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EUROPEAN
UNIVERSITY AT
SAINT PETERSBURG

Founded in 1994

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Dear Friends, dear Supporters of EUSP,

I am writing on behalf of the entire European University community – faculty, staff, and students – to thank you for your recent expression of support, and to bring you up to date about recent developments.

As you know, the educational activities of the University have been temporarily suspended as a result of a court order because our building violates certain fire safety rules. Although our administration and research centers have been able to continue working, our students have not been permitted to attend courses in our building until a plan is in place to correct at least some of the safety violations. Rector Vakhtin, the Board of Trustees, and the entire administrative staff of the EUSP are now putting all of their efforts into resolve this difficult and obviously complex situation.

Here is the background. On January 18th the University received an unexpected visit from the State Fire Inspectorate. The inspection uncovered some 50 violations of fire safety rules. As a consequence, the Dzerzhinsky District Court ordered on February 7 that all teaching activities in our building be suspended for 90 days. In the course of the following week, EUSP faculty, staff, and students, managed to correct more than 20 of these violations. The administration then requested the court to allow classes to resume. Unfortunately, the court ordered instead that another inspection be held to confirm the improvements and to document the remaining violations. The 90 day ban remains in effect.

As you might suspect, the problem is that most of the remaining violations are due to the specific design and architectural characteristics of our building — the second “Marble Palace” that once belonged to Princess Yurievskaya, the morganatic wife of Tsar Alexander II, and a designated historic landmark. To eliminate the remaining fire safety violations will consequently require a substantial amount of funding, almost certainly in the neighborhood of \$300,000 – well beyond the EUSP’s current available resources.

Although some have linked this situation to the forthcoming elections and the Russian political situation in general, we need to emphasize that there is no real evidence of any kind to confirm or refute these suspicions. The EUSP is by charter a pluralistic, non-political, non-partisan, independent institution of higher education. It has never had, nor ever will have, political positions. Its sole goal has been to provide the highest quality post graduate training to students from throughout Russia, as well as from Europe and North America. In the current crisis, many of our faculty have made heroic efforts to assist students by offering individual consultations, using their own apartments and staking out space in nearby cafes, and by putting their lectures online. Still, in order to resume teaching and to assure our students and faculty have access to our unique library, our first rate computer center, and the opportunities our lecture halls and classrooms provide, we are putting all of our efforts for now into reopening our building. Regardless of how the current problems are resolved, however, we are determined to continue in some place and form as a premier center of higher Russian scholarship and teaching.

We need your help. To meet the projected costs of bringing the building up to code, the University has launched an emergency fund raising campaign. We are hopeful that gifts of any amount from our friends in Russia and abroad will confirm the international reputation the EUSP now enjoys, and thus its importance to Russia. A successful campaign may even encourage our city government to provide various kinds of assistance of its own. Perhaps most important, your support will also provide our beleaguered students and faculty with a great lift, demonstrating how important you believe it is for them to enjoy their fundamental rights to the highest quality teaching and independent, creative research. We ask you to join us in this effort to preserve the University’s recognized scholarly excellence and its now threatened independence.

For all of us in the European University community, of which we consider you a most important part – our heartfelt thanks!

Alexander Kurylev
Executive Director for Overseas Development, EUSP