

Universities in Transitional Europe; Sails and Anchors

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”Transitional Europe”

- ex-Warsaw Pact and ex-Yugoslav states; 11 members of European Union, about dozen others - mostly members of Council of Europe;
- number of inhabitants \approx 350 millions [*comparable to ”developed Europe” (Eu15, Norway, Switzerland, ...) \approx 420 millions*]

Among about 500 best universities in the World:

- About 200 from ”developed Europe”
- About *dozen* from ”transitional Europe”

Funding – example:

European Research Council - starting grants 2007-2016

Total:	3428
”Developed Europe”	3359 (98%)
”Transitional Europe”	69 (2 %)

Transitional countries:

- From 1989 on: divisions (including wars), new states (one single integration - Germany);
- Deep social, political and economic changes; transformations still under way;
- A lot of differences; local particularities (traditions, political inheritances, cultural specificities, different levels of economic development, etc);

Still:

- A lot of similarities, common problems, phenomena and trends;

Higher Education, Research & Development

- Not independent and uncorrelated from general social, economic and political problems (even crises);

Sails & Anchors:

States:

- Heritage – symbolic significance of general attempts to revive (and reconstruct) history and tradition;
- Transition from planning (socialist) to market (capitalist) economy;
- Influences of globalization and market conditions – international dynamism and local activism;

Sails & Anchors

Universities:

- from controlled and protected role in the totalitarian systems to formally autonomous status with a low degree of accountability (from both sides – political and academic);
- **Massification** of studies; dramatic increase of number of (public and private) institutions;
- Intense search of many for **a new place in the Sun**: internal and international repositioning;
- **Large (flagship) national universities**: how to achieve **future vitality** *“in full harmony with their traditional values, including autonomy and academic integrity”* (Magna Charta Universitatum, 1988)

Crucial challenges, possible perspectives

for universities as organic parts of communities

Four components and aims

1. **Economic;** employability

vs

devastated and slowly recovering economies, technological stagnation, orientation to the third sector, economic emigration, brain drain;

2. **Political;** strengthening of democratic culture

vs

actual experiences (mainly disappointing) in politics and elsewhere, with many habits of previous political life disguised into the new rules;

Crucial challenges, possible perspectives for universities as organic parts of communities – 4 components and aims (*continued*)

3. Social; strengthening of social cohesion

vs

Ideological and historical divisions, low level of readiness to listen others without prejudices, absence of atmosphere for tolerant dialogue, discouraging presence of various corruptive elements;

4. Intellectual; strengthening of personal capabilities for confronting rapidly changing professional demands and for self-confident and ethical participation in societal life;

vs

societies that by weakening their citizens tend to be strong and unquestionably exclusive (and are as a rule in fact closed and xenophobic);

CONCLUSION

Transitional countries

- and their societies
- and their universities

are still at the open (mainly rough) seas, searching safe bays;

It seems too early

- to stop sailing
- and
- to throw anchors

THANK YOU!

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