



## Fellowship Program for Young Russian Policy and Opinion Makers

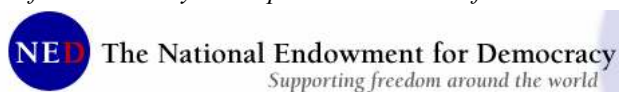
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### POSITIONING OF THINK TANKS IN THE KALININGRAD REGION: LESSONS FROM POLAND

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## 1. Introduction

At present, there are several research groups and institutions which could be identified as centers for providing advice and ideas on aspects of future planning and strategy in the Kaliningrad region. They have completed successfully a number of international projects and prepared a number of policy papers aimed at the different issues of social and economic development of the Kaliningrad region (the funds were received from the EU, the Nordic Council, the Council of the Baltic Sea States as well as the Russian federal and regional budgets). Nevertheless, **the problem is** that *regional and federal decision and influence makers have not fully acknowledged the Kaliningrad think tanks as relevant actors for providing the regional Government with the policy studies, policy papers on social and economic development of the Kaliningrad region.*

## 2. Think tanks

Think tanks in a number of countries play an important role in forming both the foreign and domestic policy agenda. For instance, according to the Wikipedia definition, a think-tank could be *a research institute, other organization or informal group providing advice and ideas on any aspect of future planning and strategy.* Examples include issues of policy, commerce, or military interest. Jacek Kucharczyk from the Warsaw-based Institute of Public Affairs offers a more academic definition: think tanks as *non-governmental, non-profit organizations that perform research and provide advice on public policy.*

Being a part of political game – in terms of both *politics* and *policy*, such institutions could be formally independent of the influence from the political forces, but at the same time keep their political and ideological identification clear. For instance, the US **Heritage Foundation** is a traditional conservative policy think tank, while the **CASE Poland** and **Gaidar Institute** in Russia have been associated with liberal tradition.

Some think tanks could be governmental – such as the **Strategic Studies Institute** at the U.S. Army War College, the former **Center for Strategic Studies of Poland** or **Effective Policy Fund** in Russia.

Some groups providing advice and ideas are clearly identified (by observers and experts) or associated with relevant political parties – representing the so-called “German model” of think tanks. Examples include the **Sobieski Institute**, affiliated with the “**Law and Justice**” Party in Poland, the **Institute of the Globalization problems** with the “**Motherland**” Party in Russia or the **Konrad Adenauer Foundation** with **CDU** in Germany.

Thus think tanks, being one of the pillars of the civil society, emerge as very important public policy actors due to their nature – providing the policy process with ideas and advice, influencing the agenda of political campaigns, or the content of mass-media coverage.



### 3. Think tanks in the Kaliningrad region.

At present, several research groups and institutions exist that could be identified as centers for providing advice and ideas on aspects of future planning and strategy in the Kaliningrad region. Among the leading think tanks in the Kaliningrad region are the **Baltic Centre for Advanced Studies and Education** and the **Regional Development Agency**. The **Baltic Centre for Advanced Studies and Education** (BaltCASE) is a think tank that was set up at the Immanuel Kant State University of Russia in Kaliningrad in 2002. **Regional Development Agency (RDA Fund)** aims to be the main provider of economic research, regional development forecasts and enterprise support in the Region.

	<b>BaltCASE</b>	<b>RDA Fund</b>
<b>Sources of financing</b>	Federal budget, regional budget, US funding, Immanuel Kant State University of Russia	EU programs, federal budget, US funding
<b>Target audience</b>	Researchers, Regional and Federal decision-makers, academics, regional parliament, Local business, politicians, journalists.	Researchers, regional and federal decision-makers, regional parliament, local and international business, foreign journalists
<b>Programs</b>	Social and economic development of the Kaliningrad region, Kaliningrad identity, Kaliningrad region as a region of cooperation	Social and economic development of the Kaliningrad region,
<b>International cooperation</b>	USA., Poland, Lithuania, Germany,	USA., Poland, France, Germany,

The regional think-tanks share several common features:

- They are relevant just for the regional level. There are no direct connections with the leading Moscow and St. Petersburg centers of public policy as well as federal decision-makers.
- They try to stay out of the regional political competition, so they have no clear political identification.
- They compete against each other on a regional market; they are not trying to develop in order to compete for the federal funds.
- There are a lot of opportunities for increasing the contacts and strengthening the international cooperation.
- They are based on an academic personal mainly. They are not attractive for the young promising analysts.

These problems can be overcome by reference to the foreign experience of positioning of the think tanks. While it is clearly impossible and pointless to transfer the foreign experience directly given the specificity of the Kaliningrad region, the best experience from abroad may be studied so as to find out the solutions appropriate for the Kaliningrad region, matching the current social and political climate.



#### 4. The relevance of the Polish experience

According to political scientist Radoslaw Markowski “Poland was a kind of trend setter”<sup>1</sup> for other postcommunist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, emphasizing the idea that some transformation processes took place earlier in Poland than in the other countries of the region. It is clear enough that it is not possible to introduce the same solutions and ideas in another country, but the idea of the very concept of “transformation” indicates that the obstacles in the transformation process are similar for every country and as a result could be overcome with the use of similar methods.

European experts and politicians often refer to a very specific role that think tanks played during transformation in Central and Eastern Europe by providing applied research. In the framework of the above-mentioned approach, the experience of a leading country is applicable to other countries undergoing the transformation process.

#### 5. Think tanks in Poland.

Even before 1989 there were some informal and underground groups in Poland that developed ideas for future reforms of the state. Among them were the group of prof. Regulski on local government and the group of prof. Geremek on foreign policy. After the mechanisms of the democratic state that were conducive to the development of civil society were established, the number of new groups providing advice and ideas increased. The foundations for the strong development research centers and think tanks were laid around the middle of the decade of the 1990s. While some of these institutions were temporary, several have remained till the present day.

Polish think tanks have been active in shaping the domestic policy agenda, working on different issues of local government administrations. However, the area of strongest activity was the foreign policy, especially relations with the countries of the former USSR in the framework of Poland’s “eastern policy”.

There are three different types of think tanks that are currently represented in Poland. The term “positioning” is used here to mean *the way of presenting* the message given by the think-tank to the external world.

The **first** model is represented by the CASE Poland. CASE positions itself as a global player, competing on the global market of political and economic analysis with the other global actors. The institution consistently affirms its ideological creed, which is drawn from liberal tradition.

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<sup>1</sup> Markowski, R. ‘Party system institutionalization in new democracies: Poland – a trend-setter with no followers’. In Paul G. Lewis (ed.) *Party development and democratic change in post-communist Europe: The first decade*. London. Frank Cass, 2001.

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### SWOT analysis of the model 1

S	W
Political independence Clear ideological line Global actor Ability for global cooperation	Financial instability Strong competitors on the global market
O	T
Could apply for global (international) funding Could be attractive employer for young and promising people Could gain international and global young professionals	Strong dependence of CASE on the political situation in the developing countries it works for

The **second** model is represented by the Institute of Public Affairs. The Institute, positions itself as a leading local player, which deals with a wide range of issues of the domestic and foreign policy of Poland. The Institute formulates political and economic strategies; initiates public debates; constitutes a forum for academics, professionals, politicians, journalists and other persons wishing to contribute to public life.

### SWOT analysis of the model 2

S	W
Political independence No clear ideological line Local actor	Financial instability Strong competitors on the regional market
O	T
Could apply for regional (international) funding Could be attractive employer for young and promising people	Instability of the sources of financing Could be an object of political pressure

**Third** model is represented by the Sobieski Institute, which is a classical political think tank, affiliated with the political party **Law and Justice**. The Institute is a Polish think tank whose mission is defined as “We create ideas for Poland”. The Sobieski Institute draws up programs for Poland’s public life, based on the principles of social order, strong and limited state, free market.

### SWOT analysis of the model 3

S	W
Financial stability Clear ideological line Local actor	Strong competitors on the global market Political dependence Local actor No ability for global cooperation and competition



O	T
<p>Could be very influential when the affiliated party is in government</p> <p>Could be attractive employer for young and promising people</p>	<p>Low ability for applying for international funding</p> <p>Strong dependence on ongoing political situation in Poland</p>

## 6. What lessons could be learned from Poland for the Kaliningrad think-tanks?

As Kaliningrad think tanks are too small and too weak to compete on the global or even federal level, such a model could not work in the Kaliningrad region. But this experience at the same times shows that think tanks may select another direction for their possible future evolution –producing papers in which a wide range of issues of the domestic and foreign policy of Poland and Lithuania would be analyzed to meet the needs of the regional governments or of the research centers in Moscow and S-Petersburg.

Due to the specific features of the party system and of the party competition in Russia, regional think tanks are not relevant for the parties operating on the federal level, where the decision making centers are situated. The leading parties hire the services of the leading federal research and analytical centers as well as top think tanks from Moscow and St. Petersburg to produce policy recommendations. This model (3) is not likely to work for the regional think tanks either.

The second model seems to be the best one for the Kaliningrad think-tanks. Since they lack ambitions to be global players, do not have opportunities to influence the political strategy of the political parties, the most appropriate strategy is for them to try to be local leaders. In this role they would offer a wide spectrum of the policy research for the needs of the regional parliament, regional governments, serving as a platform for initiating public debate; constituting a forum for academics, professionals, politicians, journalists and other persons wishing to contribute to public life. In particular, it means that local think tanks should follow a strategy based on the SWOT analysis of the IPA model in Poland:

The following long- and short-term recommendations may be offered to regional think tanks on the basis of this model:

### In the long term regional think tanks ought to:

- preserve political independence by providing the policy advice to the administration and not to politicians or political parties,
- seek to attract young promising professionals (by enabling them to use the job in think-tank as a starting point for future career, giving them an opportunity to work with the parliament, regional administration, ministries etc),
- try to turn into leading local players, increasing the competitiveness of the regional think-tanks market (to position itself as a leader, to increase media presence, to hire former high-ranking politicians as board members etc ).



**In the short term regional think tanks ought to:**

- diversify funding sources (through the establishment of a special fundraising unit in order to identify and use new sources of financing, including international ones),
- develop international contacts and enter into international projects (by more active participating in the international forums, conferences etc),
- set up a variety of regional programs, covering the wide range of the local policy issues (to make clear division of specialized expertise of the staff),
- act as a bridge between academia, the world of politics, the media and NGOs (by organizing public debates, by assisting the NGOs in fundraising, by assisting the leading business institutions in contacts with the relevant experts etc).

Moreover, regional think tanks should set up an organization (a consulting body) on relations and cooperation with the regional and federal institutions. It is possible because leading think tanks have different target audiences and as such are not in direct competition. Think tanks should also increase their relevance in the Kaliningrad region by better media communications, better PR addressing the target group of decision-makers.