



H.E. Alexander V. Konovalov, Minister
Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation
Moscow
Russia
19/09/2016

Dear Minister Konovalov,

I am writing on behalf of the Committee of British Association for Slavonic and East European Studies to urge you to review the recent decision of the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation to put the Yury Levada Analytical Centre on the 'foreign agents' registry. BASEES is a professional organisation of scholars in universities and research institutions in the United Kingdom involved in teaching and researching the countries of Eurasia. It has over five hundred members from the UK and Europe.

The Association is dismayed at the designation of Levada-Centre as a 'foreign agent' because of the tremendous damage it will do to international academic collaboration between its members and academic researchers in the Russian Federation. This action on the part of the Ministry will undo the years of painstaking bridge-building that has taken place since the 1990s between higher educational institutions in the UK/Europe and the Russian Federation, which has produced world class research.

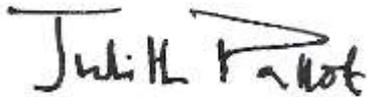
The Levada-Centre embodies the best traditions of Russian social research. Its founder, the late Yury Levada, is rightly recognised around the world as a leading social theorist. Under the leadership of Lev D. Gudkov, the Levada-Centre has become synonymous with high quality sociological research and it is universally respected for the rigour of its fieldwork and the depth of its analysis. For these reasons, the Centre has frequently been the partner of choice for social scientists around the world, including many members of BASEES. The partnerships between the Levada-Centre and international research and higher educational institutions have added much to the world-wide impact of Russian sociology. Modern scientific work is international by its very nature and international collaborations are, as the government of the Russian Federation has recognised, essential in producing work of the highest quality.

It is in the interest of neither the Russian Federation nor the countries of Europe to compromise the international networks that have provided a vehicle for discussion, knowledge-transfer and joint production of research results between East and West. An inevitable consequence of the 'foreign agent' designation of the Levada-Centre will be the withdrawal of Russian higher educational institutions and individual scholars from participation in any contemporary social science research project that relies on

international funding, for fear of attracting the 'foreign agent' label. The impact of such a chilling effect cannot be overestimated. Not only will it cut Russian scholars and students off from the international academic community but it will radically decrease the ability of international scholars, students and societies to understand Russia. For all of us, whether in the UK or Russia, international collaboration is the lifeblood of progress. It would truly be a tragedy if the mistrust that some in Russia currently feel towards international engagement were to lead to such a radical impoverishment of intellectual endeavour in Russia itself.

BASEES seeks to support teaching, research and understanding between our societies. It is in this spirit that we sincerely urge you to take a deeper look at this case. We would welcome the opportunity for dialogue with your Ministry, if that would help clarify the views and concerns of the UK academic community.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Judith Pallot". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line above the first few letters.

Professor Judith Pallot
President of BASEES, Christ Church, University of Oxford, OX1 1DP, UK

cc His Excellency Ambassador of the Russian Federation, Alexander Vladimirovich Yakovenko
cc Lev Gudkov, the Levada-Centre