

## The Arctic connecting researchers

Marina Kalinina

Vice-rector, Northern (Arctic) Federal University, Arkhangelsk

For the last few years we can witness an increasing interest to the Arctic all over the world, and there is undoubtedly no deficit of attention to the Arctic in the Arctic states. A critical approach to the processes occurring in the Arctic is closely connected with the discourse of a changing Arctic. Climate change and melting ice open new opportunities for the expansion of economic activity in such areas as exploration of mineral resources on the sea shelf and on-shore, active use of bio-resources of the Arctic Ocean, expanding of the area and duration of maritime traffic. On the other hand, the changes have a consequence to the Arctic bio-diversity and its unique and vulnerable eco-systems as well as increase the risk of natural hazards and disasters.

Russia's economic interest in the Arctic is directly connected with rich stocks of hydrocarbons, important for Russia's future economic development. According to the *Development Strategy of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation and National Security for the period up to 2020*, the region has to become a leading strategic resource base of Russia. The Russian Arctic strategy has identified six priorities for the Russian Arctic: a complex social-economic development of the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation; science and technologies development; generation of modern ICT infrastructure; environmental safety; international cooperation; military

safety and the Russian Federation state border protection.

The complexity of tasks of the Arctic development modifies the Arctic into the area of multilateral international cooperation. As more an interest in the Arctic region increases due to a rapidly growing development, more need for new knowledge and research for sustainable development of the Arctic is required from the international research community.

Russia's state policy towards the Arctic has identified the challenges in the field of higher education and research for a long-term perspective. The need for specialists capable of solving problems in different fields of knowledge is growing, and the universities have to be equipped to perform it. Being able to respond to this challenge, higher educational institutions are getting more involved in decision-making within education and research policy development in the North, through their active participation in university consortia and networks, engagement into bilateral inter-governmental working groups and international expert groups and by strengthening the voice of northern universities within different models of regional cooperation.

Existing political frames and institutional mechanisms for international cooperation in the North have been constructed so far by the Arctic Council, the Barents

Euro-Arctic Council, the Northern Dimension of European Union and by a number of international organizations such as International Arctic Science Committee, International Arctic Social Science Association and University of the Arctic. The international and regional organizations identify priority areas where more knowledge production for sustainable development of the Arctic is necessary in such fields as climate change mitigation, environmental risks, oil spills, safety, preparedness and rescue operations in the Arctic as well as permafrost degradation, methane release, safe maritime, coastal infrastructure and indigenous peoples' life, language and culture. Knowledge and competence exchange turn to become a fundamental approach to build up international cooperation in the Arctic region.

Russian universities tend to benefit more from international cooperation. The further internationalization of education is one of the priorities of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation. Criteria related to international activities are used to assess the effectiveness of Russian higher educational institutions. This internationalization strategy aims to improve the quality of human capital, develop modern research infrastructure and to encourage Russian Academia to produce modern knowledge in cooperation with foreign researchers.

From this perspective the role of international cooperation for northern universities can be hardly overestimated, and their contribution into empowering peoples of the North and development of a strong and sustainable circumpolar region will be constantly growing.