

# Concept of international sociological master's program in

## *«Comparative Social Research»*

### on the basis of NRU HSE scientific laboratories and centers

**Authors:**

**Eduard Ponarin  
Christopher Swader  
Tatiana Karabchuk**

**19 September 2013**

#### **Title:**

Master's Program in Comparative Social Research

#### **Highlights:**

- 2-year **all-english** MA program in **comparative sociology** tailored to those aiming for international sociological job market.
- Intake of up to 25 students per year (ideally, half **international**)
- Study one semester in **Moscow**, one semester in **St. Petersburg**, one semester **research internship** with international partners, final semester with advisor, affiliated with research laboratory
- **Stipends, tuition waivers** for top (based on academic performance and need) students
- Professional, **program-specific staffing**
- **Academic orientation**, with additional strengths for international research labor market
- Will increase number of **foreign students** at NRU-HSE and increase number of **outstanding Russian BA graduates** staying for their master degree in Russia
- Potential development into **dual/joint degree** partner abroad, such as King's College in London (Russia Institute)
- Awards "**Master of Sociology**" degree

#### **Main objective:**

To use the potential of a number of international NRU HSE research centers and laboratories in order to teach perspective students in-depth methods, theory, and design of advanced academic-quality comparative sociological research. To train future sociologists for academic posts and also qualify them to work in non-academic spheres.

The secondary objective, accomplished through the first, is to increase the reputation of NRU-HSE sociology and the university as a whole in the international academic arena.

Through fulfilling these objectives, we attract foreign students to the NRU-HSE, keep some top B.A. Students in Russia, and help to fulfill a high demand in Russia for the teaching of high quality comparative sociology.

Program of the course will form the following skills:

1) Academic skills – in particular, the ability to write scientific articles based on the analysis of empirical data. Program graduates will be empowered to publish their research papers in international peer-reviewed journals. In addition, they will be encouraged to continue their careers within European partners' PhD programs, potentially in collaboration with the NRU HSE academic PhD program,

2) Skills of applied research implementation in international organizations and companies.

Program language – English.

Conferred qualification – Master of Sociology

Course duration – 2 years

Mode of study – full-time

Rationale: The program is created on the basis of the Laboratory of Comparative Social Research. LCSR is a base for course organization, research internships, and provision of M.A. thesis supervisors (including foreign consultants).

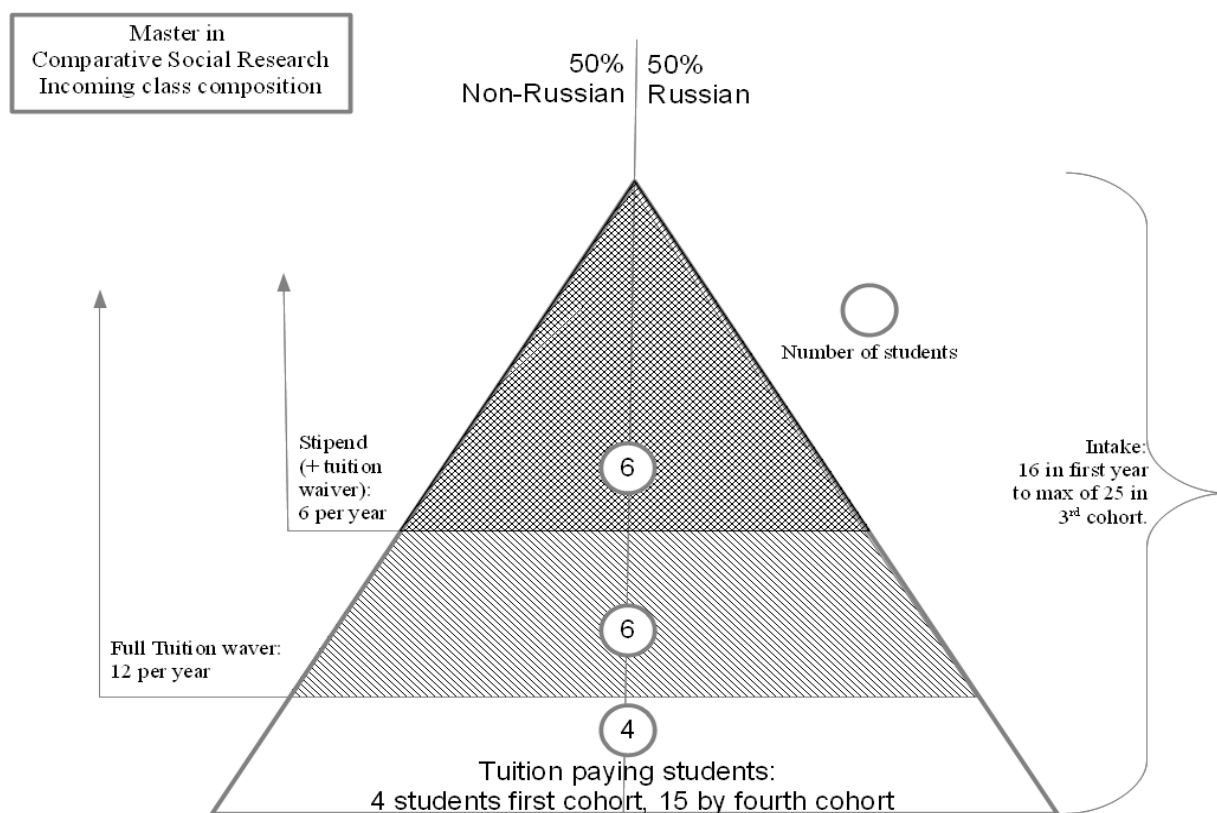
However, any one laboratory by itself is not capable of satisfying various research interests and methodological orientations of students, as well as providing all program participants with thesis supervisors. Thus, the program will offer limited elective course offerings and research internships at scientific units that are also engaged in comparative analysis of sociological problems at the NRU-HSE: Laboratory for Studies in Economic Sociology, Center for Institutional Studies, Laboratory for Labor Market Studies, Center for Labor Market Studies, Institute for Educational Studies, Scientific Laboratory for Research on Entrepreneurship, Center for Market Studies and Spatial Economics, the International Scientific-Educational Laboratory for Socio-Cultural Research, and others.

The above-mentioned scientific laboratories and centers are centers of rapid development and scientific growth and have a high reputation in Russian research circles as well as abroad. It is reasonable to use the potential of these centers for the development of the new generation of master programs. Lead members of these laboratories would be invited to organize elective courses and to supervise master's theses. This combination of international and scientific NRU HSE research centers'/laboratories' resources will increase the market appeal of the program. Furthermore, use of existing courses as electives allows both a greater range of courses and the ability to save resources.

### **Who does the program train?:**

We aim to attract foreign students from Europe, but also from Central-, East-, and South Asia and beyond, in addition to students from Eastern Europe. We also aspire to attract some top Russian BA Sociology students to continue their master sociological studies with our program, rather than to enter programs abroad. Our main competition will be comparable (in terms of content, tuition costs) programs in Germany, Netherlands, and Scandanavia.

The following diagram shows the three types of students to be brought in by the program: (a) top international and Russian students who will receive a stipend and tuition waiver, (b) good students who will be awarded a tuition waiver, and (c) competitive paying students. Stipends and tuition waivers are irreplaceable for attracting the best students to the program.



Graduates of the program will be well prepared for pursuing a further academic career in sociology. However, the top-notch research skills we provide will also suit graduates for conducting social research in business or the public sphere. Our graduates may:

- 1) Continue their education as doctoral students in top sociological departments abroad, ideally maintaining their connections to the NRU-HSE, potentially through the “academic PhD” program. The program will offer to excellent students the facilitated transfer from this MA program to the “academic PhD” program and associated partner universities. This could function in the same way as the combined MA-PhD model prevalent in the US. After the PhD, we aim for our alumni to be placed as scholars at sociology departments of leading universities
- 2) Work within international organizations, public institutions, non-profit organizations, and companies as analysts, consultants, and advisors.

#### **Given knowledge and skills (competences):**

Offered program will prepare scholars in the sphere of comparative analysis of sociological problems. Graduates of the program will have competitive advantages from acquired competences on the academic market. On the other hand, graduates will have also the practical methodological skills to also apply their knowledge within the non-academic sphere (including the ability to write scientific articles and compose analytical documents for governmental and international organizations, international businesses and NGOs).

At the moment, there are no comparable internationally oriented, exclusively English-language M.A. Programs in Russia aiming to train professional sociologists for the international academic labor market.

A typical comparable program in Europe would be the MA in Comparative European Social Studies in Maastricht. In comparison, our program has a wider scope; it does not train only comparative *European* analysis. Furthermore, the above program functions mainly to place students within European Union public labor market structures; our program can provide a similar function, by training students as researchers in international organizations, but at the same time, our academic ambitions are stronger, in that we aim to produce sociologists for the international academic labor market. We also aim to offer stipends, tuition waivers, and therefore net lower study costs for top students than the above competitor.

### **Structure:**

The program involves both flexible and compulsory elements. ANNEX B contains all curriculum elements for the program, including chronological schedule (Annex B.1), a credit listing (Annex B.2), and a list of the additional courses already offered to our students by the LCSR's international partners (Annex B.3).

1. Program is designed to last for 2 years and implies a mandatory stay of at least 1 semester internship at a research partner university, research company, international organization or national public administration institution (with mandatory report of internship at the end).
2. Core compulsory requirements include: general scientific, theoretical and methodological courses (with a quantitative strongpoint); a research workshop, internships, major research paper, thesis proposal, thesis ad defense. Total – 100 ECTS:

### **A snapshot of compulsory courses, requirements (See Annex B.1 for greater detail):**

#### **SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY**

- Research Design (philosophy of science, research question design, literature/theory links, case selection, sampling, selection of methods)
- Academic Practice (publishing, ethics, job market)

#### **METHODS**

- Quantitative Methods (up to and including OLS and logistic regression)
- Multi-level regression analysis
- Comparative Empirical Research Using Survey Data
- Qualitative Methods (to include interview, ethnographic, focus-group methods)
- Methods rotating (these are international guest lecturers invited for each body of students)

#### **THEORY/THEMATIC CONCENTRATIONS**

- Social Theory (to include key themes of selected classical and contemporary social theory)
- Comparative Sociology (taught by one the world's most reknown comparative social scientists: Ronald Inglehart)
- Human Empowerment: The Co-Evolution of Rights and Culture (Christian Welzel, teaching his theory of human empowerment, a major continuation of Inglehart's work)
- Theory rotating (these are international guest lecturers invited for each body of students)

#### INTERNSHIP (September through December)

- Research Paper (to be submitted for publication)
- Internship Report

#### MA THESIS

- MA Thesis Proposal
- MA Thesis Workshop
- MA Thesis Written (extended article format, to allow easy conversion for publication)
- MA Thesis Defense

3. Elective courses, consist of two blocks, on methods (3 courses) and on thematic areas/theory (2 courses). For elective offerings, students are offered to choose from existing courses (at least 30) at other NRU-HSE master programs that are relevant in terms of tasks and goals of the program. This listing will continue to be cultivated and evaluated in preparation for the program start. Elective courses that are needed by students and not available at the HSE, to be determined in the first semester of study, will be specially designed and provided by creating new offerings in collaboration with our international partners. The elective courses total 20 ECTS.

Our strategy to make use of existing courses as electives, where sensible, enhances overlap between existing NRU-HSE MA programs, and should therefore increase efficiency. Furthermore, when we bring in additional electives where there are current provision gaps, the added benefit may be shared by the university.

4. Extracurricular offerings: International students will be offered **Russian language** courses (depending on their level of need) by university teachers. In addition, we will seek to offer optional classes in **Academic Writing in English**. In addition, the program provides a summer adaptive course on **introduction to mathematics and statistics** for students arriving with alternative disciplinary strengths (1,5 summer months before the start of the program). Students may choose to work at an NRU-HSE laboratory during their studies, and affiliation with a lab will be encouraged especially during the last semester.
5. Location: The first semester is held in **Moscow**, the second is in **Saint Petersburg**. By the end of the second module, a student chooses a mentor for himself/herself, topic and research unit (laboratory/center), where they plan to finish work on their thesis. Third semester takes place at **research institute** (options include our long list of partners) and implies the acquisition of research training, specifically, work on a research paper, and the writing of the MA research proposal. The last semester involves work on the master's thesis at the NRU-HSE (in Moscow or Saint Petersburg) based on the location of the thesis advisor and the capabilities of basic research subdivisions that are partnered with the program.
6. Documents on graduation: **1)** standard NRU HSE sociology master diploma; **2)** (potentially, to be developed) master diploma of partner university for qualifying students (potentially, King's College, Russia Institute, UK; University of Michigan, USA; SSES, Humboldt University, Germany; Master in European Studies, Free

University Berlin, Germany; Master in European Studies, Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic) and 3) certificate of internship at research organization.

**Launch of the program:**

September 2014 – start of the program (a large number of Russian students are expected to apply).

We aim to start our advertising activities early (October, November 2013) and aggressively in order to maximize applications from foreign and Russian students. We will place a strong focus on promotional activities, also supported by centralized NRU-HSE staff.

**Advantages of the program for students:**

1. International standard of academic sociological training in methods, theory, and professional skills.
2. Objective skills, the NRU-HSE reputation, and the program reputation will facilitate student enrolment into sociology PhD programs.
3. Well-known names of professors and renowned researchers.
4. Stipends available for top students.
5. Easy access to quality data managed by the NRU-HSE, and more difficult to access from abroad (such as the Russian Longitudinal Monitoring Survey)
6. Unique scientific environment of laboratories and centers in terms of international expertise and scientific quality.
7. Opportunities of 3<sup>rd</sup> semester internships abroad at research organizations throughout the world.
8. Publication of research paper produced during 3<sup>rd</sup> semester internship, and support for publishing results of MA thesis.
9. Cultural appeal to international students due to the possibility of spending time with both of Russia's historical capital cities (Moscow, Saint Petersburg)

**Advantages for NRU-HSE:**

1. Establishing greater academic reputation through producing future academic sociologists and assisting their placement in reputable PhD programs internationally.
2. Increase the number of foreign students at the NRU-HSE.
3. Production of one to two potential peer-reviewed articles per student mentioning the NRU-HSE (the first produced during the internship, the second based on the MA thesis).
4. Closer collaboration of scientific laboratories, centers, and the sociology faculty
5. A professional, fully-devoted staff will provide great coordination and stable administration of the program. As a result, the student experience and reporting on the program will be greatly enhanced. This Anglo-American modelled staffing concept is currently not executed at the NRU-HSE.
6. This professionally staffed program could serve as a model for future MA programs at NRU-HSE. This model is different from that currently used within other international MA programs at our university, and we aim to demonstrate that selected use of this model at the HSE could reap great benefits.
7. MA graduates will be ideal for the Western-style PhD program at NRU-HSE and abroad.
8. Establishment of a mainly academic-oriented (rather than practically oriented master program).
9. Reputational effects for sociology departments at Moscow and Saint Petersburg campuses of NRU-HSE should spillover to positive effect on bachelor's program choice.
10. Partnership development with foreign and international research companies/agencies/organizations

11. New and a more efficient use of existing master courses offered in English language at the HSE. This will enhance the synergy with other existing MA programs and reduce the inefficiency of 'dormant' existing MA courses. Furthermore, our offerings will be made available to other international MA students at the HSE, so long as ideal student-teacher ratios are maintained.
12. Interest of international-PhD professors in teaching for the program.

### **Competitive advantages on the education market:**

#### **1. Within NRU HSE**

- First program that jointly trains international and Russian students for the international sociological job market.
- First program that is offered only in English at the Sociology Department.
- First master program drawing on the basis of an international laboratory (a laboratory that has already proven itself and has great potential and networking resources) .

#### **2. On Russian market**

- First program that jointly trains international and Russian students for international sociology job market.
- Opportunity to complete a research internship at a foreign research institute or in an international organization.
- Training for enrollment to PhD programs at the most prestigious universities all over the world.
- Availability of stipends for top students.
- Possibility to study in a fully internationalized sociological MA program while staying in Russia.
- Training to work as researcher/analyst at research organizations, in consultancy.
- A great number of quality courses in English language from leading scientists in this field.
- NRU HSE program, education in two cities.
- Opportunity to write master's thesis as a project supported by a research center/laboratory
- Enhancing CV through research internship of choice

#### **3. On international market**

- Proven track record of NRU-HSE in placing its M.A. Students in excellent PhD programs abroad
- Networking resources and partner connections
- Well-known names (Ronald Inglehart, Chris Welzel, Peter Schmidt) and institutions (University of Michigan, King's College in London, Humboldt University in Berlin); international-standard instructors
- Quality of knowledge and skills
- Stipends and tuition waivers available for top students
- Acquisition of comparative data
- Opportunity to write master's thesis as a project at a research center/laboratory
- Enhancing CV through research internship of choice
- Solid preliminary training offered by this program allows easier transfer from neighboring disciplines to sociology

- Research internships with the NRU-HSE's partners and laboratories

**Partners for semester internship abroad:**

1. King's College, Russia Institute (agreement is in the process of signing. May involve establishment of joint/dual master degree)
2. Statec, Luxemburg (ready to host 3-4 people a year, cooperation agreement is in the process of signing)
3. BIGSSS (Bremen and Jacobs Universities), Germany (agreement signed)
4. Michigan University, USA (agreement signed)
5. Humboldt University, Germany (agreement signed for PhD cooperation. Potential expansion to MA level)
6. Free University Berlin, Germany (agreement signed; joint Graduate College)
7. EUROLAB GESIS, Cologne, Germany (to host 3-4 people a year, agreement signed)
8. Cologne University, Germany (agreement is in the process of signing)
9. Charles university, Prague, Czech Republic (agreement signed)
10. Polish Academy of Science (negotiating terms of the agreement , ready to host students and pay small scholarship)
11. Institute for future studies, Stockholm, Sweden (agreement signed)
12. Eurasian monitor (association of research companies, universities and scientific centers of 14 countries of CIS), signed agreement with LCSR for 5 years.
13. Universities in China and India (through Christian Welzel, Ronald Inglehart, and Christopher Swader)
14. Institute for the Comparative Study of Modernity, Kazan Federal University (through S. Erofeev)
15. Eurasian bank (agreement with LCSR)
16. FADDIS (Spain) (cooperation agreement)
17. Universities and research centers in Africa (through Ronald Inglehart)
18. ZIRCON Research Group,
  - 18a. GfK-Rus, WCIOM, Public Opinion Foundation, Levada Center (basic chairs of Sociology Faculty)
19. Institute for Economics and Forecasting, Ukrainian National Academy of Sciences. (cooperation agreement with LCSR)
20. Oak Ridge Associated Universities, USA (cooperation agreement is in the process of signing)

**Lecturers:**

- International scientific laboratories and centers at the NRU-HSE
- International PhD scholars from the faculties of NRU-HSE
- Lecturers from external partner universities and scientific organizations

**Potential market (source of students):**

- Widely advertised through partner universities worldwide
- LCSR research network
- NRU-HSE
- Attract students and promoters at international sociology, slavic studies, conferences
- Partner companies
- Through "Eurasian monitor" network and Oak Ridge Associated Universities



**Students' requirements:**

Students are welcome from neighboring disciplines. This will allow us to broaden the inflow of students, especially from abroad (for instance, from fields such as Russian studies, cultural studies). All things being equal, we will prefer students who already have basic methodological and theoretical knowledge in sociology. For students from other fields of study, introductory courses on mathematics and statistics will be offered during the 1.5 summer months before the start of the program.

In order to produce the most well-rounded sociologists fitting closely to diverse international standards, all students will be imparted with core training in research design, theory, qualitative and quantitative methods. This breadth in our teaching also allows us to attract a wider body of students, especially from abroad.

**Application:**

packet should include (1) CV, (2) letter of motivation, (3) statement of research interests and methods experience, (4) two letters of recommendation (at least one of which should be academic), (5) TOEFL or equivalent test results, (6) official transcripts of BA studies, (7) and, if available, GRE results. Those students wishing to compete for stipends/tuition waivers (awarded based on financial need and academic promise) should (8) also submit a worksheet detailing their family's financial situation.

Application deadline will be in the Spring of 2014, but applications will be accepted on an ongoing basis starting early in the year. "Early decision" offers, including stipend and tuition waivers, may be offered to exceptional candidates before the deadline in order to enhance their likelihood to accept.

Our primary selection criterion is academic promise, as signified by achievements and plans. We aim to offer at least half of the program spaces to qualified international students. Our ideal Russian students would be those who would otherwise enter academically oriented master programs abroad.

**Program direction and administration:**

The success of our program depends upon the establishment of a core exclusive staff.

The proposal writers recognize that (1) other administrative ventures at the NRU-HSE may have been challenged because they lacked full-time staff or because of excessive staff multi-tasking. (2) almost all competitive foreign M.A. Programs have dedicated internal staff, and (3) competent dedicated staff have a major impact on the objective quality of program training and the subjective student impressions (reputation) of such programs.

Top master's programs abroad almost always have a dedicated and specialized program staff: For example, the MPP at Hertie School of Governance, Berlin, currently has a dedicated Director and 5 administrators (despite the fact that it has many additional support staff supporting the school's now 4 programs). In contrast, the GSP in Freiburg, Germany, "Master in Global Studies," has a director and only two administrators, plus 2 administrators in each partner location. This level of staffing was before even lower and was increased to support greater efficiency. Nonetheless students still report that the lack of administrative support negatively affects this program, despite its other strengths.

Therefore, we propose to implement a small team-based program administrative body. A centralized non-specialized staff will not be able to match the program-specific and informed creativity and flexibility needed to achieve the highest possible quality.

We request funding for **two** full-time positions: a full-time professional Director of Studies (Moscow) and a full-time Studies Coordinator (Moscow). In addition, our concept includes a part-time allotment for the program Director (Moscow) and for a Studies Coordinator (St. Petersburg). With this core staff, we are confident in our ability to maintain a competitive, flexible, and service-oriented M.A. Program for our international and Russian students.

The program administration will be headquartered in Moscow, although with support also in St. Petersburg.

The program Director will be responsible for staffing decisions. The director him/herself is appointed for 2-year terms based on the recommendation of the internal advisory board of the program, approved by the NRU-HSE leadership.

### **Core staff:**

The international nature of this program, the importance of maintaining its competitive edge through a tight alignment to the field of comparative sociology, and the need for flexibility and service-orientation assures us of the need for a program-specific staff. Therefore, our staff structure highlights English-language competence, comparative sociological competence, knowledge of sociology-specific international marketing challenges, and location alongside our students.

Part-time Director, Moscow – (Christopher Swader): Responsible for oversight of entire program, strategic planning, and development

Full-time Director of Studies, Moscow – (to be determined): Oversight and responsibility for all aspects of daily activities of MA program: budgeting, personnel, course provision, university administrative load, course and progress tracking, securing partnerships, recruitment, admissions, internal/external grant provision, PR.

Full-time studies coordinator, Moscow – (to be determined): As determined by Managing Director, responsible for course provision, course tailoring, progress/credit tracking, accreditation, evaluation of instructors, recruitment, admissions process, transcripts, degrees, dormitories, events.

Part-time studies coordinator, St. Petersburg -- (to be determined). As determined by Managing Director, responsible for St. Petersburg specific course provision, course tailoring, progress/credit tracking, accreditation, evaluation of instructors, dormitories, events.

In addition to this core staff, we may occasionally utilize temporary student support for matters related to application processing and student orientation (dormitory, bank accounts, travel) issues.

We will also make full use of existing NRU-HSE resources, where applicable, such as support for PR and study-abroad funding.

### **Scientific/Strategic Advice:**

Scientific supervisor – Ronald Inglehart will provide the program with strategic advice, vision for development, as well as teaching/advising of students,

### Internal Advisory Board

This board will provide a platform for discussion of the program's development. The board should be limited to seven members, to be approved by the NRU-HSE

- Vice-Rector for International Affairs, NRU-HSE, Sergey Erofeev
- Director of LCSR, Eduard Ponarin
- Deputy Director of LCSR, Tatiana Karabchuk
- Dean of Sociology, NRU-HSE, Alexander Chepureenko
- Vice-Dean of Research of Sociology, NRU-HSE, Leon Kosals
- First Vice-Rector, NRU-HSE, Vadim Radaev
- Director, MA Program in Comparative Social Research, Christopher Swader

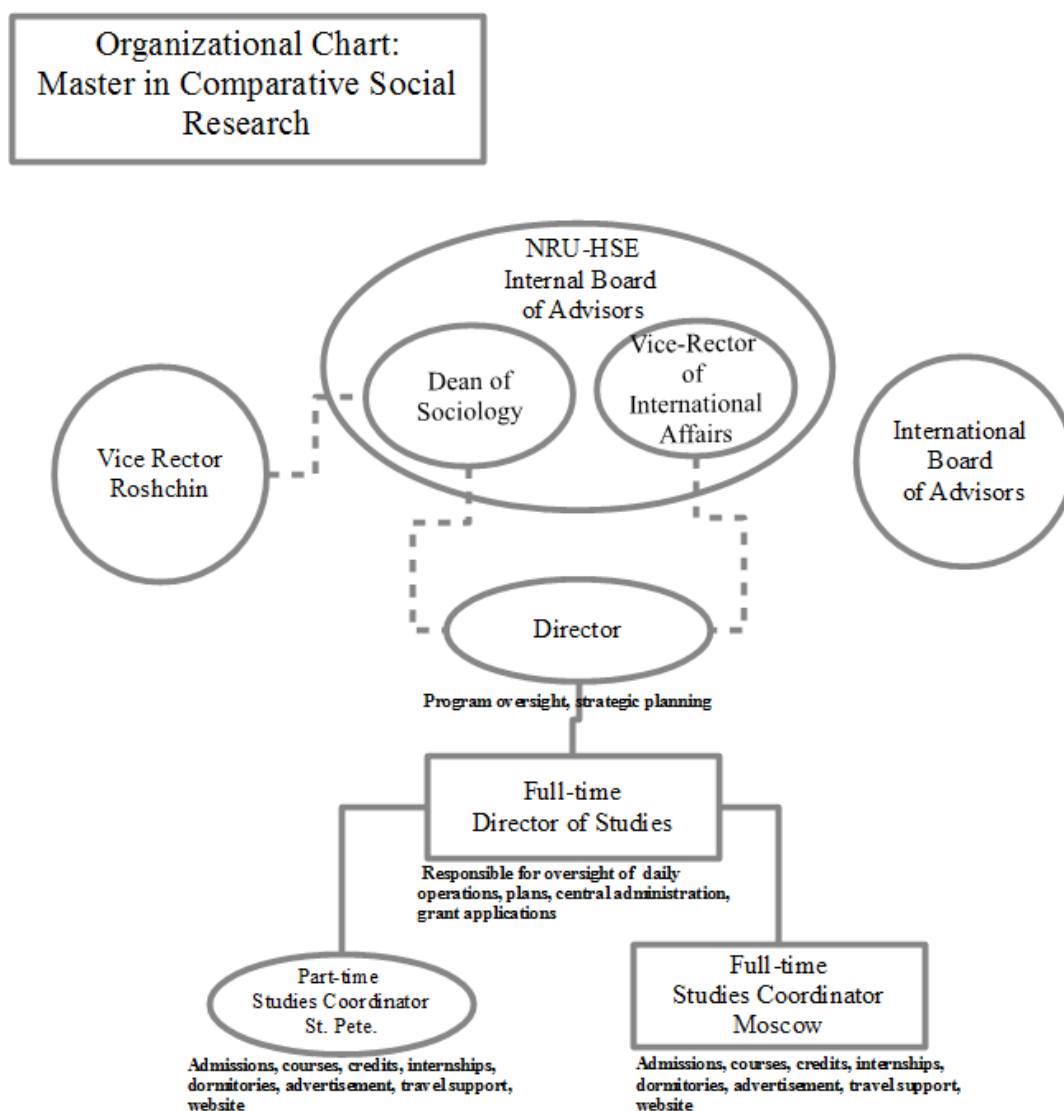
### International Advisory Committee

The first meeting of this body, in which E. Ponarin, C. Swader, T. Karabchuk part, took place on April 27, 2013, at NRU HSE in Saint Petersburg, at the LCSR seminar. The committee includes:

- Professor Ronald Inglehart (NRU HSE, Michigan University)
- Professor Christian Welzel (NRU HSE, Leuphana University)
- Professor Arye Rattner (University of Haifa)
- Professor Joshua Dubrow (Polish Academy of Sciences)
- Francesco Sarracino (PhD, leading researcher STATEC, Luxembourg)
- Malina Voicu (PhD, director of EUROLAB GESIS)

International partners received the idea of creating such a program positively and expressed willingness to be partners and help to start the program. In addition, everyone agreed to serve as course instructors (as well as host a series of lectures) with this NRU HSE program as well as to develop joint courses with the help of online facilities (which LCSR has at its disposal) with partner universities (Michigan University, Leuphana University). The members of this international advisory board will be moderately increased with additional international experts.

The following diagram displays the organizational layout of the program's staff and advisory boards:



### Budget:

The program budget can be found in Annex A. Annex A.1 displays the assumptions by which the budget for the first four years of the program is calculated, while Annex A.2 displays the actual figures per calendar year per category (these are also, of course, available by academic year, if necessary). It should be re-iterated that this is not a for-profit program. The aims are to produce great MA level academic-oriented sociological education, and through this, to enhance university reputation. As a result certain aspects of this program may be different than other local ones in terms of their budgeting:

- a professional core staff
- provision of stipends and tuition waivers for the students ranking highest in the combined categories of academic promise and financial need. Those receiving a stipend will be forbidden from taking other extra-curricular paid employment during the program (aside from lab work) in order to encourage their fullest immersion in the curriculum. **Foreign students and the best Russian students are very unlikely to stay in Russia for their MA degree without stipend and tuition waiver support.**

As demonstrated in Annex A.2, the total cost to the HSE will be 1.67 million RUB in 2014, but this cost will be reduced to 326 thousand RUB by 2017. As tuition is collected from some incoming students, the program's success in attracting and training students for the international sociology labor market could be a potential eventual source of revenue.

University housing in Moscow and St. Petersburg should be provided free of charge to all students.

Additional funding support will be sought through resources internal and external to the NRU-HSE. For example, we will seek support for some of our students for their research internships abroad through the international office. An Erasmus Mundus partnership may also help to cover these costs. In addition, we will clarify the availability of funding from the Russian Government for covering the study of foreign students in Russia.

#### ANNEXES:

Annex A.1 Budgeting Assumptions

Annex A.2 Four-Year Budget (in Rubles) by Calendar Year

Annex B.1 Chronological Plan of Studies

Annex B.2 Credit Point Listing

Annex B.3 Additional Courses Made Available by LCSR's International Network