

"Reading maketh a full man, conference a ready man,
and writing an exact man."

— Francis Bacon



oming into full bloom: XVI April International Academic Conference on Economics and Social Development took place on April 7-10. Taking into account the fact that the April'ka (the endearing nickname of the conference used within the university) is just 7 years younger than HSE itself, no wonder it has become an indispensable attribute of the university life, both for the faculty and students. Each year the number of participants, including the international scholars, is growing significantly; just by way of illustration the number of international honorary speakers nearly doubled this year. "Spring is the time of plans and projects", Leo Tolstoy said, which is perfectly true for the HSE April conference – it brings new academic life, new beginnings and new opportunities. So we are pleased to introduce new people - Dr Kyeong Hun Lee, new funding opportunities, and a chance to let others know about your research success.

Yulia Grinkevich
Director of Internationalization

Presenting Academic Achievements

XVI April International Academic Conference on Economic and Social Development is a signature academic event for Higher School of Economics, and always attracts many participants from Russia and abroad. More than 2000 participants – international and domestic scholars, PhD and graduate students, NGO and think tanks members - registered for the April Conference this year, and attended its sessions during the four days of April 7-10.

Plenary

The opening of the XVI April Conference was held in the World Trade Center in Moscow on April 7th. The morning was devoted to the session on economic growth in Russia and global trends. HSE Rector **Yaroslav Kuzminov** and HSE President **Alexander Shokhin** were moderators of the session.

Vladimir Mau, Rector of the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration (RANEPA), spoke about the convergence of three different economic crises, and the difficulty of making policy decisions to tackle them, because the measures needed to overcome one type of crisis might worsen another one. He emphasized the importance of disinflation

measures, the need to set budget priorities and make effective investments into social and transport infrastructure. Prof. Mau also talked about different approaches to import substitution: choosing different import sources in the nearby region, choosing sources in farther regions, substituting imported goods with local goods of inferior quality and, finally, substituting imported products for locally produced ones which can be competitive on the local and international market. He reminded that while there have been measures to reshape the relations between import and export in Russian economy, across the world all major exporters of goods and services, rather than resources, also have a large share of import.

Evgeny Yasin, HSE Academic Supervisor, talked about the new stage of Russia's economic development and key conditions for economic growth. He reminded the audience that despite a long history, currently Russia is a young state which underwent a significant change of social, political and economic systems less than thirty years ago. One of the challenges Russia faces is to increase the effectiveness of work and production, especially in the view of the population decline. Prof. Yasin stressed that overcoming current crises, especially the investment crisis, requires not only economic solutions but also institutional changes, such as ensuring the supremacy of the rule of law.

Herman Gref, Chairman of Sberbank's Executive Board, drew attention to the importance of lifelong learning and investments into the human capital as well as the need to improve the quality of education on all levels: pre-school, elementary and secondary schooling, higher education, and corporate training. Commenting on H. Gref's presentation, HSE Rector Yaroslav Kuzminov noted that higher education in Russia is, formally, widely accessible, but often its quality is quite low, and surveys of business, families and students show dissatisfaction with the resulting quality.

Ana Revenga, Senior Director of the Poverty Global Practice at the World Bank, told about Russia's achievements in reducing poverty and the challenges it faces. One of the indicators the World Bank monitors is not simply economic growth, but its inclusivity and the upward economic mobility it generates. A. Revenga showed that Russia outperformed other BRIC countries in middle class growth, but after the 2000s the poverty reduction tempo stagnated, and the levels of economic vulnerability remain high. Also, aggregate data do not capture the vast differences in living standards and income across Russian regions – many of the Eastern regions, except for the ones rich in gas and oil, show quite high levels of poverty and economic vulnerability. One of the challenges Russia faces is to stimulate new drivers of economic upward mobility: a rebalancing in favor of small- and medium-sized private enterprises could be advised. Another is the need to improve the quality of public services, especially to ensure that it is equal across the regions

Aleksey Gordeev, Governor of Voronezhskaya oblast, shared the experience of introducing key performance indicators into the evaluation of public officials' work in the region, and engaging regional business community and civil society into the evaluation process.

Alexey Simanovsky, First Deputy Governor of the Bank of Russia, told about the risks and challenges for the banking sector in Russia. After all the speakers **Igor Shuvalov**, First Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, highlighted the points which seemed most interesting and pressing to him: the quality of education and public service, and the importance of poverty reduction and middle class growth.

The HSE Look talked to several researchers from the HSE international labs about their impressions from the April Conference.

Panos Pardalos, University of Florida /Laboratory of Algorithms and Technologies for Networks Analysis at HSE Nizhniy Novgorod The opening was very nice; I liked very much that speakers emphasized importance of education, not only oil, for Russia. I certainly believe that in the future the good technology and good educated people will do their best. I also liked the World Bank expert's presentation, it was very optimistic, and it's positive to see how good Russia has been doing. I think, in a few years there will be an improvement, because the first time I was in Russia was in the late 80s, and I've seen a huge difference.

Our Laboratory of Algorithms and Technologies for Networks Analysis is at HSE Nizhniy Novgorod, and we used the pre-conference time in Moscow to hold a workshop with Yandex to discuss the methods of analyzing networks and data. In addition to the grant for the laboratory we also have a Russian Science

Foundation grant on how to analyze very large networks, and companies like Yandex and Google have a lot of interest in this. We work on many mathematical problems behind the techniques of analyzing data.

Félix J. López Iturriaga, Universidad de Valladolid / Laboratory of Intangible-driven Economy at HSE Perm

The conference is very interesting. I was really surprised by the number of papers – it's such a big conference, such a multidisciplinary conference. And at the same time I like that there are some opportunities for smaller events within it: I am with the HSE Perm laboratory of Intangible-driven Economy, and we had a special session about our topics. It's really complementary to attend a big conference and also to discuss the topics I am usually working on.

On the 8th I would have liked to attend one of the sessions with the experts of the World Bank: but there were too many people, so we could not fit into the room. On the 9th I attended a lecture by the keynote speaker Stefano Zambon (Professor of Business Economics at the Faculty of Economics of Ferrara University, Italy), on the management and measurement of intellectual capital as leverage for company and territorial growth, and it's been really a good experience. We are preparing some common activities between two laboratories: the corporate finance laboratory and the intangibles laboratory, and the April conference gave us a chance to discuss common points and plan a conference for next year.

Dirk Meissner, Deputy Head of the Research Laboratory for Science and Technology Studies at HSE Moscow

Our section, Foresight and Priority Setting in Science, Technology and Innovation: Issues for S&T Policy, was quite interesting and fascinating. Many researchers from our laboratory are participating in the session, as well as many people from outside the HSE. We did not have any problems inviting even the 'big names'; some even agree to come to our events more than once or twice, so we can be selective in invitation and provide more diversity of opinions. I think it is a sign of success for our work.

Ulla Pape, Ruhr-Universität Bochum / Laboratory for Non-Profit Sector Studies at HSE Moscow

Most interesting thing at the roundtable ("Is Russia Ready for the New Era in Government-Nonprofit Relations?") for me was to hear different experiences from participants and the speakers about what the reality of non-profit organizations looks like. If you look at the situation on the ground, it is completely different from the theoretical ideas of cooperation with the government. There were interesting discussions about the quality of this cooperation since there are a lot of instruments and mechanisms of involving non-profit organizations, but little information about their actual usefulness. There is also a deficit of information about the level of autonomy in decision-making of the non-profit organizations which use the government's instruments, and whether they can really pursue better policies in the social sphere.

At HSE I work with the Laboratory for Non-Profit Sector Studies, and we have a project on social sector NGOs in Russia's regions and how they work together with the state institutions. Here at this section a several participants also work in our lab's project – Yulia Skolkova, Vladimir Benevolenskiy, and Irina Krasnopol'skaya. We cover 8 different regions which differ on the quality of economic development and on the openness of the system and civil society

development. Of course, we have different subgroups within the laboratory. From my work at the HSE, this is the aspect that I enjoy most – I am working together with so many different people, and learn a lot from them, and we can discuss really interesting things.

Angel Barajas, University of Vigo/ Laboratory of Intangible-driven Economy at HSE Perm

I went to the plenary session on the first day – it was very interesting for me, because I had some insights about the situation in Russia. In our session on measurement of intellectual capital of companies I personally was very interested in the presentation on the influence of investment in R&D on human capital and performance of the companies. Also interesting for me were the presentations on what might happen with export companies and the one about the influence of human capital on performance and sustainable growth.

I work with the laboratory of Intangible-driven Economy in HSE Perm. We have three main lines of research: the role of intangibles for corporate governance, for small and medium companies, and the role of intangibles in sport economics. Every month, more or less, we hold a workshop where a member of the lab presents their research at the level that it is, and then we discuss how to develop and improve it. Now we are starting to prepare the summer school which we will hold in June to attract more students into research. It will also be an opportunity for all the international members of the lab to meet and discuss our projects.

Welcome Aboard

Kyeong Hun Lee was born in South Korea. He got his PhD in Finance from the University of Iowa in 2014. Lee's research interests include corporate finance and international finance. Since September 2014 he took up a position of an Assistant Professor at the International College of Economics and Finance (ICEF) at HSE. Lee enjoys living in Russia and is dreaming of taking a train trip to Lake Baikal.

What is your academic geography?

Where did you travel for study and work?

To make a long story short – I finished military service in South Korea in 2004 and then I decided to go abroad to study. At that time I didn't know what to study, so I went to Oregon State University just to study English as a second language and I was auditing some math class. I liked math, especially the application side. After that I went to the University of Iowa to study risk management. And then I wanted to know more about economic and financial fundamentals, so I switched my major to finance for PhD in the same University. So I have been at the University of Iowa for ten years – a small college town with many beautiful lakes and parks. I enjoyed living there. In Seoul, South Korea every place is quite crowded, and there is not much room to breathe. Iowa was the opposite, and the people are very friendly.

When you first went abroad for studies did you experience any culture-shock or was it relatively easy for you?

It took so much time to adapt, actually. Before going to the U.S. I was an average South Korean man, very conservative, trying to be silent. But the culture in the USA is different – you have to speak out to achieve your goal and defend yourself. The attitude was very different there.

When you look back at you first days in Russia, can you remember what you expected and how things turned out?

In the U.S. I was told by people who have been to Russia that Russian people are very outspoken, so I might need a strong mentality to live there. Partially true, and what I found here is that people are mostly quiet and gentle. Of course, I have also met somewhat aggressive people as well, but overall it's OK. My experience from living in a new environment, like the USA, helps me a lot.

Do you feel more or less at home now at HSE?

I really like my department here, ICEF. I love my colleagues, they are very collegial, and nice people. My department is very supportive in terms of both research and teaching. This is the place where you can really be productive in research. At the moment I work on the projects I started at the University of Iowa and I have some new projects initiated here in Moscow.

Did you do any teaching already?

Yes, last semester I taught a corporate finance class for master students in ICEF. I found students here are very strong in math, compared to American universities. They have very good quantitative skills. While teaching this corporate finance class here I was trying to help them develop their analytical skills, which can complement their quantitative skills. ICEF has a collaboration with LSE, so colleagues from London come here regularly to discuss, for example, course work and exams among others. I found this very interesting – it gives me experience in polishing teaching skills with one of the top universities in the world.

What do you think of working with Russian students?

Overall Russian students are very smart, but they somewhat focus too much on computation and often miss the qualitative side which is also very important. Being focused on problem-solving skills might be misleading. It is not much helpful to merely memorize ways to solve problems mechanically. We know that things are changing every day, so what they learn today may become useless later. But if they really understand the underlying logic, they can come up with new answers in a clever way whenever they face new problems. So that's the main difference between classroom cultures in Russian and the US. I think there has to be a good balance.

Turning back to your research: do you work on your projects individually or are they a collaborative effort?

They are co-authored projects. Mainly I work with my colleagues from Iowa, Professor David Mauer and a PhD student Emma Xu. I might later start working with people from other universities as well, we are trying to work with and learn from as many researchers as possible.

Is it hard talking to co-authors while they live in a different country?

Definitely it's more difficult than if I would live in the same country. One needs very good time management skills and due diligence. You need to make time for talks to your co-authors on a regular basis on Skype. Now with this technology it must be much easier compared to ten years ago. Still time difference is the main obstacle. When they get up in Iowa, I am ready to go to bed here in Russia. Caffeine is not a panacea, and this is one of the difficulties. Also when you physically sit together, things are much easier to communicate and understand. Discussing research by phone or Skype one really needs very good communication skills, otherwise it can take so much time. But somehow we manage to do it.

Do you continue working on topics that look at the interconnection of country's financial and political environments?

I started this project in Iowa, it's a part of my dissertation and my job market paper, Cross-border Mergers and Acquisitions amid Political Uncertainty. It looks at how political uncertainty can affect foreign investment in a country and also the way foreign investment is made. Take Russia, for example - many foreigners withdrew because of the high political uncertainty surrounding Ukraine issues. And we know that foreign investment is very important for economic development and many other reasons. To bring back foreign investors, Russia might have to allow them to make investment at more favorable terms and conditions, otherwise they won't find Russia attractive to invest. So political uncertainty or political risk is very costly and has valuation consequences for Russia.

Was it a coincidence that the situation in the country you decided to move to for work is so close to what you research?

It's a pure coincidence. I didn't plan to come to Russia when I started

working on this project. And now I see that things are happening the way I described them in my paper.

Do you work with the Russian data as well?

Not about this project. But I would like to look more at Russian businesses and companies especially nowadays when so many things are happening in the Russian economy. This is a very good set up to empirically test some economic intuition. For example, rollover risk for Russian companies as a result of losing access to the western financial market, and political ties between the government and firms among others. I would like to look into it in the near future.

Do you feel well-connected with the international academic community while living in Moscow?

I have been travelling a lot. HSE is very supportive; they encourage you to go to international conferences. I went to the Financial Management Association meeting in the U.S. last year, and to the American Financial Association meeting in Boston this year where I had a chance to meet my co-authors from the University of Iowa and this makes things much faster.

Funding Opportunities Alerts

HSE Office for Research Evaluation has launched a targeted e-mail subscription with information about international research funding. In order to subscribe, please, enter your name, corporate e-mail and preferred topics at the webpage: <http://grant.hse.ru/Anketa/alerts>.

In addition, SciVal Funding database can be accessed on all HSE computers until September 2015. In order to set up e-mail alerts, please, run a search with the parameters interesting for you, and choose Save search/Set alert option in the Search results. SciVal

Funding also enables you to refine funding alerts based on your Scopus profile.

HSE's e-mail alerts on funding opportunities are handpicked by the staff of the Office for Research Evaluation. If you feel that an important source is missing or you know of opportunities for which colleagues from HSE can apply, please, write to Ivan Sterligov (isterligov@hse.ru) and Alfiya Enikeeva (aenikeeva@hse.ru). They will also be happy to address your questions about the subscription, should you have any.

HSE Research in the Media and Professional Press: Bringing to the Fore

HSE was in the top-4 of the 15 leading Russian universities after the assessment by the international experts of the Council on Competitiveness Enhancement in late March. During the presentations of the university's achievements and roadmap among the issues brought up were the promotion of academic achievements, and the university's reputation on the global academic market.

HSE does not underestimate the importance of publicly available information about the university's research activity, so in order to better understand and use it the Office of Public Relations and Online Media has launched a monitoring of publications about the research results of HSE's faculty members.

The University is interested in information about the following publications:

- Publications in foreign scholarly journals, professional journals and newspapers which mention research results of an HSE faculty member;
- Articles in foreign mass media and professional blogs by the HSE faculty or about their research;

As soon as you learn that information about your research (or your colleagues') was published, please, send it to sciencepress@hse.ru, including the title and date of the publication, title and issue of the journal/newspaper, author, and, if it is available on the Internet, a link to the publication. Please, contact Vadim Vorobyev (vvorobyev@hse.ru) if you have any questions.