15 Years On: Educational Transitions in Central and Eastern Europe. Directions for Educational Research and Policy in the Post-Communist EU Accession and Candidate Countries

Scientific Report of the ESF SCSS Exploratory Workshop, Oxford, United Kingdom, 8-10 July 2005

Workshop convened by:

David Phillips and Alis E. Oancea

Department of Educational Studies, University of Oxford

Rapporteur:

Alis Oancea, University of Oxford

Note: This report distils the views expressed in the papers presented at the workshop and in the discussions.

Contact: **Alis Oancea**, Oxford University Department of Educational Studies,

15 Norham Gardens, Oxford, OX2 6PY, UK. alis.oancea@edstud.ox.ac.uk

Table of contents

Executive summary

1. Background and aims

The workshop explored the emerging field of transition processes in post-communist and accession countries, from the reconstruction phase in the early nineties to the EU candidature and integration. Experts from Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovenia and the United Kingdom challenged the current assumptions about transition, while aiming at a deeper and more coherent understanding of it, as a basis for enhancing European research and dialogue on education. The workshop challenged the common assumptions about the post-communist EU accession and candidate countries and took steps towards a common effort for a shared understanding of these issues. It came in a moment when the first wave of the European Union enlargement was under way, but before the second wave, and it attempted to exploit the potential of sharing the initial experience of the accession countries as an invaluable asset for the developments still to come.

The convenors are grateful to the European Science Foundation for funding and supporting the workshop.

2. Scientific content

The workshop consisted of five plenary and three parallel sessions. Four of the plenary sessions introduced the workshop, explored the conceptual complexities of the transition/ integration discourses, reflected on the lessons to be drawn from the specific experiences of the various countries, and looked towards building a shared understanding of the matter and recommending directions for policy and research in the field. One plenary, as well as the three parallel sessions, offered thoughtful and detailed insights into the processes of change in seven post-communist countries: East Germany, Slovenia, Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic, Romania, and Bulgaria.

After David Phillips' and Alis Oancea's welcome speeches and introduction to the aims and structure of the workshop, the ESF Representative, *Dalina Dumitrescu*, gave a presentation on the scope, aims, and instruments of the European Science Foundation.

Understanding 'transition' and 'integration'
The first plenary session (Cezar Birzea's address, "Transition, back to Europe, and educational reform in central and eastern Europe", and Gabor Halasz.s address "European integration and transition", chaired by David Phillips) sought to reflect on the networks of concepts out of which the discourse of transition is constructed, and on the assumptions underpinning them.

Country case studies
The "case studies" (plenary session 2 and the three parallel sessions) raised more specific questions, having to do with, mostly: the national specificity of transitions; characteristics of transition/integration in various education sectors and levels (e.g., technical and vocational education, higher education); the experiences of transition(s) at school and individual levels (e.g., teachers, students, administrators, policy-makers, academics and researchers); and cultural perspectives of transition.

Emerging questions
"Cross-national and interdisciplinary perspectives on educational transition. Learning from the experiences" was a session for taking stock and reflecting on the two days of the workshop. David Phillips sought even new ways of stimulating the debate, whilst moving towards a theoretical and methodological framework capable to direct further research. The ensuing discussion, chaired by Alis Oancea, focused on three questions drawn from David Phillips' presentation: 1.Were there any strengths of the system(s) discussed during the workshop, which were in danger of being abandoned after 1990, but should have been preserved? 2. What were the foreign models that oriented policy during the transition (what were the main influences)?, and 3.What next (looking towards the future)?

3. Outcomes and plans for the future

The final plenary session, chaired by Pavel Zgaga, brought together the perspectives of Voldemar Tomusk, from the Open Society Institute, and of John Sayer, from the University of Oxford. The session sought lessons to be learned and pointers for further research. Voldemar Tomusk welcomed the idea of organising the workshop around the joint topic of transition and EU integration and suggested that any way forward needs to take into account both positive and negative experiences and to explore further the role of educational institutions in society. John Sayer reflected back on the proceedings of the workshop, but also looked forward towards modes and questions for further research in the field, "in an Europe unsure of its own transitions". The text of his concluding statement is included almost in its entirety in section 3.1. of this report. The final session sketched the beginnings of an agenda for research, which is included in section 3.2.

Follow-up plans
The following actions are currently underway:
1. Publication of a volume including some or all of the workshop papers (Symposium);
2. Establishing a webpage based on the workshop;
3. Preserving the mailing list already constituted;
4. Seeking additional funding for:
  a. supporting the group as a network to address the agenda identified
  b. organising a follow-up meeting.

Feedback from participants
The comments provided by participants on the feedback forms show a high level of satisfaction with the academic content, the usefulness and the organisation of the workshop. They also offered suggestions for follow-up.

4. Final programme

5. Participants

The final section of the report comprises of the final list of participants, with full contact details, together with some statistics showing the balance of age, gender, and country representativeness.

1. Introduction: background and aims of the workshop

Understanding and conceptualizing the processes, through which the post-communist central and eastern European societies evolved over the 20-th century, and especially over the past 15 years, is a matter of deep disagreement among educationalists from western Europe and from the post-communist countries. The attempts to using western literature on educational change and policy-making and reform to explain the transition in the countries concerned proved to be much more difficult than expected, and were often deemed unsatisfactory by educationalists from those countries. Such disagreements became even more striking on the background of the negotiations for the enlargement of the European Union. The transition from the communist regime to EU candidate status was arguably followed by processes of transition from candidate to full membership, and backed by processes of change embracing the EU as a whole (e.g., the "transition" towards knowledge-based societies). These processes have regional specificity, but in many respects they are also very diverse, geographically and time-wise. They thus form an emerging field for research, where European – wide collaboration would be essential.

At the beginning of the nineties, public policy research was almost inexistent in the post-communist countries and in many respects it had to be reinvented. In these circumstances, many studies published during the nineties consisted of a juxtaposition of accounts from the countries involved, with little attempt to cross-national analyses. They were highly valuable exploratory studies, but with a prominent performative dimension (they were both research accounts and enactments of the negotiations that were happening along the east/west discursive and political divide). The time now seems to be right for studies where the performative dimension would subside in favour of a more research-driven approach. There is a wealth of accumulated experience, sharpened by the contact and negotiations with the west, which has yet to be teased out and distilled. The literature on the topic and the research projects and conferences held during the 1990s consisted of very valuable contributions, but often on an individual-effort basis or through ad-hoc research groups in various organizations (Birzea, 1994; Rado, 2001; McLeish, 2003). In this context, the workshop was acknowledged by the participants as a long-awaited occasion when expertise from countries in different stages of the transition process had been drawn together with a view to the educational policy-making process involved in post-communist transitions as well as in the EU enlargement negotiations: East-Germany, with its first experience of EU integration and a solid corpus of literature exploring the specificity of the ensuing transition processes (Mitter, 1990; Phillips, 2000); some of the current accession countries – Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovenia (Karsten and Majoor, 1994; Laporte and Ringold, 1997; Fizbein, 2001; Halasz, 2002; ; Oancea, 2005; Zgaga, 2005); Romania and Bulgaria, as countries still facing the challenges of the crisis that followed the reparatory period immediately after the change of regime (Sandi, 1992; Birzea, 1994; Laporte and Ringold, 1997; Fizbein, 2001); and Moldova. All participants had extensive experience of involvement with the reform processes in these countries (in some cases, in more than one country) after 1990, and they published articles and reports on the transition processes in their respective countries.

The workshop aimed towards:
1. Building a cross-national, deeper understanding of the concept of educational transition in the post-communist countries, in a comparative perspective
2. Unpeeling myths and fallacies about transition and transition countries
3. Exploring the sources, dimensions, stages, directions and content of transition processes in education, and the ways in which various models of transition attempted to make sense of them
4. Identifying areas for further policy foci and opportunities for further co-operation and research, with a view to the transition from EU candidate to EU membership status.

The intended outcomes of the workshop were:
- developing a network of experts and a dedicated mailing list on relevant topics;
- publishing and distributing a book, edited by the University of Oxford, that would distil the contributions to the workshop.

With a view to these aims and intended outcomes, the participants received, in advance to the workshop, a set of questions, designed to stimulate debate and to offer support in preparing the papers and presentations. Consultation was elicited, both between the organisers and the participants, and among the participants themselves at the country level. Each country had an allocated time in the programme, and the decisions on how to use that time (i.e., joint presentation and discussion, individual presentations and separate questions-and-answers sessions, round table etc.) belonged to the participants concerned. All papers were submitted to the organisers before the event, and were subsequently distributed at the moment of the workshop. The briefing paper included the following questions:

1. Does the concept of "transition" provide an accurate descriptor and a useful framework for understanding the dynamics of the countries covered by the workshop over the past 15 years (and if not, what would be the alternatives)?
2. What were the similarities and the differences between your country and other countries in terms of the dynamics of change (of the educational system) over the past 15 years, including the policy formulation level (local, national, EU)? What features run through these developments that a) pull the countries covered in the workshop together and b) make them divergent?
3. What can other countries, such as the Ukraine or Turkey, learn from the experiences of the seven countries covered in the workshop? What positive developments helped transition after the first general elections (please feel free to include a few statements characterising the countries before the 1st general elections: how did it all started; processes and agents/ actors; where were these countries when the system changed; how did the starting points and the initial decisions and attempts to change shaped/ influenced the direction of the further developments in the country; is there any change that your country would have done better without – can we talk of a 'change loop'?).
4. How does the discourse of "transition" articulate with the discourse of "EU integration/ accession" and with that of globalization, as practiced by actors at

different levels (local, regional, EU, international organisation such as the OECD, IMF, World Bank)? How did/do the perspectives of these different actors interact (see for example the issue of foreign aid and international or external agendas for change)? How do the images (and also the expectations, standards and indicators) of transition differ from one context to another? What was the dynamic of country-specific, regional and global contexts and agendas that shaped the developments in these countries over the past 15 years?

5. In the recent years, were there any other strands and processes of change that were not driven by the EU accession process (and that might have preceded, as part of what we used to term "transition", or might have been happening in the background of the accession process or in parallel to it, possibly in an asynchronous manner)? If such changes exist, what do they consist of and what keeps them going, if not the EU accession agenda?

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2. Scientific content

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2.1. Opening session

After David Phillips' and Alis Oancea's welcome speeches and introduction to the aims and structure of the workshop, the ESF Representative, *Dalina Dumitrescu*, gave a presentation on the scope, aims, and instruments of the European Science Foundation.

2.2. Understanding "transition" and "integration"

The first plenary session sought to reflect on the networks of concepts out of which the discourse of transition is constructed, and on the assumptions underpinning them.

Cezar Birzea's address, "Transition, back to Europe, and educational reform in central and eastern Europe" defined transition as an "overaccelerated historical process" (as well as a societal learning experience) that ends officially with the accession to the EU, i.e., with meeting the three Copenhagen criteria. Transition intensified the differences between the countries concerned (each trying to emphasise its competitive advantage), and it involved powerful value changes and the formation of an "inter-regnum culture". The meaning of the "Back to Europe" slogan shifted during this process, from referring to a desired state of "normality" (freedom and prosperity) to pointing at acquiring EU membership. Nonetheless, even if the legal, economic and political transition might have been accomplished over the past 15 years, cultural transition is slower. Once the Copenhagen criteria were met, "post-communist" transition ended as a historical process, but the countries concerned became part of another process of transition, shared with the rest of Europe, towards knowledge-based societies (a description of change that Birzea prefers to the concept of "globalisation"). "The new transition inaugurated by EU accession and the Lisbon Agenda is based first of all on education and training, as the major priorities of public policies" (p. 4). Birzea argued against the (older) thesis of economic convergence, which relied on the idea of large gaps between the central and eastern European countries and members of the EU such as Portugal, Greece and Spain, and postulated a time lag of decades in the process of catching-up. For Birzea, there is no overall gap between the new member countries and the European average, especially in relation to education (a claim he backed up with quantitative data from a recent report on

the progress towards the Lisbon benchmarks across Europe, according to which the countries who acceded in 2004 were high performers on all counts, apart from the lifelong learning indicator). The experience of recent systemic changes places the new member countries in a good position in relation to the overall processes of transformation that drive the EU:

> Post-transition, post-industrial revolution, or just a catching-up exercise? For new member countries, 'Back to Europe' means all of these together. They approach the new transition with the recent experience of rapid and substantial social changes. They are therefore ready for a new stage of systemic changes and educational reforms. They must, nonetheless learn two new things, crucial for the success of the new transition. On the one hand, lifelong learning and investment in human resources must be placed in the centre of public and economic policies. On the other hand, transition to a knowledge-based economy is a collective endeavour, accomplished by the open method of coordination. This is an entirely new experience, quite different from the egocentric and nation-centred efforts of the '90s. (pp. 7-8)

Gabor Halasz's presentation, "European integration and transition", offered a macro- and systemic perspective on education seen as an area of public policy and as an evolving system set within a continuously changing environment. The presentation concentrated on proposing three main theses:

> (1) that for the last 15 years the central and eastern European countries have been going through two kinds of transitions (from state-socialism to parliamentary democracy, market economy and pluralism; and from independent nation-state to membership in a wider political and economic community - EU integration);
> (2) that transitions have transformed the relationships between education and other public policy areas, as well as the representations and structures within education, in two phases (independence of education from other policy areas, high levels of uncertainty and simplistic views of change, followed by interdependence and the emergence of a new dynamic of coping with complexity); and
> (3) that none of the two transition has a clear destination.

In agreement with Birzea, Halasz postulated the EU as a community itself in transition. "Discovering the EU" also means discovering the challenges it faces - competition on the global market, internal divisions, etc -, discovering, therefore, that the EU is in fact a "moving target" for the accession and candidate countries. New challenges are emerging for education: quality and relevance, equity, efficiency, and governance. "Although transition remains a necessary notion (e.g. for the explanation of social anomalies) – argued Halasz- it might be more appropriate to talk about open futures and continuous change". The presentation concluded with questions for further research and reflection.

2.3. Country case studies

The case studies raised more specific questions, having to do with, mostly:
- the national specificity of transitions;
- characteristics of transition/integration in various education sectors and levels (e.g., technical and vocational education, higher education);
- the experiences of transition(s) at school and individual levels (e.g., teachers, students, administrators, policy-makers, academics and researchers);
- cultural perspectives of transition.

A. Former GDR. Two papers were presented in order to illuminate the case of the former GDR: "The process of transition: teacher biographies and teachers' actions", by Hartmut Wenzel and Gudrun Meister, and "Technical and vocational education in former East Germany in the process of transition after the unification of former West and East Germany", by Dietmar Waterkamp.

Hartmut Wenzel's presentation highlighted the ways in which the rapid and complex political, social and economic changes (the *Wende*) in the former GRD were experienced from the personal perspectives of the teachers, that is, "not just as the immediate collapse of everyone's previous world, but as a potential liberation from political ballast and disliked children's reins" (p. 2). For these teachers, the end of the GDR, important as it was, was more strongly experienced as a transition to new school structures, altogether a threatening and intrusive experience. For many, the coping strategy consisted of reverting to professional routines and familiar habits. On this basis, Wenzel and Meister believe that it "is right to diagnose a tension between the external reconstruction which led from restructuring to a new school system, and the internal reform, which may have been laid down in laws and curricula, but had to be carried out by a teaching body which had first to find its new roles in a new system" (p. 11). Internal school reform is thus a difficult process, and the difficulty is aggravated by the lack of models and motivation for change and by the perpetuation of old values and principles through the institutional requirements (e.g., teacher's responsibility for pupils' academic results, together with the focus on academic achievement as measurable knowledge reproduction).

Dietmar Waterkamp prefers the term "transformation" (which would include the personal transformation of people) to "transition" (which is more focused on systems and structures) and to terms like *Wende* and reconstruction (which emerged from specific political contexts or theoretical commitments). His account of the changes in the area of vocational and technical education in the former GDR pays close attention to the interplay of adopting external models (west-German) and organic transformation, and argues that

> The meaning of the concept of 'transition' and also the concept of 'transformation' in this sector is not restricted to the simple idea of adopting the West German system but implies the recognition of a rather long process of change which is by no way mono-directional. Above all, the West German system which seemed to be the clearly profiled target for transition is under pressure of change itself (p. 1).

Thus the weaknesses of the dual system of apprenticeship training were strongly revealed under the pressure of the system passed on from the former GDR, and they are still unsolved.

B. Slovenia. The session on Slovenia was a joint session, based on an extended paper by Pavel Zgaga and Janez Krek ("15 years on: educational transitions in Slovenia – a case study") and a presentation by the author present to the workshop, Pavel Zgaga.

Pavel Zgaga used the term "transition" in inverted commas, as an approximation of the terms that Slovenian literature would have used to describe the processes concerned ("renewal", "reconstruction"), and pointed to the methodological problems that the lack

of a common denominator brought to research in the field (particularly to any east-west collaboration). Zgaga and Krek's paper warned that educational reform and change in the former communist countries should not be conceived as "a *post festum*, mechanical *residium* of democracy", "a mere adaptation to the general new conditions of an open and pluralistic society as emerged from the turbulent change of the political system in 1990", or some "mechanical echoes of the dynamics in politics" (p. 21). On the contrary, it is argued, the change had began way before 1990, and the fight for democracy, together with the parallel process (shared with the rest of Europe) of the emergent knowledge-based society, made educational reform and the development of an alternative educational discourse inevitable: "at the turn of decades, the educational system had to be reformed, even if the political system wouldn't change" (p. 21). This is a new perspective, which shares with the presentations summarised above the idea that there is no univocal process of transition, but rather several complex processes that run more or less synchronously, but which postulates different "logics" of transition in different countries:

> In the late eighties and beginning of the nineties, we had been faced with at least two strategic challenges: the challenge of an open and pluralistic society ("the transition") and the challenge of the emerging knowledge based society. The first challenge was characteristic only to the former socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, while the second one has been pan-European and global. If processes in the area of education in former socialist countries at the turn of the eighties to the nineties are understood only as "transition", then these processes are misinterpreted and not understood at all (p. 21).

Yet another point made with poignant clarity by Zgaga and Krek has to do with the particular situation of the countries of South Eastern Europe. Where other countries, which started off as pre-1990 independent nation states, might have had to downplay national policies in their efforts towards an European framework, Slovenia saw the internationalisation of education as the best guarantee of cultural identity (against the internal "harmonisation" policies of pre-1990 Yugoslavia). With a relatively uncomplicated ethnic composition, a geographical position away from Belgrad's influence, a high rate of political consensus, and a strong measure of continuity in the process of reform, Slovenia grabbed the opportunity offered both by its new-found independence and by the EU negotiations to overturn its educational system and its parameters from a stagnant, problematic situation in the 1980s to a much improved picture by the beginning of the new millennium. The lessons to be learned are, for other countries in the region, that peace, stabile government, and consistence of political and economic reforms are all preconditions of successful systemic educational reform; and that failure of systemic education reform due to hesitation and political instability makes things even more difficult than at the starting point. "If a country in transition starts educational reform – conclude Zgaga and Krek – than it should not fail" (p. 22).

C. Hungary. Tamas Kozma presented the paper "Educational transition: the case of Hungary", and the discussion about Hungary was stimulated by this presentation. In addition to this, the Hungarian case was further illustrated by a paper submitted and made available to the participants, though not presented personally, by Anna Imre ("15 years on: changes in the education system in the 90s Hungary").

Tamas Kozma emphasised the historical significance of the central and eastern European transition, not only in terms of national and regional history, but as "the event that closed

the XXth century – a century started with the First World War and ended with the abolishing of the 'Iron Curtain'" (p. 1). For the countries concerned, transition was a "multidimensional process" (p. 1) which involved the entire political, economical, and social and cultural life. Kozma's analysis followed the shifts from high expectations (in the late 1980s, when "actors of the Hungarian economic life seemed to be more mature for the free market conditions than any of their neighbours in Eastern Europe" – p. 1) to the recasting of these expectations as "illusions" and the "awakening" to the reality of transition (Hungary lost its "illusions during the economic transition. It became clear that she was by no means a developed economy (…). Rather she was an experiment of the Soviet leadership for liberalisation" - p. 3). With this came the feelings of "anomia" (the collapse of the social ladder and the mass feeling of insecurity) and of "liberty" (harbouring a situation in which "new rules could be created by those who became members of the new elite" – p. 4). All was fuelled by the unprecedented experience of "kairos" ("the right time to do something, the milestone in the running time" – p. 5), of the moment which cannot be missed because it is the time for some essential decisions that can't be made later. The paper concluded with a detailed presentation of the changes in the Hungarian education system over the last 15 years (and beyond) and with drawing three "lessons to learn" about the policy challenges posed by educational expansion, about facing growing inequalities, and about the development of new cooperations in the region.

Anna Imre's paper went into further detail about the specific processes of change in the Hungarian system over the 1990s (including the policy and legal framework of it). She distinguishes between two phases, that of the emergence of a framework of the educational system (1990-1995) and that of the shifts and amendments that this framework underwent from 1996 to 1999. Her conclusion is that, though useful, the concept of transition must be used with great awareness of the differences between the micro- and the macro- levels to which it is applied.

D. Poland. Two papers ("15 Years On: Educational Transitions", by Maria Mendel, and "Briefing paper: Poland", by Halina Grzymala-Moszczynska), together with a commentary by Tomasz Szkudlarek, made up the Polish session of the workshop.

Halina Grzymala-Moszczynska's presentation opened up yet another perspective on transition, this time one that was rooted in cultural psychology and anthropology. She saw transition as "a cross-cultural experience", "a shift between sets of values which have dominated public and private life in Poland during the past 15 years" (p. 1). These values were those associated with the communist period (1945-1989), on the one hand, and with the post-communist period (1989 onwards), on the other hand. The Polish transformation was thus described as "cultural shock", characterised by the following: strenuous effort of adaptation; a sense of being uprooted (and, consequently, confusion of roles, values and feelings – p. 2); mutual rejection between those who could and did adapt and those experiencing difficulty; feelings of helplessness and frustration as well as ineffectiveness in dealing with the new culture (p. 2); increased divide and polarisation in the society. However, the importance of culture in the process of transformation has often been

overlooked, not least in the organisation and delivery of western aid and assistance to the post-communist countries in the early stages of their transformation:

> Western consultants and advisors were not prepared for their task of creating democratic institutions from the outside. They were lacking cultural competence; most of them did not receive sufficient training going into Poland […]. The current situation of the implementation of various educational and developmental programs via different EU agendas also often does not bring expected results because of cultural differences of which incoming experts were unaware and to which they were unwilling to accommodate (p. 3).

As a final thought, Grzymala-Moszczynska noted that it was now the time to make use of the past 15 years' experience and avoid further similar failures.

Maria Mendel conceptualised transition as a move from one s*tatus quo* to another (both describable by a set of binary oppositions: socialism/ capitalism, authoritarianism/ democracy, etc.) and described "ritual forms of transition that are typical in such processes" (*rittes*) (p. 1). Such 'rituals' are characteristic to consecutive phases of the transformation, beginning with "rites" of exclusion, immediately after the change of regime (aloneness, avoidance, hesitation, detachment, explicit exclusion of *a.* Polish schools from the 'normal' social life; *b.* Poland from the rest of Europe); followed by marginalisation (doubts, interrogations, overwhelming changes, nostalgic feelings, on the background of which the schools were "not breathing", "staying outside the main stream", "frozen in the margin of social life" – p. 2); and inclusion ("re-naming" schools, people – teachers, parents- , and their roles, as part of the sweeping cross-sector reform initiated in Poland in 1999, as an attempt to establish the educational conditions by which the main aims of transition were to be reached). Mendel pointed to the tensions between fostering local-community co-operation and measures such as closing small schools and not funding kindergartens; or between proclaiming the opening of schools to parents and limiting their influence in the actual school life. The "discursive reality of educational reform" in Poland, she notes, involves the creation of new meanings on the old background (p. 4) and in so doing, "Poland is still in transition towards democratic ways of school organisation" (p. 5), in a never-ending quest for "the ideal state, to making democracy real" (p.4).

In his comments, *Tomasz Szkudlarek* argued that transition was a more comfortable concept than "cultural shock" (which could nonetheless be a component of it – a 'point zero' followed by adaptation), and emphasised its connotation of "progress". For the Polish society, he pointed out, there was no unitary transition, but a complex of processes starting at different points in time (e.g., a gradual political transition, but a very abrupt economical one). EU accession brought even further challenges and the need to redefine national and transnational identities.

E. The Czech Republic. Jitka Kazelleova raised the issue of adult education and of teacher training in transition, using the example of Masaryk University as a case study ("Continuing professional education after 1990. The Centre for Education and Training at Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic").

Jitka Kazelleova's presentation followed the evolution of the Centre from its establishment, in 1992, to its closure in 2005. She described four stages in this process:

1992-1993 (active setting-up); 1994-1995 (striving to keep standards despite the lack of financial resources); 1996-1998 (loss of staff and re-orientation of activity towards self-financing); 1998-2005 (opening new courses targeting other markets – e.g., for civil servants, followed by abrupt closure). Her story raised issues of in-service teacher training in a context of scarce financing and of a changing university culture, and identified strategies of coping with the difficulties of transition at the organisational level. The recommendations based on Kazelleova's account concern, on the one hand, the design of "step-by-step" strategies for development, by gradually dealing with the restrictive conditions while avoiding financial crisis; and, on the other hand, a closer professional cooperation with other departments and institutions.

F. Romania. The Romanian session consisted of two presentations ("Romanian higher education system: from transition to Bologna process", by Romita Iucu, presented by Alis Oancea; and "The evaluation of university teachers in the Romanian higher education sector", by Victorita Trif).

Romita Iucu's paper placed the reform of higher education in the post-communist countries in the wider context of the challenges faced by universities worldwide, and by European universities in particular (with a view to a shared agenda): fast innovation in the field of information and communication technologies; processes of globalization and their many forms and consequences; access and enrichment vs. protecting cultural identity; development of mass higher education; national and international competition; loss of monopoly over higher education (FE, adult); deeper inequalities in opportunities to access higher education (e.g. less students from rural areas); policies promoted by the European Union (deeper impact on candidate countries); public under-financing of higher education, etc. He analysed the academic and administrative strengths and weaknesses of universities in their current state, as well as the aims for further reform of the Romanian higher education system as part of the efforts towards EU accession.

Victorita Trif went into a detailed account of teaching staff evaluation practices in higher education, on the background of globalisation and of shifting conceptualisations of the functions of universities in post-modern societies. She looked at various sets of criteria used in universities in Romania, the UK and the US, and described the interplay of developing standards, criteria and indicators, ways of sanctioning performance, and strategies of validating "best practice".

D. Bulgaria. The Bulgarian participants, *Rossitsa Pencova* and *Anna-Maria Totomanova*, decided to prepare a joint presentation ("Bulgarian education in transition").

Totomanova and Pencova's description of Bulgarian education before 1990 rang familiar bells to the audience: educational policy dominated by ideology (unified rigid curricula, emphasis on the technical and vocational, as well as on science, to the detriment of humanities and civic education); centralised administration; focus on system input and no clear standards for outputs (e.g., rigid examinations, *numerus clausus*), etc. The change of regime was followed by even further problems: demographic crisis, economic difficulties, challenges of globalisation and massification of higher education. A detailed

account of the current state of Bulgarian education, backed by rich statistical evidence, covered the main areas of educational reform after 1989, including: compulsory final examination for the secondary school graduates; 12 grades and 16 years of age for compulsory schooling; compulsory pre-primary education (preparatory class) (2004); flexible scheme for VET (1999); civic education (1999); new curricula standards on all levels (1999); assessment standards – in process of elaboration; quality assurance mechanisms – focused again on the in-put criteria (1999); decentralization of funding – formula based funding for universities (2001) and delegated budgets (experimental since 1988); school boards (1999).

E. Further questions. A short presentation by *Alis Oancea* reflected on the parallel sessions and pointed out some common themes and some issues that have not been addressed in detail; among these were:
> - The situation and dynamics of educational research in "transition";
> - The coexistence of multiple, asynchronous transitions;
> - Neo-communism vs. post-communism;
> - Difference vs. commonality and comparability between countries; in what ways collective terms such as "Central and Eastern European" or "South European" countries are still justified.

2.4. Cross-national and interdisciplinary perspectives on educational transition. Learning from the experiences

This was a session for taking stock and reflecting on the two days of the workshop. *David Phillips* sought even new ways of stimulating the debate, whilst moving towards a theoretical and methodological framework capable to direct further research.

He opened the session with the presentation of two models of processes of change/ educational reform. One of these models (from Birzea, 1994) attempted to describe the phases of transition seen as societal learning, and plotted them along a sinusoid starting from a state of initial shock, through phases of underestimation, depression, habituation, understanding, research for solution, to an "end of transition". The second model was a complex rendering not of transition, but of "policy borrowing" in education, and it described a cycle comprising four main stages (cross-national attraction; decision; implementation; internalisation/indigenisation).

The presentation concluded with three questions for discussion :
> 1. Were there any strengths of the system(s) discussed during the workshop, which were in danger of being abandoned after 1990, but should have been preserved?
> 2. What were the foreign models that oriented policy during the transition (what were the main influences)?
> 3. What next (looking towards the future)?

The ensuing discussion, chaired by Alis Oancea, raised, among others, the following points:

- There had been attempts to preserve past strengths, but this involved more of a return to pre-war traditions, rather than to those of the communist regime (you cannot save an educational system without saving the regime in which it is embedded – T. Kozma);
- Over the years of "transition", education became overburdened with social functions that it was not able to fulfil (education as the means to overcome social inequities; education as a job provider, etc.), and this impeded structural change (A. Totomanova);
- The attempt to copy western models, e.g. by introducing sudden structural changes without support and preparation, was a very challenging (and damaging) experiment for the countries concerned. However the relationships and exchanges involved here should not be oversimplified; rather, importance is to be placed on "intelligent borrowing" (of ideas, rather than systems) and the capacity to creatively transform foreign advice.
- "Transition" also meant the deep rearrangement of the relationship private-public, and thus of the limits of the public sphere in solving problems (G. Halasz).

2.5. Towards a common framework for understanding educational transition. Directions for further research and policy

The final plenary session, chaired by Pavel Zgaga, brought together the perspectives of Voldemar Tomusk, from the Open Society Institute, and of John Sayer, from the University of Oxford.

Voldemar Tomusk welcomed the idea of organising the workshop around the joint topic of transition and EU integration. He argued for an assumed responsibility for the past as a first step in the process of change. The transitions, as looked at during the workshop, were a chance for very significant learning, in order to understand the role of higher order knowledge, and that of the institutional order, in societies. Looking towards the future, we could try and derive directions from either the distant past (drawing legitimacy from the restored continuity); the immediate past (the nostalgia for the state socialism); or the "modern west" (including the OECD, the Council of Europe, etc., and the promise of economic success that they are associated with). The way forward is not uniquely defined, but it needs to take into account both positive and negative experiences and to explore further the role of educational institutions in society.

John Sayer reflected back on the proceedings of the workshop, but also looked forward towards the modes and questions for further research in the field. He recommended looking at research capacity in the field and raised questions about possible binaries that could structure further work: transition(s) to/ transition(s) from; macro/micro; visions/ realities, control/ assurance. His concluding statement is included, selectively (for reasons of space) in Section 2.3. of this report.

3. Outcomes and plans for the future

3.1. Concluding statement

The discussions raised a number of issues, which the group believed to be a good start for further work. Examples of such issues are:

> The learning dimension of transition: during the discussions, the re-focusing of attention from structural and political aspects to the learning dimension was flagged as one of the most fruitful developments of the workshop [Birzea, Halasz, etc.]

> The variability of terms (transition, reconstruction, *Wende*, transformation, and so forth): 'transition' might be ambiguous but it is still used for lack of a better term; its apparent "neutrality" can be both strength and hindrance, and for certain aspects of the processes concerned other terms might be better [D. Waterkamp]

> Regional cooperations: "regional centres of education and training and their cooperation may serve the needs of the multicultural population and the economy studying and working within the region" [Kozma, p. 9]

> Preconditions of successful systemic reform of education [Pavel Zgaga]

> "Transition" as cross-cultural experience; cross-cultural analysis of the east-west communication and collaboration [Halina Grzymala-Moszczynska]

> There are sources of change beyond post-communist restructuring and EU accession: for instance, Anna Imre notes a shift in the Hungarian educational policy following poor results of the PISA survey. Other participants pointed to global trends, to the Lisbon process, and to the role of organisations such as the MIF, World Bank, the OECD, as well as the UNESCO.

> The discursive reality (and the rhetoric) of educational reform in the post-communist countries [Maria Mendel]

> The differences in starting points need further analysis and comparison. This is the time to do it; 15 years on, open scrutiny is more feasible. [John Sayer]

The concluding session of the workshop sought lessons to be learned and pointers for further research. Some of the recommendations made during the discussions were "common-sense" principles based on the 15-year long experiences:

- Don't miss opportunities;
- Purge 'communist' practices and ideologies as quickly as possible;

- Do not import systems of education;
- Learn from failures and mistakes;
- Foster continuity of policies and strong leadership.

The final address, delivered by John Sayer in the form of a two-page statement, distilled the proceedings and suggested ways forward that would take advantage of the *kairos*, of the right moment to act. An abbreviated version of this statement is included below:

There has been much discussion of terms, e.g. prompted by Cesar's opening session transition: its source, various connotations, alternatives such as adaptation, interregnum, system change, reconstruction, transformation, *Wende*, turning point, culture shock, or introduction to permanent state of change as normality. (…) The question: in what senses is this a shared transition? has to be addressed across at least three situations: a) across accessing CEE countries, b) with existing EU member-states, including the special case of the former DDR as part of BRD and c) across different sectors of education. It needs to be looked at from starting points, in phases, across newly emerging common issues, and in terms of goals – to what kind of civic society, (diversity, pluralism, equity) from what kind of communism to what kind of (social) market economy, etc. There has been much discussion of the interface of public service provided by the state and public service provided by a) non-governmental organisations b) profit-driven private enterprise – of a (quasi-) market economy and competition in education.

Following Gabor's presentation, there have been useful explorations of the relationship of macro and micro levels, policy, system change and change of practice, paths chosen and alternatives not pursued, rhetoric and reality. In case studies of particular institutions or sectors, there have been clear, sometimes dramatic distinctions between visions and realities, but also different approaches to reality. The interactions need to be explored between a) biographies, individual motivations, what people actually do and what is done to them and b) shifts in power constellations, system change, framework.

Different stages of transition have been identified, and case-studies have shown different levels and durations. Differences have been identified between policy goals associated with EU accession and resourcing requirements, a powerful lever to some, and existing members not necessarily taking action to achieve these 'agreed' goals themselves. In an EU unsure of its own transitions, this could well increase differences and bring newly acceding members to represent the European impetus more powerfully. (…)

Discussion has shown wide differences in definition and aspiration towards 'democracy' and participation, between apparent power-transfer towards points of action- subsidiarity - and the invention of less overt means of central control – or should we say assurance?. Transition to a regulatory framework of transparency has been seen as essential.(…)

Pointers for further research
(…) Research is itself a process of learning and development. There has been a strong comparative element in our discussions, and comparative research disciplines will be needed for further exploration. These 15 years can be seen as a laboratory not only to advance understanding of the transition itself, but to verify how significant change happens, or does not, on which of course there has been a mass of general research, and the elaboration of many dubious models.

From what has happened in this fruitful workshop, I would suggest two key components to follow-up. First, our research questions should address the interactions of a) biographies, individual motivations, what people actually do and what is done to them, and b) shifts in policy, power constellations, system change. Second, we have seen the dangers of relying on outside 'expertise', but are equally aware that those with deep understanding of their own situation are

also involved as actors in it, as part of it. So our research design should try to bring together internal and external researchers to provide a joint perspective.

Have we as a group the capacities to explore these questions fruitfully together? With what modifications? As we have seen in the 15 years which we have been scrutinizing, there was that first phase of hope, vision, enthusiasm, unrealistic aspiration, followed by different waves of disappointment, compromise, facing hard facts and decisions. It may be the same for us as a group. However, my 'first phase' suggestion (…) might be:
   i) shared identification of research questions which we as a group could most usefully pursue and would like to.
   ii) What would happen if we worked as a web, in which
   Country a) had a partner country b) to share in work on country a), and another partner country c) with whom to work on country c),- and so on across our diverse situations, all working on a common framework of situation analysis informed by case studies. I know this has its complications, each having internal and external partnership. Each stage of activity would be communicated to and radiated out from the web-centre, which would ensure running commentary, internal and external transparency.
   iii) review of this stage, comparisons and distinctions.
   (iv) concurrent sub-groups for comparative work on major themes of common interest.
   (John Sayer)

3.2. An agenda for further research

The questions below are based on the papers and the discussions of the workshop. They are not necessarily the exact phrasing of the authors/ speakers, but they attempt to convey as clearly as possible the idea as shaped during the workshop; the name mentioned after each question is the main source of the respective idea, which might however have been conveyed, in other ways, by some of the other participants too, during the presentations and the discussions. The questions are based on participants' informed analyses and point to some insufficiently explored issues that may form the beginning of an agenda for further research in the field:

A. Are we justified in expecting the end of transition or should we accept to live in continuous change? And if the answer is yes, how to improve the adaptive capacity of the system and that of the people (including: organisational learning, policy experimentation, development of skills and capacities)? [G. Halasz]
B. Are the various concepts used in the field – transition, *Wende*, transformation, change etc. – just competitive understandings of the same process, or do they form a network of relations? [T. Kozma]
C. How can we learn from comparisons with transitional changes in other systems about the ways in which to influence the transitional processes in a positive direction? Could EU terms (such as that of "alternance" in the context of TVE) act as frameworks for inner-European comparisons? [Dietmar Waterkamp]
D. To what extent are educational systems in central and eastern European countries ready for globalisation and Europeanization? What kind of gaps remain, and how wide are they (i.e. between the new and the older EU member states, the new member states and the candidate countries, and between the new member states themselves)? [Cezar Birzea]

E. In what ways is the discursive dynamic of educational reform in the post-communist countries shaped by the interplay of roles and actors within and outside the formal educational system of a country? [Maria Mendel]

F. How can the pre-requisites be created for a culture of co-operation, reform and process-oriented developments, not aimed merely at adaptation of existing concepts and structures of western hue, but defining both the institutional and organisational structures and also the biographically and collectively acquired patterns of attitude and concepts of the actors involved? [Hartmut Wenzel]

G. What is the place of teacher training (initial and in-service) in the process of transition, and how could an appropriate framework be developed that would bridge across theory and practice, initial training and continuing professional learning, needs of individuals and national priorities, as well as the needs of schools, employers, and of the society as a whole? [Jitka Kazelleova]

H. What is the usefulness of "case-studies" in circumstances where we lack transferable experiences, common denominators and shared methodologies? [Pavel Zgaga]

I. What are the functions, strengths and weaknesses of universities in post-communist societies, and what expectations can we reasonably have from higher education teaching staff in the shifting conditions of transition? [Romita Iucu; Victorita Trif]

J. How can cross-border cooperations in education and training be enhanced to serve the needs of the multicultural population and the regional economy? [Tamas Kozma]

K. How can the experience and knowledge accumulated over the past 15 years about the importance of culture in post-communist transformations be utilized in order to sustain growth and to minimize further pitfalls and barriers? [Halina Grzymala-Moszczynska]

L. Is there a paradigm shift underway, involving a move in educational policy in the countries concerned from the culture of transition and the aim of EU accession towards wider agendas (europeanisation, globalisation, international benchmarking, international competitiveness, etc.)? How can this be best described? [Anna Imre, Cezar Birzea, etc.]

M. What are the new goals and directions for reform, once EU accession is accomplished? What are the new visions motivating the educational systems in the countries concerned? ([Anna-Maria Totomanova; Rossitsa Pencova; Hartmut Wenzel]

3.3. Follow-up plans

During the discussion, as well as on their post-event feedback form, the participants proposed:

- developing a network of bilateral connections, with Oxford as the mediator;
- establishing an e-mail discussion group, as a means of debating further activities;
- initiating a study of the europeanisation of educational policies – comparative analysis of EU15 countries and new member countries;
- publishing the workshop presentations;
- organising a follow-up event;
- circulating the report and notes from the workshop in order to build shared ground for future analysis;

- building up local and regional centres of research, or research groups and interconnected networks;
- involving in the debate participants from the post-soviet countries;
- organising research teams that would work on developing research topics and "goals for the future" in the area;
- looking at ways to develop capacity for research in the field;
- identifying sources of funding for further research and collaboration;developing a new and commonly agreed methodological framework;
- discussing methodological issues in more depth (moving beyond case data);
- developing proper analytical tools for looking at the wider Europe and at processes of change; the case studies can be illuminating, but what is needed is an analytical framework; however, this work needs to combine emic and etic approaches: a common scheme of reference to interpret existing data can be both a gain and a loss, if the meaningful interpretative schemes from the inside are overlooked;
- hermeneutical analysis of mistakes;
- reconnecting our discourse to that of the participants in education (the experiences of teachers and students).
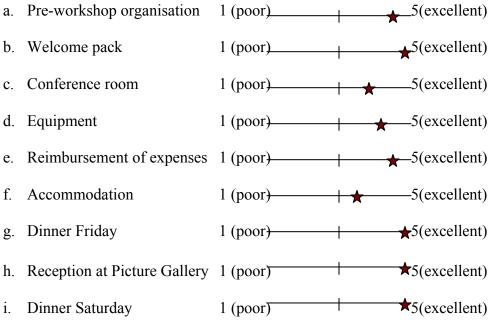
The following actions are currently underway:

1. Publication of a volume including some or all of the workshop papers (Symposium);

2. Establishing a webpage based on the workshop;

3. Preserving the mailing list already constituted;

4. Seeking additional funding for:

   a. supporting the group as a network addressing the issues identified above

   b. organising a follow-up meeting.

3.4. Feedback form results from participants

1. Organisation

a. Pre-workshop organisation 1 (poor)———————————★——5(excellent)

b. Welcome pack 1 (poor)————————————★5(excellent)

c. Conference room 1 (poor)———————————★———5(excellent)

d. Equipment 1 (poor)———————————★—5(excellent)

e. Reimbursement of expenses 1 (poor)———————————★—5(excellent)

f. Accommodation 1 (poor)——————————★———5(excellent)

g. Dinner Friday 1 (poor)———————————★5(excellent)

h. Reception at Picture Gallery 1 (poor)———————————★5(excellent)

i. Dinner Saturday 1 (poor)———————————★5(excellent)

2. Academic content

- A very good occasion to develop/ accomplish frames of understanding and future analysis
- Relevant, well chosen topic; some lines of thought could have been further explored
- Very interesting collection of new ideas; invaluable access to new data about case studies done in specific countries
- The theoretical approaches and the academic way of grasping all the issues discussed were very good; I am fully satisfied
- Inspiring, diversified perspectives difficult to find elsewhere
- Academically at a high level
- Academic content was satisfactory
- High level of presentations and professional participants
- Inspiring presentations
- Interesting and provocative debates; papers which are worth reading at home
- Very interesting, many different approaches; could've done with more time for deepening the discussions
- Some important analytical insights

3. Usefulness

- I found this meeting very important and it helped me to decide what to do in the future
- Highly inspiring for further research
- The results of the comparative analysis that we did are very useful, especially with a view to my work in my country
- Valuable knowledge of individual countries
- It can potentially build a very interesting pool of data for the analysing the dynamic of the process of transformation
- Opportunity to debate the most important issues in the countries concerned
- Generated new ideas on analysing transition processes in education
- Very useful – opening one's mind to different approaches
- Very useful, primarily for further work
- An emerging network, personal connections, good (if hidden) "case studies"
- It is important for the workshop to have a significant impact to produce some follow-up papers and events
- Helped establishing contacts
- Thank you for the opportunity to be here.

4. Final programme

Friday 8 July 2005

12:30 - 13:30	*Registration and Welcome*
13:30 - 14:15	*Buffet lunch*

14:15 - 14:30   **Opening session**
Welcome speeches and outline of the structure and purpose of the workshop (David Phillips; Alis Oancea)

Presentation of the European Science Foundation (ESF)
Dalina Dumitrescu (Standing Committee for the Social Sciences)

14:30 - 15:30   **Plenary session 1: Understanding 'transition'**
Transition, back to Europe, and educational reforms in Central and Eastern Europe (Cezar Bîrzea)

15:30 - 16:00   *Coffee break*

16:00 - 17:00   **Plenary session 2: Understanding 'integration'**
European integration and transition (Gábor Halász)

19:00   *Dinner, St. Edmund Hall, Oxford*

Saturday 9 July 2005

Country case studies – directions and content of transitions [recent processes of change] in education & lessons to be learned: presentations by the country teams

07:30 - 08:30   *Breakfast*

8:40   Minibus departure from William Miller Building to Norham Gardens

09:00 - 10:30   **Plenary session 3**
East Germany (Hartmut Wenzel; Dietmar Waterkamp)

10:30 - 11:00   *Coffee break*

11:00 - 12:30   **Parallel session 1**

A. Slovenia	B. Hungary
Janez Krek	**Tamas Kozma**
Pavel Zgaga	[Anna Imre – paper only]

12:30 - 13:30   *Lunch*

13:30 - 15:00	**Parallel session 2**	
	A. Poland	B. Czech Republic
	Halina Grzymala-Moszczynska	**Jitka Kazelleova**
	Maria Mendel	

15:00 - 15:30   *Coffee break*

15:30 - 17:00	**Parallel session 3**	
	A. Romania	B. Bulgaria
	Victorita Trif	**Rossitsa Pencova**
	Romita Iucu [paper]**/Alis Oancea**	**Anna-Maria Totomanova**

18:30 – 20:00   *Wine reception and private tour – Christ Church College Picture Gallery, Oxford*

20:00- 21:00   *Dinner, St. Cross College, Oxford*

Sunday 10 July 2005

Cross-national and interdisciplinary perspectives on educational transition

07:30 – 08:30   Breakfast

8:40   Minibus departure from William Miller Building to Norham Gardens

09:00 - 10:30   **Plenary session 4**
Reflections on the country- specific sessions: learning from the experiences (**David Phillips**)

10:30 - 11:00   *Coffee break*

11:00 - 12:30   **Plenary session 5**
Towards a common framework for understanding educational transition. Directions for further research and policy recommendations (**Voldemar Tomusk/ John Sayer. Chair: Pavel Zgaga)**

12:30 - 13:00   *Closing speeches and administrative procedures*

13:00 - 13:30   *Buffet lunch*

13:00 - 14:00   *Reception desk open for administrative issues*

Departure

5. Participants

5.1. Final list of participants

1. Cezar Bîrzea, Institute for Educational Sciences, Bucharest, Romania
   Institutul de Stiintele Educatiei
   Str. Stirbei Voda nr. 37
   Sector 3 Bucuresti 010102
   Romania
   Tel: 0040 2 1 3 13 64 91
   Fax: 0040 2 1 3 12 14 47
   E-mail: cesar.birzea@ise.ro

2. Halina Grzymała- Moszczyńska, Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Poland
   Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Centre for European Studies
   ul. Garbarska 7a
   31-131 Kraków, Poland
   tel. +48 (12) 431 1575
   tel/fax: +48 (12) 4296195
   uzgrzyma@cyf-kr.edu.pl

3. Gábor Halász, National Institute of Public Education, Hungary
   National Institute of Public Education
   Dorottya u. 8,
   1364 Budapest
   Hungary
   Tel. (00361) 1185145
   Fax (00361) 2669185
   Email: h8281hal@ella.hu

4. Marianna Jó, Open Society Institute/ International Higher Education Support Program, Budapest
   Open Society Institute, PO Box 519, H-1397 Budapest, Hungary
   Email: mjo@osi.hu

5. Jitka Kazelleová, Masaryk University, Brno, The Czech Republic
   Oddelení cizích jazyku
   VPC MU, Komenského nám. 2
   602 00 Brno
   tel.: 54949 4635
   fax.: 54949 3452

6. Tamás Kozma, University of Debrecen, Hungary
   Dept of Educational Studies
   The University of Debrecen
   P.O.Box 17, H-4032 Debrecen, Hungary
   Tel/Fax: + 36 52 512922
   Home: + 36 1 3944869
   Mobile: + 36 30 3066151 Email: kozmat@ella.hu

7. Maria Mendel, University of Gdansk, Poland
   Pedagogical Institute, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Gdansk
   Krzywoustego 19
   80-952 Gdansk,Poland
   Tel (004858) 557 20 47 ext. 336

Fax (004858) 5572112
Email: pedmm@univ.gda.pl

8. Sergiu Musteață, "Ion Creangă" Pedagogical State University, Chişinău, Moldova

History and Ethnopedagogy Departement
"Ion Creanga" Pedagogical State University
1, Ion Creanga str., of. 407
Chisinau, Moldova, MD-2069
Phone +373 22 742436
Fax +373 22 719169
Email: sergiu72@yahoo.co.uk
antim@mdl.net

9. Alis Oancea, University of Oxford (convenor)

University of Oxford
Department of Educational Studies
15 Norham Gardens
Oxford OX2 6PY
alis.oancea@edstud.ox.ac.uk

10. Rossitsa Penkova, National Institute of Education, Bulgaria

National Institute of Education
125 Tsarigradsko shausse, bl. 5
113 Sofia, Bulgaria
Tel. 00359 2717 224
Fax 00359 2702062
Mobile (+359) 887-307 559
Email:
R.Penkova@nie.bg

11. David Phillips, University of Oxford (convenor)

University of Oxford
Department of Educational Studies
15 Norham Gardens
Oxford OX2 6PY
david.phillipps@edstud.ox.ac.uk

12. John Sayer, Oxford University Department of Educational Studies

University of Oxford
Department of Educational Studies
15 Norham Gardens
Oxford OX2 6PY
jsayer@talk21.com

13. Tomasz Szkudlarek, University of Gdansk, Poland

Faculty of Social Science
Institute of Education
Uniwersytet Gdanski
Instytut Pedagogiki
Ul. Krzywoustego 19
80-952 Gdansk
Poland
pedts@univ.gda.pl

14. Anna-Maria Totomanova, Sofia University, Bulgaria

Sofia University
Sofia, Tzar Osvoboditel 15
Bulgaria
Phone: (+359 2)962 72 67
Fax: 359 2 946 02 55

atotomanova@hotmail.com
15. Voldemar Tomusk, Open Society Institute/ International Higher Education Support Program, Budapest
Deputy Director of International Higher Education Support Program, Open Society Institute, PO Box 519, H-1397 Budapest, Hungary
Email: vtomusk@osi.hu
16. Victorița Trif, University of Bucharest, Romania
University of Bucharest
Department for Teacher Training
Bd. Iuliu Maniu 1-3
Corp A, Et. 5
Sector 6, Bucharest
Romania
Telefon: 4021- 410 27 40
Fax: 4021- 411 68 90
17. Dietmar Waterkamp, Technische Universität Dresden, Germany
TU Dresden, Fakultät Erziehungswissenschaften, WEB 220a,
01062 Dresden dietmar.waterkamp@gmx.de
(0351) 463-37653
18. Hartmut Wenzel, Martin Luther Universität Halle-Wittenberg, Germany
Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg
Fachbereich Erziehungswissenschaften
Institut für Pädagogik Schulpädagogik/Allgemeine Didaktik
Franckeplatz 1, Haus 4
06099 Halle
Tel.: 0345 / 5523835
Fax: 0345 / 5527064
E-mail: wenzel@paedagogik.uni-halle.de
19. Pavel Zgaga, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia
Faculty of Education
University of Ljubljana
Kardeljeva ploscad 16, SI – 1000
Ljubljana, Slovenia
Tel. 00386 15892200
Fax 00386 158 9 22 33
Email: Pavel.Zgaga@guest.arnes.si
20. Anna Imre, Hungary (paper only)
21. Romita Iucu, Romania (paper only)
22. Janez Krek, Slovenia (paper only)

5.2. Statistical information on participants

Distribution of participants by gender

41% 59%

- M
- F

Distribution of participants by age group

27%

46%

27%

- 30-40
- 40-50
- over 50

Distribution of participants by country

5%   5%

5%

16%

9%

14%

9%

9%   14%

14%

- Hungary
- United Kingdom
- Romania
- Poland
- Germany
- Bulgaria
- Slovenia
- Czech Republic
- Estonia
- Moldova