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RIGA GRADUATE
SCHOOL OF LAW

**TWENTY YEARS
OF INNOVATION**



Riga Graduate School of Law

TWENTY YEARS OF INNOVATION

Eyewitness Accounts of Riga Graduate School of Law

Riga, 2018

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Editorial Board: Jānis Ikstens, Ligita Gjortlere, Līva Biseniece

Editor: Ligita Gjortlere

Language editor: Roberts Līsmānis

Photos by: Jānis Būls, Kaspars Garda, Mārcis Gaujenietis,
Reinis Inkēns, Māris Kaparkalējs, Andris Krieviņš,
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Foreword

Astronaut Neil Armstrong authored one of the famous quotes as he stepped onto the surface of the Moon – one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind. This one-liner well describes the early history of the Riga Graduate School of Law.

Being one among thousands and thousands of institutions of higher learning in the world, it has existed a mere twenty years – a tremendously short time span compared to the rich traditions developed by reputable universities over centuries. However, RGSL has already been a turning point in the lives of many, and the recollections below attest to that. For some, RGSL provided access to legal education of the highest grade. For others, it became an embodiment of the sustainability of changes in the legal and political environment across the post-Communist space. For



about new challenges for the legal profession, with technological advances being but one of them. Empowered by its underlying values and reinvigorated by its energetic people, RGSL stands ready to make the next step.

still others, it served as a springboard to successful and fulfilling professional careers.

While the growth of RGSL was far from plain sailing at times, the commitment of the skillful leaders at the school's helm to the founding principles of RGSL helped navigate the school through stormy waters. Innovation, ambition and excellence guided the school's expansion to launch ever more study programmes, to adopt a multidisciplinary approach to legal studies and to share its professional expertise with society in unconventional ways.

The relentless efforts of high-caliber academia, spirited students and motivated administrators to excel have created the vibrant RGSL of today. Fast-paced global developments will undoubtedly bring

Jānis Ikstens
RGSL Acting Rector

Prehistory



Ieva Morica

RGSL Board member, 2015-present
Executive Director of the Foundation for an
Open Society DOTS

In these uncertain and changing times globally and in Europe, there are a few institutions that are of fundamental importance. Universities that teach people to cherish knowledge are pillars of free and democratic societies. RGSL has been a centre of excellence for legal education and research for many years. It is a place where knowledge, intellectual curiosity and academic excellence are strived for and celebrated. But it also bears a deeper mission in Latvia and the Baltic states. It was set up to help grow a new generation of lawyers committed to and knowledgeable about human rights and European and international law to help the Baltic states accede to the European Union and regain their place in the family of European states. A generation of lawyers was dearly needed who were committed to the values of rule of law, defending human rights, able to work in international contexts, fluent in English and with a higher ethical standard, in order to help the region transform itself from its totalitarian past to a liberal democracy. Now, 20 years later, it is



remarkable to witness that RGSL, in cooperation with the Latvian government and its international partners, extends and shares its knowledge also with European Neighbourhood Policy countries and Central Asia.

I dare say that RGSL has been a labour of love for the Open Society Foundation and leadership of the Soros Foundation Latvia for many years. The Soros Foundation Latvia (SFL) was a

co-founder of the school and has been a minority shareholder since its inception, and the Executive Director of the Foundation continues to serve on the RGSL Board (in 2014 the SFL was renamed the Foundation for an Open Society DOTS).

Vita Matiss, the founding executive director of the SFL (1992-1996), engaged in a farsighted, risky and legendary endeavour in submitting a bid for privatisation of the building on Alberta Street 13 back in 1994, and convincing George Soros, founder and chair of the Open Society Foundations (OSF), to back her decision and invest 540 000 lats (about one million USD) into what she was certain would be the home for a modern, European school of law. The Foundation acquired the building on 11 January 1995 and donated it to the school on 8 May 1998, exactly 20 years ago. Thanks to the vision and persistence of Vita Matiss, we call this beautiful Art Nouveau building the home of RGSL, and it has become its symbol. The building itself has a history; stories are told of atrocities that authoritarian and totalitarian regimes committed against dissidents interrogated in this building. It is now a symbolic place, as it hosts a law school and promotes the rule of law.

Nineteen-ninety-six marked the year when the SFL in a strong partnership with the Swedish and Latvian governments launched

the effort to establish RGSL. The honourable Staffan Burenstam-Linder led the RGSL project on behalf of the Swedish government. In this effort the Latvian government was represented by the Ministry of Education.

Without even waiting for RGSL to open, already in 1996 the SFL laid the foundations for RGSL's Law Library to serve both future students and the wider community. RGSL was founded on 18 March 1998, and in January 1999 the Law Library was transferred to RGSL.

During 1996-2002, when Vita Tērauda served as executive director of the SFL, RGSL was one of the central projects for the foundation. RGSL became operational and already in its first years proved that the school can attract high-calibre students not only from Latvia, but also from the other Baltic countries. During these inception years, RGSL benefitted from significant core support from the SFL, in addition to the gift of the building and Law



Signing of the Agreement between Latvia and Sweden on the foundation of RGSL on 18 March 1998. The signatories are Göran Melander from the Swedish Institute, Vita Tērauda from the Soros Foundation Latvia and the Minister of Education, Juris Celmiņš

Library, which enabled the school to put together an excellent international academic staff. RGSL also established itself as a centre of excellence in the legal community of Latvia, providing conferences, seminars and events for an audience far beyond the academic community.

Times have never been easy for RGSL. Back in 1999, RGSL took a loan from the Nordic Investment Bank for reconstruction of the building on Alberta Street 13 and construction of a new building in the courtyard. In 2008-2009 the school weathered difficult challenges, primarily financial, due to an overly optimistic funding plan at conception, the withdrawal of Swedish support upon Latvia's entry into the EU, and the deep economic crisis that hit Latvia at that time. It was my predecessor at the SFL, Andris Aukmanis, who embarked on a trip to ask George Soros to extend a helping hand to the school. The difficulties at the school were averted in 2010 with the discharge of the original debt through



In addition to the signatories, the signing of the RGSL Agreement was attended by the Swedish Ambassador, Hans Magnusson, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Valdis Birkavš, and the RGSL Chairman, Erland Ringborg

a tripartite arrangement co-financed by OSF, the University of Latvia and the Latvian government. RGSL is now financially on much surer footing, able to work and develop, but having to do so as a free market operator without the security of public funding or an endowment.

RGSL has been the recipient of a significant long-term OSF investment, with funding exceeding four million euros via grants from the Soros Foundation Latvia alone. In addition, other OSF programmes, like the Higher Education Support Programme, have enabled the participation of more than hundred students from Eastern neighbourhood countries in RGSL programmes.

The value of the school, however, cannot be measured in financial terms only. The school's alumni work throughout the region and in international bodies, and RGSL is an influential player in the legal community at home and abroad, far beyond the Baltic states. The school continues to enrich its academic base; convenes workshops, conferences, discussions and professional programmes; and participates in international projects and in an advisory capacity to government bodies. This 20-year anniversary is the perfect time to celebrate and reflect on what has been achieved, reassess the solid footing that the school bears, and plan for and act upon future challenges.



Vita Matiss, Linda Freimane, Prince of Lichtenstein Hans-Adam II, and Staffan Burenstam-Linder in Lugano, 1996



Linda Freimane, LL.M

RGSL Prorector, 1997-2004

The other night I met somebody I know, who I introduced to my partner, saying “He used to be one of the young and promising Latvian teachers at RGSL”. He laughed and said “Well, I am neither anymore”. Sure, his hair has turned a bit grey and he is no longer 20-something, but instead is one of Latvia’s most prominent business lawyers, partner in one of our leading law firms and known for his high ethical standing and integrity.

This, I believe, is one of the keys behind the success of RGSL. At a very early stage it was decided to hire not only top law professors from the international academic scene, but also what was called “tandem teachers” – young and ambitious Baltic law graduates who would act as assistants to the professors. The benefits of this tandem model were several – the assistant teachers would learn from working side-by-side with leading scholars, but they would also be able to connect the subjects that were offered with the Baltic legal frameworks and explain the peculiarities of our countries to their international tandem.

However, in early 1998 the school was still just a project, an ambitious dream without teachers, students, an academic



programme or even a location. When the Swedish and the Latvian governments, along with the Soros Foundation Latvia, eventually signed the foundation agreement on March 18, 1998, the grand idea of a Baltic law school of high international standard still needed to be filled with substance.

What we had was a board with five members representing the three shareholders, a small office space at the Stockholm School of Economics in Riga, the beginning of a law library, a two-person administration and a long list of issues to be resolved – from financing the renovation of our beautiful, but terribly rundown Art Nouveau masterpiece, to creating an attractive Masters degree law programme and filling it with students and teachers.

During the summer one of Sweden’s most prominent business law professors, the previous Dean at the Law Faculty at Stockholm University, agreed to become RGSL’s first rector. Professor Jan Ramberg had already been involved in improving legal education in the Baltics by supporting the “Baltic Exchange Programme”, a student initiative at the University of Stockholm which ran from 1993–1996 and during which each year 10 Baltic students had spent six weeks in Sweden, learning international business law and doing internships at prominent Stockholm-based law firms. He was well aware of the acute need for modern legal education in our countries and enthusiastic about the idea of setting up a brand-new university to achieve this goal.

When it became clear that the renovation of the building and also the creation and accreditation of a Masters programme would take much longer than initially planned, Professor Ramberg suggested running a trial course in International Trade Law,

1998

starting from the fall semester of 1998. Eighteen practicing Latvian lawyers from law firms, banks, insurance companies and state institutions signed up to dedicate their Fridays and Saturdays, with Professor Ramberg himself as the main teacher, along with academicians and practicing lawyers from several European countries.

For RGSL this was a way to demonstrate action at a time which otherwise was filled with struggle and, not least, attacks from various actors on the legal and educational scene, who were not the least interested in seeing a new and competing institution open in Riga.

One of the main practical problems was the renovation of the huge building on Alberta Street 13, which was a gift from the Soros Foundation. The building had been deserted for almost a decade and was in a terrible state. Moreover, it was protected under UNESCO and not very suitable as teaching premises. The solution was a business plan to renovate the building and then rent out all except the bottom two floors to high-end tenants. The bottom floors were kept for RGSL's administration. At the same time a decision was made to construct an annex in the courtyard which would house all auditoria, seminar rooms and the library. All this was planned in cooperation with our neighbour,

the Stockholm School of Economics in Riga (SSE-R), which had inhabited the adjacent building on Strēlnieku Street 4 since 1993. There was a great understanding between the managements of the two schools that we should cooperate and partly merge some administrative and technical functions in order to save costs and have maximum benefit from each other. This all sounds nice and easy, but was not as smooth in reality. Management decisions need to be anchored throughout the organisation, and it is not always easy to convince middle managers and other staff of the benefits of doing things differently than before – in particular, if these changes would involve letting some people go. Human feelings of suspicion, envy and resistance to change were also factors to be taken into consideration. Looking back, I think that perhaps things were not always explained and carried through as delicately as they could have.

Nevertheless, the semi-merger between the schools took place, funding was brought in for the new annex (the Raoul Wallenberg Building) and after a tough and lengthy discussion and hard resistance, the Latvian government agreed to sign a Letter of Guarantee for the European Investment Bank for a loan, which would cover the costs for renovating Alberta Street 13 to its historical splendour.



The building on Alberta 13, before and after the renovation.

Here I must jump a bit ahead of the course of events and tell you about one sunny morning in year 2000 when I turned the corner of Alberta street on my walk to work and saw that they had started to dismantle the scaffolding in front of the building. I stopped and stared at the creamy, shiny top of the façade – it was stunningly beautiful and charming, beyond what I could have imagined when the building was still dark grey and shabby, or while it was covered in plastic and scaffolding. It was a moment of triumph and joy – a reward for all the work put into this, sometimes overwhelmingly difficult, project.

A beautiful building needs to be filled with content. An Academic Council (AC), chaired by the rector and consisting of six members representing different legal disciplines and countries, was appointed by the Board to take the academic lead. There was early consensus that the programme should be a post-graduate programme focusing on international and European law, since an international faculty could not teach domestic law to students from three different countries. There were lengthy discussions about the title; eventually the AC suggested Master of Comparative Jurisprudence (MCJ). Some of the members of the AC insisted that this would best cover the broad task RGSL was given, while others believed that a Master of International and/or European Law would be more understandable and, hence, attractive to future students. A few years later the title was changed, since the Latvian Ministry of Education would not accept MCJ during the accreditation process.

The academic programme took shape in the form of four modules, covering one academic year of study. These modules contained both compulsory and optional (selective) courses, as well as a solid thesis in the end. The ambition was to create a well-balanced, attractive and internationally recognised curriculum, far from the still-existing “Soviet style” methods at Baltic law faculties, where courses were entirely based on professors lecturing and students taking notes in order to repeat what their professor had said as the exam. In addition to this, English would be the only teaching language. Future students of RGSL were

expected to learn through interactive teaching methods, debates, moot courts, presentation of own research and group work. This approach had already proven successful at SSE-R, but was looked upon with suspicion by senior Latvian law professors, who would later constitute an obstacle when applying for accreditation of the school and its programme.

As the Academic Council was shaping the curriculum and beginning to seek faculty, the RGSL Board and staff were occupied with matters concerning renovation, construction and finances throughout the year.

There were also bright moments of happy cooperation and understanding. One of them happened when one of the partners from one of Riga’s biggest law firms asked me jokingly how much it would cost them to get their name by the entrance. I answered back in the same jovial tone that it would cost them a car. A few days later the same partner called me and said “Let’s discuss the car”. It did not take long before RGSL had its own VW Sharan minivan, and a bronze sign with the text “Kļaviņš, Slaidiņš un Loze” was one of the first of many signs decorating the entrance, recognising the great support from various companies, organisations and individuals which RGSL has received over the years.

Finally, in December 1998, Jan Ramberg could announce that RGSL would enrol its first 30-50 students the following academic year. The first year would consist of only students from Latvia, but after that the intention was to admit up to 100 students per year from all three Baltic countries.

Twenty years have passed since these events took place. It is easy to look back and see what could have been done differently, what obstacles could have been avoided and what turns we could have taken.

But the fact is that RGSL has educated a great number of our countries’ best legal professionals, who in turn have helped create a modern and fair legal environment. I take pride every time I meet or see RGSL graduates on the legal scene here or somewhere else in Europe.

1998

I note that our graduates' names are not amongst those lawyers who have been scrutinised and charged for various offences over the past years in Latvia. I am aware that other law faculties in our region have followed RGSL's example, changed their teaching methods and opened up to more international and European-law-based programmes. Without RGSL, legal education would be of a poorer standard in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. And with good legal education comes respect for the rule of law and human rights.

Personally I am grateful for the opportunity to be part of such an exciting project at a time which was generally a fascinating and

challenging period in the Baltics, and I am happy that I had the possibility to work for two outstanding legal scholars and human beings – Jan Ramberg and his successor Professor Norbert Reich, both of whom have sadly passed and will not be part of RGSL's 20th anniversary. I wish they were here to enjoy the fruits of their dedication and passion.

Last, but not least, I take some personal pride in the fact that RGSL's administration, where I was employed in the late 1990's, has continued serving the school all these years and is as dedicated as ever to creating academic excellence.



Ilona Čeiča

RGSL Graduate from the first

Masters programme 1999–2000

RGSL Head of Administration, 2000–2004

Lawyer Linguist at the Court of Justice
of the European Union

When I sent in my application form for the first Masters programme at RGSL back in early 1999, I had no idea what a turning point it would be for me personally and professionally.

My study mates at the Law Faculty of the University of Latvia told me that they were applying for a Masters programme at our alma mater, but somehow it was very clear to me that I was not going to join them and would rather wait for the entrance exams at RGSL, which I did.

I did not know much about RGSL, but I liked very much the idea of the new school, since it promised a completely new approach to legal studies in Latvia and the Baltics. In a country that had regained its independence from the Soviet Union just nine years earlier, it was an important mission.

A trustworthy sign also were the persons involved in the establishment of the school, most of all, then Soros Foundation Latvia



Director Vita Matiss, whom I have always admired as a person. Later, when I had a brief meeting with her during my working years at RGSL, I was so happy to see that this intelligent and sharp-minded lady was exactly like that also in real life.

Our first school day was on August 23, 1999, when 23 Latvian lawyers were joined in the classroom to study in a way that they had never done before in their lives. We were a wonderful group

of young people. Some of us have stayed close friends since, and meeting any of my co-students from that group is such a delight to this day. At that time we also did not know that four of us (Aleksandrs Gemke, Aleksandrs Petrovs, Lolita Kronberga and I) would become lawyer linguists at the European Court of Justice some five years later and will always feel proud of being from the first graduation class of RGSL.

Our first teacher in August and September 1999 was David Gossett, a brilliant and unique mind who demanded a lot from us, or so it seemed at the time (like reading 200 pages of case law from the Supreme Court for classes the next morning), but whose vivid classes I remember up to this day. He was the first to configure our legal minds

to a different thinking. Sometimes he used candies to facilitate a smoother transfer.

The study programme was full of subjects. We had long hours in the class and outside of it. Nonetheless, we were full of energy and were taking in the knowledge eagerly. Everything was new and unknown to us.

When we had passed our final exams in December 2000 I joined the team of RGSL, becoming its Human Resources Manager/ In-house Lawyer, and later Head of Administration. I was so happy to change from being a graduate to being a member of its personnel. To me it was a chance to continue providing a new

1999

kind of legal culture in Latvia, because I always saw RGSL as an educational standard-bearer in this area.

Before joining RGSL permanently I was approached by Ulla Zumente-Steele, then Head of Continuing Legal Education (CLE) of RGSL, to help out with administrative tasks while preparing the CLE courses or summarising feedback from the participants. I can surely say that the RGSL CLE department brought a European and US dimension to the CLE market of Latvia. Suddenly professionals had a place to broaden their horizons of so far mostly domestic legal knowledge. Ulla took care to set very high standards in this area. She has become my very dear friend since then. However, first of all, she taught me a lot about how to value your customer. A proper customer culture was always important to RGSL.

If I have to tell about the memorable events of my time at RGSL as a staff member, the most memorable, of course, was the



Graduation ceremony with the President of Latvia, Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga, and Crown Princess of Sweden Victoria, 2001

graduation ceremony, at which the first-year Masters programme graduates received their diplomas. The diplomas were handed out by H.E. Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga and H.E. Victoria, Crown Princess of Sweden. It was a great honour. For me it was also a double joy – I belonged to the first graduates, and as a staff member I had participated in the organisation of this important event.

As for the funny moments... there certainly were some. I still remember how in the first months of 2000 we were walking with representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia through the under-construction Raoul Wallenberg Building (a real construction site!), and I was assuring them that the room they stepped into would in a couple of weeks be a normal conference room suitable for the Ministry's international conference with simultaneous interpretation. This is a perfect example of how enthusiastic and optimistic we were about everything we did at RGSL.

The feeling that we are proposing an idea that cannot yet be seen and that we have to convince people and make them believe us, I still have now and had then when working at RGSL. This was our reality in a society in transformation.

To this day I cherish warm feelings towards my colleagues at RGSL. Even though it is many years that I have worked and lived in Luxembourg (currently there are actually 10 RGSL graduates working at the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg), every meeting with them is a happy event, because we were like a family.

I am sure that this feeling of belonging to an important idea – creating a law school with a cardinal new legal philosophy and helping transform Latvian society into an open society – was in the mind of each of us, no matter what function we had.

Looking at current events in our society, I see that institutions like RGSL still have a lot of work to do.

Happy anniversary RGSL and good luck in the coming 20 years!!!



Evika Siliņa

RGSL Graduate from the first Masters programme 1999/2000
Parliamentary Secretary at the Ministry of Interior of Latvia



I was a Masters degree student in the very first academic year of RGSL. We were a small group of students, all from Latvia. Probably one could say we were a very brave class, as we were all ready to start our Masters studies at the just-opened RGSL.

From the very beginning I remember RGSL staff and classes being very different from my previous experience and studies. We were honoured to be part of the school, and our opinions were very important for the future development of RGSL. I was a member of the School Council and enjoyed discussions and sessions with RGSL Board members. It was and still is important for me to have an impact on the system, procedures and development in every case; RGSL was exactly the place I had been looking for.

At the beginning of the academic year we had case study with an excellent professor from the USA, David Gossett. We studied a tremendous number of cases and then analysed them. I had never had such an opportunity during my previous law studies, but at RGSL I definitely got the know-how of case study, and it helped me a lot in my future career.

In the middle of our academic year we took part in a moot court competition in Sweden. We worked hard, studied late, and in the end, we felt like superstar law students.

Our rector, Professor Ramberg, represented to us an exquisite example of the kind of lawyer we wished to emulate. There were numerous other handpicked and highly recognised professors: Katrin Nyman Metcalf, Anders Fogelklou, Daiga Rezevska, Lauris

Liepa and others, who made our studies highly professional and interesting.

I obtained such useful tools for my future career as legal reasoning, public speech, relevance of principle of proportionality and rule of law. I never was able to be satisfied with mediocre standards in my lawyer career.

RGSL laid strong foundations of the absolute necessity for human rights standards to be integrated in every area of legislation. For almost seven years I have been in a legislative and political office at the Ministry of the Interior of Latvia. Without raising human standards I would not reflect the impact I believe I am having towards law enforcement authorities becoming more effective and righteous.

RGSL helped me to think “outside the box” in order to find the most suitable solution for a problem. At present, working as Parliamentary Secretary of the Ministry of the Interior, I use this “outside the box” approach very often, as I have to deal with problems affecting important aspects of society and requiring a quick, effective and the best-possible legal solution.

I have participated in several conferences and seminars organised by RGSL throughout the years, but my favourite ones are Human Rights Annual Conferences, public lectures with

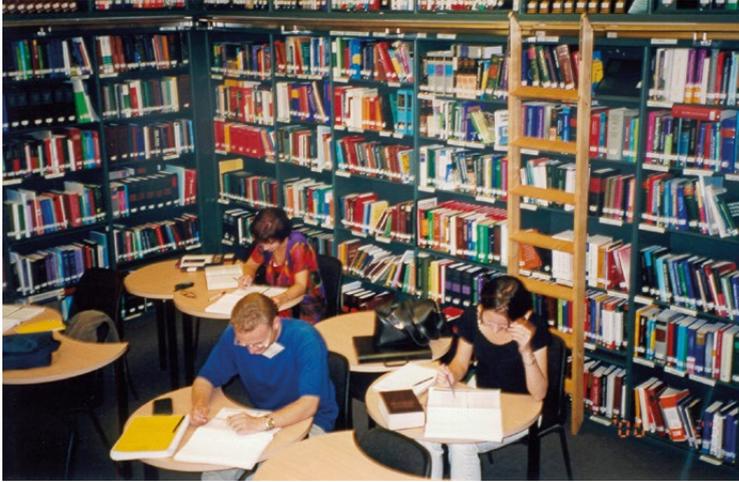
1999

distinguished lecturers and seminars related to hot topics of Latvia, such as insolvency cases, etc.

RGSL definitely has played a significant role in promoting democracy within all the Baltic states by setting the high legal standards necessary to graduate the school and that extend also

to new programs and conferences concerning current topics.

I believe RGSL plays and will continue to play an important role as a centre for democratic and political values within all the Baltic states in future.



Students at the Library, 2000



First-year students, 2000



Aleksandra Meleško

RGSL Graduate of the IEL Masters programme 2000/2001

RGSL Visiting Lecturer, 2014-present
Référéndaire at the Court of Justice of the European Union

“Le droit est la plus puissante des écoles de l’imagination.

Jamais poète n’a interprété la nature aussi librement qu’un juriste la réalité.”

Jean Giraudoux

To be honest, I really disliked law during my first years of being a student. For a long time I perceived law as a somewhat static and stuffy discipline, an antipode to everything that is dynamic and creative. I was on the verge of seriously considering a change in my professional path when, to my surprise, I realised that law can offer both creativity and dynamism. This may sound pompous, but it is true: the credit for that fully goes to Riga Graduate School of Law. The Masters programme offered by the School made me discover European law, which, in turn, made me really enjoy working as a lawyer.

In the words of French writer Jean Giraudoux, there is no better way of exercising the imagination than the study of law; no poet ever interpreted nature as freely as a lawyer interprets reality.



In my opinion, this citation perfectly illustrates one of the characteristics of European Union law: its somewhat open-ended nature. Whether one likes it or not, the norms of EU law offer plenty of room for creative interpretation. With such a fertile playground for imagination, I was finally convinced that being a lawyer is rather fun.

However, back in 2000, I knew very little about EU law. I was looking for something to add to my Bachelor studies when this “new Swedish school” came up. The programme in “International and European Law” sounded rather exotic and intuitively I was immediately drawn to it. Somehow it felt like the right thing to do, especially because times were changing and Latvia’s accession to the EU was only a question of time.

The decision to dive into an intriguing new field of law has proved to be a good one: the Masters programme delivered excellent, clearly focused classes, thought-provoking discussions and a totally different approach to studying (thank you, Kristine Krūma, Peter Gjortler, Patricia Shaughnessy, and Katrin Metcalf).

The year that unfolded further emphasised the feeling that times were changing for Latvia and a new generation of lawyers interested in European affairs.

We were a bunch of curious students from the three Baltic States who had the luxury of being offered a stimulating environment in which to learn and to go through new experiences and challenge ourselves. I keep fond memories of so many things from that year, but the most precious ones remain making new friends and competing in moot court competitions in Riga and Prague.

2000

I wholeheartedly thank the school for opening new doors for me and for showing me a new and inspiring direction. It is not an overstatement to say that that such a rich and demanding year, which often challenged me, was decisive for my future career path.

My “Happy Anniversary” wish to the school is this: keep up the good work! Keep being a source of high-quality teaching. Keep inspiring the students and encouraging them to be daring in their

approach to problem-solving. Last but not least, keep interest in the European project alive! The Union is currently going through challenging times, which makes it all the more important to promote its fundamental values and principles through teaching.

I have benefited enormously from these opportunities, and I hope they will be passed on to the next generations of students.



Moot Court competition, 2001



The first Lithuanian graduates, 2001



Egils Levits

RGSL Honorary Professor
Judge of the Court of Justice of the
European Union

It was a mutual idea of then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Valdis Birkavs, and me to establish a new judicial educational institution – a school of law – in Latvia. This international standing was important because Latvia had inherited the Soviet legal system, and the Soviet legal system is incompatible with the democratic system and the rule of law. We had to reform the legal system we inherited, and this was done relatively quickly, but in terms of daily life, it was a relatively slow process. Historical reform started 1990, and the most significant reforms were completed by 2004, with the accession of Latvia to the European Union. It was clear that in the European Union only member states could be accepted which have the same general system of law, one based on rule of law in Western terms. We did not have such legal system. In 1998 we were in the middle of the transformation process. Our idea was to create a new law school which is not at all linked with our inherited institutions, and one that could give considerable input to the transformation process.

It was difficult to find qualified personnel amongst Latvian lawyers who could accomplish this, because they were qualified

in the Soviet legal system, but not in the Western legal system. That means that such an institution had to be established with the help of and a link to the Western legal system. As Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Birkavs negotiated this idea with Sweden, which was interested in participating in such a project. Practically, negotiations started in 1996 and ended in 1998 with an interstate agreement on the Riga Graduate School of Law, which had a

special status in the educational institutional environment in Latvia, having a special link to the Swedish educational system. Actually, we created a hybrid institution.

The language of study at RGSL was English for two reasons. The first reason is that we had to attract academic personnel from Western countries or from European countries, and of course English was a common academic language in those countries. The second reason was to open to Latvian students this international legal space, which is mostly in the English language. At that time the target group was Latvian students, who after graduating from the University of Latvia with a law degree could continue their Masters studies to

obtain this special international legal education.

Turning to the content of this education, I have to admit that of course legal education is closely linked with the national state. So, the Swedish legal education is designed for Sweden, and it is not so obvious that a Swedish lawyer could work, say, in France. This was also the case here, which means that the basic education for potential students should be a Latvian education, for example, from the University of Latvia. At RGSL they could have this specific addition of an education, which would be mainly focused on international law. We planned to provide a legal education in international public law, human rights, international private law, international private procedural law, *lex mercatoria*,



international commercial law and international trade law, European law, basic theory of state and law and legal methodology. All these law branches would be offered by the Riga Graduate School of Law, in addition to the national legal education. This was the initial idea.

According to the agreement, from the second year RGSL opened its doors to Masters students from all three Baltic states, because Lithuania and Estonia were in the same situation as Latvia before EU accession.

The first rector was deliberately chosen from outside of Latvia, and he was a very well-known person in the international academic world – Professor Jan Ramberg, with his much-elaborated vision about the school. At that time the English language in Latvia was not very common, and for a rector who was coming from outside it was little bit difficult to promote the school, and so, to a certain extent, this role – to communicate between the school and the Latvian authorities – was my job. It was my contribution to help to establish a school in the Latvian environment, being a member of the RGSL Academic Council.

Being a hybrid institution, RGSL was the subject of lots of exceptions to the Latvian educational environment and was also subject to specific input from Sweden, which was also partially financing the project. The main task of the RGSL Academic Council at the beginning was to find suitable academic personnel, and I think at the beginning a good academic team was chosen, especially thanks to the efforts of the first rector, Jan Ramberg, and after him the next rector, Professor Norbert Reich who came from Bremen University. Both were very engaged in promoting the school, not only as employees of the school, but they also really felt responsible for the development of the school and for the outcome and mission of the school. Both rectors - Ramberg and Reich - with their academic contacts were able to attract academic personnel of good standing.

The school was established 1998, but in the first years it was the work of really establishing the institution. The formal inauguration of the school and its buildings took place in March 2001. Now on

all postcards of Riga you can see the Alberta Street 13 building, but I can remember also '96 or '97, when Valdis Birkavs and I visited this building before the renovation. Previously it was a Soviet military institution, which was completely destroyed after the withdrawal of Soviet troops. I think before going back to Russia the Soviet military destroyed everything inside the building that was possible to destroy. And as I was here for the first time to look at the premises, it left me with a very depressing impression. Seeing this huge building, I was not sure it was really possible to renovate the building to such a condition, but the construction workers did a very good job with the renovation.

So, in 2001 the building was ready, and the institution was also truly established. And there was an Inauguration ceremony in the presence of two, so to say, Heads of State in some way – the Latvian State President, Madame Vīķe-Freiberga, and as representative of the Swedish Head of State, Crown Princess Victoria. They were the official persons who cut the ribbon for the opening. I remember the dinner when I sat next to Crown Princess Victoria, and we had a professional exchange of opinions about judicial education and also about international law, because at the time she was studying in America.

The next Inauguration event was a seminar on constitutional law, on application of constitutional provisions in the courts. The topic was deliberately chosen in the Academic Council, because in 2001 we were already close to the end of the transformation process.

The aim of the seminar was to stress the responsibility of judges (and also civil servants) for the real consideration of the constitution (*Satversme*) in their daily judicial work. That time there was the understanding that the ordinary courts could not interpret and apply the constitution, including fundamental rights, because this was the competence of the Constitutional Court. This understanding was wrong from the point of view of rule of law. I was then judge at the European Court of Human Rights, and we invited the President of the Court, Luzius Wildhaber from Switzerland, who was very interested in the reunification

of Europe, also in the legal arena. This was his first visit to a new democratic state in Europe, and his presence lent a certain weight to the seminar.

Other interesting speakers were my colleague, Judge Peter Jambrek from Slovenia, who had the same experience in Slovenia in transforming the law and Sir David Edwards, then British judge of the European Court of Justice, who was also very interested in this legal transformation process and establishing the school.

Looking at RGSL today, I can see that the RGSL mission has not changed – it is teaching all branches of law with the focus of international and European Union law. I would say that the initial task to help the transformation process is already done, but the second task is the same – to bring international and European Union law closer to Latvia.

Looking at all Latvian institutions teaching law, the Riga Graduate School of Law is absolutely the first place concerning these specific

topics. This knowledge is becoming more and more important for ordinary lawyers everywhere, because European law often needs to be applied in very different situations, where you normally are not thinking that there is a European law issue, but, being a Member state of the Union, there is. And therefore, this second task is to be a special institution with a focus on international and European Union law.

Today Latvian students have the possibility of choosing relatively freely their international educational institution throughout the whole European Union. Latvian students can go anywhere – to the University of Latvia, Riga Graduate School of Law, to Bremen or Marseilles, or to any other institution, which means that RGSL now, unlike in the first years, is in a situation of competition, and competition not only with Latvian educational institutions, but foreign ones as well.

That means that the curriculum must be of high quality, because the school fees are comparable with those of other



Rector of RGSL Professor Jan Ramberg, President of Latvia Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga, Crown Princess of Sweden Victoria and Chairman of the RGSL Board Erland Ringborg, 2001



Opening of the Art Nouveau exhibition at Alberta 13 building, 2001

2001

European countries. They are more or less similar, and in such situation the decisive issues is the quality and also the place. For Latvian students it is more attractive to be in their own country, to stay here in their local environment. But certainly, there is a situation of competition. What is new also in the same line is that students from other European countries could choose Riga Graduate School of Law for their studies. Consequently, there are more students from European countries at RGSL, especially through the Erasmus Programme. Twenty years ago, the Erasmus Programme had just started, but today it is normal for a student to be abroad a year or two. That means Riga Graduate School of Law opens its doors not only to students from abroad, but also sends students abroad.

In addition, there are students from third countries interested in obtaining a diploma from a European Union country. I should add that there is a common system, the European system of mutual recognition of university degrees and university diplomas. That means if you obtain a university degree or diploma in Latvia from Riga Graduate School of Law, it is also after a certain procedure valid in Italy, in Spain and other EU countries, and also highly valued outside the European Union – maybe in India, in Russia, or some other Eastern partnership countries.

So, in comparison, in twenty years the market has changed, and also the situation of competition has increased. It is also good for Riga Graduate School of Law to be always up to date in terms of quality.



Ribbon-cutting at the RGSL Inauguration ceremony, 2001



Māris Brizgo

RGSL Graduate of the FEU/MEL
programme 2001/2002

Senior Associate at Ellex Klavins law firm

MEMORIES OF RGSL STUDIES 2001/2002

My studies at Riga Graduate School of Law started on a cold morning on the 5th of February 2001, when fourteen course mates and I were travelling by bus to the city of Cēsis to participate in a two-day introduction seminar. It was a real winter day and the frost was so powerful that from time to time our bus was not capable of moving. The programme of the studies at RGSL was exclusive, having been specially created to train civil servants of the Latvian government in European Union law, both theoretically and practically at the Masters level. We were fifteen civil servants from various state institutions – the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Economics, European Integration Office, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Transport, State Revenue Service, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, Ministry of Welfare, Ministry of Culture, and the Financial and Capital Market Commission.

The studies for our group were mainly taking place at separate premises allocated to us on the fifth floor of the RGSL building.



They were organised in four stages – (1) studies in Latvia at RGSL, (2) studies in Denmark at Copenhagen Business School, (3) study practice and (4) closing exam and defending of a master thesis. Dace Kavasa was responsible for coordination and managing of day-to-day operations of our Masters programme. Thanks to her for this; her investment is greatly appreciated. The studies were intensive, and lectures were taking place each day. We were

studying practically all areas of European Union law – the basics of law, EU institutions, four freedoms of movement, EU internal market, competition law, commercial law, interaction between human rights and EU law, rules of procedure of the European Court of Justice, etc.

The lecturers were both from Latvia and Denmark, and all lectures were in English. I would like especially to single out Professor Jens Fejø, who organised and created the content of the course, as well as trained us in intellectual property law, and professors Ruth Nielsen and Peter Gjørtler, who both taught us the nature and sources

of European Union law. We mastered European Union law from the book by Paul Craig and Gráinne de Búrca, *EU Law: Texts, cases and materials*, which is a very valuable book and gave us a good grounding for our knowledge. I still use this book in my everyday legal work, now an already new and updated edition. The studies required us to read many different kinds of legal literature, which would not have been possible without the RGSL Law Library and the library of the Copenhagen Business School. Both libraries were irreplaceable sources of knowledge and information.

By working in the area of legal services, I can say that there is no better library in Riga now in the field of EU and international law than the library of RGSL.

We started the school year of 2001 in September already in Copenhagen, where training took place each day at the

2002

Copenhagen Business School. Our team of fifteen lawyers was divided into six separate groups. Each group lived in separate rented apartments in different places in Copenhagen. The studies started early in the morning and frequently finished late in the evening, so as to be prepared for next day. My course mates and I tried to spend our free time together, bicycling together along the sea coast, going to nightclubs, even visiting the Christiania neighbourhood of Copenhagen, as well as visiting each other. To get to know the operation of the European Union institutions, a study visit to Brussels to the European Commission, European Parliament and the Council and to Luxembourg to the European Court of Justice was arranged. The trip was exciting and useful. Some of us, including me, were destined to return to Brussels and Luxembourg to work at various institutions of the European Union.

We finished our studies in Denmark by the end of 2001, when we took our final exams. These were divided into two main groups – substantive EU Law and moot court, focusing on application of EU Law. Mastering of the theory was thus completed, and 2002

started for each of us with practice at various institutions. For example, Renārs Danelsons, Andris Vītols and I chose to do our practice at the Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Legal Service, which is responsible for representation of the interests of Denmark in the European Court of Justice. We were hosted by Jørgen Molde, who, at that time, was head of the department at Legal Service and agent of the Danish government acting before the European Court of Justice. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to him for sharing his legal experience with us.

After finishing the practice each of us was required to write a master thesis about a given topic. I chose to write about Interactions between the community law and the common foreign and security policy: legal regulation of economic sanctions. Defence of the master thesis took place at RGSL in Riga. My course mates and I all successfully defended our thesis and passed final exams. Graduation took place on 19 June 2002.

After graduation and getting a diploma, I was required to apply my acquired knowledge about EU law in real life. Before my studies I was working at the Consular department of the Ministry



FEU/MEL programme students, 2002



Graduation of FEU/MEL programme students, 2002

of Foreign Affairs of Latvia. However, after my studies I returned to a different division – the newly created Division of the European Union law to prepare and coordinate the following year’s Treaty and Act of Accession to the European Union. My other course mates were also directly and actively involved in drafting various chapters of the Accession Treaty and Act at their respective authorities. Actually, we were working together with one common goal – to achieve the best possible legal wording of the Accession Treaty and Act. Also, one of my course mates, Einārs Punkstiņš, was directly involved in drafting the amendments to the Latvian Constitution regarding accession to the EU, which were intended for approval at a referendum. I also would like to emphasise that legal service for representation of Latvia before the European Court of Justice was conducted by three of my course mates – Esmeralda Balode, Anita Zikmane and Kristīne Drēviņa – who were the first three agents of the Latvian government before the European Court of Justice.

The first common achievement of our group was the establishment and registration of the Association of the European Union Law on December 2002. By this time, we also signed a contract with the Soros Foundation Latvia regarding writing of

commentaries to the Treaty and the Act on the Accession to the European Union. With the support of RGSL we presented at RGSL on 29 August 2003 our common edition “Treaty of Accession to the European Union (excerpt) and commentaries”. The Association of the EU Law still exists and organises seminars and conferences on EU law from time to time, as well as regularly visits international conferences of the FIDE (International Federation of European Law), being an exclusive national member of it.

After signing and ratification of the Accession Treaty, I worked for one year as lawyer-linguist at the European Parliament, and at present I am already practicing for fourteen years as an attorney at law, applying daily my knowledge of European Union law. My course mates are working or have worked at various institutions of the European Union – the European Parliament, European Commission, European Central Bank and European Court of Justice.

The studies in this EU Law Masters programme, certainly for each of us fifteen, was an important turning point in our professional lives, and I am truly grateful for the opportunity given to me to study in this RGSL programme.



Ivo Klotiņš

RGSL Graduate of the IEL Masters programme 2001/2002

Managing Partner at Klotini Sergis law firm

Looking back at my studies at RGSL I would have to conclude that it was a milestone in my professional growth, leading me to various achievements today.

People rarely make reference to the turn of the century these days, but this was a time when focusing on one thing at a time was not considered a weakness. In my opinion, RGSL was a perfect example that it was possible to create a prestigious educational establishment capable of providing in-depth focus on a subject one was really interested in. Notwithstanding the fact that it was partly owned by the Swedish government and the Soros Foundation, I consider it to be a Latvian success story – amazing faculty, more-than-excellent learning environment and, of course, a beautiful building in a part of the city that could easily be mistaken for Stockholm.

During my Masters studies at RGSL I had my “eureka” moment – arbitration. Over and over again I have to be thankful to Professor Jan Ramberg, former rector of RGSL. Professor Ramberg introduced me to arbitration and I had the honour to



have Professor Ramberg as my thesis supervisor in international commercial arbitration. It was a fantastic opportunity to receive his guidance, advice and evaluation. As it was a time when e-mail use was only beginning and people were still using fax machines, I would need to send and receive my drafts by fax. I remember that I had received only a few random pages that Professor Ramberg had corrected, and I thought that there must have been a fax

machine error or that the rest of the pages might have fallen under the desk, as it very often happened when one was receiving a fax. To be on the safe side I called Professor Ramberg personally, and in a very calm and pleasant voice he said that it was his intention to send just these few pages. And this was also the moment when I realized what RGSL had given to me – the ability to perform focused research and to be able to deliver it to professionals in the field!

Defending my master thesis and graduating with merits would also not have been possible if we had not had such amazing faculty and staff. I would like to take the opportunity and thank lecturer Mr. Christopher Goddard for his meaningful contribution to my legal writing (and editing my thesis) and presentation skills, as well as Lecturer and Head of Library Ms. Ligita Gjortlere for her introduction to research and proper behaviour at the library (yes, as students from another university we only discovered the library during our Masters studies!), and Masters Programme Manager Ms. Anda Lesina for literally “grazing” us for these 1.5 years!

It would be unfair not to mention a very important aspect of studying at RGSL – networking and friends. I would not be able to register all the contacts that I have directly and indirectly acquired by studying at

2003

RGSL with the capacity of my mobile phone at the time of my studies (you know, there was a time when there were limits as to how many contact details one was able to store!). On top of this, I have managed to develop some strong, trustful professional and friendship relationships with my class of 2002 – we are now even family friends and work together on cases for our clients.

And again, I believe that this was the environment of RGSL that facilitated such ties for the future. Speaking of students, I would like to thank Ms. Ilona Čeiča (class of 2001, now lawyer linguist at the Court of Justice of the European Union) for encouraging me to apply to RGSL.



RGSL faculty in the beginning of the academic year, 2002

Managing partner at a respected Latvian law firm, Executive Board member of European Law Firm E.L.F., member of the Council of the Arbitration Court of the Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and arbitrator... would it all be possible without RGSL? I do not think so! I am also proud to say that we have managed to stay in touch with RGSL. Namely, I am a guest lecturer (pro bono) at RGSL (Arbitration and Alternative Dispute Resolution), and our law firm KLOTINI SERGIS is actively accepting interns during summers and facilitating RGSL graduates with job opportunities, as well as for several years we have also been sponsors of the Riga Moot organized by the Student Association of RGSL. It is a great “back to school” feeling, and we are honoured to have such a likeminded partner as RGSL – innovative, forward-thinking and pushing for the best!



Students in the courtyard, 2002



Zane Vāgnere

RGSL Graduate of the IEL Masters programme 2003/2004

Counsellor of the Ministry of Culture at the Permanent Representation of Latvia to the European Union

I started studying at RGSL in 2003, just before the three Baltic states joined the EU. I chose the LL.M programme at RGSL because I knew that the school provided the best education in European and international law in the Baltics. Its faculty was highly qualified and included visiting lecturers from all over the world. The curriculum could be tailored to individual interests and was taught exclusively in English.

On the first day, I felt that my high expectations would be confirmed. The programme was full of talented students dedicated to contributing to integration of the Baltic countries into the EU. I knew some of them already from my Bachelor studies at Concordia International University in Estonia. Many of us had already gained experience in private practice or working for the state.

The study environment at RGSL was amazing. Professors, students, and administrative staff of RGSL shared a strong sense of community. The facilities of RGSL, located in one of Riga's most

beautiful Art Nouveau buildings, provided everything to enable us to fully immerse ourselves in our studies and student life. Studying was intense: often, we had to read hundreds of pages to prepare for the next day. Our class developed a strategy to deal with this challenge together. Whenever possible, we divided up the reading material and then discussed the topic together. This collective studying really worked out well. Everybody was committed to

high quality and was eager to help each other. At the same time, there was a healthy level of competition. I think this positive spirit came from the faculty and its eye-level approach its students. RGSL always encouraged dialogue and made us work as a real team.

RGSL gave us in-depth knowledge of EU law, public international law, human rights law, women's rights, democratisation and many other subjects. Importantly, it provided us with an understanding and appreciation of the values that enable one to create a better world and a more integrated Europe, and taught us skills to become

better leaders in whatever we would do.

RGSL also had a decisive influence on my personal life: I found many new friends with whom I am still in contact today, and it is where I met Moritz Wagner, my husband, when he entered RGSL's courtyard as a freshman in the following course of 2004/2005.

During my time of studies, I also witnessed the beginning of RGSL's transformation from a private law school funded by Sweden and the Soros Foundation to an autonomous institution within the University of Latvia. Looking back, I think RGSL has done a really good job. RGSL has retained its friendly and entrepreneurial spirit of the first years and now offers an impressive set of Bachelor



Inga Ignāte, Zane Vāgnere, and Moritz Wagner

2004



Beginning of the academic year, 2004



Michael Hellner and Christopher Goddard with students, 2004

and Masters programmes that attracts more students than ever before. I am extremely proud that also my sister Inga Ignāte chose to study in the newly established Masters degree programme in Legal Linguistics. She graduated RGSL with distinction in 2011, and the knowledge she gained still serves her in her work for the European Commission's Directorate-General for Translation.

I strongly believe that RGSL has fulfilled its original mission of preparing the Baltic States for their accession to the EU. Various alumni, including many friends, work for European institutions and international organisations, or are responsible for EU affairs in various government branches or the private sector. To this day, RGSL plays and should continue to play an important role in facilitating European integration not only in the Baltic States, but also in the greater region.



Students at a lecture, 2004



Moritz Wagner

RGSL Graduate of the IEL Masters programme 2004/2005
General Counsel at Transport Solutions North America
and EMEA, Ingersoll Rand

I learned of RGSL through a coincidence in 2004. Earlier that year, my father, who was a professor for architecture, had gone to Riga on a field trip with his students. When visiting the famous Alberta Street and its buildings, he met Norbert Reich, then rector of RGSL, who gave him a tour of the school. Having returned from his trip, he told me about the beautiful city and brought me the brochure of RGSL. Little did I know that this brochure contained a photo of my future wife, Zane.

After my second state exam I thought, let's see what my father found there, and I travelled to Latvia myself. It was the middle of summer and Riga was celebrating the Song and Dance Festival. The city was vibrant and full of walking choirs. There was something there that I had never experienced before. Partly out of a sense of adventure, and partly because I was amazed with my own meeting with Norbert Reich, I decided on the spot that I would apply to RGSL.

I found a jewel of a university. We were around 30 students. During all my studies in Munich, I had never experienced being part of such a small class and sitting in seminars with only five people and the professor. This was a fantastic teacher-student

ratio on top of the high quality and engagement of the faculty that Zane already mentioned. I also enjoyed the mix of people there. The majority of students came from the Baltics, but there also was a larger group from Kosovo. This gave me a completely new insight into what was happening in the neighbourhood of the European Union.

The level of education was excellent, and the choice of courses was fantastic. I have good memories of the team spirit prevalent not only among the student community, but also of the faculty and staff forming an overall team.

I really liked the concept of having a relatively small permanent faculty complemented by many visiting lecturers coming from all over Europe and the US in particular.

For example, the course on WTO law taught by Lorand Bartels was fantastic. Lorand came over as a visiting lecturer from the University of Edinburgh. He ended up being my thesis supervisor, and I actually wrote a large part of my thesis at Edinburgh University as a visiting student in order to have a closer interaction with him.

I think I still benefit from my 15 months of studies at RGSL on a daily basis. Now, I am working as an in-house counsel on legal matters across Europe, the Middle East, Africa and North America.

The insight into EU and international law gained at RGSL provided a basis for the flexibility necessary to dive into other legal systems really quickly, and made me feel comfortable working in legal systems outside that of my country of qualification as a lawyer.

In the future, I could see RGSL acting as a bridge between the EU and neighbours to the east in particular, continuing to equip students with a strong, internationally focused legal education. I also hope that RGSL will be able to preserve as much as possible of the individual and entrepreneurial approach, which I found so outstanding and valuable during my studies. I wish you all the best!



Indriķis Muižnieks

Chairman of the RGSL Board,

2004–2015

Rector of the University of Latvia

I became involved with the Riga Graduate School of Law in 2004 through Ina Druviete, the Minister of Education and Science in Latvia at that time. It was a period when Latvia was preparing for and already entering the European Union. By then the mission of the school had been formally accomplished. Within the first five years the school had prepared a number of talented new lawyers in the field of international and human rights law. The government of Sweden had informed the Latvian government that it would relieve itself from its shares in the school, and funding for the school had to be limited during the transition period, which would not last long. Consequently, a new legal status for the school had to be established. Also, the government of Latvia felt that in general the school had done a great job, which had to be continued, in order to strengthen education in international and European law.

Our first meeting with then rector of the school, Professor John Burke, and his assistant, Inese Druviete, was in early 2005. We met together with our then rector, Professor Lācis, and discussed in general our view on the school's development and its possible connection with and relationship to the university.

We felt that we did not want to have the school integrated into the huge structure of the University of Latvia. Although the legal form of a company causes limitations and eventually creates instability and risks, at the same time it provides some opportunities as compared with a public university, which is very strictly controlled by law in regard to the recruitment of staff, use of languages, and the teaching.



Additionally, during the few years of its activity, the school had created successful international networking. We wanted to maintain the school as a separate entity with an international exposure, teaching in English and blending staff from abroad with local scholars. The involvement of local staff from the university in teaching at the school provided them with additional experience and international networking.

The continuation of financial support from the Open Society Foundation was also important for the school and the university.

So, our first meeting with representatives of the school yielded a feasible, mutually acceptable plan, although it was not followed by immediate actions afterwards. Apparently it took some time for the school to explore all the options open at that time.

But by fall of the same year more activities started with the involvement of the Latvian and Swedish governments. The Latvian side was represented by the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Justice. An intergovernmental agreement was drafted. I would like to mention Mrs. Kristīne Jarinovska, a graduate of the school, who was one of the leading actors in preparing this contract at the Ministry of Justice. Due to the efforts of our ministries and the positive and supportive attitude from the Swedish government, an agreement was concluded.

The agreement stipulated that the shares of the Swedish government were to be sold to the Latvian government on the provision that they would be transferred to the University of Latvia, and the university would invest in the financial stability of the school.

Additionally, the government of Latvia supported the transition process by funding the investigation of market possibilities and a model for the school's activities. Market research concentrated on development of the school as a centre of excellence in legal studies and research. It was decided that a self-sustaining entity should be created, whether public or private, with an endowment that could support the activities of the centre. It did not exclude the possibility that tuition fees would be introduced. I believe this is true also nowadays, because if we want to keep the school as a centre of excellence, there should be some stability regarding the sources of the funding, although it may come from different sources.

The intergovernmental agreement stipulated that in the end the school should be transformed into a structural unit of the university. This part of the agreement has not been fulfilled, because 24% of the shares of the school are owned by the Open Society Foundation. So, while the Open Society Foundation is here, the school remains a separate entity, an autonomous institution within the system of the University of Latvia. To some extent we would be happy to see the presence of the University of Latvia in the school even more, in all the logistics and also public relations.

I want to mention the name of Mrs. Kristīne Jarinovska once again with regard to the period of formal change. She played a central role in the process when the shares were to be transferred from the government of Sweden to the government of Latvia, and later to the University of Latvia. It seemed to be mission impossible, because of some purely bureaucratic discrepancies in the registration procedures of the companies. At this moment, being already at the Ministry of Education and Science, Kristīne succeeded in explaining to officials at the Enterprise Register the unique nature of the process agreed to by the two governments,

and this issue was settled in one day without any delay. I was appointed Chairperson of the Board and acted in this role from 2006 until 2015, when I was elected rector of the University of Latvia.

I would like to categorise into several separate segments the development of the school after becoming a company owned by the university and Open Society Foundation.

The first period was when we started our activities with the former management – Rector John Burke and Executive Director Dace Ose. It took us some two years to change the situation, introduce new staff policy and accommodate the school's activities and commitments to the new financial conditions due to the reduced financial support from the Swedish government.

The second segment of the school started with a new rector and financial manager or director for the school. I would like to emphasise the enormous contribution to the development of the school made by Kitija Freija (Gruškevica). She had been acting as managing director of the Faculty of Modern Languages at the university prior to that. She had shown very good capabilities in dealing with rather difficult problems, not only in financial management, but also in personnel management, which is sometimes even more important. We convinced Kitija to take on another challenge, and she did, and I believe it was a very important contribution, because with the help of Kitija Freija we first got in line the running of the school and management of the Alberta 13 building, and, also, the contact with our neighbouring school, SSE-Riga, was improved. At that time the rector was Professor Jane Smith, who served from 2007 until 2009.

While the academic development of RGSL was positive, the financial situation became critical due to financial investments in the RGSL premises. At that moment Jane resigned, and I was for a short while appointed rector. Our main task at this point was to look for possibilities to repay the loan. We visited the Wallenberg Foundation together with Kitija in Sweden in November 2008. We got a clear message from the Wallenberg Foundation that we had to clear this debt, as otherwise the school would not be sustainable.

Peter Wallenberg also visited the school and had interesting meetings with our government, with the State secretary of the Ministry of Education and Science, Mareks Gruškevics. The idea to make an alliance for repayment of the debt was proposed by Mr. Wallenberg. He proposed a tripartite repayment by their foundation, the Soros Foundation and the Latvian government. The representative of the Soros Foundation Latvia, Mr. Andris Aukmanis, met with George Soros, who afterwards met with Peter Wallenberg in Sweden, but in the end the Wallenberg Foundation sent us a short notice that they were out. This was a huge challenge, because Soros had promised his participation, as had the Latvian government, and the University of Latvia had to step in, replacing the Wallenberg Foundation. It was next to impossible, since it was 2009 and the financial crisis was at its height, and I still wonder how we managed. I really hope that in future this initial concept of the school as a centre of excellence in studies and research in international law in all diversity of its aspects will prove its sustainability.



Signing of the new RGSL Agreement between Latvia and Sweden, 2005

Coming back to the periodisation of the school's development – the third period starts with the decision on repayment of the debt and with George Ulrich as the new rector of the school. This was a period of revival, with George Ulrich together with Kitija Freija building up a very active and successful management team, involving young and talented academicians, e.g. Ieva Miļūna; as well as providing space for expanding the initiatives of experienced staff, e.g. Peter Gjortler and Waleed Gumaa; recruiting leading representatives of civil service in the teaching process, e.g., Ilze Rūse; and development of the bachelor and doctoral programmes. I believe it was the important input from Kitija Freija and the enthusiasm of two university graduates, Kristis Avots and Rinalds Gulbis, which enabled the school to start an undergraduate student track, which provides additional students and an additional basis for recruitment for graduate studies.

The Doctoral programme was started in cooperation with the University of Copenhagen, and it was a great contribution from George Ulrich. After Kitija Freija, the duties of director were taken



Brainstorming in Dikļi, 2012

up by Mrs. Karīna Kulberga. After the cadence of Professor Ulrich expired, the rectorate at the school was taken up by Mr. Mel Kenny, but currently the acting rector of the school is Jānis Ikstens, Professor of the University of Latvia. It is already the fourth segment in the school's history. To my understanding, the main tasks for the school now are to: (a) renew and expand its academic staff, who are crucial for maintaining the quality of teaching and research; (b) consider in its curricula the latest changes in national legislation stipulating unified examination for graduate law students planning to take up a professional career in the national courts of justice; and (c) accumulate a financial reserve needed

for the refurbishment of infrastructure. The school's mission is to provide specialists in law, not necessarily local judges or barristers, but professionals for international organisations and companies, probably in the field of diplomacy, etc. The most important is to sustain continuous excellence in teaching and research.

My experience with the school has been very interesting and positive. I have always enjoyed the academic culture present in the school, creating a supportive but also demanding atmosphere both for the teachers and the students, working together in a joint, friendly team.



Agris Repšs

RGSL Lecturer, 1999-2002

RGSL Board member, 2006-present

Partner at Sorainen law firm

RGSL has been at the very roots of my professional career since I returned after my own Masters studies at Central European University. I returned at the very end of 1999, when RGSL was already established, and in the fall of 1999, I enrolled as one of the lecturers at the school. I taught an introductory class for Masters students together with David Gossett, a young American professor and professional who came to Latvia. We became friends and are still in touch. David started to work at one of the most prominent US law firms, becoming partner. Now he is working for the US government as a high-profile official and lawyer. Later in early 2000 I was contacted by Gints Vilgerts, whom I had met at RGSL a couple of months earlier, who offered me to join Sorainen. Sorainen back then was a small law firm that nobody knew about. It had four lawyers and I was the fifth lawyer who joined the firm. Our office was on Valdemāra Street 33 in an old apartment, which was just enough space for us five.

That is how my professional career as practicing lawyer really started, and it started together with my affiliation with RGSL. Later



as a senior associate and partner in Sorainen, my connection with the school remained, and we continued being partners with the school for all these 20 years. I was teaching an introductory course another year, then I was teaching introduction to international commercial arbitration and an e-commerce course together with the daughter of our first rector Jan Ramberg – Professor Christina Hultmark. At that time, I considered an academic career,

but my involvement with the law firm took most of my time. That is why I stopped teaching at RGSL and focused on practicing law, but I never stopped being involved in RGSL matters and life. I am really happy I maintained this connection. A few years later I became a member of the RGSL Board. That happened a year before the Swedish government exited the shareholding at RGSL, and the University of Latvia became the main shareholders of RGSL.

I have been working on the RGSL Board since then, being involved in various school projects. RGSL was going through difficult and interesting times when we had to refinance its state loan. We managed to get financial stability and independence in 2008/2009. These were the years when

the school stopped owing the bank and became a financially independent and sustainable institution. 2006 is the year when the new Board with two members from the University of Latvia, Indriķis Muižnieks and Juris Pūce, started to work. Perhaps also that is the year when the new era of the school started. Actually, I have enjoyed working with Indriķis and Juris quite a lot; they are excellent professionals.

Sorainen law firm is one of the most active sponsors and supporters of RGSL. I remember when we were building the law firm, we thought of building a library, our own library, but then realised that it would be much more beneficial for society and the

general legal community to build a library that could be used by everyone. And we decided that instead of building our own library at the firm, we would buy books and donate money for the RGSL Law Library. I believe that the RGSL Law Library was back then and still is the richest and biggest law library in the region.

During these years Sorainen law firm has invested almost 27 000 Euros in the RGSL Library, and we still continue supporting it. And we are happy to do that, because I think investing in books and providing this opportunity to have the latest editions of books and databases and access to information is a key to having a vibrant and lively legal society. Young lawyers and our firm's lawyers can do research at the school's library. I know that students from other universities come and use the library, and since ancient times university life has always been centred around the library. The library is a centre of knowledge and education.

Supporting the RGSL Law Library and seeing it grow and becoming a very important element of legal education in Latvia has always been a driving force for us. One thing is the school, its programmes, social life and student life. The other thing is a really rich legal library that is a centre for research, centre of scientific life, centre of student research life and a centre of research by practicing lawyers. I think that sometimes not everybody recognises how important a role the RGSL Law Library has played in Latvia and its legal community. I think it is quite important that we as a law firm have served society well in that sense and provided some support to a library that can be used by the entire legal community in Latvia. And throughout the years it has been our main focus of support. There have been better years, worse years, like in business. But, like in business, whenever we have discussed among the partners what is the main support that we should provide to the school, it has remained the library.

At the same time, we have been very happy to support other RGSL activities. We have been supporting RGSL students by providing traineeship opportunities, and we have supported various moot court competitions and other events. We have also supported our lawyers involved in teaching at RGSL. Some of our

associates have been teaching some courses at RGSL for many years, and I hope they will continue to do so. Now there is a new generation of lawyers coming up, and as the school evolves, they also look for teaching opportunities, and RGSL is an excellent place to do that.

Among our associates and partners, there are a lot of RGSL alumni. And this is something that we have always seen as a great advantage. We have been an employer of RGSL graduates. Some of our leading partners in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are RGSL graduates – our office's managing partner in Riga, Eva Berlaus; partner Lelde Laviņa; our partner in the Tallinn office, Karin Madisson; and Mantas Petkevičius in the Lithuanian office. There are very, very good lawyers, senior lawyers and counsels in our firm that are RGSL graduates, and they are top experts in their fields – for example, Andis Burkevics, Raivo Raudzeps, Valts Nerets and Alisa Leškoviča. They are now senior lawyers and top experts in their fields as practicing lawyers, and they have all graduated RGSL. RGSL has been a great school where we recruit our best lawyers and top talent.

RGSL graduates have received their education in English. We as an international law firm need lawyers who are fluent in English. They can write and do research in English, and RGSL teaches that. And also, the way law is taught at RGSL makes a big difference. There are a lot of case studies. They learn how to write their thesis in English. These qualities that RGSL develops are key issues when you become a practicing lawyer. Moot court competitions are very important as well. Those students who participate in moot courts actively are usually also the best students, and as our experience shows, they also are successful as practicing lawyers.

RGSL provides a practice-based, problem-solving approach in the way law is taught. This serves to train analytical skills in young professionals, who need those skills later as lawyers. And through moot courts, through active participation in conferences, in presenting legal topics and topical issues, this is the way young students gradually become successful professionals. These are the skills that later forge you as a great professional lawyer. And

RGSL has been very successful. There is an entire generation of lawyers that have graduated from RGSL. I am quite sure that if you looked at statistics, it would indicate an impressive number of RGSL graduates helping our country to become prosperous and successful, working with the top law firms as practicing lawyers and with government institutions and ministries. I think this contribution of RGSL to the legal community and the Latvian state is great.

I know what the initial aim was when the school was established, and I think it has been achieved quite successfully. Now, of course, when we are living in a new era, in an information society, with Latvia as a member state of NATO and the European Union; we are part of Europe, and we are taken as serious partners. Now is a challenging time for the school to define its role in the future of legal education in Latvia, and maybe not only in Latvia, but regionally. In my opinion, it is very important that the school as a centre of excellence for legal education continue serving the legal community regionally by providing top experts for our neighbouring countries.

Of course, there are a lot of challenges that lie ahead. In addition to rule of law and human rights, which were also important twenty years ago, there are now additional areas that we need to look at and focus on.

We should look at what role Latvia is playing now in Europe geographically, and what role RGSL could play in future legal education regionally, providing possibilities for not only our own students from Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia, but perhaps also from other regions, other countries: Asia, our Eastern neighbours.

At the same time with the new information society and information era that we are living in, there are different challenges that lie ahead for all of Europe, and we need to think of what could be the fields of law where RGSL could continue serving its role as a centre of excellence regionally. That involves thinking of new Masters programmes, thinking of new services for the legal community. Continuing legal professional education and providing support to already practicing lawyers has become a very important



Master students taking an exam, 2006

2006

aspect for RGSL, because in today's times, lawyers need constant training and education, and there are many new fields of law that didn't even exist twenty years ago. Today we are talking about information society law, technologies law and tech law. Twenty years ago, we had a course in introduction to e-commerce that dealt with electronic contracts, where the exchange of emails can form a contract. Now this is already something orthodox; nobody questions it. So, there are completely different issues at hand. Times have changed, so I think the school has a challenge to redefine itself. But I hope and wish the school never loses its key role in legal education and serving as a centre of excellence for the legal community here in Latvia.

During my work at RGSL there have been a lot of interesting events. Perhaps one of the most memorable events was the joint study trip with all the faculty and management of the school to

Bilbao, where we met with University of Bilbao faculty members and visited the Basque country and the Guggenheim museum. We had a very fruitful faculty meeting and a strategy meeting, and discussed a lot of interesting projects and ideas for the school. So, I will always remember this trip, because it was not only important for the school and its international cooperation, but also rewarding as a cultural experience. And I will always remember the Christmas events that I have attended at RGSL. They have always been fun and unforgettable parties and events, and there have always been artists or musicians playing. I remember one that we had at the school premises, where the not-that-famous-back-then Latvian cello band Melo-M was playing; I think two years later I was attending their concert in a big concert hall packed with people, and I was thinking that, "Oh, just two years ago they were playing at our Christmas party and we were dancing a sirtaki."



Working group on the development of the Law and Technology programme, 2018



Christopher Goddard

RGSL Lecturer, 1999-2017

RGSL: Leading the Way in Legal Linguistics

If language is the form that law takes, then legal linguistics is the area of study that examines how language is used in legal contexts, in particular, aspects of language use, such as terminology, as well as the main legal-linguistic operations, for example, legal drafting, legal argumentation, legal interpretation, and legal translation. The importance of legal linguistics stems partly from the internationalisation of legal life in the broader context of globalisation, with English as the law's lingua franca, and the implications for the education and training of law professionals. This article reviews legal linguistic input by Riga Graduate School of Law from 1999 to 2016. The main focus is on 2007, when RGSL launched its Masters programme in legal linguistics, the first of its kind anywhere in the world. The article will also touch on RGSL's contribution to legal linguistics more generally: Legal English courses delivered by RGSL, and RGSL inputs on European Commission and other projects.



1. RGSL Masters Programme in Legal Linguistics

At the initiative of – and with a promise of funding from – the Latvian government, RGSL developed a one-year Masters programme ('the Programme') for legal linguists in support of European Union (EU) organisations and Latvian state administrative institutions. The aim: to improve translation and drafting skills for government and the EU. In the first year, from September 2007, this was a pilot programme. Graduates of the Programme would go on to work in EU or Latvian state institutions, or in the private sector.

The wording of the commission from the Latvian government stated the aim as "to provide linguistic competence to lawyers daily engaged in drafting, revising, or editing legal acts, and to control the legal and linguistic correctness of legal texts translated from other languages." However, RGSL recognised the likelihood that such a narrow scope would be unlikely to attract enough interest to warrant running the Programme at all. For this reason, RGSL interpreted the commission more broadly, by adding: "to enhance the professional competence of legal translators in the private sector by adding theoretical knowledge of the legal landscape". The aim

was commercial adaptability and – ultimately – freedom from state funding, which from the very outset was clearly not of a level to sustain the Programme.

This was a team effort, coordinated by and centred on RGSL, but involving Latvian and other partners, who also contributed teaching or training expertise. Programme planning began in October 2006. Preliminary research disclosed that no equivalent course of study or training was currently available.

The absence of identical or similar programmes was reflected in the literature. The main source of inspiration was Heikki Mattila's *Comparative Legal Linguistics*, with which the author was intimately familiar, having translated it (from the French version) into English. In addition, the author relied on grounded theory based on his own experience – a background in law, legal translation, and education – and the collective wisdom and experience of individuals from other institutions.

Few experts are available in key areas, such as legislative drafting, legal translation, and legal linguistics. However, RGSL managed to attract enough of these to proceed: without them, the Programme would not have run at all. The Programme was offered executive-style, once or twice a month for several days. Since most key experts were fly-in professors and most students were working, the executive-style schedule was friendly both to users and to stakeholders such as employers.

Taken together with other factors, notably the Latvian government's requirement to focus on Latvian-English-Latvian, the Programme in its original form was unlikely to appeal to

participants from abroad. However, some later fine-tuning broadened the appeal of the programme somewhat.

The Programme covered a range of skills selected to maximise the employability of graduates: preparing, drafting, and managing legislative projects; legal drafting, translating, editing and revising, proofreading, and other related skills. It taught techniques and skills, not languages, and was initially a vocational programme geared to channelling students into professional work. To this end, core and optional units were complemented by extra-curricular classes designed to provide students with appropriate background knowledge. In broader terms, the Programme reflected a commitment to the application of learning and in applied and professional knowledge.

In April 2007, the Programme was licensed by the Latvian authorities, which in December 2008 issued accreditation for a maximum of six years, following assessment by a visiting accreditation committee. Both the committee and the Latvian authorities made certain recommendations, which significantly changed the Programme.

RGSL aimed to promote sponsorships from the private sector (e.g., banks, law firms) to provide financial security. Additionally, the hope was to find funding from other institutional sources, perhaps supranational under some open cooperative arrangement with universities abroad. Issues arose with funding from the Latvian government, which could not be considered a reliable or (for reasons of academic freedom) desirable source. Inability to access or generate adequate funding ultimately doomed the Programme.

Further Programme changes were based on recommendations or requirements by the accreditation committee and the Latvian authorities, and experience from the pilot year. The order of course delivery within the Programme depended on the availability of fly-in professors. The single most significant changes arose, first, from a requirement by the Latvian authorities that the Programme be delivered as an academic programme and then of an international (EU) authority requiring greater focus on law



Legal Linguistics programme students with professor Marcus Galdia, 2010

subjects and on other languages (primarily English), removing the programme from the shackles of a Latvian-oriented language focus.

Overall, students evaluated the Programme as successful in terms of content. Moreover, in terms of delivery the executive style was attractive both to students and professors. Changes to the Programme somewhat broadened the appeal of the Programme to international students, as well as offering a more realistic model to other institutions wishing to establish their own legal linguistics programmes or to cooperate in other ways. However, two major challenges remained. The first was to attract funding for the Programme from commercial and other sources. The second was to market the Programme as widely as possible while maintaining cooperation with institutions that are both potential partners and potential competitors. At the end of the day, RGSL was unable to meet these challenges.

2. Legal English Courses

Under the banner of “Continuing Professional Development”, RGSL began offering and delivering theory-based practical courses in legal English in 1999. Courses fell into two categories: evening courses offered at RGSL premises, for example, legal writing or contract drafting, mainly for practising lawyers; and tailored courses delivered mainly at the client’s premises, for example, law firms, banks, judges, court administrators and bankruptcy administrators. Demand for these courses, initially brisk, fell off during the financial and economic crisis, despite strong positive evaluations from clients. By way of comparison, The International Legal English Certificate (ILEC) exam, part of the Cambridge University Examinations Syndicate, devised and offered from the early 2000s, suffered the same fate: the last exam was in December 2016.



CLE course planning with Christopher Goddard, Ulla Zumente-Steele, and Chris Hrabec, 2001



CLE training seminar for parliamentarians, 2003

3. Projects

RGSL participated in several legal-linguistic projects at the European and international level, as follows:

- International Criminal Court: Language revising and editing (French/English);
- European Commission: Reform of the Georgian Procuracy Project;
- European Commission / EuropeAid Project: Support to Legal Translators / Interpreters and Legal Linguists in Kosovo, assisting the Lifelong Learning Centre of the University of Pristina, and in particular to support development of the Centre to meet the training needs of professional translators and interpreters in specialised areas, especially legal translation and support the Centre for defining the nature and scope of in-service training;
- The European Commission QUALETRA project contributed towards facilitating transparent, cost-effective criminal proceedings in EU courts, guaranteeing the rights of suspected and accused persons as stipulated in Directive 2010/64/EU. The project focused on multilingual term bases and translation memories, developing training materials for legal translation, implementation of training programmes, and accredited tests in order to improve the training of legal translators and practitioners to interact efficiently with beneficiaries of legal translation services such as police, prosecutors, court staff, judges, lawyers and professionals providing victim support.

4. A Personal View

Over the years, great professional satisfaction stemmed from the rare opportunity to apply knowledge and skills acquired in three areas of expertise – law, languages and education – through involvement in legal linguistics at RGSL and elsewhere. In turn, the challenge of introducing legal linguistics in the academic curriculum led me to undertake Doctoral studies in the field, resulting in a significant number of published research papers.

My strongest impression has been the high level of dedication of students, matched only by the high level of achievement in their Masters theses in legal linguistics. Involvement in projects has also been a great source of satisfaction, both professionally and culturally, especially through interacting with colleagues from abroad, both in the workplace and socially. Finally, and perhaps most important, there is the quiet satisfaction gained from the sure and certain knowledge of having contributed – even if only in a small way – to ‘making a difference’.

5. Conclusion

As I have previously maintained in my paper “A Voice in the Wilderness? Legal Linguistics in Search of a Place in the Curriculum” published in 2016 in the RGSL Research Papers, in the context of modern legal education, legal linguistics plays an important, perhaps vital, role in the curriculum.

For over fifteen years, legal linguistics flourished at RGSL, which became very much a leader in the field. Indeed, RGSL is still the only institution in the world known to have offered a full Masters programme in legal linguistics. In this respect, RGSL has played a significant role in the development of legal education. However, like all young disciplines, legal linguistics needs a dedicated association and other support in order to promote itself in the curriculum.

In this context, the International Language and Law Association (ILLA), founded by legal linguists Peter Tiersma, Lawrence Solan and Dieter Stein in 2007, was relaunched in September 2017 – though after the demise of the RGSL Masters programme in legal linguistics. Hopefully, ILLA and its members will take up the banner of legal linguistics and establish, support or sponsor new training and education programmes in this vital field for those whose work involves dealing with the language of the law. If help is needed, then the field of legal linguistics has no better-qualified institutional consultant than RGSL.



Mārtiņš Mits

RGSL Lecturer 1999-2012

RGSL Prorector, 2008-2015

RGSL Associate Professor, 2013-present

Judge of the European Court
of Human Rights

Memoirs of a “long-term resident” aka Mārtiņš Mits

I started at RGSL in 1999 as a teaching assistant and worked there until 2015, when I moved to Strasbourg, having been Prorector. I also took part in the first-ever course held at RGSL which was organised for... the future professors and not for the students.

The vision underlying establishment of RGSL in 1998 was to prepare the three Baltic countries for becoming member states of the European Union. This is why there was only one programme in international and European law taught at the Masters level in the initial period. However, in the area of international and European law, Latvia, like Estonia and Lithuania, was short of human resources, due to its Soviet past. Therefore, in addition to educating civil servants, judges, lawyers and prosecutors on the fundamentals of international and EU law, RGSL started with the excellent idea of raising a new generation of professors as



well. For a long time, courses at RGSL were taught in tandems: acknowledged professors from Western Universities were accompanied by assistant lecturers mostly coming from Latvia who took charge of the seminars and some lectures. For example, for several years I worked on the International Human Rights Course in tandem with Professor emeritus Göran Melander, who later would become my PhD supervisor at Lund University.

So, the first course for future professors was held in 1999, and it was intended, at least as I saw it, to establish a policy and to develop skills of interactive teaching methods. It relied heavily (in the person of Jānis Bolis) on the Socratic teaching method, based on questions and answers. The change from the rote learning typical of Soviet universities to research-based studies was an important one, and it has always been part of the teaching policy at RGSL. Having just returned from my own Masters studies at the University of Nottingham, research-based studies seemed to be a natural platform for a quality education. As to the Socratic method, I think it has left an imprint on the way I teach, though not in its classical form. Questions to the audience have always been an important element of my courses.

Apart from that, during the “professors’ course” I recall having experienced two approaches on how to motivate students – by fear and by fun. They both worked, but my clear preference was for the latter.

The next level in the training of new professors was launching a PhD programme in cooperation with Scandinavian universities. In 2000 RGSL announced scholarships for PhD studies. Initially 31 persons applied and seven candidates were recommended to proceed with enrolment into one of the Scandinavian universities. At the end, three doctors of law came out of this programme –

Alla Pozdņakova at Oslo University, and Kristīne Krūma and myself at Lund University. I must admit that it was a tough arrangement: PhD scholars were expected to be placed in Riga, carry out teaching and other academic commitments there and pursue Doctoral studies in a Scandinavian university. It took me eight years to finish my PhD studies and required immense mental effort. So, my advice to those who wish to pursue their PhD studies is to concentrate only on their studies and to say “no” to all other offers. As Gudmundur Alfredsson, Visiting Professor and former Director of the Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, used to say, there will be better offers when you will have acquired your Doctoral degree. So true.

Rule of law is an integral part of RGSL. Both in international and national contexts, it is so fundamental that it is impossible to ignore it in the work of an academic institution, in particular, in a country like Latvia where democratic traditions have been reintroduced relatively recently.

The RGSL’s tenth anniversary was celebrated by a conference “EU-Learning: Democracy through Law”, held on 11-12 April 2008. The conference covered five thematic areas, starting with the supranational legal construct of the European Union and ending with its foreign and security policy. The conference attracted eminent international and local speakers, and the conference papers were published in a book under the auspices of the rector at the time, Lesley Jane Smith, entitled “European Union and the Rule of Law: Experience of Latvia”. The underlying idea was to take stock of the achievements and drawbacks from Latvia’s membership in the European Union and the processes taking place within the EU through the lens of democracy and the rule of law. It is now exciting to look back on this after the passage of ten years.

At the time of the conference in 2008, Latvia was on the brink of a heavy economic crisis. A political crisis was yet to come and the trust of society in public institutions was on the decrease, in particular due to publication of the book “Litigation Kitchen”

(*Tiesāšanās kā ķēķis*), which hinted at the influence of some high-profile persons on the judiciary and a dispute between the Prime Minister and the head of the Corruption Prevention Bureau that resulted in the dismissal of the latter and political influence on the media, including the National Television. During the opening of the conference, Valdis Zatlers, then President of Latvia, spoke about the importance of the trust of society in public power, of the confidence that public power is exercised in accordance with the rule of law. Three years later in 2011, President Zatlers initiated the dismissal of the Parliament due to the “privatisation of democracy”, and the people of Latvia dismissed the Parliament for the first time in the country’s history.

These processes in Latvia were not unique. It was a time when the liberal values that dominated during the transformation from socialism to democracy in the whole region of Central and Eastern Europe were being replaced by populism and anti-liberal values. Overall, trust in public institutions was low. Politicians were



RGSL 10-year-anniversary conference “EU-learning: Democracy through Law”, 2008

viewed as being corrupt, and there were tendencies of abuse of power by the political elites. Against this background I had argued in the conference that the European Union must pay more attention to what is happening in the member states on the level of fundamental principles and that the procedure based on Article 7 of the Treaty on the European Union must be applied in situations where there was a visible or masked threat to the rule of law. I also argued that the competence of the EU Fundamental Rights Agency should be extended to monitor the situation in the member states beyond its narrowly defined competence, and, therefore, the Article 7 procedure should be based on the monitoring carried out by the EU Fundamental Rights Agency.

Today, after ten years, we see the Article 7 procedure in action. On 20 December 2017 the EU Commission triggered this procedure for the first time with respect to Poland. The legislation reforming the judiciary was assessed by the EU Commission as posing a clear risk of a serious breach of the rule of law in Poland.



PRIV-WAR project conference, 2008

The competence of the EU Fundamental Rights Agency has not been changed. Instead, the Rule of Law framework has been adopted by the EU Commission in 2014. This is a tool that allows for establishing a dialogue with the member state and preventing a situation of clear risk of a serious breach of fundamental values.

Thus, today we see that the processes posing serious threats to the rule of law in Europe have not disappeared. The European Union, for its part, has taken them seriously and put in action a mechanism whose efficiency is yet to be seen. The situation in Latvia has become much more stable.

On a personal note, 2008 was of particular importance for me. It was the year when I became Prorector at RGSL. For years to come the top administration was made up of a “troika” – Rector George Ulrich, Director Kitija Gruškevica (Freija) and Prorector (myself). I would like to end by saying without exaggeration that it was a great pleasure to be part of this team, where important decisions were taken in consultation and based on professional wisdom. More than this, I still keep wondering at how much the whole RGSL team – numerically small, but dedicated and professional – has achieved. It is only possible if there is a real Team.



Kushtrim Istrefi

RGSL Graduate of the IEL Masters programme 2008/2009

RGSL Visiting Lecturer in Human Rights Law, 2016-present

Senior Researcher at the Netherlands Office of the Public International Law and Policy Group

It is not uncommon for an international lawyer to have studied and conducted research at multiple universities. I, too, attended various academic institutions in the process of completing my PhD and obtaining my law degrees. Aside from RGSL, these were the University of Graz, South East European University, Cambridge University, the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies and the Max Planck Institute for International and Comparative Law. In considering the impact that each institution had on my legal formation, I think of, among others, two aspects. First, the extent to which the quality of teaching or research both inspired me and equipped me with legal knowledge and skills. Second, the career support it provided after completion of my studies.

This reflection on my studies at RGSL is an attempt to explore these two aspects by way of looking at the time I spent in Riga



and how that time shaped my subsequent professional work as a lecturer and legal adviser in international law.

I commenced my Masters studies in International and European Law at RGSL as a recipient of the Open Society Foundation (OSF) scholarship in 2008. It was a year that marked many developments in international law and relations, including the Russo-Georgian war, the Kosovo Declaration of

Independence, the *Kadi* case of the then-European Court of Justice and the *Varnava* and *Kononov* judgments of the Strasbourg Court. The focus of RGSL studies on these developments made the programme both challenging and stimulating. It was challenging for many students, including myself, to master simultaneously the breadth and foundations of international law, and engage at the same time with intricate developments, such as Kosovo's path to statehood and *Kadi's* approach to fragmentation of international law, that prompted fresh reflections.

The programme was highly stimulating since it allowed the students to discuss these complex

issues with prominent scholars and practitioners, including the President and Judges of the European Court of Human Rights, Jean Paul Costa, Ineta Ziemele and Snezhana Botusharova. The studies were equally enriching due to a diverse body of students, bringing their perspectives on socio-cultural aspects of human rights from the Caucasus, Central Asia, Southeast and Western Europe.

As I look back at the developments which took place during my studies at RGSL, I realise that the areas discussed then at RGSL,

such as international peace, fragmentation of international law and European human rights law, remained at the heart of my professional activity in the last ten years. In my current role of Senior Researcher for the Public International Law and Policy Group I work on a daily basis on issues of international peace, advising states and non-state actors on conflict prevention and criminal justice. Previously I advised the three branches of the Kosovo government on state building. My PhD topic, a forthcoming book entitled *European Judicial Responses to Security Council Resolutions*, largely dealt with fragmentation of international law and *Kadi*-type cases. I also taught and published extensively on European human rights law. In addition to academic research, I practiced European human rights law by successfully litigating the first case of forced disappearance before the EULEX Human Rights Review Panel. The cases discussed in RGSL in this regard, including the Varnava judgment, had an essential impact on my professional activity devoted to human rights litigation. The discernible connection between the areas of study at RGSL and my subsequent professional work attest to the quality of programmes offered at RGSL.

Furthermore, RGSL has showed its commitment to maintaining contacts and exploring modes of collaboration with its alumni. It is this type of attention that makes RGSL alumni maintain the bond with and return to the school in different capacities. In the more recent past I have collaborated with RGSL and its staff on numerous projects. In 2014 and 2016 I gave a talk at RGSL and presented at the RGSL-hosted conference of the European Society of International Law. Since 2017 I am co-lecturing human rights courses with RGSL Professor George Ulrich. I am also collaborating with RGSL Professor Ineta Ziemele and RGSL Lecturer Ieva Miļūna on a publication and a research project.

This reflection revealing the significant role of RGSL in my journey of professional formation is a story in relation to only one of its alumni. I am certain that RGSL has contributed greatly to the professional growth and development of its many other alumni, including most of my classmates, who are now involved in international organisations, public institutions, academia, law firms and civil society.

I would like to conclude by wishing RGSL a great start to its third decade of excellence in teaching and research.



Students with RGSL Honorary Professor Eleanor Sharpston, 2009



Waleed Gumaa

RGSL Director of Law and Finance
programme 2007-present

RGSL Lecturer 2010-present

RGSL Director of Masters programmes
2017-present

2009 – Metamorphosis – Future thinking

My journey with the Riga Graduate School began four years earlier, when, along with the board, we were developing the roadmap for the school after the Swedish handover.

In 2007, work began on developing what was the first interdisciplinary programme for the institution. My colleague, Gaļina Žukova, and I were tasked with developing a programme in Law and Finance. The model was unlike anything that was running in the institution previously, and it was designed as a standalone programme. The programme content was a unique combination of carefully selected law and finance courses, balanced out in order to create an understanding of the relationship between the two disciplines. After months of work, a large programme was created and submitted to the Ministry of Education for licensing. The result came back positive with a comment from the panel of evaluators asking why such a

programme was not developed sooner, as it was something that the market needed!

The programme was unusual in the fact that it ran for a calendar year and not an academic year, with a compressed format that consisted of four full days a month and more courses than a standard Masters programme. It was also a first for the school, as we not only accepted students with a background in law, but also ones with a business background.

The programme was first launched in January 2008 with about sixteen students and was followed up with a second intake that autumn, cementing its success. All the participants were professionals working in various fields and industries, from the legal, banking, manufacturing, services and public sectors. The diversity of the student backgrounds served to enhance the programme. In addition, the delivery model proved popular amongst participants, as it meant the time away from their professions was disrupted as little as possible while they pursued fulltime graduate studies. What was equally impressive was the breadth and new direction of research that came out through the academic work of the students

in their theses, covering topics ranging from financial and banking regulation to the impact of directives on the bottom lines of organisations.

Fast forward to 2009 and the implementation of that roadmap was well underway. The Law and Finance programme was already developed and launched the year before and was the first interdisciplinary programme that was to shape and set the future ethos and direction of the school. The programme was well received by the students and business – not only the legal profession, but by the private business sector and banks. With expert faculty and practitioners sourced for the programme and



specialised law and finance courses, it was not long before one of the major banks saw the value in the programme and a deal was struck to financially support the programme, in exchange for their staff attending select lectures with a five-year agreement set up. Baiba Traidase, a graduate of the programme, was awarded third place in the Bank of Latvia competition for her thesis, entitled “The European Structural Fund Implementation Scheme in Latvia: A New Approach”.

This programme was a milestone for the institution. It cemented the fact that the way forward was not as a traditional law school, but something different, something hybrid. And so, in 2009, along with colleagues, we embarked on a journey that was to define the Riga Graduate of School for the next decade.

We began by looking at our programmes: the International and European Law programme, the Law and Finance as well as the Legal Linguistics programme. With the growing interest in the specialty programmes, the need to create niches became

apparent. We looked at our International and European Law Masters programme, which was a generalist programme, and from that we were able to create three separate specialities. These were subsequently licenced and our catalogue of programmes grew to include Public International Law and Human Rights, European Union Law and Policy, Transborder Commercial Law as well as the general International and European Law programme, bringing the count to six areas of specialisation. This diversity in the graduate programmes strengthened our position in the market.

The thinking did not stop there. Peter Gjortler and I set out to develop what was to become a major milestone for the institution – to offer the expertise and experience garnered in the Masters to a newer, younger generation. With the premise of interdisciplinarity, we embarked on the ambitious development of what came to be our first undergraduate programme. The idea of law as a standalone programme was not attractive enough for our small market, with many competitors offering just that. So, we thought, Law and What? It had to be something that would prepare graduates for the employment market, as well as provide



Law and Finance programme Director Waleed Gumaa with students, 2008



Professor Luc Nijs with Law and Finance programme students, 2011

them with options for graduate education, but not just in law. After weeks of reflection and discussion, we agreed on what was to be our first undergraduate programme, Law and Business. It was a huge undertaking to develop the programme, one where a balance between the two disciplines was needed - which law courses and which business courses. The work required to put the programme together was a big task, but by bringing the team together, we managed.

While work was being done on the Law and Business programme, we were approached by representatives of the University of Latvia to develop another undergraduate programme. Latvia was to host the Presidency of the EU Council in the upcoming 2015. It was felt that there was more that needed to be done in order to prepare: graduates knowledgeable in law, economics and diplomacy ready to turn the Presidency into a success. The proposal: a consortium of excellence! The University of Latvia was to teach Political Science, the Stockholm School of Economics in Riga to cover Economics, and the Riga Graduate School of Law to deliver international and European law. The programme was to be a Bachelor in Law, Economics and Diplomacy, with the ambition of diplomas issued jointly by the consortium. It was an ambitious

challenge, and work began to develop an additional programme in parallel to the existing Law and Business.

That was to be our second Bachelor programme, which is today the Law and Diplomacy programme. The idea of a joint degree did not materialise due to restrictions in legislation. However, the cooperation of the consortium remained, as both the Stockholm School of Economics and the University of Latvia regularly contribute to the programme. The scene was now set for the future transformation of the institution.

The Board, and particularly its chairman, Professor Indriķis Muižnieks (Vice Rector, University of Latvia), with whom I worked closely several years earlier and who had been appointed acting rector in February 2009, were particularly supportive and keen on the efforts to expand the offerings of the institution and grow it, playing a pivotal role in bringing the consortium together and supporting staff ideas for this transformation.

It was August and, specifically, my birthday when George Ulrich started as the fifth rector of the school, a journey that would go the full term of six years and establish the school as a centre for interdisciplinary teaching and excellence.



Reinis Bērziņš

RGSL Graduate of the Law and Finance
Masters programme 2010/2011
Chairperson of the Board the Development
Finance Institution Altum



I graduated from Riga Graduate School of Law in 2011 with a Masters degree with merit, majoring in the strong interdisciplinary programme of Law and Finance.

The opportunity of having such a programme was really important for me, as my professional interest and choices have always been of double focus – on law and finance.

The time of my studies has left the best of memories, as it was organised for employed people in a convenient way, based on a modules system. I loved the approach of RGSL – flexible towards the process of studying, whilst strict and of a high standard. This school is also special for other reasons to me, as my wife graduated this programme at the same time as me and later became a lecturer for a couple of years at RGSL.

Looking back at the time of my studies, what I found important was the high professional quality of the teaching staff, the professors from Latvia and abroad.

If I should single out one lecturer, I would like to mention Luc Nijs, who taught at the time I was taking most of my subjects and who was also the advisor to my Master Thesis.

I would like to express my thanks to the entire RGSL team that I still am on good terms with, and especially to Waleed Gumaa, the Director of the Masters Programmes.

I would highly recommend Riga Graduate School of Law to anyone looking for an education that surpasses the average level in Latvia.



Peter Gjortler

RGSL Visiting and Senior Lecturer,
1998-2016

RGSL Director of Bachelor programmes,
2010-2014

RGSL Director of International
Development, 2014-2016

Advokat, Of Counsel at
Grayston & Company law firm



2010 – The End of the Beginning

As part of a speech given in 1942, marking a positive turn of events during the Second World War, Winston Churchill famously remarked that this was not the end, and also not even the beginning of the end, but possibly the end of the beginning.

In a similar manner, the inauguration of the RGSL Bachelor programmes in 2010 may be regarded as the end of what had been a long and successful beginning, which commenced with the inauguration of the Masters programmes in 1998.

The initial years of RGSL had the advantage of operating a fully funded programme, financed by the Latvian and Swedish governments together with the Soros Foundation, for a limited number of students, which allowed for a highly professional

teaching staff that had good time to engage with a group of highly motivated students, who were able to dedicate themselves fulltime to their studies.

Similar operating conditions have recently been created for the Advanced and Intensive programmes, which have been established for the European Neighbourhood Policy Countries, Central Asia and the Western Balkans. With full donor funding, highly motivated professionals from these countries come to Latvia to study with RGSL and its cooperating partners.

This underlines the essential role of financing in establishing and operating teaching programmes at a level of excellence, which should be a political priority for both a host country, such as Latvia, and for regional organisations, such as the European Union. However, in the balance of economic priorities, operating education at a level of excellence often becomes a difficult task.

This was the challenge faced by RGSL when full funding of the Masters programmes came to an end in 2004, at the time of the Latvian accession to the European Union. It was clear that even with the introduction of tuition fees, it would be very difficult to continue the operation of only a Masters programme with a limited number of students, although solutions were found for a limited number of years.

It was on this background that the Bachelor programmes were developed, with the aim of creating a complete educational environment from the beginning undergraduate studies to graduation at the Masters or PhD level. Originally, PhD studies had only been facilitated by RGSL at foreign universities, but simultaneously with the development of the Bachelor programmes, a PhD cooperation programme was established with the University of Copenhagen.

Accordingly, the Bachelor programmes were to constitute the foundation for further studies at RGSL, as well as providing a professional education that could be used in both Latvian and international institutions and companies. As an additional advantage, the Bachelor programmes would ensure a much larger student body and thereby provide the tuition fees necessary for programme operations.

At the same time, RGSL had become an institution owned mainly by the University of Latvia, together with DOTS, the successor to the Soros Foundation Latvia. However, RGSL has maintained its right to teach exclusively in the English language, as originally established in an agreement between Sweden and Latvia.

On this background, it seemed clear that RGSL should continue to place its focus on providing international education in the English language, and accordingly that the Bachelor programmes should not be set up in competition with the Latvian law programmes of the University of Latvia. Thus, the teaching should be on principles of law, using many different legal systems as examples, and one of the central aims should be to train the students in legal argumentation.

Furthermore, the possibility of cooperation with both the University of Latvia and the neighbouring Stockholm School of Economics in Riga pointed towards the creation of interdisciplinary programmes, which was also a current trend in the development of legal education. An interest in multidisciplinary studies was also expressed by students who participated in the development of the new Bachelor programmes.

This led to the creation of two classical interdisciplinary programmes, which were to include law, economics and political science. The first was entitled Law and Business, thus having focus on both public and private economics, and the other was entitled Law and Diplomacy, which in addition to political science included also history and other elements of humanities. However, it was clear from the beginning that the curricula and schedule of the two programmes should be as closely linked as possible, with due regard to their separate character.

Originally, only Law and Business was established as an LL.B programme providing a law degree, while Law and Diplomacy was established as a BA programme with a more general social sciences degree. However, it became clear that student interest



Student Association Board, 2013



Students - Erasmus buddies, 2017

was focussed on obtaining a law degree, and both lines of study therefore became LL.B programmes, which allowed for further integration of the teaching.

One of the difficult issues in designing the programmes was how to accommodate wishes for student choice. On the one hand, the American tradition for Bachelor programmes was a relatively open choice of courses, while the European tradition in law programmes was a highly regulated curriculum at the Bachelor level. In addition, the programmes would be subject to the requirements of Latvian educational law, and eventually the solution became a mainly mandatory first year with a high level of choice in the second and third years.

A second difficult issue was the length of the courses, where amongst others the Danish tradition has been for simultaneous courses of full semester duration, while amongst others the Swedish tradition has been for full-time courses of short duration. On balance, it was decided to maintain the tradition of the RGSL Masters programme in having simultaneous courses of medium duration, normally set at 6 weeks, but extendable to 12 weeks.

It was made very clear in presenting the programmes that they did not provide degrees that would meet the Latvian requirements for entering the regulated legal professions as advocate, prosecutor, notary or judge. However, under Latvian law this did not preclude the hiring of graduates as legal assistants in law firms, which also took place to a large extent. Likewise, graduates could be employed by public institutions and private companies, and overall graduates had a very high level of employment.

However, it was also made clear to graduates that in the longer run, many employers such as the European Union would require a Masters level education. With both Bachelor programmes established as law degrees, it became possible to offer access for graduates to the two-year RGSL Masters degrees, so as to comply with the Bologna model implemented in Latvia.

At the same time, becoming authorised lawyers remained an interest for many students. This was possible with the Professional Masters degree of RGSL, but the ongoing reform of the legal

profession points to the need for new measures, which might be addressed in cooperation with the University of Latvia.

One of the strong advantages of the RGSL Bachelor education is the active focus on legal, economic and political science analysis and argumentation, as opposed to the more traditional, passive learning of the dogma of law, economics and politics. Thus, graduates are well trained in acquiring the necessary facts in the field of professional activity that they take up, and they are also very well trained for further studies at both RGSL and other universities.

Many graduates have obtained placement in Masters programmes at leading international universities in Europe, the USA and elsewhere.

A second strong advantage is the international environment on the RGSL campus, which is often portrayed as providing the experience of studying abroad without leaving Latvia. The basis for this environment is the exclusive use of the English language and also the composition of the study body, which includes representatives of many countries, both as programme participants and as Erasmus exchange visitors.

The international environment is further enhanced by the teaching contributions of many international teachers, coming from both the professions and leading universities in Europe and elsewhere. Likewise, the international outlook of the RGSL faculty is enhanced by the use of Erasmus faculty exchanges with the many cooperation partners of RGSL. This international aspect is central to the character of RGSL, and great care must be taken to maintain it, despite possible budgetary concerns.

It has been a great privilege to work with programme development at RGSL since the beginning in 1998, through several revisions of the Masters programmes and the development of the Bachelor, PhD, Advanced and Intensive programmes. One of the advantages of a highly professional, but not very large institution, such as RGSL, is the ability to act very fast when required.

Thus, following an approval by the Board of RGSL, the Bachelor programmes were created and certified within a six-month period, including full development of all course curricula as required for the certification procedure and the subsequent accreditation. This was possible only through extensive teamwork, as well as relying on the many personal contacts of the RGSL faculty, so as to allow for the creation of the full visiting faculty necessary for delivering the programmes.

This same approach was subsequently taken for the Advanced and Intensive programmes, which were created based on a donor request, and which had to be fully developed within a few months. Once more, the basis for this being possible was teamwork, as well as the high professional standing of RGSL as a provider of legal, economic and political education in the international market.

It must therefore remain a priority for RGSL to maintain this high standing. During the time that I had the pleasure of running RGSL programmes, one practical measure that we adopted was to separate academic and budgetary concerns, so that as programme director I could focus on providing high quality and leave the economic concerns to the RGSL director. Naturally, we needed to communicate and define limits, but in the daily operation of the programmes, focus was kept on achieving the best professional and pedagogical quality possible.

I wish RGSL congratulations on its 20-year anniversary and all the best for the continuation of all the RGSL programmes, including the many new developments that have been or may be implemented.



The first Bachelor programme graduation, 2013



Raimonds Slaidiņš

RGSL Lecturer, 2008-present

Senior Partner at Ellex Klavins law firm

Our law firm has been part of the RGSL story not just for the 20 years of RGSL's existence, but even for a year or two prior to that. We represented the Swedish government in the establishment of the school and were involved in the initial feasibility studies and negotiations with the Latvian government and Soros Foundation which took place a year or two prior to the establishment of RGSL. We had represented the Swedish government in the establishment of SSE in Riga, and this led naturally to the work we performed to establish RGSL in 1998. Our firm is very proud of both projects, and we were very excited about bringing these respected institutions into Latvia and the Baltics.

The next contribution by our firm to RGSL was in 2001, when we contributed "in kind" by donating a Volkswagen bus to the school. We wanted to assist the development of the school from a practical perspective, and after some investigation, the RGSL administration understood that the school could really use its own vehicle. I understand that the Volkswagen bus had a good long life and served RGSL well for many years.



Since 2008 we have been teaching the Mergers and Acquisitions (M&A) course at RGSL, which was originally developed as part of the Law and Finance Masters programme. This course was an idea that Waleed came up with in 2008 as he was developing the new Law and Finance programme. And, since M&A work had been the backbone of our firm from the time of our establishment in 1992, this made sense to us and we were happy to participate. As

co-leaders of our firm's M&A practice group, Zinta Jansons and I developed the course.

We taught the first M&A Workshop at RGSL in 2008. At the time it was an unusual experience for us, as we are not academics but practical lawyers. We have really enjoyed the course over the years. It is refreshing to be back in an academic atmosphere and interact with the students, as well as the administration and the other faculty at RGSL. The course has gone through different variations – from the beginning it was a Masters course, which we continue to present every year, but we also developed a lengthier Bachelor level course. And as the course has developed, we have involved

other colleagues from our firm to lecture with regard to their specific areas of expertise.

Apart from the M&A course I have had the pleasure of participating in various other events at RGSL from time to time. I have enjoyed the Open House events where I have had a chance to speak to potential students and candidates about what RGSL could offer them, and what life is like after graduation.

Of course, when we are looking to fill positions within our firm, RGSL is one of the first places we look for young lawyers. Out of the 45 lawyers in our firm, more than 10 are RGSL alumni, including two of the partners of our firm – Pēteris Dalderis and Ivars Pommers.

We have found that RGS� graduates have learned to research and think creatively, and are able to communicate their thoughts very well – both qualities that are essential when working with demanding clients in the real world. They are able to think practically, digest what the law says, understand the concepts, come up with the answer from a legal perspective, and

then communicate that answer to a client in a way that the client understands. Those are some of the qualities that our firm looks for in the law school graduates we interview.

Riga Graduate School of Law is part of our firm's story and our culture – something I am very proud of.



Public discussion, 2018



Ilze Rūse

RGSL Lecturer and Associate Professor,
2009-present

Ambassador of Latvia to the Kingdom of
the Netherlands, the Kingdom of Belgium
and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg

Twenty years of Riga Graduate School of Law cover two thirds of the duration of Latvia's regained independence. RGSL was established to support high-quality education for a new generation of civil servants and scholars in preparing for membership in the EU. In other words, RGSL has witnessed and contributed to the European integration of Latvia by delivering a new generation of graduates who are well equipped in assisting their country in building up and strengthening its institutions, working with the *acquis communautaire* and taking an active engagement in Latvia's first Presidency of the EU Council. During these years RGSL has attracted a large number of foreign students as well. Each year RGSL Alumni brings together former students from European countries, Central Asia, the Western Balkans and the European Neighbourhood. It is an international hub within the heart of the Art Nouveau centre of Riga.



RGSL and its objectives have changed along with the country's development, but it continuously keeps a strong focus on multidisciplinary and internationalisation. For me RGSL is a place where you can meet professors from all parts of Europe arriving to teach at their modules. It is a place in Riga which often hosts public lectures by foreign ministers, high-level NATO and EU officials, international

judges or outstanding scholars, who visit Latvia on working visits or are invited to share their expertise in international law, human rights or European politics. It is a place where theoretical studies are merged with practical teaching methods, such as moot courts, simulation negotiations and training for civil servants and judges.

Meeting practitioners of law, international law or diplomacy is a part of the daily routine at RGSL and gives the school its uniqueness, among other higher education establishments in Latvia. To some extent I consider myself one of the double-hatted faculty members, possessing an academic degree of Associate Professor at RGSL and currently being employed in the diplomatic service of the Republic of Latvia. It is a win-win situation. In the past two years many RGSL students and graduates have taken the opportunity to take up an Erasmus internship combination at Latvian diplomatic missions, including the Latvian Embassy in The Hague. 'Learning by doing' is one of the best approaches for students and graduates of the Law and Diplomacy programme.

After defending my PhD in European Politics at Salzburg University in 2011, I returned to Latvia and was warmly welcomed

at the RGSL faculty by its multinational staff. 2012 became a very productive year in terms of academic publications on my dissertation and other ongoing research projects with Salzburg University, the European Union Institute in Florence and Tartu University. Together with the International Office, we initiated RGSL's participation at the NORDPLUS network, providing opportunities for students and academic staff to engage in academic collaboration with universities in the Nordic-Baltic region. Also, the Erasmus network expanded considerably under the engaged coordination by Ulla Zumente-Steele.

In general, 2012 can be characterised as a very dynamic year for RGSL in terms of research and academic projects. For me the most memorable moment was receiving a mail from the European Commission, informing me that RGSL has qualified for the *Marie Curie* Grant, an application for which we submitted in 2011, together with Professor George Ulrich. The DelExPol project (2013-2016) on EU External Relations allowed RGSL to carry out as the lead institution a research project in the field of EU External Relations. It also provided resources for innovative teaching

methods, including a negotiation simulation retreat and resulted in several conference papers and a book chapter. The project term coincided with Latvia's preparation for its first presidency, thus we could additionally benefit from the academic networks that were gained in Denmark, Estonia, Italy, Austria, Belgium and Germany.

In 2012 RGSL also became part of an EU-funded QUALETRA research consortium together with seven other EU member states, aiming at improving the quality of legal translation. RGSL Senior lecturer Christopher Goddard was in charge of carrying out this project.

No doubt that most important precondition for the RGSL dynamism and success in 2012 was its people – a powerful academic faculty and a great administrative team, including Director Kitija Freija (Gruškevica) and Administrator Ksenija Ļevčenko. Apart from experienced faculty colleagues, such as Professor George Ulrich and Senior lecturer Peter Gjortler, new faculty members were joining. In 2012 Inese Druviete defended her PhD, becoming *Doctor Juris* at the University of Latvia and in the same year joining the RGSL faculty.



Simulation of EU negotiations with Masters programme students, 2014



RGSL Intensive programme students, 2017

The RGSJ has applied its strong expertise in the field of human rights both in lecturing and international networking. In October 2012 RGSJ organised an international conference *'Post-Socialist Justice After Two Decades'*, aiming at revealing legal aspects of the transition from a post-socialist society to democracy and rule of law.

RGSJ faculty also actively take part in academic conferences abroad, including the presentation by Prorector Dr. Mārtiņš Mīts on the experience of training of judges and prosecutors at the conference of the Academic Network of Judicial Studies in Bucharest.

In 2012 RGSJ hosted numerous public lectures by the Latvian government and Parliament representatives, judges and legal practitioners, foreign diplomats, Members of the European Parliament, to name a few.

RGSJ was established to support Latvia's accession to the EU. Having accomplished this mission, it can now become an Excellence Centre for expertise in EU integration, Human Rights and International Law. The visiting foreign faculty as well as the expertise from Latvia's EU integration set the necessary preconditions. An advanced programme for European neighbourhood countries and Central Asia is a great start in this direction.



EU Summit simulation with Masters programme students, 2018



George Ulrich

RGSL Rector, 2009-2016

RGSL Professor, 2009-present

EMA Programme Director at the European
Inter-University Centre for Human Rights
and Democratisation

RGSL 20th Anniversary, Recollections of the Year 2013

A milestone of the year 2013 was the awarding of diplomas to the first generation of Bachelor students at RGSL. The two Bachelor programmes launched in 2010 in the areas, respectively, of Law and Business and Law and Diplomacy generated a tremendous infusion of life into the serene Strēlnieku Street premises. It was a joy to watch the first cohort of Bachelor students come of age and rise to the challenges of innovative, interdisciplinary university studies. The aim to offer internationally oriented programmes in English in the local Riga environment was successfully realised, and as several new graduates enrolled for studies in one of our Masters programmes, an internal RGSL recruitment stream was established for the first time. Another natural path for graduates was to seek employment in the public sector, notably in preparation for the Latvian presidency of the EU in 2015, which was on everyone's mind at the time. Peter Gjortler served as the first Director of the Bachelor programmes and was



one of their key architects, but numerous other members of the RGSL faculty contributed to the realisation of this endeavour, which was a source of collective pride. The Bachelor students, for their part, from the very beginning manifested an exceptionally strong school spirit, as was epitomised by a beautiful chorus performance and an original song dedicated to RGSL on the occasion of the 2013 graduation ceremony.

Equally important in terms of institutional development was the launching of a joint PhD programme in partnership with the University of Copenhagen. The programme was licensed by the Latvian authorities in the spring of 2013, and the first enrolled student, Žaneta Mikosa, commenced her studies shortly thereafter. In the following years, each Doctoral student at RGSL made his or her own unique contribution to the study environment and life of the faculty. This further reinforced our path towards becoming a fully-fledged institution of higher learning.

To facilitate this development, it had long been a priority to expand the RGSL academic staff and thereby reduce the school's reliance on externally recruited lecturers. Several years later, this objective has not fully been realised and remains a key challenge for the development of the school. However, precisely in the year 2013 some important steps were taken in the direction of strengthening the RGSL faculty. In addition to attracting Doctoral students, which in and of itself contributed important faculty resources, two key faculty members attained election as Associated Professors. Mārtiņš Mits, who had been affiliated with RGSL as lecturer for close to a decade and served as Prorector

since 2008, was a pillar of solidity for the school and an invaluable colleague in the rectorate. It was a fitting tribute that he now attained full academic credentials. In the same round of elections, Ilze Rūse was also awarded the title of Associated Professor. Being an eminent political science scholar with an international Doctoral degree who decided to return to her native Latvia after several years abroad in international service and in academia, Ilze reached out to RGSL as a natural place of affiliation. We welcomed her with open arms, in keeping with the underlying strategy to establish the school as an important academic resource base. Shortly after joining the faculty, Ilze attracted a prestigious *Marie Curie* integration grant to the school, which was jointly undertaken by her and me. We also hosted a book launch for the publication “*Why Neighbours Cooperate*”, which is based on Ilze’s Doctoral thesis and provides an insightful analysis of regional partnerships within the wider EU framework.



RGS L Rector George Ulrich at the Graduation, 2016

In the autumn of 2013, RGSL Professor Frank Diedrich organised an international conference in Riga on ‘The Status Quo of Mediation – Options for Countries in Transition.’ Throughout the year, a wide range of further initiatives aimed at strengthening RGSL’s international exposure and network of contacts, as well as its profile as a centre of excellence in the local scholarly community. These included guest lectures by Judge of the European Court of Human Rights, Professor Ineta Ziemele; Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Nils Muižnieks; Dean of the Faculty of Law of Yeditepe University, Istanbul, Professor Haluk Kabaalioglu; Minister of Economics of the Republic of Latvia, Daniels Pavļuts; Minister of Defence of the Republic of Latvia, Artis Pabriks; Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, Frans Timmermans; Ambassador of Georgia, Konstantin Korkelia; Ambassador of Canada, John Morrison; Head of the European Commission Representation in Latvia, Inna Šteinbuka; Judge of the European Court of Justice, Egils Levits; Member of the European Parliament, Krišjānis Kariņš and many, many others.

At the level of institutional partnerships, we maintained excellent relations of cooperation with the University of Latvia and the neighbouring Stockholm School of Economics in Riga, and further developed our cooperation with the Open Society Foundation, building in a positive way on the highly successful conference on ‘Post-Socialist Justice’, which was held in the RGSL premises in the autumn of 2012 in honour of outgoing OSF President Aryeh Neier. We benefitted from ongoing, highly rewarding faculty exchanges with Deusto University, Bilbao, and numerous other Erasmus cooperation partners. The engagement with a circle of Latvian honorary ambassadors to Italy likewise opened new avenues for university cooperation. Towards the end of the year, Mārtiņš Mits and I attended a Fundamental Rights Conference in Vilnius devoted to the topic ‘Combatting Hate Crime in the EU’, and as RGSL had meanwhile joined the Association of Human Rights Institutes (AHRI), we became increasingly integrated in a wider network of European human rights scholars.

Internally, 2013 was the last full year of Kitija Freija's tenure as Administrative Director of RGSL, as early the following year she opted to return to the University of Latvia to take on an important assignment related to the development of new university premises. During her tenure at RGSL, Kitija oversaw a restructuring and consolidation of the School's administration and finances and transferred an organisation in very good shape to her capable successor, Karīna Kulberga.

For me personally, the year 2013 marked the halfway point of my seven-year involvement with RGSL. On 19 March, the Cabinet of Ministers confirmed my appointment to a second term in the position of rector. As we were in the midst of a dynamic process of institutional transformation, this was an exciting moment in the history of the School and for all of us in the academic and administrative staff.

By 2013, we had all but completed a comprehensive transition from an externally funded project, which is how RGSL was originally conceived and realised, to a self-standing, potentially sustainable institution of higher learning firmly embedded in the local context.

The keys to this transformation were twofold. The school's debt burden needed, first of all, to be alleviated. This was accomplished already in 2010 through a concerted effort and with the support of benefactors in the Latvian Ministry of Education, the Soros Foundation Latvia, and RGSL's main shareholder, the University of Latvia. Secondly, student numbers needed to be significantly increased so as to generate new income streams and spread the cost of the institutional premises and infrastructure. To accomplish this objective, the existing Masters programmes were streamlined, and the two Bachelor programmes (as well as, to a lesser extent, the newly launched Doctoral programme) decisively boosted the public profile of RGSL and its student intake.

It cannot be stated too strongly that the institutional transformation described in these paragraphs was a collective accomplishment. During my seven years with RGSL, I was

continuously impressed by the talent, commitment and devotion displayed by virtually every member of the RGSL team. My fondest hope for the school as it moves towards an uncertain future is that it will be able to maintain, and to some extent recapture, the vision and dynamism that characterised our interaction at this crucial juncture. Certain subsequent developments, notably the launching of the Advanced Programme and other specialised training modules for civil servants and civil society actors from the EU Eastern neighbourhood, bode well in this regard. Beyond this horizon, new actors in key positions at RGSL will define new agendas, and I look forward to contributing to them, to the best of my ability, as a lay member of the RGSL faculty.



Training programme for Uzbekistan state officials, RGSL Rector George Ulrich with US Ambassador Nancy Bikoff Pettit, 2016



Ieva Miļūna

RGSL Lecturer in International Law,
2008-present

A Tradition of Moot Court Competitions at RGSL

The year 2014 marked a solid establishment of a tradition for RGSL to serve as a platform to promote a moot court competition custom in Latvia and internationally. A new moot court competition, entitled the Riga Moot, was first established at RGSL after a trial to organise a local RGSL internal moot court in 2013. It was my initiative to develop RGSL to serve as a base for a moot court, which will be organised by RGSL annually, together with its Student Association.

Riga Moot is intended to be an internationally oriented moot court competition, which gathers teams not only from universities in Latvia, but also from abroad. It is based on a fictitious case related to international law, which divides each team into two sides, each arguing on behalf of either applicant or respondent. We usually pick up a topical issue of international law and politics for a fictitious case, so that students can express their legal opinion on the existing law and analyse how the law should further develop. The RGSL is grateful to the European law firm KLOTINI SERGIS for



their annual support in sponsoring the main prize for the winner team of the Riga Moot.

The moot court competition tradition comes from the United States. It is a method of studying law via preparing legal research and written memorials, as well as playing out fictitious court proceedings on the basis of a fictitious case. Moot courts enhance students' ability to develop their legal research skills as well as strengthen their public speaking and argumentation experience.

Over the years, RGSL students have been active in taking part in internationally recognised moot court competitions. Our students have participated in the Central and Eastern European Law Moot Court Competition, European Law Moot Court Competition, Telders International Law Moot Court Competition, Philip C. Jessup International Law Moot Court Competition, Willem C. Vis International Commercial Arbitration Moot Court Competition, Manfred Lachs Space Law Moot Court Competition and ELSA (European Law Student Association) civil law and administrative law moot court competitions. RGSL students have enjoyed and kept motivated in taking part in

international moot court competitions, thus being well-equipped and well-orientated in discussing topical legal issues of European and international law. They have also participated in Latvian national law moot court competitions, like the Kārlis Dišlers Constitutional Law Moot Court Competition and Jānis Čakste Civil Law Moot Court Competition. Our faculty members: Senior lecturer Peter Gjortler, Dr. Inese Druviete and I have served as judges in multiple international and European-law-related moot court competitions.

In 2013, I coached an RGSL team for the Telders International Law Moot Court Competition. It was composed of two Bachelor students, Luīze Mantiņa and Rolands Žīgurs, and two Masters

students, Ketevan Vardosanidze and Dmitriy Piskunov. It was an effective combination which permitted both Bachelor and Masters students to learn from each other and engage in productive teamwork. The highest prize the team got was eighth place as applicants in the oral rounds, and Bachelor student Luíze Mantíņa was awarded a prize as ninth best speaker out of 100 contestants.

Apart from moot courts, RGSL has been very active in participating in international research projects. They have been and are mostly related to human rights, international humanitarian law, EU law, mediation and legal translation. The RGSL research teams were formed from the most active RGSL faculty members – Dr. Mārtiņš Mits, Professor Ineta Ziemele, Professor George Ulrich, the late Dr. Kristīne Krūma and myself. This contributes to RGSL's role and active involvement in promoting human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Latvia and internationally.

From 2008 to 2011 I administered and served as a researcher at the EU research project PRIV-WAR – Regulating Privatisation of War. The eight leading European universities explored how human rights and international humanitarian law are applicable to private military and security companies operating in armed conflict

zones abroad. The RGSL research team was led by Professor Ineta Ziemele. Our researchers focused on issues of human rights, Baltic States' national laws and State responsibility. As a result of this project, the recommendations were presented to the European Commission and the following two books were published: Francesco Francioni and Natalino Ronzitti (eds.), *War By Contract: Human Rights, Humanitarian Law and Private Contractors*, Oxford University Press, 2011; and Christine Bakker and Mirko Sossai (eds.), *Multilevel Regulation of Military and Security Contractors: The Interplay between International, European and Domestic Norms*, Hart Publishing, 2012. RGSL researchers contributed chapters to both of these books.

I consider the two most prominent events during these 20 years of RGSL to be: 1) the promotion of values of human rights and democracy during Latvia's transitional period from socialism to a market economy and during the accession period of Latvia to the EU and NATO; and 2) the initiation of RGSL Bachelor programmes based on demands in the job market.



RGSL team at the Kārlis Dišlers Constitutional law moot court competition, 2011



Public lecture on UN and Conflict Resolution with Sherwin Das, 2018

When I began lecturing at RGSL in 2007, I was mostly involved with the Masters programme, teaching such courses as State Responsibility, International Humanitarian Law and International Criminal Law. At that time, it was felt that RGSL did indeed prepare effective experts capable of dealing professionally with the modern challenges of public international law and human rights. I am proud to see that my students and alumni of RGSL can now be found at national ministries of foreign affairs, ministries of justice, non-governmental organizations, international organisations (EU, International Criminal Court) as well as international law firms.

In 2010, before we opened the two RGSL Bachelor programmes – Law and Diplomacy and Law and Business, we discussed their content in great detail during RGSL brainstorm meetings. We compared them with study programmes at various European universities, and we looked at the demands in the job market. I consider these two programmes to be major RGSL successes. Students receive opinions and insights from high-profile

experts and professors during these studies and are able to use this knowledge in their professional practice. It was not a coincidence that many RGSL alumni of the Law and Diplomacy programme were able to contribute to the work of Latvia's presidency at the Council of the European Union in the first semester of 2015.

To conclude, I think that the role and mission of RGSL for the next 20 years is to promote the values of international and national rule of law, and international peace and security in the region. Latvia is an active participant in international affairs on the European continent, and we as a law school are able to offer a high-quality education in English. We observe global tendencies in the development of various spheres of law, and we maintain close ties with international and national job markets to be able to offer a competitive education to students. Our faculty will always be internationally oriented with a high-class professional experience in the respective sphere. Let us keep up the good work!



RGSL team at the Telders moot court, 2013



Andrejs Pildegovičs

State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia

The Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs is fully behind the Advanced and Intensive programmes for the transmission of the transformational experience of Latvia to the countries of the Eastern Partnership, of Central Asia, the Balkans and the Southern neighbourhood. I would like to underline this by personal experience, as well as by the foreign policy priorities of Latvia.

When I was a sophomore student in 1990 during the Singing Revolution, I was not certain that I would ever be abroad, and for us Latvia's reintegration to European mainstream politics was something of a miracle. But it was not, in fact, a miracle, because it came with a lot of effort, sacrifices and hard work by the Latvian people. And that time in the early 90s, a lot of Western countries lent a helping hand to assist us in developing and creating the country anew, and to restoring democracy and the rule of law.

I went to Oxford University in the 90s for a one-year programme and spent one quarter at Stanford University in the United States. I know that these programmes – if they are arranged properly, if they are focused – act as a kind of trampoline, a springboard, in terms of inspiration, experience and knowledge



for the professionals in the respective ministries. We benefited a lot from that experience in the 90s. Now Latvia has become a full-fledged member of the European Union, NATO and the OECD. We are a country in the mainstream of all European and Transatlantic relationships, a country on the north-eastern border of the European Union and NATO that shares borders with the non-EU countries of the Russian Federation and Belarus.

I believe we are the most relevant laboratory of change for the countries of the Eastern Partnership, Central Asia, the Balkans, and the Mediterranean-ring countries. We have seen life behind the Iron Curtain. We have telescoped development in 27 years from being a captive nation to full-fledged membership in the European Union and NATO. We have experienced transition, fundamental transition. Four years ago we adopted the euro as our national currency. We have been in the European Union for 14 years now, we are part of the Schengen zone and we are part of the PESCO integrated structure, the security policy initiative within the European Union. We

have experienced the European presidency, chairing the high table of the European Union. For us these institutions are fundamental and existential, because of these considerations, and also because of the size of our country and the multilingual environment that we have in Riga.

We think we are the best place to showcase that change is possible within one generation. Most important is to inspire officials – NGO leaders, journalists and diplomats from these countries in transition – that change is possible, that change is real, that there are helpful countries in these institutions. And I think that it is most relevant to come here to Riga rather than learning from more distant and different countries such as the United States, Great Britain, Germany, France or Middle East countries.

During our EU presidency, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs initiated a programme together with RGSL and the University of Latvia to make a long-lasting programme for diplomats and officials from the countries of the Eastern Partnership in Central Asia. These were the priorities of the Latvian presidency. For the first time in the history of the European Union, we prioritised the Central Asian countries and hosted the EU-Eastern Partnership Summit in Riga. And I am pleased that this endeavour has been developing over the last four years.

More than 115 participants have had access to the experience of Latvian institutions and organisations. I think that it is very important that this programme provides an opportunity to learn about Northern regionalism. It is about European Union law, economy and standards, but it is also about regionalism. And Latvia is proud to be one of the most integrated countries in the Baltic Sea region. Our most important trade partners are around the Baltic Sea rim: Estonia, Lithuania, Sweden, Poland and Finland. This is very important, because most of the participants

of this programme come from the least integrated countries of the world. And we do not want to impose any models; we do not force anyone to copy-paste anything. But we just want to show how much we can gain from friendly competition, from economic, political and intellectual cross-fertilisation.

I think it is very important that during this programme, participants have study visits around the country. They see not only the capital, but they see also the regions and countryside, and they get exposure to broad segments of the society. A one-week visit to Brussels is also very important to get the sense of the European Parliament, European Commission and External Action Service, to see, witness and experience how this complicated European machinery works on the spot. I am very grateful to the sponsors, to the countries that have seen tangible benefits from this endeavour. I hope that this circle of friends will grow.

The programme started with the countries of the Eastern Partnership, since we are neighbours: Belarus and Ukraine are really close to us. But we also lately have included the countries of



Signing of Agreement with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on a training programme for representatives of the Eastern Partnership region and the Central Asian countries, 2014



Signing of Memorandum with the Government of Norway, 2018

the Balkans. We have had participants from Egypt, Palestine, and a few other countries from the Southern Mediterranean ring.

This programme is part of the Development Programme of the Latvian government. We will continue it for the foreseeable future. I want to stress that for me as State Secretary of the Latvian Foreign Ministry, I also look at this programme as a sort of training or diplomatic school for Latvian diplomats as well. There is no such diplomatic academy in Latvia, but we use this programme also as a training ground for all Latvian diplomats, who have gained a lot. I get very positive feedback from participants from the Latvian MFA, and we intend to use it in the future.

I was in Ukraine a week ago and talked to colleagues at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, and I received highly positive remarks about our programme. More than 20 participants from Ukraine have attended the programme so far. We think that it has to be continued; the academic standard of this programme is very high. I want to use this occasion to thank the many, many colleagues and friends who have contributed to the development of the programme. Ambassador Ilze Rūse is one of the strong supporters, and the late RGSL Prorector Kristīne Krūma contributed a lot; she is very well remembered at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

We wish success to RGSL and its Advanced and Intensive programme!



Advanced programme students, 2015



Svitlana Kovalska

Advanced Programme Graduate,
Autumn 2016



I believe that participation in the Advanced Programme helped me to become a more mature professional with a better understanding and a broader view on current European policies and processes related to EU integration. It was important for me to understand the complexity of the legislation and decision-making process in the EU. I found the lectures and study trips to EU institutions immensely valuable. Having a law background, I also benefited from the economic courses, which were of a very high quality.



Radoš Mušović

Intensive Programme Graduate,
Autumn 2017



The combination of practical and theoretical makes the Intensive Programme so unique and attractive. The main quality of this programme is that it is tailor-made and flexible in the sense that it adapts to current happenings in the target regions. Additionally, it allowed for interactive learning and discussions, which was very welcome. I feel that, in my work in the field of EU integration, I will not only use the learning, but reflect on the experiences of Latvia and use my contacts established here.



Reinis Znotiņš

Alumnus of RGSL Law and Business Bachelor programme, 2014

Cofounder and Business Development Manager at Your Move

RGSL Graduate Story

Back in 2011, I was about to graduate from Riga Gymnasium No. 2 and faced an important decision - where to study next? The line of thinking was clear to me - since age 16 I wanted to become an entrepreneur. At age 18, I established my first company. When choosing a university, I looked for a programme that could provide me with the best background to become a successful entrepreneur one day. It is not always easy to connect the dots when you are a 19-year-old and looking forward, but it has been very clear for me looking back.

I decided to apply for studies at RGSL because it provided me with two crucial elements – studies in English and a dual degree in law and business. Both of these elements proved to be priceless later on. The studies in English helped me get selected for the Baltic American Freedom Foundation (BAFF) scholarship, while my background in law and business helped me see business matters from different angles and provided multidisciplinary value to the companies I have been involved in.



During my time at RGSL, I took part in various activities, both academic and cultural ones. Two that bring back the warmest feelings are the Erasmus Student Exchange and playing for my school's basketball team. I studied abroad at the University of Tilburg in the Netherlands. It was an amazing experience, where I was exposed to a truly international environment, met and competed at a professional level with students from all around the globe, and took up studying Chinese. Although Chinese did not work out for me, I came back with a wider perspective, and since then I have never stopped trying to expand my horizons. During my time, RGSL and Stockholm School of Economics in Riga decided to collaborate and formed a unified basketball team. That was a lot of fun, and I am still meeting with some of our Lithuanian teammates from time to time.

Looking back at the academic side, I recall Waleed's (Waleed Gumaa) lectures about the future of technology, which aligned more and more with my own interests, Michel's (Michel Verlaine) chaotic but entertaining business courses and George's (George Ulrich) charismatic legal presentations.

Some say law is not a profession but a way of thinking.... I was lucky; I got that and much more from my time at RGSL. Now I can refer to myself as a person with a start-up mentality, one who is ready to move fast and change the status quo, but at the same time stand firm with both of my feet on the ground.

A week before the deadline for submission of my Bachelor thesis at RGSL, I received notice that I had been selected for the second round of interviews at the BAFF. I had a tough decision to make – I could either concentrate on my thesis, which was far from finished, or put some time aside to prepare for the interview.

Living and testing myself at a professional level in the United States had always been my dream, so I chose the latter. I put a whole day aside, wrote down questions that I might be asked and spent hours practicing answering them in front of the mirror. On Wednesday morning, I went for the interview, and right after it was finished, I went straight back to my thesis. I completed my thesis on time, only losing one night of sleep, and was selected by BAFF. This was the start of my professional life.

Afterwards, I went to Seattle, where I was part of a four-person team that developed and organised more than forty start-up pre-acceleration events around the globe in a year. At Techstars, I had a chance to travel around the United States and understand how start-up businesses work and investments are done. During my time at Techstars, I met and helped a Latvian start-up team called Anatomy Next in their first steps, eventually ending up as Chief Operations Officer for the start-up and raising half a million Euros in funding. It was a rollercoaster for three years, in which I had a chance to use the knowledge I gained in the United States as well as legal knowledge from RGSL to negotiate business deals with companies from Japan, the United States, Korea, France and elsewhere.



Lecture by Deputy Secretary General of NATO, Rose Gottemoeller, 2018

Now I wear several hats. I have my own business, and I am actively involved in the NGO sector. A year-and-a-half ago, together with likeminded and internationally experienced people, we established an NGO called “*Ar pasaules pieredzi Latvijā*” (Global Latvians), which has now grown into an organisation with three thousand followers and is actively taking part in various remigration initiatives like the new Diaspora Law, where we are among the parties drafting the new law. I have co-founded a business called “Your Move”, which connects internationally experienced professionals with companies in Latvia that appreciate such an experience. Also, I currently serve as president of the Baltic American Freedom Foundation alumni association.

At Techstars, they said that you evaluate businesses by six metrics – “First is team, second is team, third is team, followed by market size, the idea...” I have grown to appreciate smart and motivated people more and more.... I’ve found incredible people at Techstars, at BAFF, at “*Ar pasaules pieredzi Latvijā*” and at RGSL.

My wish for RGSL and all of RGSL’s graduates is – let’s stay connected! Always remember that alone, you can go fast, but together, we can go far.



Student Excellence Award, 2017



Otto Tabuns

Alumnus of RGSL Law and Diplomacy
Bachelor programme, 2014

President of the RGSL Student Association,
2013

Executive Director of the Baltic Security
Strategy research project

The year 2015 was the best of times for Latvia. For the first time it was our turn to deliver the presidency of the Council of the European Union. That year was the best of times for me. The most important function our republic has ever had on the international stage was there, and so was I, involved in it!

I studied Law and Diplomacy at RGSL. At the time we applied, the school announced its intention to prepare future graduates of the fresh-off Bachelor programmes for the international opportunities bound for Latvia, the first being the presidency. We were well prepared, owing to the finesse of such faculty members as Dr. Žaneta Ozoliņa, so we won the objectives we had fought for in those three years.

I was the first of several RGSL graduates to be hired by our foreign service to do public diplomacy for the presidency. I was soon joined in the ministry by my outstanding course mates Sarma Gintere, Līva Pavasare, Georgs Zommers and Dāvis Skulte. We were very proud that our Professor, Dr. Ilze Rūse, had been selected



as Head of the European Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and who now serves as an Ambassador. At the conclusion of the presidency, we received a special expression of gratitude from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Latvia, Edgars Rinkēvičs, for what he recognised as a highly professional performance. When having lunch together at the ministry we, the RGSL bunch, had to pick the largest table to be seated together. And to imagine

whether there is a table large enough to seat the entire RGSL family today?

The time at the school gave us ample opportunities to get the most out of the vibrant multinational setting and make the most of ourselves. My peers elected me as President of the Student Association and with the Board of the Association, strongly supported by the school management, faculty and volunteer students, we together made magic. I am most proud of our own moot court that we started in our time, and it still takes place and keeps rewarding students for their initiative and effort, just as in the professional world.

Furthermore, we established the International Committee to capitalise on the global character that makes RGSL unique in the Baltic states. I remember teaching my new Georgian friends some Latvian, and by doing so picked up enough Georgian to almost be married off when I visited sunny Tbilisi soon after. We held Sports games not just for us, but also together with our neighbours at the Stockholm School of Economics in Riga (SSE-R), fostering connections between law and economy experts in the making. Our choir and basketball team, organised by the Student Association, made new friends and impressed many around Riga and beyond.

We must not forget the way RGSL was represented at the SSE-R Quiz game at the weekly competition at the Soros Auditorium. It is quite an impression we made when the sole RGSL team (versus nine other tough teams) was the one that took away the cake and

some bubbly! The ultimate RGSL experience was getting to know how to get fun out of being the brightest.

I am glad to keep in touch with the school after finishing it. Apart from frequent possibilities to visit high-level conferences and guest lectures, I am happy to speak and share my experience, provide the first impression of Latvia to new international students together with Ulla Zumente-Steele, and do our best to help others do their best at the moot court competition together with Ieva Miļūna.

The Riga Graduate School of Law helped me to harvest my variety of pursuits in an international environment right here, in my homeland. It serves the demand for multidisciplinary specialists based on international law, not just for Latvia, but for many countries abroad as well. In addition to unique legal expertise, the school provides networking like no other, and that in my experience is crucial for international relations.



RGSL team at the RGSL moot court competition “Riga Moot”, 2016

Professionally, the school has to search for and develop a new generation of talent for achieving Latvian and European interests in the world. Academically, the school is best placed to open up the national system of higher education to the world, establishing connections, fostering publications, and exchanging ideas and talent in the arena of social sciences, which is run mostly in English. Beyond Latvia, the mission of providing world-class legal education overlaps with the promotion of democracy and rule of law to countries and individuals from around the world who wish to make it happen wherever they are. The school has done it before and ought to keep up the good job.

In my mind the keyword of the year 2015 is to preside. It means to be in authority. So was Latvia, so was RGSL, and so was I representing them both back then. Let us retain it in the following decades of RGSL and the coming centennials of the Republic of Latvia and its capital city, where the school is meant to thrive.



Bachelor programme Director Inese Druviete with the President of the Student Association, Edgars Poga, 2018



Ineta Ziemele

RGSL Professor, 2001-present
President of the Constitutional Court
of Latvia

I joined the Riga Graduate School of Law in the capacity of Söderberg Professor of International Law and Human Rights in 2001. That was a time when the school was still working on the basis of the bilateral agreement between the governments of Latvia and Sweden. And so, one of the aspects in this cooperation was that the Raoul Wallenberg Foundation had provided funding for the position of professor – Chair in International Law and Human Rights. The professor was selected in a public process by a committee of three professors from Lund, Oslo and Heidelberg, in which I won the position and could start my work at the Riga Graduate School of Law. At that time, I also was teaching at the Raoul Wallenberg Institute on Human Rights at Lund University, so I was dividing my time between Sweden and Latvia.

In 2001 one of the aims that I set for myself was to really streamline the teaching of international law and human rights, because that was meant to be one of the important features of the identity of RGSL. From that point on, RGSL has been associated with public international law and human rights. My assistants

at that time were Doctoral candidates – the late Prorector and former judge of the Constitutional Court of Latvia, Kristīne Krūma, and current judge of the European Court of Human Rights and the former Prorector of RGSL, Mārtiņš Mits.

Among the alumni of the school, there are many students who have gone through the Masters programme in international law and human rights and who have positions, among others, in the Latvian government today.



I stayed with the school also during the years I worked as judge of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), although given the amount of work of the judge, I could focus primarily on organising the annual discussions on current human rights issues. I was elected to the court in Strasbourg in 2005, and in 2006 Mārtiņš Mits and I started the tradition of annual human rights discussions. This discussion has become an important part of the Latvian legal culture, and I would say that every year everyone expects that RGSL will organise a discussion where RGSL faculty members are the main panellists, providing the main presentations on relevant and

important developments in human rights law. One of the important elements in this discussion is an update on the ECHR judgments in cases brought against the Republic of Latvia, and also on the new principles and ideas that the Court has generated over the year in other important cases. RGSL has a very important function for the Latvian legal community through these annual discussions. Every year you can have slightly different membership or a broader or narrower scope of panellists discussing the European convention and its implementation in the Republic of Latvia. Since the audience is also those who work in Latvia in the law enforcement area, in the field of protection of human rights, through the discussions we would also identify at least one – most

often several – ideas regarding what should be done at the level of improving legislation or improving implementation of the law. In 2016 we celebrated already ten years since the annual human rights discussion has been taking place.

The year 2016 in general was a very important year for the school, because in this year the school placed its identity in the field of international law on the world map. That happened because Riga Graduate School of Law was selected to organise the annual conference of the European Society of International Law (ESIL) in Riga. For international law this is the most important event every year in Europe, comparable with the annual conference of the American Society of International Law, which is the most important event in international law in the United States.

Since 2004 when ESIL was established, the annual conference has taken place in a different European city; universities are selected

looking at the available intellectual and administrative capacity to carry out this most important annual event. Riga Graduate School of Law was first among the Eastern European states to organise such an annual event together with the European Society of International Law. So far smaller, so-called research meetings have taken place in Budapest and Tallinn.

The conference was an incredible success, because we had over 400 participants from all over the world; and we had participants from 43 states from different continents. The theme of the conference was chosen accordingly. It was an intriguing theme – how international law works in times of crisis. In the presence of international standards and mechanisms (e.g., intergovernmental, monitoring, judicial, etc.), whether and how international law really makes a difference during crises in international relations. The outcome of this meeting was very interesting, because we as organisers went into this meeting with a degree of scepticism. In times of crisis, asking the question whether law makes any difference, the answer actually comes rather automatically for



Human Rights Discussion with Michael O'Flaherty, George Ulrich, and Ineta Ziemele, 2010



ESIL Conference panel: Judge James Crawford, Lauri Mälksoo, and Catherine Redgwell, 2016

many people that it is highly doubtful, because it is only politics that can probably make a difference. But the Riga ESIL conference brought rather unexpected answers, and the answer was yes – international law does in fact make a difference for different types of crises, because it conceptualises, it defines the crisis, it sets the actual boundaries of the crisis, it boxes in the crisis and provides solutions on how to solve the crisis. Now over the centuries since the development of international law, we can say that we have reached the stage where there is a common international legal system, and within that system, internationally or nationally we do have points of departure, common points of thinking that allow us to examine problems and issues and arrive at the conclusions. If there was no international law, it would be a very different situation.

Riga Graduate School of Law currently is working on a book on the proceedings of the annual conference under the editorship of professors Ziemele and Ulrich, and with the help of our librarian, Ligita Gjortlere, as well as our own language editor, Christopher

Goddard. RGSL also has the capacity to produce the type of scholarship that is to be published by Oxford University Press or the most respected publishing houses, certainly in the field of international law. The 2016 ESIL conference was confirmation that since the school was established, the aim to focus on international law as a part of RGSL's identity was the right approach. There is no question that in Latvia international law is very important; it is part of the Latvian legal system. Today I think every lawyer has to have at least some basic understanding of international law, because we are working in a globalised world, and that is exactly the view that RGSL takes on legal education.

RGSL for years tried to develop a stronger profile in legal research, and since about 10 years ago more and more faculty members of RGSL have been involved in various European research projects, also contributing to important publications by leading legal publishing houses. In 2016 we have started our own book series *RGSL Interdisciplinary Studies* with my book "Separate opinions at the European Court of Human Rights". In fact, the



Arina Melse with Ineta Ziemele after defence of PhD at Copenhagen University, 2017



TRIO Presidency conference on the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, 2015

proceedings of the ESIL Annual conference in 2016 will be the basis of the second book in this series, published by Oxford University Press.

As I already mentioned, the teaching of international law and human rights characterises the school and its identity from the very beginning, as was stated in the bilateral agreement between the Republic of Latvia and Sweden. RGSL Masters programmes still focus on this area of law, offering an extensive number of courses in international law from various perspectives – theoretical, philosophical and practical, such as for example various aspects of international adjudication, international criminal law, international humanitarian law, and environmental law. There is a great selection of courses offered in human rights. This part of the school's academic work continues to be very strong and over the years has attracted a great variety of students.

When I started in 2001 the school offered only a Masters programme, and a majority of the students were from Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia. Over the years we have, in fact, covered pretty much the world – today we have students from other European states, from the West and the East, from Asia, Africa, the United States and Latin America. I think this is exactly the direction in which the Riga Graduate School of Law should work. The advantage of the Masters programme in its aspect of international law and human rights is that the faculty is also with experience in the processes of transition from a totalitarian legal system to a democratic one, based on the principle of rule of law. That transition gives an interesting touch to teaching international law and human rights, which in particular explains why the school is also actively engaged in organising other programmes concerning the rule of law.

The professors and lecturers at RGSL have their own personal experience in the Latvian transition process. We teach, for example, human rights with a perspective on how to really establish rule of law, and how to, coming out of a rather lawless society, understand international standards and international human rights standards, and how to work practically with students in helping their own legal systems to become more rule law-oriented. That is the strength of the RGSL Masters programme, and that is probably something that one should also reflect on for the future. RGSL should not lose this knowledge and perspective and should maybe conceptualise it better, and have a more focused place in the Masters programme, for example, in the form of a course on transition of justice.

If one looks also towards the future of RGSL, the way the school has expanded its teaching and training and academic work, it shows that the school has really ventured into different areas that one would not automatically link with Masters or Bachelor studies in law. This has happened as the school has evolved and has taken the interdisciplinary approach to studying law. Law is of course still at the centre, but when the school offers its academic programmes, there is no hesitation in also offering courses in the fields of finance, economics, diplomacy, history and philosophy. You actually discover that instead of offering a narrow approach to law, RGSL has expanded rather naturally to an interdisciplinary approach, which I think is the proper direction for the future of legal education.



Ligita Gjortlere

RGSL Head of Law Library and Lecturer,
1998-present

The Law Library and its Law School

It has often been mentioned that the Law Library was established before Riga Graduate School of Law. This is absolutely true, and in 2017 we celebrated 20 years since the official opening of the library. The Law Library Project was initiated by the Soros Foundation Latvia in 1996 with the ambition of creating the first traditional Law Library in the region. My task from the first day was to follow the traditions of law libraries around the world, as defined by the International Association of Law Libraries (IALL), in which we have been very active members from the beginning, and to develop an authoritative collection of legal literature and databases.

This was not an easy task because, initially, the library was to open its doors to any person interested in law and to serve the needs of the Latvian legal community. We had to create a collection covering the information gap in legal literature available to the legal community in Latvia in the post-Soviet era. Later it became clear that in addition to the legal community, the library would have to serve RGSL, which at that time was still in the



project stage. The RGSL project also started in 1996 under the leadership of Vita Matīss and in cooperation with the Law Library. The Stockholm School of Economics in Riga (SSE-R) kindly offered us the reading room of the SSE-R Library, which had a pleasant balcony and where we operated until the Wallenberg Building was opened for RGSL in 2001. I spent almost a year working side by side with Vita Matīss, and it was a really fascinating time for me.

I remain grateful for her inspiring and the same time demanding style of work, which provided a strong feeling of motivation.

The official opening of the Law Library took place on 28 May 1997 and was attended by many officials interested in the development of the Law Library and the RGSL project. This included the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Valdis Birkavcs, as well as representatives of the Soros Foundation Latvia, various embassies and the professional library community in Latvia.

In 1998 the Law Library was donated to the newly established RGSL. Life became more active because apart from the regular readers from the legal community of Latvia, we had to serve the first international seminars organised by RGSL, and also

the new faculty members who started creating the content of the first Masters programme, which at that time was called the Master of Comparative Jurisprudence. That required serious collection development activities, including bringing in the latest international legal publications and subscribing to legal databases. Book ordering procedures were different, as use of the Internet in the book business had just started, and there were many problems with the delivery of books because of antiquated customs procedures.

The following year the first students started their studies. The new study programmes and the demanding international faculty

of RGS� required regular acquisitions from various publishing houses. Also, important became the need to follow library staff practice of the United States and Western Europe, where lawyers work together with traditional librarians. A larger number of currently well-recognised academics and practising lawyers have worked in the RGS� Law Library as legal research assistants since the first days – Laine Škoba, Helēna Stare, Maija Tipaine, Edmunds Broks, Inga Kalniškāne and others. We were the first library in Latvia employing lawyers in the library in order to ensure library services more directly linked to the subject of law.

During the first years of operation we received large donations to the library from exile Latvians – including donations from Ādolfs Sprūdžs and Rasma Kārklīņa, Professor of the University of Illinois at Chicago. In 1999 Ādolfs Sprūdžs, former President of the International Association of Law Libraries (IALL), introduced me to the IALL, where I later served as a Board member for six years. Another donation, which formed a fundamental collection

of the history of international law, was received in 1999 from Hans Blix, the Swedish diplomat and politician who worked in various international organisations, including the United Nations. All these donations helped to fill gaps in the newly established library collection, which at the time was missing core collection items needed in a traditional law library.

In 2003 the RGS� Law Library, together with law librarians from Central and Eastern European universities and information centres, created the Consortium of Legal Resource Centers and Legal Information Specialists (Consortium), with the goal of promoting the formation and development of law libraries and information centres, acquisition of legal information resources, and proper dissemination and international cooperation among Central and Eastern European and other countries.



Students at the Library, 2011



Students reading on the Library terrace, 2007

The founders of the Consortium first met in September 1999 in Budapest at the Training for Law Librarians organised by the Constitutional and Legal Policy Institute (COLPI), which is associated with the Open Society Institute in Budapest. The idea of the Consortium came from our regular trainer, Mirela Roznovschi, from the New York University School of Law, who later became editor of GlobalLex. After four years of annual training courses, representatives of the libraries decided to create the Consortium, where initially we were 18 libraries. Today, we are 10 university libraries from the Baltic countries and Hungary actively working together and subscribing to the most important legal databases in the world – including Westlaw, HeinOnline, BeckOnline, Oxford Public International law legal databases and others. RGSL still has a central place in the Consortium, and I have had the pleasure to act as Chairperson of the Board since the establishment of the Consortium.

With the move to the Wallenberg Building, the RGSL Law

Library became available to readers seven days a week, which was rather unusual for Latvian libraries at that time. Our regular visitors are still RGSL students, legal practitioners, students and faculty from other universities. An especially fruitful relationship has been established with the University of Latvia (LU), which has been one of the shareholders of RGSL since 2005. The cooperation agreement with LU ensures an exchange of information resources between the RGSL and LU libraries, as well as use of the Moodle e-learning platform, which ensures convenient remote access to study materials and subscribed databases for RGSL students.

A unique experience for the RGSL Law Library has been that from acquisition of the first book, the entire collection has been registered in an electronic catalogue, which today ensures automation of all library processes and procedures. The first Library Information System (LIS) used for the collection was ALISE, which was developed by a Latvian company. While using this system, the RGSL Law Library initiated creation of the Latvian



Agris Repšs presents a book donation to the RGSL Library on behalf of Sorainen law firm, 2008



RGSL Library receives book donation from Sorainen law firm, 2015

Union Catalogue of Academic and Special Libraries of Latvia. In 2012, the RGSL Law Library catalogue was moved to the LIS entitled ALEPH, which is connected to a different union catalogue of Latvian libraries. Integration into the ALEPH system made the collection more visible and accessible to local and international users. Presently, in 2018, the RGSL Law Library collection includes 9 000 books and 5 000 legal journals, with approximately 200 titles, as well as 12 full-text legal databases.

The RGSL Law Library has an excellent cooperation with leading law firms in Latvia, which usually donate their publications to the library. The longest lasting cooperation has been established with Sorainen Law Offices, and since 2001 they have donated more than 100 jointly selected law books to the library, which are much appreciated by library users.

Looking back at the history of RGSL, I have to mention that I really enjoyed working with our rectors, including professor Ramberg, Reich and Ulrich, as well as our faculty members. Since

the first day they saw the library as an integral and very important part of the school, and they always supported development of the library collection. During these years, so many academics of high standing have been visiting and working with RGSL, that when browsing books on the shelves, I can recall seeing many of the authors at RGSL or at various conferences.

Staying with RGSL all these 20 years has been a unique experience for me as well, because we managed to create a real family with its joys and problems, with its happy and sad moments. The team was built by us, the staff of RGSL, who managed to set common goals and go ahead with the development of RGSL in the interest of our students, who are the most valuable asset for the school. Like recalling authors of the books on the shelves, I am proud to meet our alumni at various occasions and glad that they remember the time they spent at RGSL with joy and that they feel like family members as well. I wish that Riga Graduate School of Law may keep up this family spirit forever.



RGSL faculty and staff at the Graduation ceremony, 2017

RGSL Graduates in 20 Years

Master programme graduates, 1999-2017

LL.M International and European Law	436
LL.M Law and Finance	93
LL.M Legal Linguistics	81
LL.M European Union Law and Policy	7
LL.M Public International Law and Human Rights	104
LL.M Transborder Commercial Law	33
Total	752

Bachelor programme graduates, 2010-2017

LL.B Law and Business	167
LL.B Law and Diplomacy	124
Total	291

Advanced Programme graduates, 2014-2017

Total	115
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Intensive Programme graduates, 2016-2017

Total	55
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Graduates with Open Society Foundation Scholarships, 2006-2017

Total	107
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Publications by RGSL faculty members, 2010-2018



RGSL Graduates' Home Countries

1. Albania
2. Armenia
3. Australia
4. Austria
5. Azerbaijan
6. Belarus
7. Bosnia and Herzegovina
8. Cambodia
9. Czech Republic
10. Croatia
11. Denmark
12. Egypt
13. Estonia
14. Ethiopia
15. Finland
16. France
17. Georgia
18. Germany
19. Iceland
20. Indonesia
21. Ireland
22. Kazakhstan
23. Kosovo
24. Kyrgyzstan
25. Latvia
26. Lebanon
27. Lithuania
28. Macedonia
29. Mexico
30. Moldova
31. Montenegro
32. Netherlands
33. Palestine
34. Poland
35. Russia
36. Serbia
37. South Korea
38. South Sudan
39. Sudan
40. Syria
41. Tajikistan
42. Turkey
43. Turkmenistan
44. Ukraine
45. USA
46. Uzbekistan
47. Zambia
48. Zimbabwe





