

## Item 10.i Slavonic and East European (SEE) Languages

This is a report on Slavonic and East European (SEE) Languages in UK Higher Education, covering the period December – April 2021. This report is based on consultation with the leadership of British Association of Slavonic and East European Studies (BASEES) and with academics in the field.

### 1. COVID-19

The Covid-19 pandemic continues to loom large in our field. At the time of writing, we await news from the government about the road map for students returning to on-campus learning. Students and researchers of Russian have been particularly affected by the Russian Federation's decision on 21 December 2020 to suspend direct flights between the UK and Russia, and to suspend entry for UK nationals (unless they can prove they are permanent residents of a country other than the UK). This decision will be reviewed on 16 April 2021.

Many students of Russian who were hoping to travel to the Russian Federation for their Year Abroad in 2021 have therefore been unable to do so. In many cases, partner institutions in Russia are providing online tuition for students, as they did in the spring of 2020. In some cases, students have been able to find alternative programmes in Russian-speaking countries.

Staff and postgraduate students who need to be physically present in the Russian Federation in order to carry out research continue to face challenges. A small number of materials may be accessible digitally, but many researchers have to postpone or redesign their projects.

### 2. The withdrawal of Erasmus+ and the establishment of Turing Scheme

The UK government's decision not to remain within the Erasmus+ scheme following Brexit has posed a challenge for programmes in SEE languages. While Erasmus+ is not used as widely in SEE languages as in Western European languages, some programmes have nevertheless been affected.

It is hoped that the new Turing Scheme might offer more funding to students of SEE languages, particularly those outside the EU, where funding could not normally be obtained through Erasmus+ channels. At time of writing, universities are submitting applications to the Turing Scheme for support with funding the Year Abroad.

### 3. New UCML ECA SIG representative for Slavonic and East European Languages

Dr Jade McGlynn has stepped down as the representative for SEE languages in the UCML Early Career Academics Special Interest Group (UCML ECA SIG). We are pleased to announce that Dr Cathy McAteer (Exeter) has agreed to take on this role from March 2021. Cathy has also generously agreed to serve on the BASEES Executive Committee as their inaugural Early Career Academics Representative. BASEES have added this role to the committee, partly in response to the success of the UCML SIG.

### 4. BASEES Strategic Review

BASEES is currently conducting a strategic review of the organization. This review was initially planned for 2020, but was postponed because of the pandemic. The major review of governance,

communications and activities is designed to ensure that BASEES is currently meeting the needs of its membership, that the organization is sustainable, especially following the pandemic, and to bring issues of equality, diversity and inclusion to the fore, as well as our support for ECAs.

BASEES has already taken some steps as part of the Strategic Review. In addition to the appointment of an Dr Cathy McAteer as representative for Early Career Academics, BASEES is pleased to welcome Alison Long (Keele) as the inaugural representative for Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion on the Executive Committee.

As part of the strategic review, BASEES is planning to launch a major survey to obtain data on what the organization is doing well and where it can improve. The survey will be available to all current members, as well as those in the field of Slavonic and East European Studies who are not members (and who might hopefully be persuaded to join). The survey is expected to go live during the week commencing Monday 12 April 2021. The results are likely to be interest to UCML as well as BASEES, and I will hopefully be able to report back in my Autumn 2021 report.

#### 5. Other news from BASEES

The impact of the pandemic sadly meant that the BASEES Conference 2021 did not take place. Next year, it is hoped that an in-person BASEES will take place in 8-10 April 2022 in Robinson College, Cambridge.

In lieu of this year's conference, BASEES is planning an occasional series of online talks to take place throughout the calendar year 2021.

The first of these, held on 23 March 2021, addressed '[Researching Russia and Eastern Europe as a PhD Student in Times of Covid](#)'. Further BASEES talks are being planned for later in 2021.

BASEES is joining forces with the research network EEGA (Eastern Europe—Global Area, based at Leipzig) to co-host a conference 'Globalising Eastern Europe – New Perspectives on Transregional Entanglements' on 20 – 24 April 2021. The conference will be held virtually and in Leipzig. Further information is available from <https://www.leibniz-eeqa.de/events/conferences/basees/>.

A new BASEES Study Group launched in November 2020. The Eurasian Regions Study Group is led by Dr Catherine Gibson (University of Tartu), Dr Siobhan Hearne (University of Durham), Dr Jo Laycock (University of Manchester) and Dr Alun Thomas (Staffordshire University). More information can be found at <http://basees.org/eurasian-regions-study-group>.

The BASEES Study Group on Minority History will host an online event, 'Being a Minority in Times of Catastrophe', on 25-26 June 2021. A draft programme is available here: <https://studygroupforminorityhistory.com/blog/>

#### 6. Other events

A silver lining of the pandemic is the number of events in Slavonic and East European studies that are now accessible online, which are of excellent quality and transcend geographical borders. There are too many excellent events to list all of them here, but here are some of the major event series in the UK:

The Anglo-Russian Research Network (ARRN), in association with Pushkin House London, is running a series of virtual events throughout 2020-21. A list of events is available at: <https://anglorussiannetwork.wordpress.com>.

Pushkin House itself continues to host a vibrant programme of events that are now available online:  
<https://www.pushkinhouse.org/events>.

The Society for Co-operation in Russian and Soviet Studies has always moved its programme online:  
<http://www.scrss.org.uk/cinemaevents.htm>

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