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Twenty Years of the Baltic Regional Stratigraphic Commission (1970–1990)¹

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Activities of the Baltic Regional Stratigraphic Commission (BRSC; previously known in Russian as BRMSK) during 1970–1990 are analysed. The main tasks of the Baltic RSC were to develop stratigraphy of the whole Baltic Region from a theoretical time-rock classification to practical use of the stratigraphic subdivision in geological cartography and compilation of geological maps. The common problems of the regional stratigraphy of the Baltic region are discussed. The most remarkable achievements of the Baltic RSC are elaboration of unified stratigraphic classification with correlation stratigraphic charts of the Baltic region, that were examined and confirmed in 1976. This achievement got next step in 1980-ies when BRSC plays an important role in elaboration of wider correlation charts of the Baltic region with extension to the whole European Russia in the frame of the East-European Craton.

Keywords: Stratigraphy • Geology • Stratigraphic charts • Lithuania • Latvia • Estonia • Baltic region

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Introduction

Stratigraphy – the study of strata, or layers – applies the Law of Superposition to every stratified system: geological stratum, composition of soil, archaeological materials in order to determine the relative ages of rocks. The complex goals of this wide branch of geological sciences need use conventional international rules and, in particular, have a system of international and regional tools for scientific cooperation. Such a system works under aegis of the IUGS International Commission on Stratigraphy (ICS) and its numerous bodies (see www.stratigraphy.org).

The Baltic Regional Stratigraphic Commission (BRSC; previously known in Russian as BRMSK) was established in 1969 as a regional body of the All-Union Interdepartmental Stratigraphic Committee (MSK), located at the VSEGEI, St. Petersburg (Leningrad). This Committee, established in 1955, reached excellent results during 55 years under leadership of the outstanding Russian stratigraphers, academicians Dmitriy Vasilyevich Nalivkin (led from 1955 to 1975), Boris Sergeyevich Sokolov (from 1976 to 1988) and Aleksandr Ivanovich Zhamoida

¹ Based on report made at the 8th Baltic Stratigraphical Conference, 29 August 2011, Riga, Latvia.

(since 1988), in different issues of the stratigraphic classification, nomenclature and terminology (Zhamoida 2004; Zhamoida and Prozorovskaya 2005).

The goals of the Baltic Stratigraphic Commission were stated as follows: application of uniform methodology in the stratigraphy studies, introduction of the internationally accepted rules, unification of stratigraphic classification at the local and regional levels, adaptation to the constantly renewing International Stratigraphic Chart (Grigelis 1971).

Remarkable steps towards a common policy in geology studies of the Baltic (Soviet) Republics became obvious in the mid of 1970-ies thanks to several circumstances:

- strengthening of the national geological surveys;
- rise of well-educated scientists in the basic fields of geosciences;
- research of the Baltic Region as a specific unit of geological evolution.

These ambitious points enhanced, in particular, development of a well-grounded stratigraphic basis. In this progress fundamental documents of the field of that time like “A Stratigraphic Code of the USSR” (Zhamoida *et al.* 1977; 2nd edition 1988), and “International Stratigraphic Guide” (Hedberg 1976; 2nd ed.: Salvador 1994) played essential role. As well as important conditions supporting successful activities of the Baltic RSC, as a structured body in the world stratigraphy system, were formed through relationships with the All-Union MSK and, via institutional and individual channels, with the International Commission on Stratigraphy (ISC) of the IUGS.

Noteworthy to mention about the goals of the ISC that during decades have been changing, but quoted below as it is written in 2011:

ICS : Its primary objective is to precisely define global units (systems, series, and stages) of the International Chronostratigraphic Chart that, in turn, are the basis for the units (periods, epochs, and age) of the International Geologic Time Scale; thus setting global standards for the fundamental scale for expressing the history of the Earth [http://www.stratigraphy.org/; interactive, 2011-09-10].

According to James G. Ogg, into the approaching of these goals was added the ICS Task Force for Stratigraphic Information [formerly called “*Stratigraphic Information System (SIS) Subcommission*”] established in 2000. This commission is aiming [...] *to enable the world geoscience community to have quick and free access to a vast amount of stratigraphic information, thus helping to spread the knowledge of Earth's history and foster the advancement of stratigraphic sciences. The Task Force priority is to gather selected stratigraphic information (such as stratigraphic databases and links, compilation of biozonal schemes, regional time scales, stratigraphic standards and GSSP information, geohistory teaching modules), to logically organize the databases and related links, and make easy search and use of the contents through its website [James G. Ogg, Chair; https://engineering.purdue.edu/Stratigraphy/index.html [interactive, 2011-09-09].*

Historical setting

Background agreements for formation of the Baltic Regional Stratigraphic Commission (BRSC) were elaborated under guidance of the Lithuanian Geological Prospecting Institute (LitNIGRI) in 1968, in co-operation with geological institutes and geological surveys of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. A foundation meeting of the Baltic RSC was held on 19th

January 1969. Structure and management of the Commission were formed and approved in the same year, and it went into power.

Acad. Juozas Dalinkevičius was appointed a first chair of the Commission but in 1970 he was substituted by Algimantas Grigelis (Vilnius). Acad. Karl Orviku (from 1969) and Dimitri Kaljo (from 1981, both Tallinn), Rita Ulste (Riga) and Juozas Paškevičius (Vilnius) were appointed the chairs of the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian stratigraphic commissions, respectively. Researcher working groups for every geological period/system were established as a main tool of collaborative work.

The well-known professional Baltic stratigraphers (Figure) as follows below played leading role in these groups:

Vendian–Cambrian	Arnīs Brangulis, Ārija Fridrihsone, Tadas Jankauskas, Kaisa Mens, Lidiņa Paškevičienė, Enn Pirrus, Angelina Zabele
Ordovician	Lilita Gailīte, Evlampijus Lashkovas, Ralf Männil, Juozas Paškevičius, Arvo Rõõmusoks, Rita Ulste
Silurian	Lilita Gailīte, Dimitri Kaljo, Petras Lapinskas, Heldur Nestor, Juozas Paškevičius, Nijolė Sidaravičienė, Rita Ulste
Devonian, Carboniferous	Valentina Karatajūtė–Talimaa, Visvaldis Kuršs, Lyubov Lyarskaya, Elga Mark-Kurik, Atis Mūrnieks, Vytautas Narbutas, Lyudmila Savvaitova, Vitalijs Sorokins, Herbert Viiding, Stasys Žeiba
Permian–Triassic	Valentinas Kadūnas, Jurgis Kisinėrius, Visvaldis Kuršs, Lyudmila Savvaitova, Povilas Suveizdis
Jurassic–Cretaceous	Algimantas Grigelis, Romualda Mertinienė, Lilijana Rotkytė, Petras Šimkevičius
Paleogene–Neogene	Vytautas Baltakis, Algimantas Grigelis, Vladas Katinas
Quaternary	Igors Danilāns, Algirdas Gaigalas, Kalju Kajak, Ona Kondratienė, Elsbet Liivrand, Anto Raukas, Vilnis Stelle, Jānis Straume, Petras Vaitiekūnas, Vytautas Vonsavičius



Karl Orviku (1903–1981)**



Juozas Dalinkevičius (1893–1980)*



Tadas Jankauskas (1938–2005)*



Rita Ulste (1931–1991)***



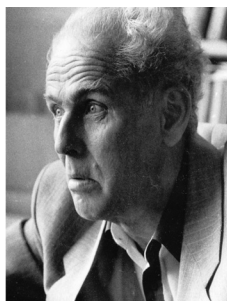
Ralf Männil (1924–1990)**



Arvo Rõõmusoks (1928–2010)**



Nijolė Sidaravičienė (1936–2001)*



Vitālijs Sorokins (1936–2008)***

Note: Photos are published by courtesy of the * Institute of Geology and Geography, Vilnius; ** Institute of Geology at Tallinn University of Technologies; Tallinn; *** Department of Geology, University of Latvia, Rīga.



Visvaldis Kuršs (1928–2000)***



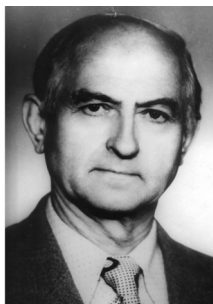
Algirdas Gaigalas (1933–2009)*



Kalju Kajak (1929–2011)**



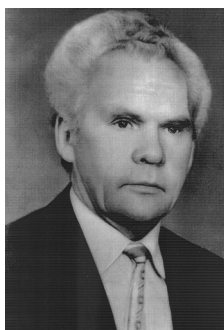
Elsbet Liivrand (1932–2011)**



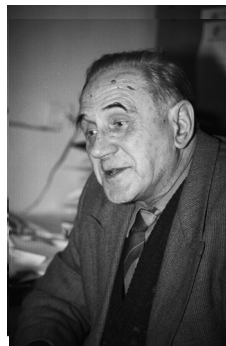
Stasys Žeiba (1916–1999)*



Jurgis Kisinėrius (1922–1986)*



Vytautas Vonsavičius (1929–1991)*



Igors Danilāns (1928–2007)***

A successive form of cooperation was the annual meetings (assembly) of the Commission, and thematic stratigraphical conferences held every two–three years followed by geological field excursions (Table 1). This tradition is kept till now, in particular when BRSC in 1990 was reorganized into three republican commissions of the independent Baltic States and their umbrella – organisation the Baltic Stratigraphic Association (BSA) was founded.

Table 1

The selected annual meetings of the Baltic RSC

<i>Event</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>City</i>	<i>Country</i>
The First Baltic Stratigraphic Conference “Approval of the unified stratigraphic charts of the East Baltic region“	1976	Vilnius	Lithuania
XII Assembly of the Baltic RSC “Regional correlation of the biostratigraphic zones”	1981	Rīga–Jūrmala	Latvia
XIII Assembly of the Baltic RSCK “Problems of Phanerozoic stratigraphy“	1982	Tallinn–Lohusalu	Estonia
Joint Assembly of the Baltic and Belarus Regional Stratigraphic Commissions “Problems of stratigraphy and correlation“.	1982	Vilnius	Lithuania

Results

The Baltic RSC worked actively during twenty years having main task to develop stratigraphy of the whole Baltic Region from a theoretical time-rock classification to practical use of the stratigraphic subdivision in geological cartography and compilation of geological maps. The common problems of the regional stratigraphy of the Baltic region first were discussed (Grigelis 1972).

The most remarkable achievements of the Baltic RSC could be mentioned below:

- Elaboration of unified stratigraphic classification with correlation charts of the whole Baltic region, that were examined and confirmed at the Baltic Stratigraphic Conference held in Vilnius, 11–12 May 1976.
- Evaluation and approval of detailed stratigraphic schemes and correlation charts by the All-Union Interdepartmental Stratigraphic Committee (MSK) and its publication (Grigelis ed. 1978).
- Application of the palaeontological method became widely used in geological mapping and compilation of detailed stratigraphic schemes and correlation charts of the Phanerozoic sedimentary rocks.
- Elaboration of principles of detailed stratigraphic legends and the user guide on methods of compilation of geological maps of the Baltic region (Grigelis 1979; Grigelis ed. 1981).
- Compilation and publication of the set of regional geological maps at a scale of 1:500 000 of the Baltic Republics based on the detailed stratigraphic correlation charts (Grigelis ed. 1982).

- Regular labour of regional and thematic working groups on improvement of the detailed stratigraphic schemes.
- Later work with the Baltic regional stratigraphic schemes of 1976 (1978) including their data to the whole East-European platform for Cambrian system in 1983 (Vilnius; published 1986 by VSEGEI); for Ordovician and Silurian systems in 1984 (Tallinn; published 1987 by VSEGEI); for Devonian system (Rzhonsnitskaya and Kulikova 1990) that had a much wider sense than only Baltic region.
- Persistent relations with the International Commission on Stratigraphy (ICS), the International Subcommission on Stratigraphic Classification (ISSC), and the Subcommissions on stratigraphy of geological systems where the Baltic stratigraphers have had the officers and membership positions providing sufficient contribution to its activity.

Future trends

The Baltic RSC properly transferred its power after restoration of the independence of the Baltic Republics to the national commissions on stratigraphy, which were set up in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania in September–October, 1990. Thus, instead of the Baltic RSC the Baltic Stratigraphic Association (BSA) was established on 16th October 1990 in Vilnius at the meeting by the delegates of these commissions (Grigelis 1991). Later, in 2003 the NW Russian national commission on stratigraphy joined the Baltic Stratigraphic Association (BSA).

The main goal of the BSA was declared to unite activities of the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian researchers to determine and solve the problems of the stratigraphy of the entire Baltic Region (Kaljo and Hints 2009). A new BSA statute was approved by the first Baltic Stratigraphic assembly meeting in 1991. The fruitful cooperation has a good continuation, and the BSA regularly calls open international conferences devoted to various aspects of regional geology and stratigraphy.

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