

CONFERENCE
"Best Practices of Centres of European Studies"

6-7 November 2003

REPORT

PURPOSE:

The University of Novi Sad established the Center for Advanced European Studies and Research (CAESAR) in March 2003 with the aim of promoting all aspects of European integration, civilization and culture. As a newly formed centre it has found itself in a position to design its activities according to best practices of other Centres of European Studies on the one hand and to create its own specific focus on the other.

Even before the Centre was officially founded, some activities had been going on for two years. Those activities were the two Summer Schools of European Studies in 2002 and 2003, as well as a set of meetings on the establishment of a Master's Course in European Studies, within the so-called «Subotica Process».

In order to launch the activities of the Centre on a larger scale and to present it to professors engaged in the field of European Studies from other countries in the Region and beyond, the Rector of the University of Novi Sad, prof. dr Fuada Stanković, decided to organize this Conference with generous financial support of the German Rectors' Conference.

The Conference was therefore an opportunity for all participants not only to make valuable contacts with their fellow professors, but to learn about programmes, initiatives and efforts undertaken at different universities within the same field.

PARTICIPANTS:

There were all together 20 participants from abroad and 12 professors from the University of Novi Sad actively involved in the Conference. These participants came from 12 different countries – Germany, Poland, Slovakia, Romania, Hungary, Italy, Great Britain, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Turkey and Serbia and Montenegro.

PRESENTATIONS:

A great variety of experiences in the field of European Studies and a number of different cultures represented at the Conference had contributed to useful discussions after each of the presentations.

1.	Prof. Michael O'Neill	Nottingham-Trent University	European Studies: Curriculum Development and Quality Agenda
2.	Prof. Reinhard Meyers	University of Münster	The Joy and Anguish of Developing International Teaching Programs
3.	Prof. Aladár Nagy	University of Miskolc	On the Activity of ESC at the University of Miskolc
4.	Prof. Stanisław Puppel	Adam Mickiewicz University of Poznań	"European integration - a challenge for Poland's higher education: in retrospect and some prospects"
5.	Prof. Findor Andrej	Comenius University in Bratislava	Institute of European Studies and International Relations at the Comenius University
6.	Emma Lantschner	European Academy of Bolzano	From Summer Academy to the European Studies Centre: The genesis of the Centre at the European Academy of Bolzano

7.	Prof. Marius Jucan	Babes-Boyai University in Cluj-Napoca	Strategies to expand and develop European Studies at the Babes-Boyai University
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8.	Prof. Şule Kut	Istanbul Bilgi University	EU Studies in Turkey and at Bilgi University (oral)
9.	Prof. Rosita Schjerve-Rindler	University of Vienna	European Studies Programme, University of Vienna: Concept, focus and perspectives
10.	Prof. Zdravko Grebo	University of Sarajevo	GUEST
11.	Prof. Andrásy György	University of Pécs	Foundation and development of the Centre for European Studies at Pécs University
12.	Prof. dr Willibald Posch	University of Graz	Composition of a Basic Course on EU law and EC-Institutions for Students of South-Eastern European Non Member States
13.	Doc.dr Zoran Kurelić	University of Zagreb	European Studies at the University of Zagreb

14.	Prof. dr Boban Stojanović	University of Niš	TEMPUS PROJECT – European studies development at the University of Niš
15.	Janja Bedrač	University of Maribor	STUDYING EC LAW IN SLOVENIA – in the last decade
16.	Prof. dr Alex Francis-Drace	University College London	The idea of Europe and the idea of Eastern Europe: archaeologies, genealogies and trajectories
17.	Prof. Francesca Arato	University of Bologna	Experiences of Best Practices of Italian European Studies Centres: the “Centro per l’Europa centro-orientale e balcanica” and “the European Point” of Froli

18.	Prof. Žanet Ugarčić-Hardi	University of Osijek	GUEST
19.	Prof. dr Wendy Bracewell	University College London	GUEST
20.	Prof. Grzegorz Pozarlik	Jagiellonian University in Kraków	European Research and Education at the Jagiellonian University Centre for European Studies

Professors from the University of Novi Sad who participated in the Conference:

1. Prof. dr Fuada Stanković – Rector of the University of Novi Sad
2. Prof. dr Stevan Vasiljev – Dean of the Faculty of Economics
3. Prof. dr Bernadet Bordaš – Director of CAESAR
4. Prof. dr Tomislav Sudarević – Faculty of Economics
5. Doc. dr Sanja Djajić – Faculty of Law
6. Doc. dr Branko Bešlin – Faculty of Philosophy
7. Prof. dr Nađa Skenderović-Ćuk – Faculty of Economics
8. Prof. dr Senad Jašarević – Faculty of Law
9. Prof. dr Agneš Kartag-Odri – Faculty of Law
10. Prof. dr Rodoljub Etinski – Faculty of Law
11. Prof. dr Pavle Sekeruš – Faculty of Philosophy

CONCLUSIONS of the CONFERENCE:

1) Based on Prof. Meyers' and Prof. O'Neill's observations

The conference proceedings emphasized both the similarities of experiences and problems as well as the particularities between EU universities in setting up and operating programmes of European Studies.

The conference covered the widest possible range of universities, and examined programmes at both the post-graduate and undergraduate level. It also reviewed freestanding programmes with a single award outcome and programmes that involved a multiple (double diploma) award.

There was discussion about two principal themes during the conference: the initial discussions were about practical issues - how to set up and operate a viable and coherent programme. The general consensus seemed to be for a familiar one-year programme that combined general courses in the social sciences and history, with more specialized option choices, with a dissertation at the end of the period of study. But some participants took a narrower view and defined the area of study as about EU law or related administrative/policy-based subjects.

There was a general problem, too, with defining the discipline of 'European studies'. Some participants said that the preference in their home countries for retaining traditional disciplines of knowledge ensured difficulties in both the introduction of European multi-disciplinary approaches (the 'man from the ministry' problem) and perhaps some resistance too from students reluctant in career terms to abandon a traditional discipline of knowledge approach in their studies. This problem is often circumvented by attaching a broader traditional label to European Studies (for instance, International Relations).

(Sense of disappointment about the retarding role of national political decision-makers and education bureaucrats in the introduction of European Studies to the national academic curriculum. Sometimes a subject which is well established in West European universities is regarded as non-existent in CEE and SEE curricula; sometimes it is only allowed in combination with another branch of learning (usual international relations). In this, the role of accreditation committees appears to be rather questionable: they either appear as the battlefield on which academic traditionalists fight an entrenched rearguard action against this upstart science called European Studies (not the least out of the fear of having to give up some of their resources and/or manpower), or they even serve as a smokescreen behind which politicians unwilling to deal with European Studies academically are sheltering. This is astonishing if one bears in mind the existential importance of a thorough knowledge of EU matters for the advancement of the accession countries).

This moved the discussion on to a wider debate about what is European Studies, and the general consensus was that, while it is often defined as EU -based programmes, this is only a very narrow definition. It is a definition that is driven by the need of many countries to prepare for enlargement / EU membership, but it is nevertheless a too narrow, too constricted definition.

Discussions were also held on:

- multidisciplinary vs. transdisciplinary
- the possibility of establishing contacts from European Studies to other individual disciplinary contexts
- the relation between attitudes and aptitudes in the teaching of European Studies
- the boundaries of the subject to be studied opening from a rather narrow political science angle to a much wider liberal arts/culturalist perspective

The overall conclusion of the conference was that whatever our particular definitions / practices there was a common corpus of problems to be resolved in presenting a coherent programme, common pedagogic and curricula challenges to be addressed, and that for this very reason there was much to be gained from sharing experiences and networking. And on this basis the conference was unanimously agreed by all participants to have been a great success.

1) Based on Prof. Bracewell's reflections and conclusions

There are three themes that are relevant to plans to establish a programme in European Studies in Novi Sad: EU Studies and European Studies; the costs and benefits of interdisciplinary programmes within a University environment; and the possible advantages of a local approach to European Studies.

It was clear that there was a range of approaches to defining 'European Studies', ranging from practical, pragmatic and vocational programmes focusing on EU accession issues (and usually framed within specific disciplines such as Law or Economics) to broader multi- or interdisciplinary programmes. The EU Studies programmes were noticeably less troubled by *institutional* obstacles, though even here there was evidence that the target *consumers* were not always easily convinced of the benefits. How long lasting such programmes will be is an important question; are their life spans directly linked to the initial problems of accession? However, it was clear that the mixture of disciplines could be set very widely. Though European Studies is conventionally framed around Law, Political Science, Economics, International Relations and perhaps History/Cultural Studies, with languages as either an integral or a service component, some programmes suggested more innovative possibilities (the inclusion of Mechanical Engineering was an inspiring example). The notion of a minimalist and maximalist scope (as at Cluj-Napoca) also suggested ways in which European Studies programmes might be designed flexibly, with the potential to shift focus with changing circumstances.

Institutional difficulties were one of the constant themes in the presentations of the more multi- or interdisciplinary programmes. Such programmes are often seen as threatening the interests of established departments (and disciplines), as rivals for funding, staff time, prestige, students (all seen as limited goods). University administrative structures may not be equipped to deal with extra-departmental programmes effectively (and may be reluctant to provide initial short-term funding, particularly when this is a grass-roots initiative).

Outside funding is available, especially for well-framed projects, but applying for and managing such money can be expensive in administrative terms. Cooperation with other institutions is a time-consuming and sometimes frustrating experience.

Participants stressed the importance of the inspiration and commitment of individuals as a crucial factor in getting such programmes under-way, but recognized that this could often be at the expense of research time (especially problematic in an academic culture which rewards individual publishing above all else).

The benefits were also framed very clearly. On an institutional level, a good European Studies programme could lead to increased student numbers, additional external funding, prestige and visibility; on an academic level (both individual and institutional), research potential, innovations in teaching and learning, and new networks of contacts.

The problem is: how best to achieve such innovation within the highly structured environment of the University? A core group of committed academics; a minimum of support from the institution; access to external funding; initial results fairly quickly: these seem to be the minimum requirements. The specific politics of the institution and the skill and commitment of the individuals concerned will probably play as great a role in determining the outcome as will any assessment of the costs and benefits. (By these measures, Novi Sad seems well placed to pursue its plans with every hope of success.)

The same points could probably be made about any interdisciplinary programme that cuts across established institutional boundaries. Still, it is worth considering whether there are any issues that are particular to the prospects of European Studies programmes? One line to pursue might be the ways that European Studies might be framed from a local perspective. This could have both intellectual and institutional benefits.

Many 'EU Studies' programmes derive very directly from issues of EU development. The aim of such programmes is to ease the process of accession, harmonization, and standardization (according to standards set elsewhere), rather than to question the framework within which the issues are posed. This could also be the case for a 'European Studies' programme, even if framed more broadly in terms of disciplines and problems, to the extent that 'Europe' is taken as a given and the problems associated with the field are derived from academic and socio-political concerns located in the West.

But what if we ask how we might go beyond the taken-for-granted notion of Europe, and look at Europe as something that is not given, but is made? This offers intellectual benefits, in that it forces us to reconsider the assumptions that shape the field (raising questions about the coherence and homogeneity of 'Europe', as well as about concepts such as backwardness, modernization, etc.). It also offers a way of framing new issues that arise from specific local circumstances: does our understanding of European problematics shift when considered from a different perspective, outside the hegemonic core? How do the local and the global interact in producing the modern world?

Framing European Studies programmes in this way, using specific local experiences and perspectives as an important starting point, could have institutional as well as intellectual benefits. This approach can help to differentiate between the multitude of ES programmes on offer by emphasizing a unique perspective (how does Europe look from the Vojvodina?). It can also help recruit local / regional / national support from those who might otherwise resist the homogenizing / internationalizing implications of 'European Studies'.

This approach might have a political benefit as well: helping us all see how we can contribute to making Europe, not simply accepting it as a ready-made import commodity with its standards agreed – elsewhere.

University of Novi Sad, 24 November 2003