

**OPEN LETTER TO SUPPORT FACULTY AND STUDENTS
OF
EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY ST. PETERSBURG, RUSSIA**

We, the undersigned, from different countries across Europe and North America, are dismayed and deeply concerned by the suspension of the teaching process at the European University at St Petersburg, a unique graduate school, whose first advocate was Anatoli Sobchak, and which has been supported ever since by the St Petersburg city government.

The European University is an academic institution of the highest quality, one of the foremost graduate schools in the humanities and social sciences in Russia as well as Europe. Its level of teaching and scholarship is on a par with the best in our countries; it encourages open, lively, intellectual debate among faculty and students; it is expressly and completely non-political, proscribed as are the leading higher institutions of learning in our countries from advancing or taking up political positions. The research agenda of its faculty is driven by the sole aim of furthering knowledge, knowledge that will benefit Russia and the world community.

EUSP has an impressive record of reaching out to able students from Russia's distant regions. Many students from outside of Russia attend programs at the University. Graduates and Faculty of EUSP are teaching in and collaborating with scholars all over the world. Our understanding of Russia would be far poorer without them.

All of this is now threatened.

We find it hard to believe that the teaching program of an academic institution would be suspended, in mid-term, or indeed at any point in the year, for its inability to bring its historic and city-owned building up to contemporary fire codes. Many of us teach in historic buildings. We share the real concerns of the EUSP and city administration as regards safety.

Indeed, many if not most of the historic buildings in St. Petersburg present similar concerns. The answer to these problems everywhere, however, must be to find mutually acceptable solutions that assure appropriate levels of safety while maintaining the ability of the EUSP and those occupying similar historic structures to continue their activities. It is surprising that the building is now suddenly judged to be intrinsically inappropriate for teaching purposes. This suggests (quite wrongly) that the city's Property Department demonstrated a lack of professionalism leasing the building to the EUSP for a second ten-year term.

We support rectorate, faculty and students of the European University St. Petersburg in their appeal to respective authorities to repeal the suspension of the university's activities. We feel most strongly that for the sake of Russian higher education as well as for the EUSP itself, the issues involved in the closure can and must be resolved without delay so that the normal life of the University can resume. The suspension is damaging not only to the students, but also to the reputation of higher education in Russia.

*For more information or if you want to sign this letter, please contact Anika Walke, History of
Consciousness Dept., University of California - Santa Cruz by email: awalke@ucsc.edu*