

## **“Comparative Baltic State-Building”**

The week of the Baltic States at Uppsala University has been opened by a workshop on “Comparative Baltic State-Building”. The workshop has been held at the Uppsala Centre for Russian and Eurasian Studies, Uppsala University on the 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> of March. The seminar was chaired by Professor Li Bennich-Björkman. The event provided a diversity of views by bringing together invited professors from Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania and Sweden.

The purpose of the workshop was to introduce and discuss the crucial issues concerning the governance development in the Baltic States in the comparative perspective. The workshop represented a crucial forum for sharing opinions concerning similarities and differences in the Baltic States political development. During the discussions the important issue of whether the countries should establish united Baltic policy or act individually based on the newly forming identities has been raised. Andres Kasekamp from Tartu University in his presentation entitled “The Baltic States: Moving Together or Apart?” emphasized the question concerning the divergence or convergence in the development paths of the three Baltic States. In the presentation Andres Kasekamp made a conclusion that in the short-term there would be the divergence in the development process of the three Baltic States, as for instance, Estonia’s joining of the euro zone provided the state more opportunities for foreign investment attraction. In the long-run term there would be convergence between the States, as the other two countries Latvia and Lithuania would overcome the difficulties for the euro adaption. The issue of the differences in the economic performance was discussed in the frames of various political systems that were established in the three Baltic States, precisely what were the benefits of the establishing parliamentary republic in Latvia and Estonia or semi-presidential in Lithuania. Zenonas Norkus from Vilnius University in his paper entitled “Parliamentarism versus Semi-Presidentialism in Baltic States” examined this difference in the systems of government in the Baltic countries. He tried to analyze if whether the form of government had influence on the stability of democracy in the Baltic States or not. Another issue that the workshop participants discussed was nationalism in the Baltic States. David J Smith from Glasgow University focused on the analysis of multiculturalism in the Baltic States. In his discussion paper entitled “The Multicultural Baltic Way: Inter-war State and Nation-building compared”, David Smith noted that national building in the Baltic states, since the dissolution of USSR and the obtaining of independence, was different. As regard to state and nation construction the three Baltic states adopted a multicultural approach. Li Bennich-Bjorkman in her presentation entitled “Explaining moderation in nationalism: Divergent trajectories of national conservative parties in Estonia and Latvia” emphasized the Europeanization of political parties in the Baltic States. She focused the analysis on the political parties in Estonia and Latvia. According to Li

Bennich-Bjorkman, the moderation of the nationalist parties was influenced both by internal and external development of the countries. Valters Ščerbinskis, in his discussion paper entitled "Ethnopolitics in Latvia: background, implementation and reactions", focused on analyzing the ethnopolitics issues related to the relations between two major ethnic groups in Latvia. He pointed out that ethnopolitics in Latvia were based on the perceptions of how the ethnic minorities have been understood.

The influence of the Soviet legacy and the ongoing Europeanization of the states have not been left without an attention during the workshop discussions. Veiko Spolitis from Riga's Stradins University in his discussion paper entitled "Governance in the Baltic States - Post Soviet legacy and Europeanization 1999-2009" raised the issue concerning the different levels of the Europeanization in Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania. Veiko Spolitis pointed out in the presentation that the vital results achieved by Estonia were rooted in the country's capability to create the competitive good governance principles and to establish bases for voluntary participation in the enhanced cooperation. Mindaugas Jurkynas from Vilnius University in his work: "Europeanisation of Lithuania after 2004" looked more precisely on the Lithuanian case. Although the EU membership contributed to the occurred changes in the state, however, as Mindaugas Jurkynas stated, it was not too easy to define the exact effect of the Europeanization since the many improvements have been in Lithuania without the direct EU involvement. However, the EU membership provided the country with numerous opportunities of open markets, free travel, work and education.

In the paper entitled: "Performing Identity – Looking for Subjectivity: Marginality, Self-esteem and Ontological Security" Marko Lehti from Tampere University turned attention to a completely different but debatable issue of relationship between self-identification of marginal state (in the case of Estonia) and how national self-esteem is expressed in international forum.

The workshop was closed by a lecture of Andres Kasekamp entitled "The Politics of History and the 'War of Monuments' in Estonia" at the Uppsala Centre for Russian and Eurasian Studies.