

Impressions of my trip to Russia

By **Diamantis Liamas** Forest engineer – M.sc. student

In the framework of the Tempus Project, graduate students from the participating countries of the Project (Finland, Austria and Greece) went to Yoshkar – Ola (Republic of Mari-El) and particularly to the Mari State Technical University, in order to learn about the Russian Forestry in general and also about the Faculty of Forestry and Ecology.

In this point I would to express my gratefulness and heartfelt thanks to Prof. Paul N. Efthymiou (contact person of the Project on behalf of Greece - Aristotle University of Thessaloniki) for this unique opportunity that he gave me to participate in the Tempus Project and for his continuous efforts and support to me.

My participation on the Tempus Project begun on August 6 2004. From the early beginning, Mr. Kurbanov (coordinator of the Project) along with his colleagues, managed to organize a program of visits and trips according to my special interests (organization of forest operations, structure of state forestry service etc.). Me and Mr. Probst (colleague from Austria) had also the chance to participate in several trips inside and outside of the Republic, with good colleagues from the University, where they explained us about their scientific work and their experimental plots. We had also the opportunity to attend several English lectures in the MARSTU, where we made short presentations about ourselves and our countries, and discussed with students of different Faculties.



Diamantis Liamas, Aleksey Shurgin (dean of the forestry and ecology faculty) and Markus Probst (from left)

At the MARST University, I had my own office with all the necessary equipment (computer, printer, internet etc.), and I managed to work there when we didn't have any trips or excursions. My often presence at the University gave me the chance to getting known with very good colleagues, and learn a few things about the Faculty of Forestry and Ecology, the program of studies, the scientific stuff and in general the way that this Faculty works. I couldn't learn as many things as I wanted about the Faculty, because there was a significant problem with the language. I couldn't speak Russian language, while all the lectures were made in Russian, and also most of the teaching staff didn't speak English. It was the only serious problem that I faced during my stay in Russia.



In the office

At the Faculty of Forestry and Ecology, I noticed a few differences in the program of studies, and also in the whole approach of the Forestry Science, compared to the School of Forestry and Natural Environment in Thessaloniki. For example, in the MARSTU there were two Faculties regarding Forestry issues, one was the Faculty of Forestry and Ecology, and the other one was the Forest-industrial Faculty.

In Greece, there isn't such a separation, as all the Forestry subjects are integrated into the School of Forestry. Another difference between these two Universities is the total approach of the post-graduate studies. In Greece, after the basic studies there is the Master's degree (duration 2 years), which is obligatory for someone to continue for a PhD (duration minimum 3,5 years). In Russia, after the basic studies there is the Candidate's degree (duration 3-4 years), which the forester usually work at the same time in the University as senior lecturer or as Laboratory

assistant, and then he can continue for a PhD, that needs up to 8-10 years for someone to finish it.

The Faculty of Forestry and Ecology is considered to be one of the best Forestry Faculties in Russia, having very good tradition and history. The collaboration with other European Universities, like in the Tempus Project, is going to give new dynamic prospective and a lot of experiences to the scientific staff.



With teachers of MarSTU

In general, my stay in Russia was successful, both in personal and educational level. In personal level, because I had the chance to getting known with very kind and interesting people from the University, colleagues who were all the time next to me for any questions, and in general their hospitality and friendliness was something unbelievable. At study level, I had the unique chance to see the Russian forest ecosystems, to discuss with foresters and administrative staff about all Forestry issues, and to visit several forest companies and enterprises. It was really great chance for me to be in one of the most forested countries of the world, Russia Federation, and see natural forests, ecosystems that have limited presence of human activities, and this wild beauty of these forests is something that I will never forget.

In this point, I would like to thank Mr. Kurbanov, Ms. Vlasova, Mr. Vorobyov and Mr. Shurgin for their great efforts to translate for me, whenever it was necessary, and also for their continual support and friendship. I also want to thank Mrs. Tokareva and Mrs. Kurdyumova (English teachers) for their help and support in translating a few papers of great importance to me.