

**Dynamics of university partnership: Northern (Arctic) Federal University
and Haute Alsace University (France)**

Abstract: The paper shows the progress and development of the relations between the Pomor State University and then Northern (Arctic) Federal University and the Haute Alsace University since 2000 when the agreement on cooperation was signed. The development of this partnership went through promoting contacts between the universities and expanding their common interests in pedagogic and scientific spheres. Special attention is paid to cooperation in the field of language learning and humanities in both universities.

Key words: university partnership, scientific cooperation, language learning,

It is impossible to underestimate the role of university partnership in contemporary world. Universities cooperate with communities, business as well as with other institutions of higher education on local, regional, national or international scale. This cooperation permits them to remain not only centres of scientific innovation and exchange but sources of highly trained personnel satisfying the demands of employers.

Among recent papers concerning this sphere we find not only reports on evolution and achievements of particular projects but also comprehensive analyses of international university cooperation (see for example, [Denman 2004]), as well as prognoses (regarding French/Russian relations see the interview with Armelle Groppo, university cooperation attaché and assistant cultural adviser in the Embassy of France in Moscow from 2004 to 2008, President of AFR, French Association of Specialists in Russian Language and Culture [Белов 2011]).

Our article shows the progress and development of the 15 year partnership between the Northern (Arctic) Federal University (NArFU) and the Haute Alsace University in Mulhouse, France (UHA). This partnership dates back to 2000 when an agreement on cooperation was signed thanks to the initiative of Gérard Binder. In 1993 he first came to Arkhangelsk with a huge delegation representing administrative and economic structures of Mulhouse and Alsace. M. Binder, as the representative of the UHA, visited Pomor State University and, having got acquainted with the colleagues from Arkhangelsk, offered cooperation.

In 1999 several lecturers from the Pomor State University visited Mulhouse where they worked in the university libraries and got acquainted with the University and their colleagues.

In 2000, relationships between the two universities were formally recognised by signing a

cooperation agreement and Russian language was introduced as a new subject for the UHA students. The first groups comprised about 20 students altogether. Since that time, Russian language teaching has become traditional and is popular among students. Each year about 100 students have been studying Russian in Mulhouse.

Russian language courses in the Haute Alsace University have different status. There are elective courses for students from different faculties, courses for students in humanities, students from the master's program "international management and cross-cultural communication", as well as for auditors who attend these classes for the professional issues or their personal development.

The elective courses groups comprise students in economy, management, engineering, mathematics, chemistry, etc who form about a half of all the students in Russian in the Haute Alsace University. They usually acquire the A2 level in Russian.

The second group is represented by students of the Faculty of Arts, Languages and Humanities (FLSH). These students follow the course they have chosen for 2,5 years and their motivation, as well as experience in language learning permit them to get better knowledge, often level B2. Some continue their studies after graduation as auditors.

The third group comprises students who attend the master's program "International Management and Cross-Cultural Communication". This program opened in 2007 offers Russian as the third foreign language. In addition to 1,5 year course of the Russian language, in each semester students follow the courses of Russian history, culture, political, social and economical issues. These subjects are taught in French and partly Russian, depending on the subject matter as well as difficulty of the material and finish for every student with the defence of a project. This program is one of the most popular within the region, and it strengthens considerably the position of the Russian language course in the Haute Alsace University.

In addition, since 2000, UHA offers Russian language courses for auditors from Mulhouse and its region. The advanced level course can also be attended by the UHA students who aspire to continue their studies in Russian after the final examination.

Some of the students in order to deepen their knowledge and develop their linguistic competence take part in the Summer School of the Russian Language and Culture in Arkhangelsk organised in NArFU in June. This school, that now enrolls auditors from different countries, was initially organised in 2009 for French students.

Though, the fields of contacts between two universities are much wider than just Russian language teaching. The development of cooperation proceeds through promoting contacts between the universities and expanding their common interests.

As other form of cooperation we can quote visits of Russian students to Mulhouse. Students from Arkhangelsk come to the UHA on a short visit, attend classes and take part in the Festival of

languages. Their presentation of the Russian language and culture are always impressive and attract a lot of attention. A week of Russian language was organized in 2010 on the initiative of French colleagues and students. This event was marked by a visit to UHA of the NArFU Rector, Dean of the NArFU Faculty of Foreign Languages and Russian Consul in Strasbourg.

Another interesting form of cooperation are seminars for the teachers of French in Arkhangelsk held by UHA teachers and professors. For many years this week seminar has been attended by school and university teachers as well as students in pedagogy, it has largely and continuously contributed in their professional level and maintained interest for the French language and culture in Arkhangelsk and its region. Unfortunately, due to difficult economic situation these events were not held in 2012-2013.

We would like to pay special attention to the Tempus project implemented in 2003-2006 (CD JEP – 23169 – 2002), the Pomor state university being its beneficiary and the Haute Alsace University its contractor. Other universities involved in this project were the University of Lapland (Finland), Artesis University College in Antwerp (Belgium), Lund University (Sweden). This program was aimed at the internalisation of training courses in the Pomor State University.

This project embraced the efforts of 3 Pomor State University faculties: Faculty of Foreign Languages, Faculty of Law and Faculty of Management, each of those introduced as a result of the Tempus project a new profile: specialist in cross-cultural communication, specialist in international law, specialist in international management.

The events held within the framework of this project were of comprehensive nature and largely contributed to the development of these faculties: (1) 6 training workshops for teachers concerning the University curricula were delivered by foreign professors from partner universities; (2) 4 internships were organized for Pomor State University teachers who attended classes at partner universities. During these 6 weeks long visits, they developed under the direction of foreign colleagues 24 training courses in the framework of the three new diplomas; (3) Hardware and software were purchased to equip a computer classroom with 15 computers; (4) Large number of textbooks and educational programs were procured for the three faculties.

Thus, this Tempus project was an essential stage in the consolidation of academic relations between the Pomor State University and the Haute Alsace University.

In 2011, the agreement on cooperation was renewed between the Haute Alsace University and the Northern (Arctic) Federal University in Arkhangelsk. So, academic exchanges were continued and enlarged.

Dual Masters' Program "Comparative Literature Studies: Russian-French Literary Relations" was developed in 2013 thanks to the efforts of colleagues from the NArFU Institute of Philology and Cross-Cultural Communication and the UHA Faculty of Arts, Languages and Humanities. The

agreement on double degree was signed in July 2013 by the UHA President Christine Gangloff-Ziegler, first Vice-President Serge Neunlist and the Vice-President on International Relations Laurence Schacher within the framework of their visit to Arkhangelsk. It was the first NArFU agreement on double diploma. This masters program based on the convergence of the curricula in comparative literature studies in both universities gives a unique opportunity to study during the second year and complete the Master's thesis in Mulhouse on a topic approved both by Russian and French tutors. In order to study in the UHA, Russian students must prove language competence in French at B2 level, the requirement met in 2014 by only one student. But in 2015 this number is likely to increase due to the fact that three of the students enrolled in 2014 have a degree in French language. That proves that the dual Master's program is a success in the education market.

This 2013 visit of the colleagues from Mulhouse gave a new impetus to cooperation between the universities. Since 2013 NArFU is reaffirmed as one the priorities of UHA's international cooperation. French colleagues visited all the latest NArFU laboratories, noting with satisfaction that the high level of equipment allows building serious plans for the development of cooperation in scientific spheres. Cooperation was established between the NArFU Institute for Energy and Transport and the UHA Risk and Environment Management Laboratory; a post-graduate thesis joint supervision started (professors V.A. Lubov and J.-F. Brillhac).

The Project Management Workshop held in 2013 in NArFU Institute of Philology and Cross-Cultural communication by Florence Duchêne-Lacroix, director of the UHA Centre for Cross-Border Competencies NovaTris, can be considered as a renewal of the tradition of UHA training seminars in Arkhangelsk. This project is supported by the French Government and aims to develop cross-border cooperation in educational and industrial spheres, Alsace bordering with Germany and Switzerland. This week seminar was devoted to the Tandem method used by Haute Alsace University in cooperation with the German universities. Its methods were presented at interactive sessions for teachers of French and German languages.

After this interactive seminar NArFU Institute of Philology and Cross-Cultural communication also introduced the TANDEM method, key concept of the UHA NovaTris project aimed at cross-cultural professional communication development.

Thus, the analysis of dynamics of university partnership between Northern (Arctic) Federal University and Haute Alsace University clearly demonstrates that despite the changes in administrative staff of both universities, their cooperation remains progressive and fruitful.

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