

## **University Alliance for Sustainability**

### **Research and study stays 2015**

#### **Research Visit to the State University of St. Petersburg**

Visiting Researcher: Tina Schivatcheva

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#### ***How did you benefit from the stay at the partner university?***

As a researcher I benefitted from the rich research traditions of the Russian science, the wealth of resources available to analyze and explore, as well as from the excellent current research, taking place in Russian academia. I am fluent in Russian, so I was able to read widely and interact freely with a wide community of researchers. I have also been immersed in the very large international scientific community of both junior and senior researchers from around the world, who are based at the State University of St. Petersburg – e.g. USA, Germany, China, Finland, etc. This community provided me with the opportunity to perceive the sustainability issues from a variety of different perspectives, thus productively challenging my approaches and ideas.

#### ***What were the main results of your research stay?***

1. Access to scientific publication of leading Russian scientists working in the area. Access to the rich libraries of the State University of St. Petersburg and the Russian Academy of Sciences.
2. Meetings with leading Russian and international scientists. As a result of my interaction and collaboration with the Russian scientific community I was kindly invited to participate in the Sustainability Winter Forum, taking place at the Oxford University

3. Student education – I was an invited presenter of two guest lectures – at the State University of St. Petersburg and at the St. Petersburg Polytechnic University. The lectures were on the topic: ‘European Approaches to Sustainable Development and Nature Conservation’. A summary of the lecture that I presented at the State University of St. Petersburg can be found at: [http://earth.spbu.ru/news-events/news-1\\_466.html](http://earth.spbu.ru/news-events/news-1_466.html)
4. Participation in 2 international conferences:
  - a. Sustainable urbanization of the St. Petersburg metropolitan region
  - b. Russian-Finnish sustainability collaboration
5. Attendance and participation of 2 visiting guest lectures of Prof. Dr. Volker Schneider, University of Konstanz, which took place with the collaborative assistance of the Institute for Sustainable Development at St. Petersburg and Hans Seidel Stiftung.
6. Meetings and discussions with the representative of Hans Seidel Stiftung at St. Petersburg about the possibility for more extensive future collaboration
7. Participation in discussions with graduate students, currently engaged in research in the area of sustainable development
8. Preparation of materials for future publications, in collaboration with Prof. Nikolai Bobylev.
9. Preparation to take the research project from the theoretical into the empirical stage via the delineation of the overall guiding strategic research perspective of the establishment of shared research objectives and common ground for future collaboration, as well as by drafting the operational guidelines for empirical case studies development.

***Who were your primary contact persons?***

I would like to express my warm gratitude to Prof. Nikolai Bobylev, who has been my host professor and who has made every effort to help my research at the State University of St. Petersburg.

***What aspects of your research stay did you find most challenging or interesting?***

Part of my visit coincided with the COP Paris 2015 conference about addressing the challenges of the global climate change. My research visit also aimed to make a contribution towards addressing the global sustainability challenges, at the same time as furthering the collaborative mechanisms and establishing new connections between two of the most advanced scientific communities – the German and the Russian. One of the most challenging and interesting aspects of my research stay at the State University of St. Petersburg was finding this common ground, allowing myself and my research perspective to be challenged and accommodating the comments that I have received into my research paradigm.

***What activities have you been involved in while at the partner university and how have these aided your understanding of your research topic/sustainability?***

As mentioned previously, I have been involved in a variety of different research activities - library research of the existing scientific publications, discussions with the scientific community, conference participation as well as student education, via invited guest lecture presentations.

***How did you interact with the university/staff/students/sustainability initiatives?***

I am fluent in Russian, so I interacted with ease with the university academics, staff and students. Everybody has been very easily approachable and helpful. The sustainability initiatives at the State University of St. Petersburg are international in nature and I was warmly welcomed to participate and contribute to them.

***How did your understanding of sustainability/sustainable development develop during the research stay? How has the research stay influenced your future goals?***

The research stay expanded my understanding of the complexity of the sustainable development challenges, especially in consideration of the magnitude and large scope of the problems, faced by Russia.

Prof. Bobilev and I are in the process of developing a plan for continued research collaboration and for a future research visit, which will aid in deepening the research focus and the understanding of the sustainability issues. An imperative and logical next step in this collaborative effort is proceeding towards the next stage of the research progress by complementing the current theoretical perspective with a more empirical, field-based one.

I would like to conclude my remarks by expressing my gratitude for being able to participate in this academic exchange to the following institutions: the University Alliance for Sustainability, the Free University of Berlin and the State University of St. Petersburg. I am particularly grateful to Prof. Nikolai Bobilev, my host at the State University of St. Petersburg and to my graduate supervisor at the Free University of Berlin - Prof. Dr. Miranda Schreurs.