

Yefim Pivovar

**INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION
FORA AS A FACTOR
FOR STRENGTHENING
THE GLOBAL COOPERATION
IN THE HUMANITIES**



The article is devoted to the development of new forms of international cooperation in education, such as international fora of rectors of universities and faculties of Humanities. Such fora are regarded as an innovative form of inter-university cooperation, which opens new prospects and opportunities for cooperation in education, science and culture.

Key words: forum, arts education, educational programs, scientific and educational cooperation, innovation, inter-university cooperation.

In today's globalized world it is especially important to expand multi-level partnerships in the sphere of the humanities which, on the one hand, is based on the existing historical and cultural links, and on the other — on the latest innovative achievements. One of the major components of interaction in the humanities is educational cooperation, promotion of the convergence of intellectual elites, sharing experience and best practices, preparation and implementation of joint innovation projects in different areas.

The Forum of rectors of universities and deans of the humanities in Russia and other countries, an effective mechanism for strengthening inter-university educational co-operation was initiated in 2009 with an active participation of the Russian State University for the Humanities (RGGU). The initiative was supported by Rossotrudnichestvo. It became an innovative form of cooperation of the university community, opening new opportunities for more intensive cooperation in the field of education, science and culture.

States and regions which successfully cooperated in the sphere of education were selected as partners. The first step in such cooperation was made in November 2009 when the 1st Forum of Rectors of universities of the humanities and deans of the humanities in Russia and France was held at the Russian Centre of Science and Culture in Paris. The Forum, which brought together over 50 leading universities of the two countries, discussed a wide range of issues pertaining to the development of wide-scale cooperation between universities of the two countries in the humanities and arts.

In accordance with the decisions of the first Forum, the organizing committee of rectors of universities of the humanities and deans of the humanities of Russia and France was transformed into a permanent coordinating council, which included rectors of the largest universities for the humanities of both countries.

For the intensification of cooperation in research and education special attention was paid to the decision of the first meeting to establish a permanent Russian-French commission on major activities of the Forum,

which include priorities for the development of the humanities and social sciences in Russia and France, launching joint Russian-French master's programs, international Russian-French programs for doctoral students (doctoral studies), joint research supervision, organization and development of academic mobility for students and staff, joint activities (research conferences, student fora, festivals, education fairs, etc.). These priority areas indicate a wide range of issues on the agenda of the Forum, and its focus on tackling higher education specific problems. The efficient work of the commissions, active support of the education authorities, and academic community have brought scientific and education cooperation between our two countries up to a new level.

The agenda of the Coordinating Council includes the development of a program for the setting up of information centers in the humanities in universities-members of the Consortium. The establishment and maintenance of electronic databases of cooperation between Russian and French universities and faculties of the humanities is seen as the most urgent task. Such database could pave the way to a more systematic implementation of the ongoing joint projects, as well as facilitate a more efficient use of the gained experience for further development of cooperation in the humanities.

Following the Russian-French model, a meeting of the Coordinating Council of the Forum of Rectors of universities of the humanities and deans of the humanities Russia and Germany was held in Berlin, 14—15 June 2010. It was organized with the active participation RGGU, representing the Russian academic community. The meeting was organized in the Russian House of Science and Culture in Berlin (Rossostrudnichestvo representation in Germany). The meeting of the Coordinating Council of the Forum was attended by representatives of several leading universities in Russia and Germany: Humboldt University (Berlin), Free University (Berlin), Ruhr University (Bochum), the University of Konstanz, the University of Freiburg, Herzen Russian State Pedagogical University, International University in Moscow, the State Academic University of Human Sciences, Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University (Kaliningrad), Kursk State University, Tver State University, and Saratov State University. Participants of the meeting discussed prospects for cooperation in the field of the humanities between Russia and Germany. The agenda of the first Forum, scheduled for autumn 2010 in Berlin was set.

The Coordinating Council decided to make the Forum of Rectors of universities of the humanities and deans of the humanities in Russia and Germany in Berlin a permanent platform for cooperation in science and culture uniting researchers and students of these two countries. The main objectives of the Forum are to create conditions for an exchange of views on the current status, problems and prospects of liberal education at a higher level. The Russian House of Science and Culture in Berlin supported the initiative of holding the Forum in the capital of Germany.

Russia attached particular importance to cooperation with universities and faculties of humanities of the CIS. The development of cooperation be-

tween the CIS countries has some advantages, for instance, the absence (in most cases) of the language barrier. It was only natural that in 2010 the Russian State University for the Humanities (RGGU) started to discuss the idea of creating the Forum of Rectors of universities of the humanities and deans of the humanities of the CIS countries.

The new forum will discuss similar pressing issues: priority areas for the humanities and social sciences in the CIS countries, joint training programs for graduate and undergraduate students, international training programs for doctoral students, joint research supervision, academic mobility for students and staff and other joint activities. Participants of the open discussion agreed that in the future the Forum would need to create permanent multilateral commissions on major activities of the Forum. Apart from the discussion of the above-mentioned issues, the Forum will also focus on region specific problems.

The Forum is intended to become a permanent union of Rectors of the CIS universities of the humanities holding regular meetings of both university administration, lecturers, researchers and students. Regular meetings will be organized at least once a year at one of the universities — members of the Forum. This event could be held in connection with some important dates: for example, the first Forum in 2011 may be dedicated to the 20th anniversary of the Commonwealth of Independent States. It was decided to form a coordinating council that would identify representatives of the relevant government bodies of the CIS countries and organizations facilitating cooperation in the humanities. Rectors of the participating institutions can become members. The Coordinating Council is supposed to be elected at the 1st Forum. The Coordinating Council is to be responsible (based on the suggestions made by the participants of the 1st meeting of the Forum) for the elaboration and implementation of the Action plan for 2010—2011, setting the date and agenda of the next meeting, as well as the key areas of work — the organization of international conferences, academic mobility for staff and students, and the organization of international meetings.

An important aspect in the development of new forms of inter-university cooperation could be seen, in my opinion, in the creation of a similar inter-collegiate organization, bringing together researchers in the field of the humanities from the Baltic Sea region.

Today we can say that the international fora of rectors of universities of the humanities and deans of the humanities are turning into a platform for regular meetings of university administrators, lecturers, researchers and students, the platform for the discussion of current problems of different countries. These fora are an innovative form of cooperation between representatives of international university community, which opens up new opportunities for cooperation in education, research, science and culture.