

# Editorial Foreword

*Silviu Miloiu*

*President of the Romanian Association for Baltic and Nordic Studies, E-mail: silviu.miloiu@arsbn.ro*

Most of the articles published in the current issue of *Revista Română de Studii Baltice și Nordice / The Romanian Journal for Baltic and Nordic Studies* have been initially presented at the Fourth International Conference on Baltic and Nordic Studies in Romania: *Empire-Building and Region-Building in the Baltic, North and Black Sea areas* held at Ovidius University Of Constanța in May 2013. The conference approached the North in the wider perspective of regional cooperation intra- and extra-Nordic borders. The North is regarded as a springboard of regional cooperation which has a strong though faltering historical and cultural background and an obvious European dimension. The downfall of the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the process of European integration (whether some of the Nordic countries belong to the EU or not, they are all part and parcel of the process and deeply affected by it) have encouraged the development of regional cooperation in Northern Europe. Belonging to the Northern dimension of the EU meant not only maintaining a regional identity with deep roots in history and culture and making the others acknowledge it, but also strengthening the influence of Nordic countries within and outside the EU and fostering other regional cooperation initiatives in the Baltic Sea area and outside it. Patterned on the Nordic regional cooperation, the Baltic States of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia strengthened their regional cooperation and envisaged deepening their ties to surrounding areas, especially with the Nordic countries. Alongside the Nordic countries, they also gradually turned into a model for the Danubian and Black Sea countries. In this respect, the conference addressed themes such as: the empire building, region-building, national/nationalist, cultural construction discourses present in these regions; the historic development of these regional initiatives and/or organizations and the relations between them; political, cultural and diplomatic relations between Baltic and/or Nordic states, on the one hand, and the Black Sea countries, on the other hand; the relations between the EU integration and different Baltic, North and Black Sea regional structures;

education and leadership in the context of regionalization in the Baltic Sea and Black Sea areas; linguistic unity and diversity in Scandinavia and the Baltic states; Nordic and Baltic identity through cultural diversity; water protection in the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea Region and the role of agriculture; inter- and intra-regional comparisons.

Stefan Ewert and Kari Alenius address in their contributions the topic of region-building. The former scholar explains why in the Baltic Sea are no spill-over effects in the area of agricultural cooperation as they are to be found in other areas such as education. The latter studies the creation of the image of Balkans in Finnish schoolbooks from late 19<sup>th</sup> century to early 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Darius Žiemelis discusses the social economic history of Lithuania from the 16th-19th centuries from the perspective of non-Marxist (Karl Bücher, Max Weber) and neo-Marxists (Witold Kula, Immanuel Wallerstein) scholars. Aelita Ambrulevičiūtė looks at peasant habits while researching the modernization of Vilnius, Kaunas and Grodno provinces society in the period of 1861 – 1914.

Costel Coroban rightly acknowledges the state of Viking studies in Romania and devotes his analysis to Romanian language terminology with regard to “Viking historical characters, rituals, artefacts.” Mihaela Mehediní looks at Nordic and Russian diplomats as interconnectors between their countries and the Romanian area during the Modern Age (17<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup> centuries) and discovers a net of bonds linking them to the Romanian rulers.

Finally, Giedrius Kviklys sketches out the EU-Russia relations from the perspective of EU - Northern Dimension and Black Sea Synergy.

One of the plenary sessions organized during the conference brought together diplomats from the Nordic and Baltic areas who were looking to Baltic Sea region-building process from the perspective of their countries. The address of Her Excellency Ms. Ulla Väistö, the Ambassador of Finland, is included in this issue as well as the address of Dr. Vladimir Jarmolenko, at the time the Ambassador of Lithuania in Romania.

We hope that the diversity of themes and insightfulness of analyses will capture the interest of public, decision-makers and academic community alike.