

REPORT
about stay in Sweden in March – May 2013 financed by Sverker Astrom Foundation

My stay in Sweden has brought to me many results, not only in the research sphere.

First of all, I have never been to Scandinavia before and to be in Sweden for 3 month was a nice opportunity to get acquainted with Swedish culture and people. The general perception about Sweden I got from my stay was that Swedes are a very internationalized community, they are quite open towards others, well-educated etc., but still closed culturally. For example, many times I heard from people I spoke with that there are “Europe” and “we”, the Swedes. Sweden tries to preserve its cultural traditions and historical memory (for example, those about imperial legacy, special role of Sweden as a peace-maker etc.). It can be seen also in the Swedish province which is organized according to historical perceptions.

My acquaintance with Sweden was a reason why I have been trying to know more about Swedish culture. I visited the Week of Swedish cinema which took place in my hometown Tyumen some time before my departure to Sweden. Besides, now I approach more carefully and with better understanding such things as Bergman’s films, Strindberg’s novels etc. I visited also Swedish historical museums in Stockholm and these visits brought me much for understanding the Swedish “politics of history”.

My research project was about Swedish views and policies towards Eastern neighborhood, especially Republic of Moldova. I researched on political interests and identity issues standing behind the Swedish policy in Moldova. I found out why Sweden for some time has been paying much attention to the Moldova’s fate. My key thesis is the following: from the 90s Sweden inherited a tradition of being a key international financial contributor to the development goals, but in the last years Swedish government perceives the Eastern neighborhood as a zone of Swedish special responsibility in the context of Europeanization of Swedish foreign policy by itself. Consequently, EaP is a mean for Sweden to find its own role within the EU foreign policy landscape. A particular role of C. Bildt who is much interested in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe should be mentioned here.



In Sweden I have done many interviews with Swedish officials and researchers. It became possible predominantly thanks to the support of Ms. Disa Hastad and her daughter Elsa, who recommended me to people whom I could talk to. Without this support it would have been much more difficult to get the opportunity to talk to people in such a way I have done it. Besides, Ms. Hastad was very kind and organized for us nice events at and outside her home, which is a place, where many people, which have something to do with Eastern Europe, gather. Unforgettable is our joint Easter time, trip to Uppsala, Stockholm’s surroundings, Disa’s “datscha” etc.

I lived in Malmo, so I got an opportunity to enjoy permanently Sweden outside Stockholm. Malmo is a nice town, a harbor with nice parks, lakes, a plethora of birds. Eurovision Song Contest took place this year in Malmo and I managed to attend the First Semi-Final of this event. Impressions I got from it cannot be compared to those you can have from watching it via TV. Besides, the Malmo University is a nice place to do research within the international team of colleagues. I organized a research seminar on my research issue on the 10th April and got a fruitful feedback from people who attended the event. Malmo was for me a very quiet place where I had a nice opportunity to finalize my book on Russian-German relations, to write some research articles etc.

Usually I use the research stays in any European country for visiting other countries with some research agenda. This time these were two trips – to Estonia and Finland. In Estonia for one week I was a visiting researcher at the Center for EU-Russian studies, University of Tartu. I established many useful contacts with colleagues from my research area and organized also a colloquium with a topic close to my research agenda in Sweden. At the end of May I went to Helsinki for a conference on East European studies where I presented a paper summarizing my research results of staying in Sweden and had an opportunity to communicate with many Swedish and Scandinavian colleagues who also participated in the conference.



I also made a few tourist trips. In Sweden as I mentioned I visited Stockholm, Malmo, Uppsala and Lund and in Denmark it was Copenhagen which is very close to Malmo.

To my mind, Sverker Astrom Foundation is a very efficient initiative in terms of Swedish “soft power”, but also as an instrument how Russian young people despite political circumstances can keep their cultural and mental connection to Europe and know more about Sweden. Thank you!

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