



92/301



Standing Conference
on University Problems (CC-PU)

COE233213

Conference on Universities and Democratisation

Warsaw, 29 - 31 January 1992

Conclusions

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Action

See Foreword, Paragraph 6

Directorate of Education,
Culture & Sport, Higher Education Section

Distribution:
CC-PU
Conference participants

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I. FOREWORD

1. The Conference on "Universities and Democratisation" was organised jointly by Warsaw University, the Polish Ministry of Education, and the Standing Conference on University Problems (CC-PU) of the Council of Europe. It formed one of the CC-PU's regular "forum role" events, that complement more operational activities by seeking a European perspective on major current issues in higher education. (¹)

2. The aims of the Warsaw Conference were:

- to contribute to an understanding of the role and importance of higher education in the democratisation of society by drawing on the experience of both Eastern and Western Europe;

- to explore practical ways in which the democratic experience of post World War II Western Europe could be of use to the countries of Eastern and Central Europe in the present transformation of higher education;

- to provide ideas for the Council of Europe's work on higher education. In particular, it was hoped that the activities with special relevance to the countries of Eastern and Central Europe would be able to draw on the results of the Warsaw Conference.

3. The Conference was attended by 67 governmental and university delegates, representing 24 of the States party to the European Cultural Convention (including Romania for the first time); the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe; Latvia, as an observer; and seven international organisations. The Polish Delegation was headed by the Minister of Education, Professor Andrezej STELMACHOWSKI, who addressed the Conference. The programme, including the names of the speakers and the list of working documents, is reproduced as Appendix 1, and the list of participants as Appendix 2.

4. The Chairman of the Conference was Dr Roberto de ANTONIIS (Italy), Chairman of the CC-PU, assisted by Professor Roger ELLUL-MICALLEF (Malta), Vice-Chairman of the CC-PU, and Professor Włodzimierz SIWINSKI (Poland), Pro-Rector of Warsaw University and CC-PU Bureau member. Professor Ruud de MOOR (Netherlands) acted as the General Rapporteur.

5. At the close of the debates, the Conference unanimously approved :

¹ Recent events include:

- Colloquy on university financing in Europe (in cooperation with the OECD), University of Barcelona, September 1989 (Conclusions: see document DECS/ESR (89) 88)

- Conference on East-West university cooperation in Europe, University of Hamburg, October 1990 (Conclusions: see document DECS/ESR (90) 78)

- the conclusions presented by the General Rapporteur (Section II below),
- recommendations to the Council of Europe (Section III below), for consideration by the CC-PU at its next meeting on March 31-April 2 1992.

It is intended to publish the proceedings, possibly in book form.

Action

6. The Standing Conference on University Problems (CC-PU) is invited to:

- examine the conclusions with a view to approving them as a statement of its own position;
- transmit the conclusions, and the first of the Conference's recommendations to the Council of Europe, to the CDCC and if appropriate the Committee of Ministers;
- transmit the conclusions to the Conference on "Academic Freedom and University Autonomy", to be organised by Unesco/CEPES with the Romanian Rectors' Conference in Bucharest on May 5-7 1992;
- invite the Secretary General to draw on the conclusions in the Council of Europe's contribution to the cultural side of the CSCE process;
- examine the second part of the Conference's recommendations to the Council of Europe, with a view to incorporating the points made in its future activities.

II. CONCLUSIONS SUBMITTED BY THE GENERAL RAPPORTEUR

1. WHAT SUPPORTS A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY ?

History shows that only a few countries in the world have a long-standing record of an uninterrupted democratic functioning. Another lesson of history is that certain conditions must be fulfilled for stable democracies to develop and to survive.

A certain degree of economic prosperity seems to be a prerequisite. In view of this fact, it must be a matter of high priority for Western Europe and North America to help Central and Eastern European countries to develop their economies as fast as possible. This is all the more urgent because the attitudes of the citizens of these countries towards the new political regimes - which are democratic regimes - will not only be affected by absolute standards of living but even more by the standards prevailing and the expectations that they had when the old totalitarian regimes crumbled away. A particular danger in this respect arises when only a small part of the population is able to take advantage of a free economy - and makes this manifest by conspicuous consumption - whereas the larger part does not benefit, or even experiences a decline in living conditions.

While the first condition for the development of stable democracies is of an economic nature, the second one has to do with social structure. A strong middle class is the backbone of democracy. But not every type of middle class will do. Politically speaking, democracy is a specific system of the division of power ; not only, however, a division of power in the strict sense, but more broadly a division of power between purely political forces and societal, mostly economic forces. A middle class of bureaucrats, who are the stakeholders of political power, is, therefore, not what we have in mind. The middle class has to be an economic power, counteracting political power, even in democracies. At the organisational level, free trade unions and employers' organisations are equally essential. This means that a market economy is not only an arrangement to foster prosperity, it is also a component of society which supports political democracy. In the market economy, the strength and growth of small and medium sized firms particularly deserves attention for two reasons, from a socio-political angle:

1. in this part of the economy, entrepreneurship and independence are crucial values;
2. unlike the leaders of large international firms, small businessmen are unlikely to form coalitions with holders of political power.

The third condition for stable democracies is both the most neglected and the most crucial one: the cultural factor. I quote from the Secretariat's memorandum (DECS-HE 91/82 p. 2):

"The establishment of a political system of working parliamentary governments, genuinely free multi-party elections, the rule of law, and independent courts, are the outward signs of democracy. But to flourish, the concept of democracy must put down roots in society as a whole. The idea of a democratic society goes beyond political institutions and is intertwined with the quality or tone of human relations and cultural life."

The most fundamental belief in a democratic society is that the individual, each individual, has value in and by him- or herself. In this core value, others originate, such as:

- equality of all before the law;
- liberty of the individual, restricted only where necessary - and this only by the law;
- freedom of speech;
- freedom of association.

These classical fundamental freedoms rights can only flourish in societies where tolerance and the acceptance of pluralism are parts of people's culture. Political science research has revealed another cultural determinant of the stability of democratic political structures: trust. Trust is necessary between the various groups in society, between religious and ethnic groups in particular; and in addition, trust in institutions, of which the government is a central one, is indispensable.

These introductory remarks lead to a first, still very broad conclusion.

First conclusion

Universities in Central and in Eastern Europe will play, will have to play, a central role in building up democratic societies:

- by providing society with the knowledge necessary to develop a market economy (more accurately a social market economy) and to let it function;
- by providing society with a well educated élite, who are not only highly trained specialists but who have at the same time a wide understanding of what is crucial to a well functioning democratic society, and who have absorbed democratic values.

To fulfil its mission, the university needs academic freedom and autonomy. This brings us to a second subject of the Conference: the relations between government and university. By government is meant not only the government of a centralised state, but equally governments at a federal and at a regional level, whatever their constitutional level may be.

2. RELATIONS BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND THE UNIVERSITY

There is no country in the world where the government does not have some control over the university. Particularly in Continental Europe there is a tradition by which governments are held responsible for higher education, responsible not only for providing resources, but also for the way in which universities serve society. Universities are public services. The question, therefore, is not whether governments should have some control over universities, but rather: control over what ? to what extent ? and how should it be exercised ?

The first requirement to be met by a government is that academic freedom be fully respected. What is academic freedom? It is not just an application of the freedom of speech. This latter, classical freedom has restrictions which are generally accepted. Being a civil servant (in the narrow sense) imposes some restrictions on this right in as far as its exercise would run contrary to duties towards the government.

Academic freedom, however, is characteristically a right to which the university teacher and researcher may appeal even against the authorities of the university and his or her colleagues. The function of granting this right is that only by allowing academics freely to make known the findings of their scholarly work can the advancement of knowledge be expected.

Exercising the right of academic freedom may have a political impact. This is obvious, particularly but not solely in the humanities and the social and behavioural sciences. One cannot analyse without at least implicitly criticising existing practices and opinions; one cannot jump to recommendations without

hurting interests and values. But it is also precisely this critical function which the university has to fulfil in order to contribute to the democratic functioning of society.

Academic freedom is to be distinguished from autonomy. Whereas academic freedom is first of all a right of the individual academic, autonomy is the right of the institution and its component faculties and departments. It is a right to decide, independently from external authorities, on certain internal affairs. Through autonomy, academic freedom can be protected, but autonomy is also functional to the advancement of teaching and research. These two functions constitute the legitimation of autonomy, but at the same time they imply limits.

In exploring the relations between government and universities, we will focus on issues of autonomy, and this only at the level of the university as a whole. As an arrangement to protect academic freedom, autonomy has first of all to be related to the hiring and firing of teachers and research staff. Governments may set criteria and prescribe procedures for the appointment in particular of professorial staff, to maintain quality standards. It must, however, be left to university authority itself to decide whom to appoint. Still more important is that no external authorities be allowed to intervene in the teaching and research of staff members, let alone to fire them, on the grounds of what they have taught or published. We know that, even in democratic countries, people in power have difficulty in refraining from this kind of action e.g. the McCarthy period in the USA.

The institution of tenure is a device to protect academic freedom from internal and external assaults, an institution which, of course, is not meant to prevent the university authorities from dissolving contracts with staff who are performing below acceptable standards.

The core of university autonomy lies in the domain of teaching and research. This autonomy may touch upon academic freedom, because very detailed prescriptions on curricula and on research projects may hinder academics in following their line of thought.

In practice, however, autonomy in this field is predominantly legitimated because it serves the flexible adaptation of teaching and research to new developments in science and in the labour market. Academics themselves know best what are the most fruitful developments in their disciplines, and usually they are fully aware of the new needs of society, more particularly of the labour market. This is not to say that no conservative forces are at work in the university, but in the balance of pros and cons, we may give more weight to decision-making by the university itself than to decision-making by the government or other external authorities.

An overview of the state-university relationship in this field shows that even between Western European countries there are sometimes remarkable differences as to the degree of autonomy in designing curricula and introducing new degree programmes.

The arguments in favour of a far-reaching autonomy in deciding on curricula and new degree programmes will, however, gain in importance. The rate of economic and technological change in our societies is very high, and new fields of knowledge, particularly interdisciplinary fields, are constantly being created. A modern university has, therefore, to adapt rapidly to new needs.

In some countries, we observe a tendency for governments to increase university autonomy in teaching. At the same time, we see a tendency for governments to expand their control over research, in the sense that they want to set priorities between different research fields. The method of exercising this control might be a transfer of research funds to outside agencies, such as research councils, or direct negotiations with the universities on research to which priority has to be given. The background to this tendency is a stabilisation of research budgets, while claims on the government which call for inputs of new knowledge are increasing. At the same time, in the 80s and 90s governments are more than ever concerned to keep or make their economies internationally competitive. They, therefore, want to stimulate research which is technologically relevant.

Autonomy is also needed in structuring the internal organisation of the university and its governing bodies, as well as in distributing the various decision-making competences. The organisation and governing structures of the continental European universities are traditionally laid down in laws. This makes them rather inflexible.

There is, however, a great awareness that the size and complexity of a modern university do not allow a static and uniform regulation from outside. Just as in other large, complex organisations, the competence to organise and reorganise needs to rest with those who are directly responsible for running the university.

The same principle applies to financial decision-making. Lump-sum financing is what a modern university demands.

A second conclusion is therefore:

The protection of academic freedom demands autonomy of the university in personnel policy and in teaching and research. The rapidly changing environment in which the modern university has to function, and its own complexity, also demand a large autonomy in deciding on its internal organisation and in spending its budget.

Increased autonomy also means an increase in accountability, not only with respect to financial matters, but also with respect to the quality of teaching and research.

A third conclusion has to complement the second one:

Evaluation procedures to guarantee the quality of teaching and research are part of a largely autonomous system of higher education.

3. RELATIONS BETWEEN UNIVERSITY AND SOCIETY

In many aspects, the government (the State) acts on behalf of society. But state-university relations are not identical to those between the university and society.

The university is an institution growing out of society. It has to fulfil specific functions towards society. Core functions are:

- to be a centre of learning (Bildungszentrum)
- to be a centre of professional education
- to be a centre of research.

In the last few decades, the function of acting as a centre of social service has gained more importance, to the extent that the balance between this and the core functions may deserve attention.

One of the crucial aspects in the relationship between society and universities is that of access to the latter.

Equality of educational opportunity is a democratic principle and has been one of the goals of educational policy in Western European countries during the last thirty years, even to the extent that the elimination of cultural barriers related to social class or ethnic groups has been part of this goal.

The principle has, however, to be rightly understood. Equality of educational opportunity applies to those who meet the necessary qualifications for a certain line of study. Where the population varies in talent and ambition, application of the principle in a modern, technologically advanced society implies a diversified system of higher education, diversified as to goals, levels, and length of education.

Finally, the principle finds its limitation in the resources which can be made available to higher education.

Fourth conclusion:

A diversified system of higher education, to which all qualified citizens have access, best meets the ideals of a technologically advanced and democratic society. Limitations of access due to restricted resources and/or labour market considerations may, however, be accepted.

Universities may be considered as élite institutions in so far as their standard of teaching is concerned. This does not contradict their being mass institutions in the sense of educating a large proportion of the population. The tension between being an élite institution and granting open access is reduced in a diversified system of higher education.

4. A DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURE OF THE UNIVERSITY

Democratisation is not a process confined to the political systems of a society. It is an on-going process that influences all kinds of structures in society and all kinds of daily behaviour.

The modern university too has to be characterised by a democratic culture and structure.

A democratic culture implies that the relations between teachers and students are characterised more by a mentality of equality than by a hierarchical, let alone authoritarian approach. Furthermore, the relations between teachers of different grades and between teaching and auxiliary staff will manifest more the approach of a joint effort in a common task than a status differentiation.

A democratic structure of decision making is also needed. However, a university is not a political system of equal citizens. Proportional representation of all members of the university community would not correspond to the different responsibilities of teachers and students, of teachers and auxiliary staff. Nevertheless, participation of all groups in decision-making processes must be considered as natural. In practice, forms and degrees of participation differ between the universities in the various countries and sometimes even within countries. Such differences are partly due to the fact that academics have strongly divergent opinions on sharing their authority with non-teaching staff, with junior staff and with students. Obviously, national traditions and socio-political situations also play a role.

In devising democratic structures, one has to take into account the necessity of an effective and efficient functioning of the university. This demands a certain balance in the distribution of power between the various groups, but is not an argument against participation in decision-making. On the contrary, the non-teaching staff and students also have an expertise which needs to be tapped to achieve the best decisions. Moreover, in a modern, dynamic and complex university, many decisions require a competence which is not the monopoly of professors. Indeed, one may expect that such a university will even demand a professionalisation of university administration which will also have an effect on the way participation will be shaped.

Finally, one has to take into account that not only competence determines the outcome of decisions; personal, departmental and faculty interests have at least an equal weight. The participation of non-teaching staff and particularly students may lead to a constellation of interests which better serves what the university stands for.

The question of whether outsiders should take part in universities' decision-making has to be approached from the same perspective. Such participation may strengthen the relations between university and society, and may bring in valuable expertise.

This participation has, however, to be considered carefully from the point of view of academic freedom and autonomy.

Fifth conclusion:

In a democratic society, the university too needs to be characterised by a democratic culture and by real participation of all groups in the decision-making process. The forms this participation takes will depend on national circumstances and may also vary from period to period, depending also on the kind of administration that is most effective.

5. **TEACHING AND DEMOCRATISATION**

The teaching of the universities in Central and Eastern Europe may contribute greatly to the formation of a younger generation of democratic inspiration and behaviour. The first step in the formation of attitudes is knowledge. Cognition precedes evaluation. The social sciences and humanities may, therefore, play an important role in building up democratic societies. However, attitudes are not formed in a purely intellectual way. Daily experience may be even more important to the formation of attitudes. This is why a democratic atmosphere in the universities is so important.

However essential the academic specialist may be in our present societies, a specialist who is not aware of the social and cultural dimensions of his or her work is not well prepared to contribute to the tremendous task of creating a democratic culture.

Therefore, the sixth conclusion is:

Universities, according to the particular situation in their country, should also try in their education of specialists to transfer democratic values through a critical reflexion on the way their graduates will have to function as specialists in a democratic society.

6. **COOPERATION BETWEEN UNIVERSITIES IN EUROPE**

It is up to the universities in Central and Eastern Europe to accept their responsibility. However, the universities of Western Europe have a duty to respond to requests for cooperation.

This duty originates in a common Christian and humanistic past and a common destiny. In the world of tomorrow, Europe will have to unite both economically and politically, while maintaining its valuable cultural diversity.

What we need is a two-way cooperation, in which both parties give and take. If this cooperation is based on what our universities are able to give and take, that means on their strengths and their needs, then they will contribute in the best way to their societies. This also applies to the students.

Seventh conclusion:

Decentralised decision-making on projects of cooperation, which may embrace all academic subjects, promises to be most fruitful in the long run.

Eighth conclusion:

Student exchanges can best be based on cooperation between universities. Moreover, student organisations should have the opportunity of exchanging members between the various countries.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

1. In its overall programme to support the strengthening of democratic institutions and society in its new member and partner countries of Eastern Europe (DEMOSTHENES Programme), the Council of Europe is invited to recognise the important role of universities as institutions and make full use of the varied expertise of academics.

2. In its higher education programme, under the Standing Conference on University Problems, the Council of Europe is invited:

i) to emphasise, in its operational activities (the postgraduate training programme, the new project on the European dimension of higher education), fields of particular relevance to the university's role in democracy, including (but not only) human rights, political sciences, law, studies related to cultural identities, and the human dimension of science and technology;

ii) to contribute, through the new ad hoc project on legislative reform, to the establishment of a democratic framework for the relations between the university and society (including both national legislation and the internal legislation of the university).

iii) to take account in its work of the contribution of student participation.

Appendix 11 :: Programme of the conference

The Conference was held in the Senate Room of Warsaw University, Casimir Palace, Krakowskie Przedmiescie 26/28, Warsaw.

Wednesday 29 January 1992

15.00 - 17.00 Registration.

17.00 - 19.00 Opening ceremony

Address : Professor Andrezej Stelmachowski, Minister of Education of Poland

Greetings : Dr Stanislaw Wyganowski, Mayor of Warsaw
Dr Roberto de Antoniis, Chairman of the CC-PU

Address : Mr Raymond Weber, Director of Education, Culture and Sport, representing the Secretary General of the Council of Europe

Keynote speaker:

Professor Henryk Samsonowicz, Warsaw University

Thursday, 30 January

09.30 - 11.00 **Universities and democratisation: an historical perspective**

Chair: Dr. Roberto de Antoniis, Chairman of the CC-PU

Case studies of:

Germany: Professor Notker Hammerstein, Johann Wolfgang Goethe University, Frankfurt

Spain: Professor Manuel Núñez Encabo, Rapporteur for Higher Education of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Czechoslovakia: Professor Juraj Švec, Rector, Comenius University, Bratislava

Introductions followed by discussion

11.15 - 12.45 The interdependence of the university and society

Panel, chaired by Professor Roger Ellul-Micallef, Vice-Chairman of the CC-PU

Participants: Professor Alenka Šelih, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia
Mr Seán Harkin, Ministry of Education, Ireland and Vice-Chairman of the Education Committee
Dr Peter Fischer-Appelt, former President of Hamburg University
Professor Valerio Grementieri, University of Siena

Discussion

Afternoon session: Universities and democratisation: teaching and practice

Chair: Professor Roger Ellul-Micallef, Vice-Chairman of the CC-PU

15.00 - 16.00 The teaching of human rights and other topics related to the functioning of democratic institutions

Speaker: Professor Colin Warbrick, University of Durham

Discussion

16.00 - 16.30 Opportunity to review material presented by participating institutions (during coffee break)

16.30 - 18.00 University democracy

A rector's view: Professor Hans Peter Jensen, Rector, Technical University of Denmark

A student's view: Mrs Dorota Kolodziej, Warsaw University

Discussion

Friday, 31 January

10.00 - 11.30 Current initiatives for Eastern and Central Europe

Chair: Professor Włodzimierz Siwinski, member of the CC-PU Bureau

Introduction by Mr. James Wimberley, Council of Europe

Question-and-answer session with representatives of organisations active in East-West university cooperation:

- Mr Adam Cichawa, Polish TEMPUS Office
- Professor Boleslaw Mazurkiewicz, CRE (European Rectors' Conference)
- Professor Ørjar Øyen, Dubrovnik Inter-University Centre and European Coordination Centre for Research and Documentation in Social Sciences, Vienna
- Professor Eberhardt Shaich, Tübingen University

11.45 - 12.30 **Report by the General Rapporteur**

Chair: Dr. Roberto de Antoniis, Chairman of the CC-PU

Presentation of the report by the General Rapporteur, Professor Ruud de Moor, former Rector of the Catholic University of Brabant

Discussion; adoption of conclusions

12.30 **Close of the conference.**

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Working documents

- DECS-HE 91/84 Final programme
 DECS-HE 91/82 Secretariat memorandum containing reflections on the theme

Universities and democratisation: an historical perspective :

- DECS-HE 91/97 Case study of Germany, Professor Notker Hammerstein
 DECS-HE 91/12 Case study of Spain, Professor Manuel Núñez Encabo
 DECS-HE 91/13 Case study of Czechoslovakia, Professor Juraj Švec

The teaching of human rights and other topics related to the functioning of democratic institutions:

- DECS-HE 91/98 Paper by Professor Colin Warbrick

Current initiatives for East-West cooperation:

- DECS-HE 92/14 Information and discussion document by the Secretariat of the Higher Education Section

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