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[m.soskina@gmail.com](mailto:m.soskina@gmail.com)**SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATIONS IN ECONOMICS:  
EASTERN EUROPEAN CHALLENGES**

**Abstract:** Nowadays, in the countries of Eastern Europe, which include more than 200 million of educated population, exist common problems of scholarly communications in economics realization and the knowledge spreading both within the region and in the world. In this paper, the author presents a view on such issues in this field as barriers of after-soviet economic science dissemination and its acceptance in the world; the fight with “old-school” domestic stereotypes both in economic research and communications; overcoming of social and technological barriers for economic science; peculiarities of applied practice for research quality and peer review in “crony” countries; as well as the ways for the Eastern European economic science to get out from the “reservation” which are, among other, open access practice and active scholar social networking through the Internet.

**Keywords:** scholarly communication, knowledge spreading, economic science, science dissemination.

**JEL Classification:** A11; D83

**Introduction**

The path post-soviet economic scientists from different countries have overcome for international recognition and the obstacles we have been facing are “first hand” information about main problems of scholarly economic communications, actual to Eastern Europe. This paper represents experience gained at every-day action towards economic knowledge dissemination the region and beyond.

A case for the research is the “Economic Annals-XXI” Research Journal of Ukraine. Based at its editorial board’s 20-year experience in academic publishing, the problems in economic scholarly communications are singled out. It is worth mentioning that “Economic Annals-XXI” is a print edition available also for free in the Internet which has passed a long process of international standards adaptation to the publications and

their promotion among Ukrainian scholars. Nowadays, the journal participates in the nine indexation bases, namely: Scopus, EBSCOhost, C.E.E.O.L, Ulrich Periodicals, RISC and others. It has widened the auditory of the readers and authors to the Eastern and Central Europe as well as Russia.

### **Brief literature review**

There are many approaches towards understanding of scholarly communication at both national and international level. Let us mention few important and interesting researches which show different aspects of the topic.

A research of scientific journals readers, authors and editors in Russia undertaken by the representatives of The European Association of Science Editors (EASE) in Russia Sergey V. Gorin, Igor Yu. Sklyarov, Elena I. Kostyukova (2013) showed that: Russian science journals did not yet achieve valuable reputation in the world science; respondents did not always trust the information and considered the articles were of low quality; however, the quality of scientific articles is the main driver of a journal's reputation, whereas the journal's Impact Factor, publishing organization and social responsibility are judged as secondary factors. We should mention that the results presented are quite relevant to the situation in Ukraine as well.

In the report on scholarly communications in the economics discipline conducted for JSTOR by Michael Dawson and Matthew Rascoff (2006, 2015) is given an overview of main types of academic journals in economics, their practices of publishing and research results dissemination. Among useful research tools are named Google Scholar; EconLit; National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) in USA; The Center for Economic Policy Research (CEPR) which is a European equivalent to the NBER; SSRN and RePEc; various state and public databases for social sciences and economic, for example, The Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) of the University of Minnesota and The Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) of the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research. All of these sources of economic publications and information are mainly in English. Most of them are available under different financial conditions.

The authors also argue on the problem open access, its possible positive and negative consequences. A bigger research on the issue of open access in scholarly communication presents Caroline Sutton (2011) in the paper "Is free inevitable in scholarly communication? The economics of open access".

However, the specific issues of scholarly communication in the post-totalitarian Eastern European region which traditionally had its own economic research school and many barriers towards the West stays out of the researcher's spotlight which substantiates topicality of the presented paper.

**Purpose** of the paper is to analyse current situation with scholarly economic communication in the Eastern Europe under the modern international standards, and show the ways of its improvement.

## Results

### *The problem of little acceptance of the after-soviet economic science in the world.*

Starting with, the countries of Eastern Europe had all once belonged to the so-called "Soviet Camp". In fact this meant to the economic science a break of historical connections with traditional national and pan-European approaches to economics from "before" the soviet times. The fruits from the period of liberal revolutions had been de-facto extracted from the social sciences and replaced with the socialistic-communist doctrines. So-called "anti-soviet propaganda" was a criminal article under which many scholars had been scrutinize and imprisoned. Afterwards, the approaches to modern world in its economic and social dimensions were being formed and disseminated under many false concepts and doctrines. The air of fear, external as well as self-censorship in science used to be a common practice for more than 70 years. Economic was particularly perceived as a "political" discipline. For example, one could not provide a research in economics, become a scholar or a lecturer, if he was not a member of the communist party. As a result, the occurred school of economic science was not able to explain and critically analyze true economic processes both inside and outside the "Soviet Camp". Only since late 1980s and early 1990s more objective knowledge about the economy of the world and different scholar economic schools have become available in the Eastern Europe and widely applied.

The main consequence of the discontinuity in economic knowledge and international communications disruption is little acceptance of the after-soviet economic science in the world.

At the same time, after proclamations of independence, during the last 20 years many traditional ties between former soviet allies have also been broken as a result of the force of antagonist reaction which pulled the system apart. The countries of Visegrad Group (Poland, Slovakia, The Czech Republic and Hungary) have entered the European Union and struggle to become recognized in the West, while Russia, Ukraine and

Belarus became the participants of the Commonwealth of Independent States (formed by the former USSR republics).

***The fight with “old-school” domestic stereotypes both in economic research and communications.***

*Research stereotype.* Despite the different international path of post-communist development, the problems of after-soviet traditionalism have remained in the region. It is not only the issue of natural alternation of generation in science which takes time, but also the need to withdraw from the narrow views on capitalism, state regulation, macroeconomic indicators and microeconomic perceptions. Former socialist doctors of sciences have written a great number of monographs, textbooks and articles explaining capitalistic approaches to economics which they had barely seen or understood. These researches are still based mainly on traditional works of Keynesians in state regulation, Friedman or Keynes in public finance and Samuelson in micro- and macroeconomics, not to forget Marx talking about the nature of capital. Post-socialist understanding of these world-known scientists which may be far away the true meaning of their research, are stereotypic for the Eastern European scholars.

Approaches of other modern scholar economic schools, for example, Austrian economic school, Stockholm economic school, institutional, feminist, post-Keynesian, ecological schools, are much rarely presented in economic literature in general and in periodical issues in particular. Not only Eastern Europe, but economy as a science widely taught and represented in all civilized world needs some kind of actualization. Concerning this issue it is interesting to read an essay in The New Yorker magazine “Rebellious Economics Students Have a Point” by John Cassidy (2014).

The other problem of “old-school” science which also has its roots in command communism past is mutual disregard between so-called “cabinet scholars”, lecturers of higher educational institutions and business professionals. The last have common view that academic science does not meet the needs of practitioners and does not explain the situation in the markets. Scholar conclusions and recommendations concerning the state regulation of public economic and finance are not actually implemented into policies, though formally are accepted and taken into account.

*Communication stereotype.* Apart the problem of research practicality and up-to-datedness to modern tendencies in science and economics, stays the issue of language barrier common to the region. It has several aspects. Firstly, some Slavic languages are written within the Cyrillic alphabet and some – within the Latin letters (Hungarian language stays apart, though also disintegrated with others). All are principally different from roman languages which are widespread in scholar economic com-

munication of modern world. Not to offend German and French-speaking scholars, all of us realize that today English is everywhere. It has become the new Latin of globalized and internationalized age. However, neither English, nor German or French have not yet taken the place of the research languages in Eastern European higher education and, consequently, science. Of course, the Visegrad Group countries have done more on their way to English spreading in education and publishing, than Ukraine, The Russian Federation and Belarus, where most scholars have only basic knowledge of foreign languages.

Nowadays, the publishers work on encouraging of writing and translating of worthy papers to English. The fact of the multi-lingual environment appearing in the region is important itself and is a start for further progress. The other issue is the quality of the language and its correspondence with international academic standards in writing. We have not got enough neither professional translators in economic topics, nor editors or authors who can provide “pure” language. Moreover, there is a kind of irresponsible attitude toward English abstracts and texts among some of the authors. They provide the publishers with low quality texts and don’t understand negative consequences of their actions both to the publisher’s and their own image in the world.

These are the situation which I encounter monthly preparing an edition. It is also widespread that the authors are used to prepare “generalized” English abstracts to their articles, though we ask them to make precise and “detailed” ones in order to meet indexation criteria.

Thus, at present, the problem of overcoming post-soviet stereotypes in the research as well as communicational barriers of language and perception lies solely on the shoulders of publishers, most of which are at the same time scientific, research or analytical institutions. The tools to encourage English language publication are to make them first-in-the-line, to disseminate in the Internet, explaining to the authors advantages of appearing in indexation databases and Google search, appealing to their feelings of self-dignity.

Nevertheless, I may not avoid the problem which spurs as a result of scholar communication’s orientation towards the outer world: while we are still less cited and known abroad, we become much less understood at home, because, as I have explained, English is not widespread in the regional scholar community in such countries as Russia, Poland, Slovakia, Ukraine. The situation in the Czech Republic and Hungary is some better, but also cannot be considered as sufficiently good.

The way to deal with this situation is to post to versions of the paper – in native and English versions in the web-pages of the journals, and also to inform about it the interested scholars through the social communications network.

*Overcoming of social and technological barriers for economic science.*

We still have widely accepted state education and science sector, which dominates the scholar economic environment. It is still rare to have common programs of research and publication with private sector or industrial business associations. The strong diversification between “business” and “scholar” publishing still exists in topics, language and principles of publishing. I would like to mention that apart some exclusions, business periodicals are published in native regional languages. We experience that Ukrainian Ministries, deputies, local authorities, commercial banks, insurance companies, industrial associations don’t favor publishing their text or interviews, supporting or even subscribing academic journals. Not because of lack of information quality of the journals, but because, in contrary, the staff of mentioned organizations is not qualified enough to acquire it and understand. So, the social barrier in competencies and skills in society also exists.

Lack of acquaintance with modern software instruments of research, as well as dissemination of the studies’ results worldwide has actually become a new not “iron” but “technological curtain” for the Eastern European economic science.

*Peculiarities of applied practice for peer review in countries of Eastern Europe.*

There is a special understanding of peer review in our region, as far as “cronyism” in science goes hand in hand with the bribery practice in the state institutions. Young scholars were often forced to pay or to do favors for positive peer-reviews as well as other assistance during the process of their research in the state institutions. In such circumstances, resulted of dramatically low wages in academic sector (approximately 150-200 EUR of monthly salary for a senior scientific fellow or associated professor at state university in Ukraine; 800-1000 EUR in Poland or Slovakia), though many efforts are applied to overcome unfair or “crony” actions, I see the only reasonable solution. It should be editorial board conclusion concerning the article’s quality before its publication and voluntary peer review and discussion in the Internet after the publishing. The last one should be taken into account in reputational metrics.

There is one more problem of peer review connected with unfair writing. The business firms which write, edit and place scholar articles on behalf of scientists have occurred. Their texts have scholastic character, absence or low quality of ideas and research. The publishers often do not even know that a firm, not a scientist personally, contacted to them. Unfair competition is a sign of not transparent society and must be disclosed and widely criticized. Nevertheless such practice exists not only within our region, here it takes severe forms and blocks research development.

***Necessity of open access to overcome the gap in research.***

In the context of problems in scholarly communication of economics in the Eastern Europe, the course on open access provision is the most fruitful one the academic community as a whole. Of course, special indexation base and reputational metrics systems may provide the subscribers with additional search and analytical tools, therefore, not losing their market advantage. But only the open access really contributes to the needs of community and forces regional and international cooperation, provides recognition opportunities for the authors.

A good example of effective open-access is the German Central Eastern European Open Library (C.E.E.O.L.) the main aim of which is to popularize Eastern European scholars in the world. The “Economic Annals-XXI” Research Journal participates in C.E.E.O.L. since March, 2013. Since that time, this base became a source of our edition’s disclosure and appearing even wider than we have known. For example, from this database, not from our web-site, the collection of the article was placed at German, Swiss and South Korean electronic libraries.

In this uneasy fight for re-consolidation with the world economic thought, the publishers must not stay alone facing the difficulties of social and technological integration. We need more support from the authors. They should understand the importance of scholar self-promotion and participate more actively and on regular basis in the social networking, internet discussions and their papers spreading in the world.

***The potential of social networking through the Internet and factors of its restriction in the region.***

Internet has become everything for everyone. And today it is not the time to criticize negative social consequences it might have caused. I would like to emphasize that through targeted e-mailing to foreign academic and scientific institutions, supporting of our web-page, creating a group on Facebook, as well as participation in international indexation databases we made a “jump” towards the international space. Not only “Economic Annals-XXI” Research Journal does so. These common “virtual” practices are more or less applied by all leading economic journals in the Eastern Europe. We need more support and active participation from our readers and authors to create better social networking. Good results may also be achieved through combination of “virtual” and “physical” communication at round tables and conventions.

**Conclusion**

We may shape not only economic science perception through our openness to the world, but also change the stereotypes of the world towards us, boosting understanding and mutual interest. Eastern Europe



with its vast population, natural resources, deep and complicated social, economic and political transformations and controversies should be treated right and be better known to the other countries. Our societies are on the edge of transformations. Our scholars live in the transitive societies where the theories may be probed by uneasy practices. That is why scholar economic communication is interesting and rewarding both to us and to our partners.

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