish to enter the EU. In addition, knowledge about issues of the Union became more and more necessary in my job.

What are your brightest impressions from this Study Programme?

The first memories are linked with the collective – it was good. We were not a large group – about fifty people – that ensured nice study process. For example, relations with lecturers developed differently, it would not be possible if we were two hundred. It is also nice to remember competent professors. The opportunity to listen foreign lecturers, for instance, M.Hansen and A.Vanags, seemed something completely new and unknown. I got my Bachelor Degree in the Faculty of Economics and Management and that is why I found interesting the possibility offered by European Study programme to enlarge knowledge and to get notion also in questions on law and political science.

You worked along with studies. Did you successfully manage to combine studies and work?

I already worked in time of Bachelor Studies and continued while studying at Master Studies. It was easy to combine – a lot of people did it. Everything is possible.

Whom would you recommend to study in the European Studies Master Programme?

First, for those who wish to work in public sector and who have work connected with issues of the EU, for instance, regional politics, employment. And for those, who see their place working in the EU institutions.

What would you wish to next students of European Studies Master Programme?

To continue educating yourself also after studies in issues related with the EU and to follow up news as well as keep up the things you have started.

REPORTS, PUBLICATIONS, WORKING PAPERS

Turkey and the EU: Finally “Yes”?

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European Commission's verdict regarding the possibility of starting accession negotiations with Turkey was announced on 6th October, 2004. Of course, this is only the first step towards starting accession negotiations. The European Council should also say its “yes” to starting accession negotiations with Turkey in December 2004, but very few expect that the Council will overturn Commission's recommendation. No date on starting negotiations has yet been set, however Commission has already been keen on warning Turkey that negotiations can be postponed or stopped at any point. This is not to mention that Commission's report on Turkey's readiness to open accession negotiations is very explicit in saying that Turkey's readiness is politically sufficient, but that there is a lot work to do for Ankara¹.

¹*Recommendation of the European Commission on Turkey's progress towards accession.* Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, Brussels, 06.10.2004.

http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/report_2004/pdf/tr_recommendation_en.pdf

Detailed article available at web page <http://www.lu.lv/leksa/en/research.html>