

## **French economists in support of the European University at St. Petersburg**

We, the undersigned economists, express our support to the faculty and students of the European University at St. Petersburg (EUSP).

The European University is one of the top schools of higher education in social sciences and humanities in Russia. It is one of a few places that retain a true spirit of the Humboldtian education ideal, i.e. it is a university which raises new generations of academic and industry professionals by holistically combining studies and research activities. EUSP founding fathers broke the mould in, at least the North-West of Russia but arguably in the whole country too, when they made it back in the 1990s. Other Russian universities have followed in EUSP's steps.

Nowadays EUSP attracts leading academics from all over the world – they go there to teach, inspire students, get valuable feedback to their work, and learn something new for themselves. In turn EUSP's academics are frequenters in many a conference, department and research centre all over the world. The EUSP Department of Economics has firmly placed itself on the map of European centres studying mathematical economics, economic growth, income distribution, and environmental economics issues. While not as large as their counterparts in bigger Russian universities, its MA programmes have earned a solid reputation for their international quality. Their many graduates have continued careers in PhD programmes in Europe, USA, and Australia, becoming Russia's "soft power". Others stayed at home to strengthen the country's academic life, private and public sectors.

With an increasing concern since the middle of the last year we have been hearing the news of EUSP's problems caused by the court standoff with the Russian education watchdog, Rosobrnadzor. The recent decision to revoke EUSP's license to teach struck us as being hugely unfair and unjustified. For in the past many of us had an opportunity to visit the University and can testify to the University's academic quality. Other news about the forthcoming eviction of the University from its premises coinciding in time with the mounting of the problems vis-à-vis Rosobrnadzor makes us suspect that EUSP has fallen under the pressure which true nature is essentially political.

We believe that any problems with EUSP of a regulatory compliance nature can and should be resolved by the parties involved, including the Russian authorities, in a professional and routine manner. That is without subjecting the University to stopping its educational and research activities, to hurriedly forcing its out of its building. This University is one of the best examples of what Russia is able to and should achieve in the process of economic and social transformation from its communist days of the past. We hope that EUSP will continue to teach, do research, and develop itself for the benefit of Russia and beyond. In EUSP's sustainable future we see the guarantee of ever-growing importance of Russia's contribution to the knowledge of how our societies and economies operate, and cultures develop.

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