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OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES

The present report provides an overview of the key activities of/developments at UNESCO-CEPES which may be of interest to the BFUG.

All the Centre's activities are in line with both the UNESCO Programme in higher education and the UNESCO-CEPES mission to promote co-operation in higher education among Member States of the Europe Region (the countries of Europe, North America, and Israel), including its function in the context of the Bologna Process.

The Centre's activities were implemented in various forms of cooperation with other governmental and non-governmental international organizations, including the European Commission, the Council of Europe, the OECD, the World Bank, the European University Association (EUA), the European Students' Union (ESU) and many other professional networks and research institutions. Equally important partnerships already established with various national bodies, organizations, research and policy institutes, and higher education institutions contributed to the successful implementation of the UNESCO-CEPES projects initiated during this period.

I. HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY, REFORMS, AND DEVELOPMENTS

I.1. UNESCO Forum on Higher Education in the Europe Region: Access, Values, Quality and Competitiveness, (Bucharest, 21 – 24 May 2009).

Ten years after the 1998 World Conference on Higher Education (WCHE) higher education in the UNESCO Europe Region is in the midst of fundamental transformations, and therefore at the UNESCO General Conference in 2007 Member States considered it both timely and appropriate that a new regional and global assessment of the major developments and trends in the field of higher education worldwide takes place.

The Government of Romania, represented by the Ministry of Education, Research and Innovation, and UNESCO-CEPES, in close collaboration with some of its longstanding partners: the Council of Europe, the European Commission, OECD, the European University Association (EUA), the European Students' Union (ESU), and Education International (EI), organized the Bucharest Forum, in preparation of the 2009 World Conference of Higher Education (WCHE+10) held at UNESCO Headquarters, in Paris, 6-8 July 2009.

Convened as part of a series of regional conferences aimed at bringing regional concerns and expectations to WCHE+10 the Bucharest Forum provided opportunities for networking, debates, academic book exhibitions, student gatherings, and more. Ministers and other high level decision-makers, parliamentarians, representatives of the academic community met representatives from various academic and research institutions, governmental, national and international non-governmental organizations, individual experts, and media representatives from the UNESCO Europe Region and beyond.

The Forum focused on the issues of access, values, quality and competitiveness, summing up the results of a series of important recent meetings in the field of higher education in the Europe Region, and assessing major developments and trends in higher education; providing a policy and intellectual platform for critical debate on the state and the future of higher education in the region; as well as providing input to the 2009 WCHE+10. The main outcome of the UNESCO Forum was the ***Bucharest Message to the 2009 WCHE-Recommendations and Appeal***, proposed by the Programme Committee of the Forum and adopted by the participants (see Annex). Further details can also be found at www.cepes.ro/forum.

I.2. WCHE

The 2009 World Conference on Higher Education gathered together over 1,200 participants from around 150 countries, representing ministers, university rectors, faculty, students, key private sector officials as well as regional and multilateral institutions.

The World Conference on Higher Education has once again reaffirmed the fundamental ethical and social role of higher education and research in responding to current and future global challenges such as the eradication of poverty, sustainable development, reaching the internationally agreed upon development goals, which include Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals, as well as the building of inclusive, vibrant and diverse knowledge societies.

The Conference gave special focus to the challenges and opportunities for the revitalization of higher education in Africa, integrated throughout the Communiqué adopted on the last day.

The Conference's two final reports and the Communiqué, which reflect the fruitful, constructive and stimulating discussions in 41 plenary, parallel and special sessions, put forward far-reaching recommendations and concrete follow-up action, charting the future directions and contribution of higher education and research to the major themes addressed, namely internationalization, regionalization and globalization; equity, access and quality; and learning, research and innovation.

Participants called for more resources for higher education as a pillar for achieving the Education for All goals and expressed confidence that appropriate resources will be reflected in the next Programme and Budget of UNESCO, thus allowing the Organization to continue to be a strong voice for higher education and fully meet its commitments.

2009 WCHE follow-up activities will aim to:

- address longer-term challenges of sustainable higher education policy and reform;
- lead the policy dialogue on the role and impact of the sector on development, by tracking trends and identifying good practices;
- support countries, in particular the developing ones, to strengthen their teaching, research and development capacities, including through appropriate use of new technologies;

- help build institutional and national capacities in quality assurance as a prerequisite to enhancing access to quality higher education based on merit;
- launch a series of world reports on trends in higher education;
- promote research and development, facilitate synergies, encourage knowledge sharing across borders;
- assist governments to mobilize critical strategic resources to scale up teacher education and enhance teacher professional development , including through open and distance learning and information and communication technologies;
- support the establishment of the Pan-African institution of university governance, to be based in Yaoundé, Cameroon, together with the Association of Commonwealth Universities and the Agence universitaire de la francophonie;
- pursue the work of the UNESCO/ADEA Task Force to ensure the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of priority activities for the revitalization of African higher education
- reinforce public-private partnerships in support of brain gain initiatives (with Hewlett Packard) or the establishment of a Task Force on Higher Education and ICTs (with Microsoft);

I.3. European Benchmarking Initiative (EBI 2)¹

UNESCO-CEPES has been a partner of the EBI II consortium, which includes ESMU (the European Centre for the Strategic Management of Universities, Brussels, CHE (Centrum für Hochschuleentwicklung – Centre for Higher Education Development, Gütersloh, Germany) and the University of Bath, UK. The EBI-II project builds on a successful previous initiative (EBI I) on benchmarking in higher education (which was also partnered with UNESCO-CEPES) to support HEIs with a modern management tool to progress with institutional reforms, increased operational efficiency and the capacity for innovative changes in order to adapt to new challenges in their environment. The project focuses on four key areas: governance, university-enterprise cooperation, curriculum reforms and lifelong learning. During the course of the two year project, EBI-II will:

- bring together four benchmarking groups of 10 universities for a wide exchange, of advice and best practices (with 5 workshops);
- establish a broader online collaborative learning community;
- elaborate benchmarking tools (questionnaires for data gathering, detailed reports on findings, handbooks of good practices on the four themes and a glossary of definitions, concepts and approaches of benchmarking in three languages);
- organize two dissemination conferences associating other European networks and professional associations.

The project's ultimate aim is to create a European platform on benchmarking in Higher Education, with sub-communities both on specific themes and for groups of HEIs with similar or different characteristics. The project will also clearly identify areas where

¹ UNESCO-CEPES has formally withdrawn from this project (ref: IV below)

institutional performance can be improved and with concrete ways to do so. More details of the project can be found at: <http://www.education-benchmarking.org/>.

1.4. EU-STEP and MODERN Projects²

UNESCO-CEPES has also been a partner in two further ESMU projects:

i) “EU – STEP (Study Tour: European Higher Education Programmes)”

The purpose of this three year project is to promote better understanding of European Higher Education among policy-makers and decision-makers in HEIs in Australia, the United States and Latin America, i.e. the target groups. The concrete aim is to design six one-week European study tours for these target groups, focusing (1) on key EU priority policies and their impact (curriculum reforms, governance, quality assurance, university-enterprise, regional innovation) and (2) their implementation in HEIs, in specific national and regional contexts. The main activities will be:

- the design of six study tours for the target groups in Australia, Latin America, the United States;
- the dissemination of the information within the target groups;
- expanding the programme to other regions.

The project aims to produce:

- An inventory of the current provision of information on European Higher Education for third countries, linking to the European Global Promotion Project
- Six one-week European study tours
- A central database of resources based on study tour material and linking to existing resources
- Three conferences, i.e. one in Australia, in Latin America and in the United States.
- An international network of professionals

For further details visit: <http://www.esmu.be>.

ii) European Platform for Higher Education Modernization (MODERN)

This two year project aims to create an open European platform as a key instrument innovation, state-of-the art knowledge, dissemination of good practice and joint action on university leadership, governance and management for the professionalization of the sector. The following objectives are foreseen:

- The creation of a European Higher Education Management Community through an innovative web-based community
- A structured review of the supply of management development programmes and their adequacy to the demand
- The creation of a European Portfolio of the Provision (short and long term training) in HEIs and European associations
- New joint actions in the form of peer learning/coaching activities and a regular dialogue with European authorities and all stakeholders

² Ibid.

- Communication and Dissemination of information, examples of best/appropriate practice in the form of conferences and reports on five key issues for EU policies and HEI professionalization, i.e. governance, quality assurance, regional innovation, knowledge transfer and internationalization.

I. 5. The Council of Europe/UNESCO Recognition Convention

UNESCO-CEPES continues to provide the co-secretariat together with the Council of Europe for the Lisbon Recognition Convention and (with the European Commission) of the ENIC and NARIC Networks. The Networks work to develop good practices in the recognition of qualifications via their Joint Annual Meetings, their joint web site www.enic-naric.net, and identified specific Working Groups. One of the current working groups is examining the issue of the “Global Context of Recognition” given the significant increase in requests for the recognition of qualifications received by the Networks’ Centres from outside the Lisbon Convention area. The Group is researching the volume, types and geographical spread of such requests. In addition, working together with the UNESCO HQ Division of Higher Education, the Group hopes to bring together national recognition “Focal Points” and representatives from the other UNESCO Regional Conventions (Asia-Pacific, Africa, Latin America, Arab States) to generate a multi-lateral dialogue to share information, good practices and common barriers to recognition. The next meeting of the Lisbon Recognition Committee will take place in June 2010 in Sevres, France to coincide with the 17th Joint Meeting of the ENIC and NARIC Networks.

II. NETWORKS AND CAPACITY BUILDING IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBALIZATION AND KNOWLEDGE-BASED SOCIETIES

UNITWIN-UNESCO Chairs

The Programme was established in 1992 following the relevant decision of the General Conference of UNESCO taken at its 26th session. It was launched with the aim of developing interuniversity cooperation, while emphasizing the transfer of knowledge between universities and the promotion of academic solidarity across the world. UNESCO-CEPES has provided assistance to requests for support from universities and UNESCO Chairs in Croatia, Serbia, Armenia, France, UK, and Romania as well as from the UNESCO Section for International Cooperation in Higher Education (ED/HED/ICE). This included:

1. Support to several higher education institutions in finalizing the process of establishing new UNESCO Chairs, such as the *UNESCO Chair in Entrepreneurial Studies* at “J. J. Strossmayer” University in Osijek, Croatia and the *UNESCO Chair in Development of Education –Research and Institutional Development* at the Centre for Education Policy in Belgrade, Serbia;
2. Support to UNESCO ED/HED/ICE in
 - evaluating applications for the establishment of new UNESCO Chairs, such as the *UNESCO Chair for Post-Graduate and Lifelong Learning* at the Armenian

- State Pedagogical University and the *Chaire UNESCO en "Education en Entreprenariat Social et Durable"* at Euromed Marseille, Ecole de Management, France.
- evaluating annual progress reports submitted by already established UNESCO Chairs (*UNESCO Chair in Entrepreneurship* at the University of Applied Sciences Gelsenkirchen, Germany)
3. Provision of information/guidance with regard to the establishment of UNESCO Chairs/Networks in Romania (University "Al.I.Cuza" in Iasi; Horia Hulubei Foundation) and the United Kingdom (University of York in Heslington, York)

III. DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION, KNOWLEDGE AND GOOD PRACTICE

Recent Publications

i) Quarterly journal

The Centres's subscription journal *Higher Education in Europe* is published in English by Routledge Press and is also made available to download free of charge in French and Russian.

2009 issues:

- Vol. 34 No. 3-4: A Barometer of Change: Celebrating Achievements and Identifying the Challenges for a New Era in Higher Education
- Vol. 34 No. 2: Financial Support to Students through Student Loans
- Vol. 34 No. 1: The Bologna Effect: Perspectives beyond a Decade of Influence on Higher Education Change

ii) Monograph series

Higher Education in Greece, KYRIAZIS, A. and ASDERAKI, F. (2009)

iii) Studies series

- *Implementation of Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education of Central and East-European Countries - The Agenda Ahead* KOHOUTEK, J., ed. (2009).
- *An Idea that Became an Institution: the European PhD on Social Representations and Communication* DE ROSA A. (December, 2009)
- *Entrepreneurship – Foundation and Growth of New Enterprises* VOLKMANN C.K. and TOKARSKI K. O (October, 2009)

iv) Higher Education for a Knowledge Society series

- *The World Class University as Part of a New Higher Education Paradigm: from institutional Qualities to Systemic Excellence* LUI N.C and SADLAK J. (November, 2009)
- *Higher Education and Its Institutions as Part of Public Sphere: The Polish Perspective* WOZNICKI J. (2009)

IV. CLOSURE OF UNESCO-CEPES AND TRANSFER OF EUROPE REGION ACTIVITIES

In January 2009, the Director-General of UNESCO announced his decision to close the UNESCO decentralized unit in Bucharest (UNESCO-CEPES) by the end of the current biennium (31.12.09) and to transfer the Centre's responsibilities related to co-operation in the field of higher education across the Europe Region to the Higher Education Division of the Education Sector at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, France. These activities include the Consultative Status within the Bologna Process, as well as the co-secretariat function to the Council of Europe/UNESCO Recognition Convention and the ENIC Network.

This decision was taken, in close consultation with the Education Sector, and following several strategic evaluations of UNESCO's decentralized bodies presented to the UNESCO Executive Board. These assessments considered the current international context and regional needs, particularly given the political realities in Europe that have evolved over the last two decades, and concluded that the need for UNESCO-CEPES has diminished and that its mission had largely been accomplished. The decision also took into account increasing calls from Member States of UNESCO to streamline the organization's human and budgetary resources towards priority activity areas identified at the biennial General Conference.

The Romanian Government has submitted a proposal to retain a UNESCO Centre in Bucharest, which would be fully funded by the Romanian authorities. Such a Centre would have a sub-regional focus (South East Europe) and would operate for a further two years in the first instance. This proposal has been accepted by the Director General of UNESCO, and negotiations are currently underway to finalize this new operational structure with effect from 1st January 2010.