

INTELLECTUAL PARTNERSHIPS AND THE CREATION OF A BALTIC CULTURAL BODY

Algo Rämmer

University of Tartu

Abstract. The League of Nations initiated an intellectual cooperation movement in the 1920s to propagate humanistic principles of universal cultural policy to ease political tensions. In 1934, after signing the Baltic Entente treaty, attempts began to include cultural collaboration in addition to the political movement. The key role in developing the strategy of cultural cooperation was played by the regional conferences of national committees of intellectual cooperation, organized in 1935–1938. In my paper, I will analyze the standards of these cooperation movements, the decisions, and the process of achieving a consensus. The purpose of the paper is to show the emergence of the concept “being Baltic”, discuss how the common cultural body developed, and identify factors or events that strengthened and/or hindered this process.

Keywords. cultural diplomacy, International Intellectual Cooperation Organization, Baltic Entente, regional cooperation, Nordic-Baltic conferences, Baltic identity, intellectuals

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1. Introduction

The interwar period of the Baltic nations’ history relates to the transnational activities of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania at a time when they made an allied stand against the efforts of Russia and Germany. Both these formerly great powers were striving to restore their past influence into the region. These activities relied upon the conviction that the neighboring nations of the Baltic states, and the Scandinavian countries Denmark, Sweden and Norway, share a common destiny for economic, political and cultural reasons. Due to this and the need for collaboration, the concept was received favorably by the majority of intellectuals as well.

Repeatedly, the countries’ cultural elites and professionals (e.g. university professors, physicians, journalists, and schoolteachers), although small in numbers and varied in their composition, took the lead in building new cultural identities of

their countries. Another noteworthy and distinctive feature is the fact that the scientists, artists and writers became actively involved in establishing governmental departments and several played a more direct role as politicians or as members of the state administration. For example, Ants Piip, an internationally recognized jurist and professor of international law from Tartu University from 1919 to 1940, at various times from 1919 to 1940 held the post of minister of foreign affairs and was even elected State Elder (prime minister) serving from 1920 to 1921.

Due to WWI, the political landscape of Europe was divided into winners and losers, along with many new countries being born. In part, these states formed something like a buffer zone within the European region. The national economies were more or less destroyed and for many people the future looked truly grim. In addition to war damages, the feebleness, or even the absence, of a common cultural identity hindered cooperation between Western European countries. The overall situation was recognized as a cultural crisis, induced by the geopolitical fragmentation which furthermore resulted in a reluctance to believe in what was then supposedly a worn-out idea from of the Enlightenment movement. This refers to the claim that shared culture and transnational values about the form of civil society can unite the European countries. To make matters worse, a post-war chauvinism dominated, even in the international academic community. This can be illustrated by the attempts to establish the International Research Council (IRU), the forerunner of the modern International Council for Science (ISCU) in 1919. Note that German representatives were never allowed to participate in the IRU. However, the breakup of the organization in 1926 proves that the opposition did not benefit either – there were neither winning nor losing sides (Cock 1983:249–88).

With a different viewpoint, after a trip in post-war Europe, Herman von Keyserling, summarizing the situation optimistically, argued that the cultural crisis was by nature temporary, merely a crisis based on delayed development due to nationalism and imperialism. He was convinced, therefore, that the universal force of vitality (in his own words, “the telluric powers”), would finally prevail and another period of peace and stability would follow after this era of gloomy outlook and depression (Keyserling 1928:459–60; Kuehnemund 1942:455–6). Nevertheless, the intellectuals of the 1920s and 1930s such as Johan Huizinga, Thomas Mann, and Oswald Spengler turned to a more pessimistic view by stating that Western European societies would not survive another transnational conflict which seemed likely to arise due to emerging ideologies incorporating desires for aggressive retribution within Germany and Russia.

The League of Nations (LN) tried to restore the integrity of the fractured European culture. By following the recommendations of scattered intellectual cooperation efforts, the LN began its contributions by establishing an International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation (ICIC)¹. The ICIC was an apolitical

¹ Depending on the language, also referred to as ‘the commission’.

alliance which united the most highly respected intellectuals from different countries. The only representative from the Baltic countries, the Rector of the University of Latvia Mārtiņš Prīmanis, became a member of the ICIC in 1938. The founders of the LN were convinced that promoting cultural contacts would reduce the misunderstandings of other nations and cultures. Therefore, it promoted activities to help less developed countries as well as the ones that had participated in the war. The intellectual cooperation was often seen as a new force uniting Europe like Christianity had in earlier ages (Tarvel 1938:558). During the first years, LN's activities mainly concentrated on helping to reduce the war damages. However, the activities of LN soon acquired a global scope; under the auspices of the union, a series of conventions to coordinate the activities of the countries were concluded. Around the ICIC itself, a network of various subsidiaries was emerging (the LN's Intellectual Cooperation Section, its Education Information Centre, the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation (IICI), the International Educational Cinematographic Institute (IECI)², and various international groups of experts). Furthermore, it also cooperated closely with other subsidiaries of the LN, e.g. the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law and the International Museums Office (the predecessor of the International Council of Museums), in addition to the aforementioned IICI and IEI. At the state level, the national committees (NCs) fulfilled the role of advisers to the governments in the fields of culture and science. Moreover, distinguished intellectuals from these countries developed Baltic and Nordic cultural contacts because they were convinced that a successful cultural cooperation will be instrumental in creating closer economic and political contacts.

The progress of NCs towards intellectual cooperation in the Baltic countries can be divided into two periods: for the first ten years, the activities occurred at a slow pace, and then there was a more productive culmination period starting from the second half of the 1930s. The relative ineffectiveness of the initial period is explained by factors including the early need to identify the most appropriate means for action first and, in general, by an organizational weakness. Certainly, to some extent, one can blame here the failed experiment of the *Baltic Union*, the idea of a federation between Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Finland and Poland.³ Although the treaty had been signed (1920), it was never really implemented. Nevertheless, distinguished intellectuals of the Baltic countries, this time in collaboration with Finland, made another attempt to jointly formulate general humanistic principles of cultural policy for their governments from 1934 to 1940, as recommended by the LN. These activities, which were firmly rooted in the Baltic and Nordic experience of a regional cooperation, are still interesting as a

² In the official publication (*Essential facts about the League of Nations* 1937:239-40;273-5) both institutes (IICI and IEI) are mentioned as part of the Intellectual Cooperation Organization and as special institutes of LN.

³ The first attempts to create a wider Baltic-Scandinavian cooperation network were already initiated before WWI (e.g. I Congress of Baltic Archaeologists in Stockholm in 1912, or the International Baltic Sea Fisheries Congresses from 1910 to 1914).

successful example of a wider collaboration in the Baltic Sea area in the interwar period. Among them are the signing of the *Treaty of Understanding and Collaboration* (also known as the Baltic Entente treaty) in 1934 which strengthened the solidarity of the Baltic states and offered opportunities for joint actions in the field of intellectual cooperation. From 1935 to 1938, four Nordic-Baltic conferences, organized by the NCs of the intellectual cooperation, each over two days, took place and were partly attended by over twenty participants (delegates and guests). These conferences formulated cooperative positions that were later forwarded to the national governments. Even if the resolutions of the pre-WWII meetings were not really implemented, they nevertheless represented the most notable attempts to promote cultural cooperation between the Baltic and Nordic countries on a regional level.

In the following, I will outline (1) how this international movement of cultural cooperation emerged, (2) which activities were taken, and (3) how the common standards of cultural cooperation were established in following the model of the LN's conventions and declarations. In addition to this, I will discuss concerns regarding how these activities were initiated at state level in the Baltic states and how intellectuals responded to the humanistic ideals of such an international movement. The focus here will be on the Nordic-Baltic conferences of intellectual cooperation as an attempt to establish a cultural body for the Baltics (in some cases even Nordic-Baltic), and to initiate a sense of a transnational cultural commonality. To give some flesh to this idea, I will identify the main issues such as which language one would use to communicate on a regional level, which strategies would be implemented for interstate cultural cooperation, how they arrived at formulating joint positions, and will underline the most active agents.

2. The objectives and the emergence of intellectual cooperation movement

At the first meeting in 1920, the General Assembly of the LN adopted the resolution *Coordination of Intellectual Work* and called together a commission of 12 members who were assigned to present a report to the next plenary session on how to engage in intellectual cooperation.⁴ The LN was handling this issue in part with a desire to show respect for the nationalistic sentiments. The President of the Council of the League of Nations, Léon Bourgeois, stressed in 1921 that:

Systems of education, scientific or philosophical research may lead to great international results, but they would never be initiated or would never prosper if

⁴ A recommendation to create a permanent international organization, similar to the International Labour Office called Office for Intellectual Intercourse and Education and the draft of the agenda was sent to the Secretary-General of LN by the French Association for the League of Nations in summer 1920 (*League of Nations. Official Journal* 1920:445–51); also the Central Office of International Associations (nowadays the Union of International Unions), founded by the Nobel Peace Prize winner Henri La Fontaine and Paul Otlet in Brussels in 1907, and its member organizations had already started their activities in this field (*League of Nations. Official Journal* 1921:1106–10).

they were not bound up with the deepest national sensibilities (League of Nations official journal 1921:1105).

Starting from 1922, the 15 members of the ICIC, appointed by the Council of the LN in Geneva, gathered annually for a week at a time. The committee brought together prominent intellectuals from different countries, e.g. the French philosopher Henry Bergson, the German physicist Albert Einstein, French politician and historian Édouard Herriot, Czech historian Josef Šusta, Swedish radiologist Gösta Forssell, the Polish-French physicist Marie Curie-Skłodowska, the Dutch cultural historian J. Huizinga, the German novelist T. Mann, the British classical scholar Gilbert Murray, and the Swiss writer Gonzague de Reynold.

The international movement followed the example of the LN in formulating policies, identifying key topics, and in drawing upon the knowledge of those specialists who constituted the experts' committees. The committee for literature and the arts, as well as the committee for the LN's propaganda, operated as standing entities. On the other hand, the committees for other fields operated in a provisional manner; these include architecture, science, archeology and art history, higher education, and the committee concerning museums, libraries and archives. The most significant of them – a subcommittee on science and the arts, led by Paul Valéry and with the participation of the famous Baltic-German philosopher, H. von Keyserling – was created in 1931. Unlike others, this committee concentrated on the broader issues of cultural policy. It discussed topics such as the future of culture, the idea of "Europe", and the demand for international relations without violence.⁵

In 1926, the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation (IICI) started its operation. As the French government was particularly interested in its creation, they supported the program with 2 million francs and housing at the *Palais Royal*. However, this generous offer aroused heated debates because the other member countries were afraid of French influence dominating the actions and the policies of the international movement. Thereafter, the IICI's activities overlapped partially with the areas in which the ICIC's Secretariat was already active, and finally the movement's executive committee was established in Geneva in 1930. Not surprisingly, this combination notably narrowed down the Secretariat's influence and power. In the same year, the IICI's director together with diplomats representing LN member states started regular meetings as an advisory body for discussing action plans and reporting activities from Paris.⁶

The International Act concerning Intellectual Cooperation was signed in 1938 by the representatives of 45 countries. This document stressed the independence of intellectual cooperation from everyday politics and regulated organizational issues – the NCs and IICI are mentioned therein as the most important agents. However, due to WWII, not all parliaments ratified the agreement, the meetings of the ICIC were cancelled, and in September 1939 the director of the IICI dismissed the

⁵ The materials of the meetings are published in the series *An International series of open letters, and Conversations*.

⁶ Estonian State Archives (Eesti Riigiarhiiv, henceforth ERA), 957-13-399, 6.

majority of the staff. As the ICIC and its secretariat suspended their work, the IICI became the sole coordinating body of the Intellectual Cooperation Organization until the end of 1946, when a new organization, UNESCO, was created.

The 9th Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs was held in Kaunas in 1939. It was decided that each Baltic country will pay the minimum membership fee of 750 gold francs per year for supporting the IICI, assuming the Paris agreement would be finally ratified.⁷ Latvia was the only Baltic country to ratify the treaty; Estonia and Lithuania were unable to find the financial resources to maintain the IICI in Paris.

The NCs, which operated in over 40 countries, fulfilled the role of a mediator between the ICIC and the national governments. Another important task of the NCs was to serve as a non-political body of experts for cultural policies at the state level. Starting from 1933, reports about the work of NCs were presented at the ICIC's meetings (1933 – Lithuania, 1934 and 1938 – Latvia, and in 1936 – Estonia).⁸

Also, two world conferences of NCs took place in the interwar period (Geneva 1929 and Paris 1937), which played an important role in the sharing of perspectives. The first conference was held in the summer of 1929 in Geneva without any participation from Latvia and Lithuania. They preferred not to participate at this point since the committees had not worked actively due to a financial bottleneck. On the other hand, the costs of the Estonian representation were supposedly covered by the state. Piip, who presented the report of the Estonian committee, summarized the situation later in stressing his impressions were that “every national committee is working in a peculiar way”.⁹

The main topic of the conference was to seek ways for integrating the activities of the NCs. The Belgian group formulated a draft resolution that included a task list outlining the role to be played by the NCs. As translated from the book *How to make the League of Nations known and to develop the spirit of international co-operation* (1927) this includes: (1) working out plan of activities at the state level, and (2) actively encouraging gathering information for an international directory of information storage institutions (i.e. archives, museums, and libraries). In addition, the Belgian group proposed that the process to transform the conferences of NCs into regular meetings should be a task undertaken at the international level. These proposals were adopted with several amendments, the most important of which was made by Piip who recommended not distinguishing between national and international tasks anymore because of the complexity of the problems that had to be solved.

Over the first years (1921–1924), the task to coordinate joint activities was mainly carried out by the prominent Polish historian Oscar Halecki. Halecki was

⁷ ERA, 1108-5-918, 205-8.

⁸ ERA, 957-14-134, 3; Puksoo 1935:4.

⁹ Tartu University Library Department of MSS and Rare Books (henceforth TÜR KHO), 46-1-3, 4.

then the ICIC's secretary¹⁰ and later elected honorary member of the Learned Estonian Society. First, he established contacts with various universities and scientific institutions in order to determine which of them continued to operate after the war. In 1923, de Reynold, a member of the committee, and Halecki drafted a questionnaire that was sent to institutions in 12 of the countries faced with the most serious recovery challenges. These were Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Yugoslavia. For the institutions that had survived the war and the internal revolutions, they proposed to improve cooperation with the ICIC. From Estonia, the University of Tartu responded to the proposal. Furnished with the data supplied by these institutions, Halecki reviewed the situation at the second meeting of the ICIC in summer 1923, where he stressed the optimistic nature of the responses and the fact that in spite of economic difficulties, the number of the centers for intellectual activities had increased (Pycior 2001:352). At the third meeting of the ICIC on December 5, 1923, it was decided to establish the NCs on intellectual cooperation as well to establish the principal fields of their activities.¹¹

3. International conventions

The LN coordinated the activities of the countries in capacities that concerned the conciliation of international conflicts, the protection of human rights, and economic, cultural, educational and legal cooperation by employing corresponding bodies of experts (commissions of specialists or the LN's subsidiaries). Thereby, it regularized the activities of the states by establishing an agenda of universal principles and norms. Although the signing of the agreements was voluntary, the countries did it heartily. Estonia ratified at least 52 different international conventions, agreements and declarations, as well as concurred with the most important documents in cultural affairs. Four of these are directly linked to the fields of literature, arts, education and science and connected with the work of the Intellectual Cooperation Organization. For example, the International Convention *for the Protection of National Historic or Artistic Treasures* aimed at preserving and rescuing historical and cultural antiquities. In practice, this required two major components. Firstly, they sought to improve the exchange of information at the international level to prevent the export of antiquities by the former colonial powers. Secondly, they needed to create a registry of cultural heritage items in general, but especially for looted assets that had already been illegally exported. For this task, Konstantin Päts, the State Elder, appointed Gottlieb Ney, the

¹⁰ He got a salary from the LN; the Commission's Secretariat and the Executive Committee, established later, were subordinated to the 1st Department (starting from 1940 the 3rd department) of LN.

¹¹ Estonian Historical Archives (Eesti Ajalooarhiiv, henceforth EAA), 2100-4-429, 61v.

Director of the Department of Science and Art of the Ministry of Education, to be the Estonian representative in the International Monuments Commission.¹²

The *Convention for facilitating the international circulation of Films of an Educational Character*, initiated by the IECI in Rome, proposed to carry out a wide set of measures for promoting an international exchange of films including granting an exemption from customs fees, setting technical standards, and improving information exchange. However, the Ministry of Economic Affairs feared that the concessions intended for educational cinematography could be exploited and preferred the status-quo. This meant that the Ministry of Economic Affairs decided each case separately on the basis of a recommendation from the Ministry of Education and Social Affairs.¹³ Nevertheless, the agreement was ratified by Estonia, and also by Latvia and Finland.

An extraordinary commission was created by the General Assembly of the LN in 1937 for developing a special agenda for radio broadcasting – *International Convention concerning the use of Broadcasting in the Cause of Peace*. The agreement provided for wide-ranging activities to propagate LN ideals such as peaceful coexistence and violence-free international relations through broadcasting lectures, news reports, program exchanges, or musical recordings. The radio was quite popular in these days – the number of households owning the broadcast receiver license grew rapidly in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania (ratios of the number of licenses to total population were 86,000/1,134,000, 134,900/1,995,000 (01.12.1938), and 59,393/2,421,570 respectively in 1939).¹⁴

Among the members of the commission were the political scientist Alfred Zimmern, the former deputy director of the IICI and one of the architects of the New World Order (NWO), and Tracey M. Kittredge, the representative of the Rockefeller Foundation in Europe. This organization emphasized the visionary nature of the agreement and searched for international funding that could finance the activities (Pemberton 2001:265-72; Watt 1978:159-73).

Already in 1925 the necessity to revise school textbooks was stressed by ICIC. The *Declaration on Teaching History (Revision of School Text-books)* signed in Geneva in October 1937 established that the teaching of foreign history should stress tolerance across borders.

¹² ERA, 957-13-724, 103-4.

¹³ ERA, 957-13-399, 22, 23, 29.

¹⁴ To the official statistics should be added the ‘rabbits’ who did not pay for the license. In Estonia, for example, their number was quite remarkable, by some appraisal even half of the license owners (Trikkel 1977:50). The total number of inhabitants are taken from the report *Wartime Population Changes in Areas Incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1939-1940* compiled by the US Office of Strategic Services in 1944 (http://www.lituanus.org/1981_3/81_3_07.htm, 03.10.2009); the data about the licences from: Trikkel 1977:40; http://www.arhivi.lv/sitedata/ZURNALS/zurnalu_raksti/45-73-VESTURE-Kruks-Radio.pdf (01.02.2013), <http://www.zilionis.lt/history/rproblem.php> (01.02.2013).

4. Intellectual cooperation in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania in the 1920s

In order to alleviate shortages of specialists with higher education that are needed in building up a fully functional state, all three countries opened their universities before the wars with Soviet Russia were ended. Note that in Latvia and Lithuania they were officially called high schools, and in all cases, the aim was to preserve the newly won independence. In building up higher education and research expertise, much hope was placed in gaining foreign assistance, but in fact the developing foreign connections were hindered by governments abroad harboring mistrust toward the countries that had just achieved independence. Contacts with West-European countries, especially the United Kingdom and France, remained modest except for the activities coordinated by French institutes. Somewhat more successful was the outreach to US aid programs, especially assistance gained from the Carnegie Center and the Rockefeller Foundation.

Sometimes the reception in other countries was cold, as for instance when associate professor of children's diseases Aadu Lüüs visited Germany after WWI. He was one of the first professors from the University of Tartu to visit, yet due to information sent out by local media in a biased key, even in academic circles, representatives of new countries would get humiliating treatment (Lüüs 1959:60–1). Only those university professors who had already gained international recognition before WWI (for instance Ludvig Puusepp) were treated as equal partners.

Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania found it useful to develop contacts with the ICIC because its philosophy, on the contrary, was stressing the equality of cultures and the countries were treated equally. Moreover, Estonia became the first country in the world that decided to establish a state level (national) intellectual cooperation committee. The University of Tartu Council meeting (December 12, 1922) named developing foreign academic contacts as the main task of the committee. In the same year, 1922, the Hungarians followed the Estonian example. Then, the first half of the next year saw the “spontaneous” establishment of national commissions gaining ground throughout Europe. By the summer of 1923, such commissions were already active in 12 different countries (LN 1937:7). The common feature of these countries was that they were smaller countries eager to develop academic contacts. Almost a year after the Estonian committee was founded on December 5 1923 the international commission in its 3rd session adopted a special regulation on the creation of NCs and outlined their main fields of activities.¹⁵

In Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, the universities were eager to organize the NCs, and the rectors of these institutions were elected presidents of them. In Estonia, the committee also included governmental members, namely the Department of Science and Arts from the Ministry of Education and the Political Department from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

However, the activities of the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian committees remained passive and slow-paced in the 1920s. For example, according to the

¹⁵ EAA, 2100-4-429, 61v.

meeting records, the Estonian Committee assembled for the first time in 1929, and the most important activity was apparently the exchange of information.¹⁶ The real work, i.e. to answer the different questionnaires which were distributed by the international movement, was carried out by the administration department of the University that also functioned as the Secretariat of the Committee (Puksoo 1935:4–5). Reviewing the correspondence between Karl Wagner, a former professor at the Lithuanian University in Kaunas (renamed in 1930 to Vytautas Magnus University), and various institutions in the intellectual cooperation network, it seems there was no clear division of tasks between international and national institutions in the 1920s.¹⁷

Wagner, who was unjustly dismissed by the Lithuanian government¹⁸, appealed to the ICIC as well as to the Latvian and Lithuanian NCs. Because Wagner was a Latvian citizen, his appeal became a sensitive topic when he requested protection against his dismissal from the ICIC. The committee appointed Albert Einstein to handle this delicate issue. According to the statement by the juridical commission, the appeal was sent to the government of Lithuania with the advice to find reconciliation. Although as a member of the ICIC, Einstein was not obliged to deal with the matter further, he sent a letter in Wagner's support to the Lithuanian Minister of Education. Similarly, the Latvian ambassador in Kaunas and the Latvian NC supported Wagner's request. However, the Lithuanians reacted tepidly to these suggestions. In 1933, the situation was resolved when the chair of Zoology at the Herder Institute in Riga vacated, and Wagner was appointed to the position.

5. Reorganization and the activities of the national committees in the Baltic states in the 1930s

From 1933 to 1934, the Baltic countries strengthened their contacts and signed the Baltic Entente treaty, which gave a favorable setting for strengthening cultural cooperation. Also, a reform of the NCs took place in all three countries almost simultaneously, including member selection by the university councils. A number of new members were appointed – among them were officials of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Education, representatives of different academic societies, as well as other cultural establishments (e.g. information storage institutions – archives, libraries, or museums).

These changes can be linked to the international conventions, which focused on developing international contacts between cultural institutions, and on the growing

¹⁶ TÜR KHO, 46-1-3, 1.

¹⁷ Dokumentensammlung Herder-Institut Marburg, Nachlässe Karl Wagner 28, 22–66.

¹⁸ In 1922, when the Lithuanian state offered him the chair of veterinary anatomy in Kaunas, Wagner left an assistant's position in Tartu. After some years the Lithuanian Parliament decided to end the teaching of veterinary science at Kaunas University, and Wagner, despite a contract for 10 years, was fired.

desire to promote foreign cultural communication. The Estonian and the Latvian authorities did not intervene in the activities of the NCs. They limited their actions to appointing officials as representatives of the ministries who collaborated in the activities of these bodies. The financial support of the activities varied from country to country: in Estonia, Latvia and Finland it was supported by private donations and irregularly subsidized by the governments.

The agenda changed the Lithuanian NC's classification from a component of the university to a department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1934. Thus, from that point on, the activities were funded from the state budget (*National committees* 1937:58, 85, 89). According to the new agenda, the inauguration of the Lithuanian committee was chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs who also reserved a position of Secretary to one of the committee officials. In addition, the Ministry's consent was necessary for using the committee's funds (*National committees* 1937:90).

Estonia planned to amend the committee's statute in autumn 1939, when the NC was intended to be transferred to the jurisdiction of the Academy of Sciences, but for various reasons (the beginning of war and its chairman Piip was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs) it did not happen. Finland's committee never developed an agenda at all; it was much more an association of individuals rather than a body of representatives (*National committees* 1937:57).

The term of office for the members of the Estonian NC was originally limited to two years. However, in the 1920s when the committee remained nearly dormant because Piip was abroad, this deadline was not enforced. Among the active members of the Estonian committee in the 1920s were university professors Johan Kõpp (theologian), Piip, Puusepp (neurologist), Peeter Tarvel (historian), and the library director Friedrich Puksoo who was very active, too.¹⁹ The membership of the last Estonian committee (1937) included, besides university professors, the rectors of other high schools, the representatives of scientific societies, Nikolai Kaasik, the Director of the Political Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Voldemar Päts, the Deputy Minister of Education.²⁰

The structure of the Latvian and Lithuanian committees was similar, but the Latvian one was noteworthy because it included women intellectuals and student representatives in its body. As opposed to the liberal attitude shown in Latvia, the Lithuanian version looks much more restricted and conservative. Its members mostly came from university faculties, and just a few from cultural institutions such as the Union of Artists, as well as the directors of the national broadcasting corporation and the national theatre (*National committees* 1937:89–90). That Lithuania's committee had members from such cultural organizations shows that it placed more emphasis on cultural affairs than Latvia and Estonia, both of which had a more "scientific" emphasis.

When searching for solutions on specific issues, the NCs (as had the international committee) established *ad hoc* groups of specialists. Sometimes, such *ad*

¹⁹ EAA, 2100-4-443, 69.

²⁰ EAA, 2100-4-443, 76-7.

hoc groups became permanent bodies as, for example, the expert commission for coordinating school textbooks, which was formed by the Latvian national committee in 1932. It was renamed the National Education Information Center with nearly 13 members one year later (*National committees* 1937:87–8). These efforts in promoting education gave Latvians the opportunity to organize the 15th International Conference of High School Teachers in Riga in the next year.

In the 1930s, the issue of regional cooperation became a topic of discussion again because its proponents were convinced that joint actions at the cultural level could open a door to political cooperation. In 1932, archaeologist Francis Balodis, the chairperson of the Latvian committee, sent a letter proposing to organize a regional association of NCs for establishing closer relationships between Estonian, Danish, Finnish, Lithuanian, Latvian, and Swedish committees. This was probably the first attempt to regionalize such cooperation (Stradiņš Cēbere 2001:297; *Coopération intellectuelle* 1938,91/92:353–5).

Although the idea to initiate official cooperation between Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania was suggested by non-governmental entities early in the 1930s, the countries did not sign the corresponding agreement until September 1934. Researchers usually stress that the Baltic Entente treaty was a regional security pact based on Article 21 of the LN Statutes (The issues of regional cooperation are also studied by Inesis Feldmanis and Aivars Stranga (1994), Kaido Jaanson (2001), Eero Medijanenen (2006, 2012), Marko Lehti (2002, 2011), Kasekamp (2010), Kaslas (1976) a.o.). Stressing the security aspects yet at the same time emphasizing the connection between such an agreement and core LN principles primarily aimed at averting opposition by Germany and the Soviet Union. Previously, the protests of these two states had blocked attempts to establish the Baltic Union which was abandoned in the 1920s (Piip 1933a:174–5).

Simultaneous with the Lithuanian proposal to Estonia and Latvia that the three nations finalize an official cooperation agreement (February 1934), Kazys Pakštas, a professor of geography at Vytautas Magnus University and Member of the Lithuanian NC, made a trip to Norway, Sweden and Denmark. During this trip Pakštas presented a number of public lectures where he propagated the idea that Lithuania belonged to the North-European region (Pakštas 2005:20–1). As Pakštas avowed later, the attempt to reanimate this idea was successful: “After some time, the phrase Baltoscandia began to appear in the press and gained considerable recognition” (Pakštas 1940:100–1). He took a similar journey to Latvia, Estonia and Finland although notably later, in December 1934. This trip came after the Baltic Entente treaty was signed and Edgar Kant, an influential social geographer in the Nordic-Baltic area, stated his support for the revived conception (Buttiner 1994, *Vaba Maa* December 15 1934).

The position Pakštas advocated in his lectures and discussions differed significantly from the Swedish geographer Sten de Geer’s original Baltoscandian conception. According to de Geer, Estonia and Latvia (i.e. the former Baltic provinces) were the only new countries on the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea which belonged to the North-European cooperation region (De Geer 1928:121–32). De Geer’s

statement, in turn, relied on the research of Mihály (Michael) Haltenberger, a short time professor of Geography at Tartu University (De Geer 1928:136). This study, *Gehört das Baltikum zu Ost-, Nord- oder zu Mitteleuropa*, was one of the first attempts to solve a dilemma, but significantly hindered real cooperation. Haltenberger questioned whether Estonia and Latvia should join themselves into a “region” with Lithuania or Finland. However, standing by such an omission (only two of the five countries that made an effort to create the Baltic Union – Lithuania and Poland – were counted out from Baltoscandian region) was insulting from the Lithuanian point of view.

Indeed, even Estonia and Latvia were treated differently than Finland. Only the latter was accepted into the Nordic cooperation region (1924) while the official applications of Estonia and Latvia were rejected (1928) (Hackmann 2002:423). After this step, a new conception arose about including Estonia and Latvia into two cooperation areas, a narrower Baltic entity and a broader Nordic region. With these definitions, the Lithuanians were definitely included into the Baltic cooperation region. For instance, Piip stated that “the Baltic states represent a certain regional grouping, a unity, determined to cooperate in the maintenance of general peace and to develop their mutual economic and cultural relations” (Piip 1933a:177). However, differing from the public opinion,²¹ political scientists did not support the idea about including Lithuania into the wider cooperation region. For instance, Piip stated that the kernel of a new Baltic Union would be formed only with Eastern-Baltic (Estonia, Latvia, and Finland) and Scandinavian countries (Piip 1933b:26).

The groundwork to bring into existence a new Baltic cultural cooperation region, started by Pakštas’s tour, was continued over the next summer (1935) by Mykolas Römeris, a lawyer, the chairperson of the Lithuanian NC, and rector of Vytautas Magnus University. He made a series of visits to neighboring countries primarily for advocating the idea of Nordic-Baltic conferences (*Segodnya* October 31 1935).

Choosing supporters of the basic principles of a regional cultural policy for membership in the NCs of intellectual cooperation, however, was not accidental. From the beginning of the 1930s, the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian NCs were coordinating cultural and educational activities with an additional goal of improving contacts beyond the region. The fact that the movement was symbolic of global humanistic cooperation, gave hope that the intellectuals of the Nordic countries would agree to the fulfillment of fundamental values of regional cultural cooperation. In addition, the similarities with many Nordic principles would enable coordination of activities at the wider Nordic-Baltic level.

Although the achievements of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in implementing the LN’s and the ICIC’s recommendations on transnational cultural and educa-

²¹ For example, a new non-governmental organization promoting the founding of the federation, the Baltic Union Association, officially stressed in 1933 that Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are banded together into the Baltic cooperation region and will form, together with Nordic countries a wider Nordic-Baltic cooperation area (*Baltijas Ūnija* 1933, 1:44).

tional cooperation were internationally recognized, Danish, Norwegian and Swedish NCs still refrained from sending their intellectuals, and thus held back from participating in the first conferences. However, the Finns' agreement to join enabled the conferences to start at the interregional level as originally planned.

6. General outline of conferences

From 1935 to 1938, four regional conferences took place (1935 in Kaunas, 1936 in Tartu, 1937 in Helsinki, and 1938 in Riga). A first meeting of the Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian and Finnish representatives was organized by the Lithuanians in October 1935 when eight delegates met in Kaunas.²² Since 1937, the meetings were organized under the title of "Nordic-Baltic Conferences", and at the last prewar meeting, the representatives came from seven countries: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden. Even Poland was very close to joining as an eighth country that year.²³ Due to the war in Europe, the conference scheduled to meet in Stockholm in 1939 was cancelled and the next conference (the Baltic Conference on Intellectual Cooperation) took place in Riga in 1939. These conferences were organized according to a strictly followed pattern: usually they started with exhaustive discussions, then working out drafts of resolutions, which were followed by presentations. The same issues could be discussed and debated during the next conference, and often previously signed resolutions were amended too.

Firming up the agenda for the first conference, the Lithuanians had to settle an important but not yet commonly discussed issue – the scope of the cooperation. Their vision as presented in Kaunas (1935) suggested concentrating on promoting contacts within areas identified with a precise term "arts" (i.e. in the humanities, fine arts and music) especially at the levels of personal and institutional (research centers, institutes, museums) contacts (*Segodnya* November 2 1935).

Although the delegates supported the proposal in principle, including the limitations, out of sensitivity for the areas related to developing national identities, they in fact decided to leave to final composition of the resolution to the organizers of the next conference. The final text of the document, adopted at the conference in Tartu, was formulated by a special commission from the local university's teaching staff (Harri Moora, Ferdinand Linnus, Oskar Loorits, Sten Karling, Otu Liiv and F. Puksoo) led by F. Linnus (*Actes du deuxième congrès*: 65). This document differed from the earlier version which had explicitly limited the cooperation efforts to the humanities; in this case the expansion to the natural and medical sciences was not eliminated. Despite this, the coordination of joint

²² Römeris, Vytautas Soblyš, and Paulius Galaunė, docent of art history represented Lithuanian, Adamovičs and Blese Latvian, Piip and Puusepp Estonian, and Långfors Finnish committees.

²³ ERA, 957-14-678, 30-2.

activities in fields such as visual arts, music and literature was occasionally discussed at the further meetings.²⁴

By the beginning of the conference in Tartu, the Lithuanians were no longer satisfied with limiting activities to nongovernmental channels, and tried, with the backing of their government, to push for more official cooperation. Even though at that time it was still more of an ideal than a reality, the Lithuanian delegation demanded a written agreement on regional cultural and educational cooperation. The idea was further expanded in the essay *Necessite des accords relatifs aux rapports intellectuels et artistiques entre les états de la région Baltique*, which was published in the conference's proceedings (*Actes du deuxième congrès*: 98–104).

It is noteworthy that although the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs formally supervised the preparation of the draft of the declaration concerning the teaching history and geography, it has a direct connection to the Baltic Entente treaty (Soblys 1937:10). In addition to similarities with the model of bilateral intellectual cooperation agreements suggested by the LN which were common at the time (*Recueil des accords intellectuels* 1938), the draft's preamble refers to the declaration as an annex to the Baltic Entente treaty. The reference to the Baltic Entente treaty shows the desire to return to the closer cooperation plans cast aside shortly after the Bulduri conference (1920). In addition, until this time, the member governments had avoided openly supporting or rejecting the notion put forward by non-governmental associations that the Baltic Entente treaty represented a first step towards a more comprehensive federation (i.e. unrealized Baltic Union).

By the time of the conference in Helsinki (1937), the Lithuanians had become convinced that beyond a declaration concerning teaching history and geography between Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, circumstances required the completion of a wider cultural cooperation treaty between the Baltic and Nordic regions. The difference in that case from a Baltic treaty is that a Nordic-Baltic agreement would

²⁴ In addition to Šimkus who suggested (Kaunas 1935) developing wider cooperation in the creative arts the topic was again debated in Helsinki (1937) by Pauls Kundziņš, professor of architecture of Latvian University. His short speech was devoted to the cooperation in the fields of visual and folk arts, with the recommendation to organize joint exhibitions and traveling exhibitions (here for the first time the idea to organize joint Nordic-Baltic exhibitions emerged) in neighboring countries (*Helsingin Sanomat* November 6 1937). However, the corresponding resolution was not adopted (*Troisième congrès régional des commissions*:28). In Riga (1938) docent of the University of Latvia William Kleesmann-Matthews, an eminent linguist who was fluent in Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian (Ariste 1958, 9:575) stressed the need to start publishing regular Baltic and Scandinavian selected bibliographies of fiction (*Quatrième conférence régionale*:106). Kleesmann-Matthews, emphasizing that the Nordic literature is known in the Baltic countries, but the Baltic literature is not yet well-known in the Nordic countries, find that publishing similar lists will improve the situation. However, compiling such bibliographies was a capacious work and could not be without state support. It was started only by Estonia and Finland because these two countries, by signing the bilateral conventions of intellectual cooperation (together as well as with Hungary) undertook an obligation to compensate compiling the bibliographies from state funds. As emphasized at the conference by Vladas Jakubėnas, professor of Kaunas Conservatory, also in the field of music the ties to the Nordic countries were still weak despite the satisfactory development of the contacts between the Baltic countries (*Quatrième conférence régionale*:120).

only represent a confirmation that the states involved would follow principles adopted by the LN in promoting cultural relations (*Troisième congrès régional*: 41–4). The delegates adopted the proposal of the linguist Arthur Långfors (the chair of the Finnish NC), Piip, and Puusepp which demanded that the Lithuanian NC should develop the preliminary draft (*Helsingin Sanomat* November 6 1937; *Postimees* November 7 1937). This document, however, was not completed because Trimakas pursued his diplomatic career, and no longer gave priority to matters of regional cooperation. In addition, the acceptance by the NCs of the plan to finalize the draft of the Baltic declaration concerning teaching history and geography, led the Lithuanian ministry of education to initiate steps aimed at building up a common Baltic educational area. At the last regional conference of NCs in Riga a year before the outbreak of WWII, the Lithuanians (Pakštas) envisioned convening a special conference of representatives from the Nordic-Baltic universities to flesh out a draft of the Baltoscandian cultural cooperation agreement (*Quatrième conférence régionale*: 58).

Piip made an attempt to analyze the results of the Nordic-Baltic conferences at the last joint event in Riga before the war in 1938. Responding to his own question, whether the approach chosen was too optimistic and idealistic, Piip concluded that the right course of action had been chosen. However, he considered it necessary that efforts to implement the decisions and proposals had to be improved, and that it would be necessary to engage in wider publicity for their efforts (*Quatrième conférence régionale* 1940:27).

7. Language of communication

Unlike the Nordic countries, the Baltic countries did not have an innate common language for communication, either for communicating among themselves or for dealing with other countries. Just in dealing with the Scandinavian countries, they needed to use various foreign languages. The absence of a single communication language was substantially inhibiting their interactions. For instance, communications between Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania involved using seven different languages simultaneously (*Vaba Maa* December 15 1934). The Estonian NC provides a matter of fact description of this complicated situation:

[...] if one considers the international relations with just our closest neighbors, we must also emphasize the equivalence of the two languages: the French language is required for us to communicate with Poland (and the countries located beyond), also in the near future with Russia, occasionally with Lithuania and Latvia, and even Sweden. However, the English language is needed for all Scandinavian countries, and possibly for Lithuania, or Latvia, too (in the case of Finland, since the Finnish and Estonian languages are very similar, where Estonians understand Finns, and vice versa, an auxiliary language is not at all needed).²⁵

²⁵ ERA, 1108-5-805, 209.

Wishing to emphasize the compatibility of their countries with the Nordic cooperation region, Estonia and Latvia (1934) decided to start teaching English as the first foreign language instead of German. This also reflected the increasing popularity of English as an international language of communication. Similar proposals were also made in Lithuania, but the authorities there refrained from taking further steps, citing a lack of teachers. However, establishing English as the first foreign language was a particularly significant and overt step, because previously Russian had filled the role of *lingua franca* among the three Baltic states. Indeed, relying on Russian for this role became increasingly problematic, since younger people, having been educated during the period of independence, did not readily understand it.

Both reports at the conference held in Kaunas (1935) stressed the need to completely adopt either English or French for interstate communication. Piip, as well as Ernests Blese, preferred using French, and advocated as the main criterion for suitability, the returns arising from belonging a language's cultural sphere. This idea of accounting for a wider scope of consequences was not new. For instance, the issue of the compatibility of the language's culture filling the role of "donor culture" along with the benefits of belonging in the corresponding cultural space were already discussed extensively during discussions held in the columns of a *Latvian-Estonian Association monthly (Latvijas-Igaunijas Biedrības Mēnešraksts = Lāti-Eesti Ūhingu kuukiri)* magazine in 1933–1934.

Långfors and Andrus Saareste, two well-known linguists, proposed another path at the conference in Tartu (1936). Their suggestion was to abandon attempts to determine "a most suitable language" and to start using English and French simultaneously. For one of the more compelling arguments for using two languages in this way, Långfors and Saareste referred to the so-called traditional language predilections which associated English with trade and maritime usage, while the French was used in high culture (*Actes du deuxième congrès*:111–123). As further justification for their support of the use of French in certain settings, Långfors and Saareste applied an influential argument supporting its international role from the quite recently published article by Franck Louis Schoell in *Revue de l'Alliance Française* (Schoell 1936). Due to its originality, this particular argument was still not widely-known, and therefore Långfors presented it in a public lecture *The French as language of international communication*²⁶

The amount of attention that Schoell's reasoning to support the use of French received can be explained by the fact that it was more widely spread in the Baltic countries than English. For instance Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian diplomats in the LN preferred French over English when communicating with colleagues. In spite of French becoming the official language for NC conferences, cases of low proficiency in the language forced the delegates to make accommodations. The reality of the situation is well characterized by the fact that for the Kaunas conference, French, the official language of the LN, was used only during the opening

²⁶ The text was later translated into Estonian and published in the journal *Ajalooline Ajakiri (Historical Review)* 1937, 2:49–57.

session. Later, at the suggestion of Puusepp who chaired the meeting, the delegates switched to Russian. Ironically, even Piip's statement about the criteria for a common language of communication was read in Russian by Puusepp (*Segodnya* October 31 1935). Thus, although the Baltic states sought a complete departure from Russia's cultural space, they were still caught inside because of its language. The last such conference to include presentations delivered in Russian was Tartu (1936). At the next joint meetings, the speakers mainly used the English and French language, and as an exception, the German language, since that was accessible for both Baltic and Scandinavian delegates.

The resolution adopted at the conference in Tartu which suggested using both official languages of the LN, French and English, for communication was particularly suitable for communication with Nordic and other more distant countries. However, it was incompatible with the course to broaden interstate communication and cooperation, pursued after Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania signed the Baltic Entente treaty. For this venture it was more suitable to use a far-reaching solution proposed by friendship associations, preferring national languages instead of the international ones. This allowed the associations to become the coordinators of activities involving other non-governmental associations, and it allowed the NCs of intellectual cooperation to retain the role of experts when developing educational contacts within the Baltics.

8. Revision of the content of school textbooks

The LN and the Intellectual Cooperation Organization turned special attention towards disseminating the ideas of internationalism, particularly among the youth. A major objective was to make the future generations more inclined towards tolerance and to stimulate their interest in the culture and history of other nations.

However, this was not an easy task. A country often fails to consider that their own ethnically centric narratives may contain interpretations that others view as intolerant or even insulting. Especially interpretation of the past can be a problem, even for nations with highly similar linguistic and cultural backgrounds. For example, after reading Estonian textbooks, the Finnish School Department concluded that the Estonian authors' knowledge of Finnish history was poor.²⁷

In comparing Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, the situation is even more complex. The NCs expert groups' (sub-committees) leaders Tarvel and Ludvigs Adamovičs mentioned in their reports that the language issue is the most difficult challenge. Adamovičs did not want to allow the authors of textbooks to use original materials translated into the languages of neighboring countries. There-

²⁷ EAA, 2111-4-442, 393.

fore, the authors were expected to use foreign sources even when writing about the period of independence, or in general about the national history.²⁸

Even in the late 1930s, as indicated by the prominent Lithuanian historian Ignas Jonynas, special effort was needed just to counter mistakes and misconceptions spreading through Russian texts. For example, Jonynas pointed to a term that was insulting to the Lithuanians, using the “Polish Commonwealth” to describe what was actually known as the “Lithuanian – Polish Union (Rzeczpospolita)”. A similar shortcoming was not distinguishing Estonians and Latvians from Baltic Germans or Russians. In general, a consensus viewpoint was much easier to achieve in describing the 20th century than earlier periods; the robust amount of published material on international relations helped to disseminate objective, factual descriptions.

History textbooks in both regions, Nordic and Baltic, were outstanding regarding the international viewpoint with realistic depiction of their neighbors’ past. In Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, the national ministries of education played a pivotal role in ensuring the objectivity of textbooks.

On the non-governmental front, the Baltic Teachers’ Union began regional harmonization of history textbooks in the early 1930s in order to “consequently take out all which is preventing developing friendship and initiating bellicosity”.²⁹ The situation was initially quite problematic – for instance, in Lithuanian schools Estonian history was not taught at all. The Lithuanians declared that a desire to avoid tendentiousness was the reason for this exclusion (*Õpetajate Leht* May 26 1933).

After the cessation of input from the Baltic Teachers’ Union in 1934, various friendship associations continued with efforts to promote regional relations through the education provided to youth. Yet, unlike the Baltic Teachers’ Union that could address daily aspects, the friendship association partnerships together with various ministries of education only had advisory roles.

While in the Baltic states the supervision of textbooks was done through the ministries of education, in the Nordic countries the process was coordinated through non-governmental agents. The Nordic associations served as the main coordinators of these efforts and even created a region-wide commission for

²⁸ The representatives of Estonia and Latvia also highlighted the activities of the attempts by teachers’ organizations to rewrite the textbooks from the point of view of the nationality concerned. The positions of Latvia are very precisely formulated in the Law of Education (1934) and the Estonian ones in the resolutions of the 4th National Congress of History Teachers. The document set out the need to teach the “objective” history because the discipline of history should propagate a “nationally oriented” world view. Besides, they stressed that syllabi of history should serve to develop the universal as well as the individual responsibility for Estonia’s future (EAA, 2100-4-443, 121).

²⁹ Attention to the history textbooks was explained by the necessity to liquidate deficiencies caused by insufficient information exchange and tendentious teaching of history in high schools, universities, seminars and teachers’ institutes at the tsarist era (*Õpetajate Leht* May 26 1933).

supervising the content of history textbooks. Thus, the Nordic countries went further than was foreseen by LN recommendations.

The Nordic commission's best known product was an extensive study regarding objectivity for the majority (126) of the history textbooks used in Nordic schools. This project took place from 1933 to 1936. During this research they found that beyond mere inaccuracies and inconsistencies there were contradictions based on national perspectives on history. The latter were more prevalent when handling events relating to their sense of national dignity (the Viking era and the conquests, Swedish-Danish relations before 1814, as well as Norwegian-Swedish relations after 1814) (*Handbook for the improvement* 1949:32–3).

Therefore, adding the topic of coordination for history textbooks to the agenda of the 1935 conference in Kaunas can be understood as the organizers' wish to obtain further information on the Nordic practices. The Lithuanians gained consent to present a report introducing the Nordic practices from Långfors, the chairperson of the Finnish NC. Långfors optimistically suggested that the Baltic region adopt the Nordic model and organize, as the Nordic countries had, a joint interstate commission to avoid promoting intolerance and subjectivity. The delegates adopted the proposal with an amendment; they considered it necessary to create the joint Baltic commission as a union of national commissions (*Coopération intellectuelle* 1936, 61/62:681).

In subsequent meetings (Tartu, Helsinki, Riga), the Lithuanians distanced themselves from coordinated activities at non-governmental regional level, preferring to limit the examination of textbooks to reviewing at the state level.³⁰ The Baltic countries finally abandoned implementing the Nordic model at the 1938 Riga conference. The compromise proposed by Långfors and approved by the delegates was to continue following the guidelines of the international resolution *Declaration on Teaching History*, as created by the IICI (*Quatrième conférence régionale*:83).

The previously mentioned opposition from the Lithuanians to the coordination of history textbooks over the regional level can be, to some extent, explained by the widespread distrust in the Baltic countries towards international non-governmental associations and their activities. For example, among the organizations banned in Latvia and Lithuania was even the influential Pan-European movement. However, the main factor motivating this opposition was a desire to implement coordination of the developing cultural contacts at higher, more official levels.

In the draft of the declaration concerning teaching history and geography adopted at the conference in Tartu, the Lithuanians put forth the position that a central goal of cultural cooperation should be cultivating a shared sense of unity. In some aspects new, while in other ways consistent with earlier statements,

³⁰ Jonynas, Professor of Lithuanian history in Kaunas, was opposed to reciprocally reviewing information about neighboring countries, because he was convinced that the Lithuanian commission is sufficiently effective. Nevertheless and under the pressure of other participants, Lithuanians consented to the resolution stating the need for translating the particular paragraphs, which was included in the conference resolution (*Actes du deuxième congrès*:51–2).

particularly in advocating the sense of unity, this was significantly more ambitious with an aim to draw attention to the implications for education. The draft stressed the need to highlight consistently in teaching history and geography “the elements that bear witness to a good understanding of the affiliation between the Baltic nations” (Soblys 1937:11). As emphasized at the 1937 friendship associations congress in Tallinn, Soblys, director of the National Pedagogical Institute and a member of the Lithuanian NC, the proposed draft of the declaration was essentially a plan for cultivating a common sense of unity (Piip proposed instead it use the *Baltic patriotism*) (Soblys 1937:11; *Uus Eesti* June 15 1937).

After the next friendship association congress in Kaunas (1939), Soblys, now working as the Director of the Cultural Department in the Lithuanian Ministry of Education, suggested rewriting the draft. The recommendation from the Lithuanians incorporated a new and more ambitious agenda intended to cultivate a spirit of Baltic patriotism among the ‘school youth’. As Soblys explained in his presentation (Soblys 1939:9), the term ‘school youth’ in this case referred to all students from elementary schools through universities, a social group over 600,000 persons in number.

9. Integration in the field of higher education

Starting from the dispersal of the international survey in 1923 discussed previously,³¹ the issue of integrating aspects of higher education across states was a topic in the mind of the Intellectual Cooperation Organization. In 1924, the Spanish Government proposed to the ICIC to create an international university as means for WWI participants to build up educational networks.³² However, such an institution was never established. The committee was concerned that due to a much wider scope in seeking funds, it could become a privileged school at the expense of national universities. The committee feared this would undermine the idea of equality of opportunities in various countries that relied upon the activities of the intellectual cooperation movement.

In the Baltic Sea region, an attempt to create a single educational and cultural area including Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland became high priority. Even though the delegates of the Bulduri conference (1920) adopted two conventions, *The Relations of Scientific Establishments* and *Convention on Cultural Cooperation*, based on Latvian proposals, they were never implemented.

The desire to begin cooperation without delay led to the conference in Kaunas. And even though the importance of promoting foreign scientific contacts was

³¹ The idea to establish an international university was first proposed by the Union of International Associations in 1913. However, it was only implemented as summer university courses. The first session was held in Brussels in September 1920 in cooperation with the LN. Among the lecturers was also the Under Secretary-General of LN, the Japanese economist Inazo Nitobe (*League of Nations. Official Journal* 1921:1109–10).

³² EAA, 2111-4-429, 89–90.

already highlighted³³, most of the realization of a comprehensive cooperation plan only occurred with the proposals of Jūlijs Auškaps, Rector of the University of Latvia.³⁴

In his presentation at the conference, Adamovičs, the Chair of the Latvian NC justified the delay in implementing a new plan by seeking to accomplish cooperation in higher education and research areas through two channels. In this plan, the main efforts should initially seek to create conditions promoting an intellectual common ground before investing resources in developing direct contacts between scientists or institutions. As the first step, Adamovičs pointed out the need to establish centers in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, which would collect the most significant scientific publications of the neighboring countries. These new collections should be used (1) to update the already existing sets of scientific literature, (2) to list all publishing companies that were willing to exchange their publications, or to supplement research papers published in the national languages with summaries in foreign languages, and (3) to compile a bibliography of the more important studies published in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Finland in the humanities, social and natural sciences over the last five years (*Actes du deuxième congrès*:69-70).³⁵ Further developing Adamovičs's idea, Balodis proposed to establish a Baltic library in order to enhance the accessibility of literature (*Troisième congrès régional*: 37).

Inspired from the first proposed versions, the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian delegates at the conference in Helsinki (1937) considered developing the cooperation of libraries by initiating the exchange of deposit copies of scientific literature, which would have in fact presumed the completion of a formal agreement. However, the discussion, followed by presentations, revealed that even the Nordic countries had not succeeded with introducing such an exchange of deposit copies of scientific literature.³⁶ Thus, the delegates considered it more feasible to start with an exchange of bibliographic lists of the most significant publications (circa

³³ Calling into existence Academies of Sciences as special institutions for promoting foreign scientific contacts was named as a separate point in the conference six-point resolution (*Coopération intellectuelle* 1936,61/62:681). This was a timely subject in Estonia. In winter 1935 the NC recommended with regard to the accession of Estonia with the IRU to establish the Academy of Sciences as a coordinating body of scientific contacts with other countries. However, the Academies of Sciences were founded later: 1938 in Estonia and 1941 in Latvia and Lithuania. The historian of science J. Stradiņš has pointed to a mistake in a publication of the Latvian historian Edgars Andersons who wrote that Piip suggested creating a common academy for Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania (Stradiņš 2011:14–5).

³⁴ In 1934 and 1935 Auškaps presented his ideas of a possible cooperation in higher education of the three countries at the meetings of the Baltic Union and friendship associations. He considered it necessary to start with the universities and to arrange lectures for students from other Baltic countries in areas where a country was better equipped or developed than the neighbors. Furthermore, he promoted the establishment of the joint scientific journal *Acta Academica Baltica* (Stradiņš Cēbere 2001:299).

³⁵ *Actes du deuxième congrès*:1937:69–70.

³⁶ *Ibidem*:38.

200-900 titles) that would be exchanged annually between the national libraries (Helsingin Sanomat November 6 1937).

During further discussions in Riga (1938) regarding the possibilities to standardize practices among the Baltic and Nordic libraries, the importance of bibliographic lists was stressed again. The existence of similar lists in the Nordic and Baltic countries, as it was pointed out, could lead to constructing a wider cooperation network and enable the lesser-used works to be borrowed from neighbors instead of buying them (*Quatrième conférence régionale*:87–89). In 1939 Estonia, following the example of Sweden and Finland, began compiling a list of the foreign scientific literature acquired by their libraries, but the experiment failed.³⁷

On the other hand, the vision approved in Kaunas to start building up common higher educational and scientific areas from scholarly contacts centered in the humanities had been shifted at the Conference in Tartu (1936) because of Puusepp. Puusepp stressed the fact that the cooperation in natural and medical sciences that had been put on hold could be started immediately because at least one internationally recognized regional research center, suitable to fill the role of a coordinating body, already existed. As Director of the Neurological Clinic of Tartu University, Puusepp confirmed that the clinic fulfilled almost all the characteristic features of a regional (Baltic) center as described by Auškaps except one; due to lack of funds, foreigners could only work there as unpaid assistants. This conformity to the characteristic features of a regional scientific center was not an accident; Puusepp was implementing the same recommendations from international organizations which had inspired Auškaps as he formulated his vision.

Puusepp's proposal to summon an inter-university conference for working out principles of cooperation in higher education and research was inspired by ideas spreading at this time on the international level. A similar conference on wider standardization of higher educational principles was being arranged by two influential cultural diplomacy organizations: IICI and the Société de l'Enseignement supérieur (Society of Higher Education) in which Puusepp represented the Estonian government.

The resolution adopted at the conference in Tartu, along with a suggestion to pay foreign assistants salaries, was rewritten at the next meeting in Helsinki (1937). This version included an amendment suggested by Börje Knös, Piip, Trimakas and Långfors, which would settle the issue of whether to pay undergraduates visiting from neighboring countries an assistant's salary. However, the suggestion was considered to be excessively expensive, particularly with the limited financial resources of the countries in question.

However, as Jurgis Baltrušaitis stressed when speaking about cooperation within the fields of art history, archeology, and ethnography³⁸ (Riga 1938), similar wider cooperation networks already existed in the humanities. As he experienced

³⁷ EAA 2100-4-442, 381-381v.

³⁸ In the agenda of the meeting the presentation was titled incorrectly: "Cooperation within the fields of history, art history and archeology".

during the 1930s, the contacts between the Baltic and Nordic countries were strengthening at both personal and institutional levels. This was evidenced by the success of Swedish scientists who had, in addition to developing broader Baltic Sea region central approaches, also built up corresponding research networks.³⁹ In addition to the coordination of efforts, these networks also helped to disseminate the perspectives of smaller countries. For instance, at the 1937 Congress of historians of the Baltic Sea region in Riga, in considering the histories of the Baltic countries, priority was given to new national historiographies (Tankler, Rämmer 2004:174–5).

10. International issues and the conferences seen from afar

Overviews about the Baltic, and later the Nordic-Baltic, Conferences on Intellectual Cooperation were published in the official journal of the Intellectual Cooperation Organization, *Coopération intellectuelle*. Representatives of the IICI attended the meetings as guests, and in at least in two cases, the impact of international institutions in the Baltic region can be traced directly back to interactions from these conferences.

Piip presented the report on the activities of the Estonian NC during the meeting of the ICIC in Geneva in the summer of 1936. His presentation stressed the importance of regional conferences as regular coordinating meetings. The joint activities stirred a widespread interest in Geneva; the representatives of Swedish, Danish and Norwegian NCs, as well as the officials of the ICIC declared their wish to participate at the conference in Tartu (*Actes du deuxième congrès*:11).

Due to the short time between the meeting and the conference in Tartu, only the Swedish representatives Knös and Isak Collijn were able to attend. Although invited to the conference, Jean Daniel de Montenach, the Secretary-General of the ICIC, could not take part due to the short notice. Nevertheless, he sent the organizers a letter with recommendations that changed the course of this and future meetings. For instance, de Montenach recommended including the topics of educational cinematography and radio propaganda for peace. His idea was to put pressure on the governments to speed up the ratification of the relevant conventions. On another issue, de Montenach thought it necessary to discuss the participation of NCs at the Second International Conference of National Committees on Intellectual Cooperation, which was organized within the framework of the intellectual cooperation month in Paris.⁴⁰

³⁹ Three most influential events, according to Baltrušaitis, are: founding the Baltic Institute in Stockholm (1931), participation of Estonians and Latvians at the Nordic Congress of Historians (1935), and the joint congress of historians of the Baltic Sea region taking place in Riga (1937). In addition to historians and art historians, similar wider Baltic Sea region centric approach is characteristic also to archeologists, ethnologists and folklorists (Rämmer, Tankler 2008).

⁴⁰ EAA, 2111-4-442, 41.

Due to lack of time, the organizers of the Tartu conference did not succeed to incorporate all the ICIC Secretariat's recommendations for the agenda; also in some aspects the attempt to find suitable speakers failed. Nevertheless, Piip compiled the general report, *Activities of the international intellectual cooperation committee and the congress of national committees in Paris*, and the delegates added to their resolution the recommendation that the governments ratify these international conventions (*Actes du deuxième congrès*:35–9, 104).

After the presentation, a discussion took place about who should participate in the international congress. Therefore, two possible options were considered: either to send a joint delegation of Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians, or for each country to send its own group. The delegates settled on a compromise of these options: the three countries will send separate delegations to the Paris congress, but will debate in meetings on the basis of a joint perspective (*Actes du deuxième congrès*: 186–7).

At the Paris congress, Rõmeris, the chairperson of the Lithuanian NC, provided an overview of the intellectual cooperation in the Baltic countries. The unique Nordic-Baltic experience was also stressed in the resolution of the conference: “the regional cooperation of the national committees is important to the whole international movement as a new and useful form of collaboration” (*Coopération intellectuelle* 1937, 82–83:471–5).

In the summer of 1938 when the Latvians were invited to the ICIC's session in Geneva, a report about their activities was composed by the chairperson of the Latvian NC, Adamovičs. This report was also introduced into the 1938 conference in Riga. The report summarized the transnational cultural cooperation in the region, and a synopsis outlined the variety of contacts at state level (schools for minority populations, information agencies and broadcasting), the activities of the friendship societies and the cooperation of professionals. Adamovičs discussed the activities of the intellectual cooperation committees as a final topic, an understandable place for academic cooperation, which is to a large extent not of interest for the wider public beyond the narrow circle of that particular community (*Quatrième conférence régionale*:51). After the presentation Murray, President of the ICIC, expressed satisfaction with the achievements of the Baltic countries (*Coopération intellectuelle* 1938,91/92:355). Another confirmation of the attention of the international community on the Nordic-Baltic regional cooperation is the publication of a comprehensive overview on the Riga conference in the journal *Coopération intellectuelle* in 1939 (715–26).

11. Conclusion

After WWI, the ICIC, a special consultative organ, was created by the LN in order to re-establish the cohesiveness of a damaged and fractured European culture. They also worked to help countries devastated by war to rebuild a network of educational and cultural establishments. To achieve this objective, the LN

initiated transnational cultural cooperation initiatives, which promoted peaceful coexistence of the countries, and also gave importance to the concept of and belief in national identities contributing to this cooperation.

Starting the restoration of cultural and educational networks crushed by the war, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania faced unexpected difficulties in the development of external contacts. The wider academic community showed a distinctive distrust towards representatives of the newly independent states. Except in the case of some already well-established scientists, they were not treated as equal colleagues. In this situation, the support from the international intellectual cooperation movement and its desire to promote cultural contacts based on the principle of equality were very important for Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. The three states rushed to join the movement, being among the first countries to establish national committees as state level supporting structures. Unfortunately, they soon had to realize that the intellectual cooperation movement was ineffectual in bringing more extensive plans to completion.

In the early 1930s, there was growing evidence testifying that the situation had changed. The number of national committees was significantly increased, and with the formation of the ICO (1931) the foundation of the intellectual cooperation network was finished. Furthermore, a series of international cultural communication standards (conventions and declarations) were created and adopted under the auspices of LN, along with a series of publications familiarizing people with these principles.

After signing the Baltic Entente treaty, the Lithuanians advocated an expanded concept of Baltoscandia (a common Nordic-Baltic cooperation region), which became the basis for guiding principles of the Baltic cultural cooperation movement. The states quickly reached a consensus that the means of implementing these principles should be created at joint conferences of representatives from the NCs for Baltic and Nordic countries.

Choosing the NCs of intellectual cooperation to expand upon those principles provided two main benefits. On the one hand, it provided evidence of the commitment to the fundamental humanistic principles established by the ICO. On the other hand, it positioned the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian NCs as central coordinating structures to facilitate cultural contacts.

Initiated by the Lithuanian NC, the Nordic-Baltic conferences of NCs (1935–1938) initiated the construction of the cultural cooperation region, similar to the Nordic one. Most attention was dedicated to developing contacts in education and scientific research areas, while occasionally also discussing cooperation in the creative areas (art, music and literature).

Following the model of the Nordic countries, the first conferences took a direction towards developing joint ventures through non-governmental approaches. However, it soon became clear that the non-governmental approaches, which proved suitable for cooperation between the Nordic countries, could not be used. This was due to the lack of a shared historical tradition providing a preexisting basis for a sense of unity and common identity in the case of the Baltic states.

The more appropriate basis for the regional cooperation efforts was relying on the Baltic declaration about teaching history and geography and the Nordic-Baltic cultural cooperation agreement. In addition, the regional educational cooperation agreement was also considered to be a supplement to the Baltic Entente treaty. The initial draft of the treaty in 1936 set the establishment of a Baltic education area as a goal; later on in 1939, common coordination was extended to the higher education sphere.

Although the plan to begin official cooperation was immediately adopted by delegates representing Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania as well as by the governments in 1940, the conferences continued to propose solutions using the non-governmental cooperation model. This discrepancy led to setbacks, which eventually favored the broader activities, for example creating bases in the higher education and research area.

Reaching the anticipated results was also hindered by the distrustful response from the Nordic countries. The Lithuanian proposal to join the conferences got a lukewarm reception; the wish to participate only appears after the events were endorsed by the ICO.

The Nordic-Baltic conferences of NCs for intellectual cooperation went down in history as an attempt to synthesize Nordic non-governmental approaches and the bilateral intellectual cooperation conventions model created at the LN. The draft of the declaration about teaching history and geography adopted by the delegates, unlike the bilateral agreements aimed to develop cultural contacts, concentrated on cultivating a sense of regional identity (Baltic patriotism) by establishing a common educational space.

Via the international network of intellectual cooperation organizations, the unique Nordic-Baltic experience of regional conferences was even transplanted to other continents, e.g. the first American Conference of National Committees on Intellectual Co-operation held in Santiago in January 1939.

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Address:

Algo Rämmer
Lossi 3, Tartu 50090
University of Tartu
Estonia

Tel.: +372 5154368

E-mail: algo.rammer@ut.ee

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