

News / Information

‘Cultures in Transition’

Joint congress of SIETAR Europe and SIETAR Germany

March 31 – April 4, 2004

SIETAR, the Society for Intercultural Education, Training and Research is a global network encompassing regional and national sections. In 2004, the Humboldt University in Berlin hosted the annual congress of SIETAR Europe and SIETAR Germany. The hosts of the congress were Prof. Henze and his team from ‘Comparative Educational Sciences’. The university maintains intensive research and exchange relations with universities in CEE (Central and Eastern Europe), especially with those in Ex-Soviet states.

The congress lasted from March 31 to April 4. The pre- and post-congress days were reserved for longer workshops, while the three core days consisted mainly of short paper presentations, workshops and discussion sessions, all centred around nine pre-defined tracks. The complete programme can be found under www.sietarcongress2004.de. Most of the contributions addressed tracks referring to methods and limits of intercultural work in general and to identities in transition. Disappointingly few treated subjects related to CEE. A similar ratio was reflected by the participants; 15 CEE participants out of a total of 450 whereby 9 came from Poland, 3 from Hungary and one each from Latvia, Slovakia and Czech Republic respectively. The following report aims to spotlight the congress activities with CEE implications.

1. Power relations within the enlarged Europe – Austria and its neighbours Hungary and Slovakia.

Dr. Reif from the NGO ‘Südwind’ in Vienna addressed the power, wealth and psychologically related inferiority position of the East. Her research compared, among others, the conflict behaviour within the three countries. The high conflict avoidance and an ‘internalised power distance’ in Eastern Europe facilitates the West’s endeavour of imposing its own (economic, value, language) systems.

2. Globalisation in CEE – the answer of systemic consultancy

The approach of Ms. Mueller, osb international consulting Vienna, was to combine Goshall&Ballett’s triangle for organisations (International, Multinational, Global) with the systemic constellation triangle of Varga von Kibéd (Cognition, Trust, Order) into a consultancy tool, applicable to both Western and Eastern firms. A successful organisation should be balanced in all three poles. The workshop participants positioned their CEE related firms in

this triangle and assessed the weak ‘angles’ to be strengthened. As firms in CEE are mostly local, the discussion turned more to CEE subsidiaries of Western firms.

3. Impact of cultural standards on teamwork – Analysis on Austria, Germany, Hungary and Spain

Ms. Meierwert and Ms. Dunkel, University for Economics, Vienna, found the most relevant cultural standards for teaming to be hierarchy-independence, verbal-nonverbal communication and rule orientation. Their effect during the five teaming phases (Tuckman & Jensen) was analysed and compared. It is an innovative approach, the displayed results mostly confirming the known business culture profile of these four nations.

4. Business Culture of Romania – Mapping the Transition

Ms. Rubatos, Henley Management College UK, presented the results of her research quantifying the transition of the business culture by means of the Triangle Model, a cultural audit tool developed by Terry Garisson. The progress towards a capitalistic ‘IMO’ (individualistic, materialistic, open) culture was explored with regard to cultural bedrock, work systems and behaviour.

5. Misunderstandings as a driving force for actions – identity as the key for a successful project

Ms. Barthélémy-Capet, Sorbonne University, adopted a complex view on identity. She viewed the cultural, sociological and professional aspects of identity, all three being continuously reshaped by heritage and new forces. The potential misunderstandings in projects were investigated from the identity perspective using cases of Czech and French partners working with French subsidiaries.

6. Linguistic invasion or natural process? – Cultural issues in the mirror of modern Latvian.

Ms. Brede, University of Latvia, discussed the extent to which the influence of Russian, German and especially English on the Latvian language of the young generation and of the mass media is a cultural necessity within the changing reality of the country.

7. Post-traditional transition.

Mr. Darko Strajn, Slovenia, presented a theoretical reflection on the applicability of some new sociological concepts to a better understanding of old and new democracies.

8. Intercultural Education Programmes with CEE, China and Arab countries

Mr. Weiss, from the NGO www.AFS.de, presented the feedback expressed by exchange-scholars and students (Easterners in Germany and vice versa). AFS

offers one year exchange programmes. The more recently created AFS-Foundation focuses on Poland, Czech Republic and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

9. Europe in Transition – Effective East-West Cooperation (post-congress workshop)

Ms. Uehlinger and Ms. Rubatos gave a culturally holistic introduction about CEE as a region. The intention was to make the basic values and feelings of CEE people understood by Western attendees. After the historical-religious backgrounds of CEE, selected cultural dimensions were explained and assessed for both East and West. The practical examples were mostly from business. ‘Reconciliation’ proposals were given for cases showing an extreme cultural gap between East and West.

Worth mentioning are some other CEE related contacts and information on the SIETAR congress:

- Larger consultancy firms are looking for partners specialised in the culture of certain CEE countries.
- The European George C. Marshall Centre (founded 1993, located in Garmisch-Partenkirchen) bears responsibilities for CEE and the Euro-Asian region. Professional management development programmes are offered for leaders in diplomatic, military and political services, but also for economists and journalists of these countries. Topics are strategic change, crisis management, nationalism, reforms and security. The teachers are mainly university professors, both from Eastern and Western countries.
- Dr. Castiglioni, as partner of ‘Formaper’ (Chamber of Commerce Milano), is designing and executing training programmes for managers in Ex-Soviet countries within the MTP-project (EU programme ‘Tacis’). During the last years, thousands of senior and junior managers have attended course sessions of 1 to 3 months (management skills and intercultural aspects) and a work placement in a Western firm. The theory learned is transferred to particular projects then supported by local consultants. The MTP-project led to numerous JVs and M&As. MTP is an excellent concept, which could be copied for all CEE countries!

This report is an attempt to reflect the multitude of aspects approached by various researchers and practitioners working on the CEE region. It remains fragmentary simply owing to the nature of the SIETAR organisation, which encompasses a wide spectrum of intercultural activity fields.

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Baltic rim economies - Bimonthly review, ISSN 1459-9759**Turku School of Economics and Business Administration,
Pan-European Institute**

The Institute for Economies in Transition at the Bank of Finland (BOFIT) conducted its final monitoring report on the Baltic States (Baltic Economies - Bimonthly Review) and Poland (Polish Economic Review) at the end of the year 2003. The Pan European Institute (PEI) decided to carry on this monitoring activity since the Baltic Sea Rim has been one of the Institute's core research areas for several years. Though the PEI generally follows the monitoring tradition set up by the BOFIT, slight changes concerning the emphasis of these reviews will be incorporated.

We concentrate in our monitoring reports on economic and particularly upon business development in the Baltic Rim. The Baltic Rim Economies - Bimonthly Review consists of concise information on recent macroeconomic development, reasons behind important movements and expectations concerning the near future. In addition, we inform our readers of interesting news concerning the business climate, legislation, corporate acquisitions and major foreign direct investments in the three Baltic States and Poland. Each bimonthly report includes an expert article on a current topic.

The Bimonthly Review will be published regularly on the last weekday in every even month. The report is freely available on the Internet, in pdf-format, on the current site: <http://www.tukkk.fi/pei/bre>. We will also inform our readers by email when the new review comes out. You can subscribe into our mailing list using the same address. We do not publish a paper version of the report.

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International Conference:

“Catalysts and impediments of economic development in Central and Eastern Europe”, October 14-15. 2004, Vilnius - Lithuania

This year marks the anniversary of two special dates: the 425th anniversary of the founding of Vilnius University, one of the oldest universities in Europe, and the 200-year anniversary of the first department of economic studies in Lithuania.

To commemorate these events, the Vilnius University Faculty of Economics and the Lithuanian Association of Economists are hosting an international conference.

Conference Program

The conference will be organized on three main sessions:

1. Plenary session (October 14)
2. Parallel sessions (October 15)
3. Round Table session with Key speakers, Government and Business representatives (October 14)

Invited Speakers:

Professor Janos Kornai, President of the International Economic Association

Professor Povilas Gylys, Former Lithuanian Minister of Foreign Affairs and member of the Lithuanian Parliament

Professor (Emeritus) Michael Thomas, Strathclyde University, Past President, the Market Research Society of Great Britain, Past Chairman, The Chartered Institute of Marketing

Professor Erik Berglöf, Director of the Stockholm Institute of Transition Economics (SITE)

Professor Jorgen Drud Hansen, Jean Monnet Professor of European Economics, University of Southern Denmark

A more detailed conference program will be available soon.

Contacts and assistance

Conference website: www.ef.vu.lt/Conference/index1.htm

You are welcome to contact any of the following individuals if you have questions about the conference or need assistance:

For questions related to conference abstracts, the conference program and publications:

Dr. Audra I. Mockaitis

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Fax. +370-5 2366 150

Vincent Giedraitis

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For questions related to accommodation and practical arrangements:

Jelena Aneičik

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Fax: +370-5 2366 150

Erika Vaiginienė (for questions also related to conference fees),

verika@takas.lt

You may send your registration form to either of the following addresses:

verika@takas.lt or info@marketing.lt