

Dear SSE Riga EMBA community:

I am writing this letter to you while being in Khorog in Tajikistan with Afghanistan just across the river and where tomorrow a regular Saturday cross-border market will take place on the bridge. While physically being far away, I am making bridges through recollections of the early days of the EMBA launch and the formation of EMBA community over 15 years.

In 2002 the euro coins and notes entered into circulation in the twelve participating Member States, the European Commission recommended the conclusion of accession negotiations with 10 countries, including Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, and the first EMBA class started their programme at SSE Riga. This year in my capacity as the Dean of School of Arts and Sciences of the University of Central Asia I have launched a new campus in Khorog with another one launched in 2016. Building programmes, schools and institutions is a unique experience when one has to deal with the whole complexity and ambiguity on the one hand, and the magic role of a creator on the other hand.

For almost a decade, the undergraduate programme in Business and Economics was the only degree programme offered at SSE Riga, but in 2002 we had to reorganize ourselves to welcome our second 'child' in the SSE Riga family. For parents, it is not an easy task to divide attention and care between the two, and we were learning. The first cohort had 21 students: 20 Latvians and 1 Lithuanian. 80% of the students were male, with the average age was 34. Over time, as the EMBA gained momentum, the pool of applicants became more international, with students hailing from Argentina, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Israel, Lithuania, Netherlands, Russia, Spain, Taiwan, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, and the

United States. Male to female ratio has also improved, and the diversity of industry and educational backgrounds has broadened. Instructors for the EMBA are drawn from leading international business schools, and from industry. Not unlike in the undergraduate programme, 80% of the EMBA instructors have been in-sourced. Many of the in-sourced instructors have been affiliated with SSE Riga for years. John Branch, for example, started teaching in 2004.

At SSE Riga you gained knowledge and skills, formed relationships that strengthened your inner selves to take either a new position at work or a new direction in your professional life. It is great to see the EMBA community having found their own alumni identity as well as being active within the larger SSE Riga Alumni community. The bonding between undergraduate and graduate classes grows year by year. In June, I had an opportunity to welcome an EMBA graduate Andrejs Strods together with a B.Sc graduate Kristis Avots in Naryn campus, Kyrgyzstan to run a week-long module on entrepreneurship.

I am certain that the 'parents' have found the right proportions of attention and care to both of their 'children' – undergraduates and graduates. Well, a 15 year old, in fact, is already a teenager with the features of a young adult. I wish the 'teenage' EMBA community the future with strength, courage and vision for the coming years in your professional and personal lives.

Vivat EMBA!