

Final study report, Sini Ihanainen-Alanko

I studied with a grant from the Helsingin Sanomat Foundation at the Higher School of Economics, National Research University Moscow (HSE Moscow) for the academic year 2020-2021, the summer semester 2021 and the autumn semester 2021.

The main focus of my studies was on studying the Russian economy and its renewal. I studied macro- and micro economics, the challenges of the Russian economy, state-business relations, the informal economy and corruption in Russia, international trade and geopolitics, the BRICS, EU-Russia economic relations, Russia's energy economy, and Russia's international relations, foreign policy and political institutions. I studied a total of 80 credits.

I learned how the mistakes of the 1990s and the concentration of wealth continue to affect the Russian economy and society. I learned how, after 2008, Russia turned its look more intensively from the West to the whole world, also because of economic pragmatism. I received new information about, for example, new financial banks and the activities of the BRICS.

Before studying at HSE Moscow, I had studied Russian language and culture at the Language Center of the University of Jyväskylä and as a minor. I had also visited Russia dozens of times. HSE Moscow has a wide range of courses in various areas of the Russian economy. I studied mostly in English. Professors are demanding but pedagogically skilled. Straight but warm professionals.

The personal results of the study were the growth of Russian economic knowledge and expertise in Russia, the growth of knowledge of Russian society, my own internationalization and the diversification of my knowledge of the Russian language. I see the challenges and trends of change in the Russian economy, the way Russia and the Russians think and experience the world, and I can outline the direction the country is going on.

The study was interesting and of a pedagogically high standard. Studying at a Russian university is inclusive: lots of presentations, group work and essays. It feels very hard at first, but at the same time you learn deeply.

HSE Moscow has students from all over the world. It was a big plus that the courses were so international. It was interesting to do group work with participants from all over the world. At the same time, I got to know a wide variety of personalities. Many acute world situations look so different in different parts of the world, and it was fascinating to hear different views.

I studied as a visiting student, which brought a challenge. The studies are primarily tailored for graduate students. When I chose courses that interest me as a visiting student, some were at the same time. Some courses were difficult to get to, as places usually go to undergraduate students first.

I got anyway to most of the courses that interested me. Covid made studying difficult at the beginning because I didn't know how it will work online. Soon I found, that studying might be even more effective online. I got to know people through it too. Online also allowed that when some of the lectures were at the same time, I was able to watch recordings of those I didn't get to. Online also provided, for example, a BRICS Summit and Academic Board meetings access with links.

Covid situations varied and teaching was sometimes offline as well. In the spring of 2021, I arrived in Moscow. When you live in the city and country, you look everything more like local people. At the same time, you learn more on of Russian society and in a completely different way than from books or from your own country.

I consider it important that I was able to meet students and professors up close and exchange news and thoughts more freely. In addition, I saw the daily life of the class society as I moved around the city. I also got to enjoy Moscow's architecture, culinary and culture.

I consider it important for Finnish journalism that Finnish journalists have the widest possible expertise in Russia. I see that the better Finns know about Russia, the better for interaction between nations.