

SCIENTIFIC LIFE

About the results of the All-Russian Research-to-Practice Conference “Society and Sociology in Modern Russia”

Over the last 25 years the Russians have met the hardest challenges: collapse of the USSR, change of the social system together with deeply unfair privatization, prevalence of oligarchic capital, derangement of the state management system. Since 2000 the country has been emerging from the deep systemic crisis. Major steps have been taken towards a new state ideology, based on the revival and strengthening of moral foundations of national identity and state sovereignty.

The complication of the international political situation in 2014, affecting the lives of Russian citizens, worries and frightens them, but as ever, the events of recent months actualize the task of society consolidation, require active involvement of the scientific community, authorities and public associations in the country’s economic and social development and in provision of its national security.

The dynamics of the Russian society development over the past 25 years, as well as social mood, caused by the rapid development of political events in 2014, were the leading idea of the discussion at the All-Russian Research-to-Practice Conference “Society and Sociology in Modern Russia”, held November 13–15, 2014 in Vologda.

The conference was hosted by:

- The Institute of Socio-Economic Development of Territories of the Russian Academy of Sciences,
- The Institute of Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences,
- The Institute of Socio-Political Research of the Russian Academy of Sciences,
- The Government of the Vologda Oblast.

The conference was aimed at the joint discussion of relevant methodological and



conceptual problems of public opinion sociology by the sociologists-practitioners and researchers in the field of sociology from national research and academic institutions, mass media, public and commercial organizations.

The event dedicated to the 20th anniversary celebration of the Sociologist Day in the Russian Federation gathered the most famous scientists in the field of sociology and the study of social development problems: **G.V. Osipov, M.K. Gorshkov, J.T. Toshchenko, V.V. Fedorov, V.V. Lokosov, V.A. Ilyin, I.I. Eliseeva**, researchers from Russia and the near abroad: Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Irkutsk, Kursk, Tyumen, Voronezh, Bashkortostan, Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug, the Republic of Belarus.

The opening ceremony took place on November 13. The opening speech was made by ISEDT RAS Director V.A. Ilyin, First Deputy Governor of the Vologda Oblast A.I. Sherlygin and Academician of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Member of the Presidium of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Director of the Institute Socio-Political Research of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Chairman of the Board of the Society of Social Sciences G.V. Osipov.

G.V. Osipov underlined: "The inclusion of social sciences and sociology specifically in the system of state management of the society acquires the contours of reality... We can be reasonably confident that in the 21st century social sciences, including sociology, are becoming a sign of the time. Without studying these problems, we can ultimately reach a social reality, which nobody wanted and nobody strived for".

According to A.I. Sherlygin, "the modern world is impossible without sociology, without this essential tool of not only scientific, but also political and social activities. It is impossible to build any plans for socio-economic development. In general, any prospects for development of our country, the Vologda Oblast are always compared with sociological research... Sociology should answer the main questions, the main challenges of any management process. Why is there such a situation? What underlies it? What is the public opinion? Without a feedback in modern conditions it is impossible to run not only the country or region, but, perhaps, even a large enterprise. So, for us the role of sociology and processes associated with it is very important".

The conference was attended by over 600 people. More than 70 speeches touched upon key problems of the modern Russian society, sociological support for regional management, the role of sociology in forming trends of social development, issues of the sociological science methodology improvement.

There were 6 sections, including the section for young scientists and the panel discussion devoted to the single voting day in September 2014.

Young PhDs, graduate students, applicants, students and even high school students participated in **the youth section** (supervisors: Doctor of Sociology, Professor *Yu.A. Zubok*, Ph.D. in Sociology *S.V. Mareeva*, Ph.D. in Psychology *L.O. Kocheshkova*). The participants discussed problems of migration, methods of life quality study, specifics of society

marginalization processes as well as modern labor market and labor motivation of adolescents, ways to realize the youth’s social subjectivity in the management system and features of its self-organization. According to Yu.A. Zubok, “the section served as a methodological platform, which gave participants the opportunity to test their scientific results, get advice and was a springboard for learning.

Section 1 “Russian society in the 1990–2010 as viewed by the social scientists: problems, trends, common factors” (supervisors: Doctor of Sociology *G.I. Osadchaya*, Doctor of Philosophy, Professor *A.L. Marshak*, Doctor of Economics *A.A. Shabunova*) was devoted to a wide range of issues related to culture and cultural identity, social stratification of the modern Russian society, a concept of human development, social aspects of lifestyle, sociology of medicine. It addressed the problems of the North Caucasus, information support of the population, touched upon urban and youth issues, etc.

Summarizing the work of the sections the Co-Chairman **A.L. Marshak** thanked the conference hosts “for the opportunity that was given to the scientists of different views, different schools to express their opinions and evaluate those events and phenomena that occur today in our lives”.

Section 2 “Development of territorial communities and sociological support of regional management” (supervisors: Doctor of Sociology, Professor *V.V. Markin*, Ph.D. in Sociology *S.G. Karepova*, Ph.D. in Economics *M.V. Morev*) considered both fundamental and applied issues of sociology

of regions, including socio-territorial identification in terms of consolidation of the social space in Russia, interaction between the authorities, business structures and institutions of civic society, development of the strategy of social technologies that ensure regional management. Attention was focused on economic sociology, labor sociology.

The Co-Chairman of the section **V.V. Markin**, expressing the opinion of its participants, characterized the conference “Society and Sociology in Modern Russia” as “an event historically significant for Russian sociology”. He spoke about “the growing potential of the Vologda economic-sociological school and prospects of its development in collaboration with other leading sociological centers of the country” and expressed his hope for another forum in Vologda in 5 years.

Section 3 “Development of theory, methodology and methodological tools of sociological research” (supervisors: Doctor of Sociology, Professor *G.G. Tatarova*, Doctor of Economics *S.V. Ryazantsev*, Doctor of Economics *T.V. Uskova*) discussed methodological issues associated with the study of social capital, migration processes, social risks gender fault. A lively discussion was sparked application in sociological research official data of state statistics.

Section 4 “Problems of education sociology, tasks and prospects of sociological education development” (supervisors: Doctor of Sociology, Professor *G.A. Klyucharev*, Doctor of Sociology, Professor *V.V. Lokosov*, Doctor of

Economics, Professor *N.B. Pochinok*, Ph.D. in Economics *G.V. Leonidova*) discussed intellectual potential of the Russian society, education excessiveness, sociological ensuring of education quality management, etc.

The Co-Chairman of Sections 3 and 4 **G.A. Klyucharev**, stressing the efficiency of the work carried out, noted specificity of the obtained results, identification and presentation of “new trends, which we have not had earlier”.

In addition to the work of sections there was a panel discussion “2014 regional elections. Forecasts. Models. Results”. The results of one of the key political events of the last year were considered by:

First Deputy Governor of the Vologda Oblast **A.I. Sherlygin** (speech subject – “2014 Election in the Vologda Oblast: expectations and results”);

Director General of Russian Public Opinion Research Center, Ph.D. in Politics **V.V. Fedorov** (“Sociological picture of the electoral campaign of September 2014”);

Political Expert, Member of the Board of the Russian Association of Political Experts **V.A. Bianki**, Director of the Center for Contemporary Caucasian Policy (CCCP “Caucasus”) and Head of the Expert Group “PiterR” **A.I. Seravin** (speech subject – “Applied electoral research in Russia: problems and solutions”).

At the plenary session First Deputy Governor of the Vologda Oblast **A.I. Sherlygin** and Academician of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Member of the Presidium of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Director of the Institute Socio-

Political Research of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Chairman of the Board of the Society of Social Sciences **G.V. Osipov** made an opening speech.

The leading scientists in the field of sociology considered the key issues of society and social science development.

Academician of RAS, Director of the Institute of Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences **M.K. Gorshkov** in his speech “Post-soviet stage of sociology development in Russia: state and problems” raised the issue of sociological education in Russia, the relevance of sociological knowledge in the modern Russian society, the role of social science in expert evaluation of the scientific activities of state institutions and public authorities. He drew attention to the fact that “extensive growth in the field of higher sociological education does not erase the problem of professional prestige and practical relevance of sociologists in Russia, does not make the problem to form sociological culture of the society less urgent”.

Director of the Institute of Socio-Economic Development of Territories of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Doctor of Economics **V.A. Ilyin** spoke about the history of ISEDT RAS establishment and development, paying considerable attention to the interaction with the Vologda Oblast Government, the 20-year collaboration of the sociological scientific community and public authorities at the regional level. V.A. Ilyin stressed: “sociology, in our opinion, can perform its function in full when the system basis of sociological research will be fixed at the legislative

level, there will be unified mechanisms to estimate public opinion regarding the assessment of the state performance in the entire vertical of power”.

Director General of Russian Public Opinion Research Center, Ph.D. in Politics **V.V. Fedorov** presented the results of the recent VTSIOM polls revealing public opinion on the RF President’s activities, spoke about the Center establishment and its role as a mechanism to transfer public opinion to government authorities, drew attention to the urgency of improving the mechanisms of state-society interaction.

The speech subject of Corresponding Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Chief Editor of the Journal “Sociological Studies” **J.T. Toshchenko** was the following: “Social consciousness of the Russians: 25 years on”. He presented the results of sociological research in the comparative analysis of the Russians’ values and attitudes in the last years of the Soviet Union and modern Russia. J.T. Toshchenko also touched upon issues, such as social atomism, spread of negative social phenomena (speculation, fraud, bribery, etc.). He said: “Unfortunately, the life social status of a person nowadays is determined mainly by the possession of capital, money and power, personal achievement and personal dignity occupy the last place in social values and in the social status of a person”.

In the report “Demographic situation in modern Russia” RAS Corresponding Member, Head of the Center for Social Demography and Economic Sociology of the Institute of Social and Political Studies,

Doctor of Economics **S.V. Ryazantsev** analyzed the RF demographic policy in 1990–2000, considered the evolution of the federal and regional authorities’ views on the key demographic problems faced by post-Soviet Russia. S.V. Ryazantsev drew the audience’s attention to the main problem: “The basis of the demographic situation has not been changed. The basic idea should be that the demographic problem is national in the full sense of the word. We often get used to blaming only the government and the power that they do not solve our problems. In fact, many of the challenges can be met by the civic society, business and media. The state role should be significant, but can be different in various areas of the demographic policy”.

RAS Corresponding Member, Chief Research Associate Honorary Doctor of the Institute of Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences **A.V. Dmitriev** in his speech “Conflictogenity of migration” focused on the fact that the migrants represent a new social group, formed after the USSR collapse. Today this group contributes to the economy and culture of the Russian society. Thus, it is necessary to study the processes occurring in the migrants’ environment. A.V. Dmitriev summed it up: “The interests of migrants and the Russian population can be linked, but in very thoughtful and thought-out policy”.

“The Russian population quality in the context of the intellectual division of the world” is a report subject of Director of the Institute of Social and Economic Studies of Population of the Russian Academy of

Sciences, Doctor of Sociology, Professor **V.V. Lokosov**. He stressed that “the quality of the population is a key strategic resource and a basic indicator of society’s development efficiency... In order to strengthen it, it is necessary not only to fight crime and other problems, but also support numerous healthy forces in our country and simultaneously place stake on a responsible, active and self-sufficient person”.

The plenary session briefly summarized the sections work: Doctor of Sociology, Professor **Yu.A. Zubok**, Doctor of Philosophy, Professor **A.L. Marshak**, Doctor of Sociology, Professor **V.V. Markin**, Doctor of Sociology, Professor **G.A. Klyucharev** made their speeches.

Moreover, the ceremony to award Pitirim Sorokin silver medals “For contribution to science” took place. This award was established in 2008 due to the 50th anniversary of sociology revival in Russia and the 40th anniversary of the creation of the country’s first sociological institute.

The Medals were awarded by G.V. Osipov and M.K. Gorshkov to ISED T RAS Deputy Director Doctor of Economics **A.A. Shabunova**, Dean of the RSSU Faculty of Sociology and Social Management Doctor of Sociology, Professor **O.A. Urzha**, RAS Corresponding Member, Head of the Center for Social Demography and Economic Sociology of the Institute of Social and Political Studies, Doctor of Economics **S.V. Ryazantsev**, Chief Editor of the newspaper “Tribuna” **N.A. Vasiliev**, political columnist of the newspaper “Truth” Doctor of Philosophy **V.V. Trushkov**.

In general, the conference “Society and Sociology in Modern Russia” showed that domestic sociology keeps pace with social development. Having accumulated rich experience of their own basic research, theoretical knowledge and practical groundwork, combining the heritage of classical sociology with the best practices of modern schools, the Russian sociological science demonstrates its readiness to meet the key challenges of social development associated with the main trends of the 21st century, such as:

- development of human potential;
- improvement of the state performance;
- enhancement of the living standard;
- pursuit of social justice and development of civic foundations of the society;
- reinforcement of national identity.

To sum it up, the interaction between the state, social science and the society has been recently clearly positive: ordinary citizens have become interested in sociological issues; sociological knowledge has been increasingly used in the authorities’ activities at all levels of government.

Russian sociology is demonstrating growth by many indicators: new scientific schools are being established; faculties and departments are being formed; a great number of theses in sociology are being defended annually; public activity on sociological issues is increasing; the number of sociological studies at the regional level is rising; fundamental sociological science is rapidly developing.

At the same time, some problems still remain relevant: the prestige of a sociologist

is still not high enough; there is a significant gap between fundamental theoretical knowledge and its practical application; the mechanism of social expertise of adopted laws is developed insufficiently. The maximization of the social science potential requires joint efforts of the scientific community, government and citizens.

The participants highly appreciated the scientific and organizational level of the event. The results of the questionnaire survey¹ conducted among the conference participants showed that the average score of satisfaction with the organization and outcomes of the

forum was 9.2 (by a ten-point scale). The scientists' comments were the following: “The conference was well-prepared in terms of organization” (“Such issues are raised! Such a topic!”, “The discussion is at a high scientific level and very democratic”).

The conference hosts got suggestions, such as “to continue active scientific cooperation”, “not to stop”, “to carry out such activities as often as possible”.

The participants agreed to meet at ISEDT RAS, Vologda, in 5 years in November 2019 to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Sociologist Day.

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¹ The survey included 175 people who participated in the conference.