

BICEPS future

On June 26, Alf Vanags passed away. Alf founded BICEPS in 2002 and has served as its Director since then. Until the very end, he was actively working on projects, taking part in the public debate, and giving policy advice. There are many former students and colleagues whose lives and careers Alf influenced – with his lectures, with advice, with support and sometimes by simply being a wise friend who could encourage, help to identify the most important things and to go forward. He created a truly unique atmosphere around himself - many people who used to work with BICEPS and are not formally affiliated with BICEPS anymore, kept the ties and often come to our office. “Once you are in, you can never get out” – this is Alf’s favorite saying about people affiliated with BICEPS.

Alf was the heart and the soul of BICEPS. It does not come as a big surprise that we were contacted by many people during the last couple of weeks asking what would happen next and whether BICEPS would continue. It will. By being a great scholar and a truly charismatic and vivid personality, Alf had always attracted young and dedicated people who had an opportunity to learn from him and who are there to continue what was Alf’s main undertaking over the last years. BICEPS will continue working and will preserve its close ties with the Stockholm School of Economics in Riga, where it is located.

There are many things that we do and will continue doing. Just to name the current major projects – first, since 2010 we work on the development and maintenance of microsimulation tax-benefit model EUROMOD, which we do in co-operation with the Institute for Social and Economic Research at the University of Essex (www.euromod.ac.uk/). EUROMOD is a European-wide project financially supported by the European Union. We have previously used EUROMOD to analyze work incentives generated by the Latvian tax-benefit system, to evaluate progressivity of the tax system and to propose reforms aimed at reducing income inequality and increasing efficiency. We are currently working on evaluating the potential of shifting the tax burden from labour to immovable property and on proposing other possible reforms aimed at reduction of income inequality. We expect to have the results in early autumn.

Another long-standing project for BICEPS is Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), where we have been involved in since 2005. GEM Latvia is part of the global project initiated in 1999 by Babson College (USA) and London Business School (UK), and represents a trusted source of information on entrepreneurship for many international organisations like United Nations, World Economic Forum, World Bank, OECD, and others. The next annual GEM Latvia report will be published in late autumn 2016.

Since 2015, BICEPS gets support of its research activities from the State Research Programme SUSTINNO. As part of this programme, we use micro-level data on Latvian enterprises and a specially conducted survey and focus on competitiveness of the Latvian enterprises, their ability to export and on the main constraints Latvian exporters face. We expect several working papers to be finalised by the end of 2016.

Apart from projects, BICEPS is involved in many additional academic activities. In close co-operation with the Stockholm School of Economics in Riga, we run series of academic seminars. It is the only regular economics seminar series in Latvia, and is open to the

public. Speakers come from Latvia and abroad. We expect the seminar series to further develop and become more frequent, following the trend of the previous academic year. We will also continue managing the Baltic Journal of Economics, which has been published since 2000 in co-operation with SSE Riga and, as of 2014 – also in co-operation with Routledge publisher house.

There are too many activities that we are involved in to mention all of them, and we will find ways to go forward. We have lost a dear friend and colleague, but Alf's legacy allows us and his work to continue.

We would also like to thank you for donating money for research and educational activities to honor Alf Vanags. In less than three weeks the fund that accepts donations received 2100 EUR. This money will be used to finance research activities, student scholarships – all of that we are sure Alf would love and would be proud of. We will regularly provide reports on the amounts received and on the spending activities. The money can be donated to SSE Riga foundation (www.sseriga.edu/en/about/foundation/, see bank details below), with a remark that it is a donation to research and educational activities in honor of Alf Vanags.

Here you can also read a text remembering Alf, written by his friend and colleague, rector of SSE Riga and chairman of BICEPS board, Anders Paalzow. [www.biceps.org/en/news/Remembering Alf](http://www.biceps.org/en/news/Remembering%20Alf)

Bank details:

Rīgas Ekonomikas augstskolas-Stockholm School of Economics in Riga nodibinājums

Reg. Nr. 40008164674

Bank account number: LV43UNLA0050016119052

Aim of the payment: Donation for research and educational activities in honor of Alf Vanags

BICEPS team