

## Russian alumni of Bielefeld University meet up in St Petersburg

St Petersburg in spring. Ice floes are still floating on the Neva, but the spring sunshine is beginning to spread its warmth. As part of the German Week in St Petersburg, Bielefeld University sent out its first ever invitation to its foreign alumni, inviting them to a meeting at Saint Petersburg State University's Centre for German and European Studies (ZDES). Dr. Thomas Lüttenberg, Head of the International Office, informed former students about current developments at Bielefeld University. The Bielefeld alumni also included Dr Michael Kleineberg, who is currently supervising the DAAD Information Centre in St Petersburg. In his welcoming speech, Professor Nikolai Skvorzov, Vice-President of Saint Petersburg State University, emphasized the great importance of academic ties with Bielefeld.

Over the course of the evening, there were intensive discussions on the latest developments at Bielefeld University: the new academic structure, Bielefeld's performance in the rankings, and the building projects attracted considerable interest. Future international alumni relations was also a topic of discussion, and the Russian alumni are looking forward to setting up a regional group – after Taiwan, this will be Bielefeld University's second international alumni group. Bielefeld University also intends to extend its networking with international alumni in the future: In autumn 2012, it is planning to found a third group in Shanghai (China) where several partner universities are located.

Already in autumn 2011, Dr Tatjana Zimenkova (Faculty of Sociology) was elected to the board of Bielefeld University's alumni network to represent the interests of international alumni. A Bielefeld group on the Alumniportal Deutschland [German alumni portal] already offers opportunities for contacts and international exchange. In addition, the alumni network's own Internet portal is also becoming more international. In the long-term, international events such as special lectures and invitations to international conferences and workshops should help to build up networks.

Work on relations with Bielefeld alumni from throughout the world is currently being funded as part of the German Academic Exchange Service's (DAAD) Programm zur Betreuung und Bindung ausländischer Alumni [Program to aid and promote ties with foreign alumni].