

CHER Newsletter

CHER CONSORTIUM OF HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCHERS

GREETINGS FROM THE EDITORS

Dear CHER Members,

We are very happy to present to you the number 1 issue of the new CHER newsletter. At the 2012 CHER conference in Belgrade the board of governors decided to establish a newsletter as a means to enhance communication within the consortium. As new things always take a little longer than expected the first issue of the newsletter is published in February 2013 – so do not get the idea that the extension of the deadline for the call for papers for the 2013 Lausanne CHER conference has anything to do with this. In the long term there shall be two to three newsletters per year: one in winter (to come out with the call-for-papers for the next annual conference, varying depending on the conference date), another one by early-summer (preparation for the conference), and another one in between (optional), depending on the amount of CHER news to communicate. For the content of the newsletter we decided to establish stable sections: the opener will be reserved for the annual conference, e.g. call for papers, looking back and preparation for the upcoming event. Section 2 is named “at the pulse of higher education research” with invited contributions discussing burning issues of and for the community. This time we are happy that Ulrich Teichler agreed to make a start with “25 years of CHER – looking back and looking ahead”. Section 3 will be news from the board of governors.

And, there will be a section 4 with news from CHER members. News from CHER members we consider interesting for publication in the newsletter are if someone has received tenure or a call for professorship respectively, depending on your higher education tradition, and any other achievement you consider worth sharing with the CHER community. Therefore we depend on your contribution to be sent to cher.newsletter@gmail.com.

We are certain that people will use this in a humble manner and not for navel gazing! All together we hope this meets your expectations of a newsletter and we look forward to receiving your contributions. We are happy to get feed-back and ideas about the content

and format of the CHER newsletter.

Best wishes,

Ekaterina Kozina, Postdoctoral Researcher, Higher Education Research, Office of the Deputy President and Registrar, Dublin City University, Ireland

Christian Schneijderberg, Director of Research Unit Innovation and Transfer, International Centre for Higher Education Research (INCHER-Kassel), University of Kassel, Germany

Creso Sá, Associate Professor of Higher Education, University of Toronto, Canada / Member of the CHER board of governors

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ANNOUNCEMENT



UNIL | Université de Lausanne

Observatoire Science,
Politique et Société

Lausanne, **9-11th September 2013**
Observatory Science, Policy and
Society
Social Sciences Institute
Faculty of Social and Political Sciences
University of Lausanne, Switzerland

Upcoming CHER 26th Annual Conference

The Roles of Higher Education and Research in the Fabric of Societies

Education has long been analysed as the vector through which national identities are diffused (Gellner, 1983). Since the post world war II period, research on higher education underlined its transformation from an instrument of nation building to a tool serving a knowledge society. These changes in the missions of higher education sectors have been accompanied during the last three decades by a complexification of the Higher Education and Research (HER) systems, as they developed both in size and regarding the place they occupy in a large number of societies. These changes have stimulated a growing if somewhat fragmented body of research on HER systems. To foster the discussion among academics working on HER issues, this CHER conference proposes as an overarching theme to question “**the roles of higher education and research in the fabric of societies**”. Besides nurturing knowledge societies and economies, do higher education and research systems foster individual and collective well-being? HER sectors and institutions are embedded in wider societal contexts. The issue of the HER role is intimately related to

the identity question and thus can be dealt with in different ways. First, it interrogates the transformation of institutional identities. The reinforcement of institutional autonomy and power, changes in governance models and organisations, impinge on the redefinition of institutional identities. Second, it questions the reshuffling of disciplinary boundaries. For example, economy seems to develop as a strong subfield in other social and human sciences disciplines such as history or sociology. Third, the academic profession is becoming more differentiated, characterised by increased heterogeneity in the statuses and practices and thus regarding professional identities. This conference, by bringing together researchers dealing with one or all of the three dimensions in their research, is expected to stimulate the methodological and theoretical debates on the added value of articulating different perspectives in the analysis of HER, including but not only historical, comparative, societal, organisational, institutional, quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Conference Tracks include:

1. **The fabric of identities**
2. **The territories of science and knowledge and the fabric of societies**
3. **Theoretical and Methodological Developments in Higher Education Research**
4. **Open Track**

Additionally: a *Fulbright New Century Scholars* follow up session: 8 years after the end of the research programme “Higher Education in the 21st Century: Global Challenge and National Response”.

Another additional event will be 20-years’ reunion of alumni and teaching staff involved in the “European Higher Education Advanced Training Course” (EHEATC).

For more information please see: [Conference website](#)

AT THE PULSE OF HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH:

Looking Back: How CHER Has Started, invited contribution, by Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Ulrich Teichler, International Centre for Higher Education Research (INCHER-Kassel)



I. In November 1988, about 50 scholars from about 20 countries attended a conference “Research on Higher Education in Europe Approaches – Results and Future Perspective”. The conference was arranged in Kassel (Germany) to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Centre for Research on Higher Education and Work (since 2006 named International Centre for Higher Education Research) of the Comprehensive University of Kassel (later named University of Kassel); it was supported by the Volkswagen Foundation. The major trend reports on various thematic areas presented were published by Guy Neave and Ulrich Teichler in 1989 in a special issue of the *European Journal of Education*. The participants were not only invited to participate in the discourse on the state of higher education research, but also – in a letter signed by the local host Ulrich Teichler as well as Guy Neave and Frans van Vught – to consider the establishment of a European research consortium in higher education. The invitation to the conference, the letter named as well as the introductory remarks by Ulrich Teichler name primarily three motives. First, fruitful communication and cooperation among higher education have been hampered in the past by the small number of higher education researchers within almost each European country: The number of researchers was too small to form a credible platform of mutual critique and encouragements.

The individual scholars, as a consequence, were tempted to be active in such broad thematic area and thus faced difficulties in ensuring a high quality of research. Improvement could be expected in the short run only, if regular communication was established on an international basis.

Second, higher education researchers have met each other across countries in the past primarily in higher education policy fora, e.g. OECD conferences. A need was felt to establish an arena where just the higher education researchers meet each other to focus on research in order to stimulate improvement of theories and methods. This might include discussions on the relationships between higher education research on the one hand and on the other higher education policy and practice, but from the perspectives and experiences of higher education researchers.

Third, a focus on Europe was advocated in the invitation. This was influenced by the perception that U.S. higher education research dominated the international discourse at that time. Cooperation within Europe could strengthen research approach that played a greater role outside the U.S.: notably comparative research as well as research on macro-societal issues of higher education. Moreover, it was expected to strengthen the self-esteem of higher education researchers outside the U.S. Eventually, the scholars founding CHER agreed to invite scholars from all over the world who like to join the discourse on higher education research where international comparison and macro-societal contexts and issues of higher education play a role.

II. The idea to establish a new international network of higher education researchers met with enthusiasm on 25 November 1988 in the four hours foundation meeting. Maurice Kogan spontaneously put forward the name “Consortium of Higher Education Researchers (CHER)”. A steering group was formed comprising Jean-Claude Eicher (Dijon), Maurice Kogan (London), Roberto Moscati (Milano), Guy Neave (Paris), Ulrich Teichler (Kassel), Frans van Vught (Enschede) and Björn Wittrock (Uppsala). Ulrich Teichler was chairman for many years of the first decade and Frans van Vught secretary. It might be added that various scholars well-known at that time were present in Kassel in 1988 and contributed to the development of CHER in the early years, e.g. Tony Becher, Ladislav Cerych, Simon Schwartzman und Gareth Williams. And some of the participants subsequently took over important functions of communication and collaboration, e.g. John Brennan, Patrick Clancy, Egbert de Weert, Oliver Fulton and Christine Musselin. The founding members agreed that CHER should not become a “heavy” association with plenty of rules, high conference fees and major coordination functions of collaborate research and publication. Preference was given to informal communication among friends stimulating a broad range of activities beyond its formal domain. There was not any intention to displace networks of higher education researchers already existing nationally or internationally, focusing on individual themes and disciplines or with a broad spectrum of themes. What was called for was a unique open forum of academically demanding discourses on concepts, methods, findings and practical implications of higher education research across countries, disciplines and thematic areas.

AT THE PULSE OF HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH:

Looking Back: How CHER Has Started, *invited contribution, by Ulrich Teichler*
(Continued)

III.

CHER can be viewed as a success story, first, in making a public critical dialogue among higher education researchers a matter of procedures. It became easier to point out deficiencies of higher education research and to suggest possible thrusts of improvement without fear that colleagues feel offended.

Second, CHER has well worked as a network of researchers knowing each other – one’s motives, potentials and achievements as well as personal characteristics. A multitude of international collaborative projects could be established quickly and – often – smoothly thereafter, because the necessary mutual knowledge and trust started off from CHER.

Third, scholars involved in CHER are convinced that the quantitative expansion and the improvement of quality of higher education research in many countries have been assisted by CHER. CHER made it easier to develop the courage of taking steps forward in those directions.

Fourth, the combination of a focus on Europe and being open worldwide persisted. On the one hand, all CHER meetings were held in Europe, and more than two-thirds of the participants come from Europe. More importantly, higher education research in Europe became clearly stronger, more visible and more self-confident on the world-wide scene with the help of CHER. On the other hand, the involvement of persons from other continents and the attention paid to themes highly relevant outside Europe assured that the European emphasis on international comparison did not become regional and that the strong interest in macro-societal issues became better intertwined with other issues. Fifth, the communication within CHER succeeded in striking the balance between the search for academic improvement and policy relevance of higher education research.

For example, key issues of higher education were already often the major theme of communication among higher education researchers before they became burning policy issues.

IV.

This does not mean that those involved in CHER for a long time note successes in more or less every respect. For example, many of them have preferred a stronger role of CHER as an association in coordinating research and in taking care of joint publication activities. It is often pointed out that CHER should have taken more care of the specific needs of young researchers in this field. Also, some members of CHER point out that CHER could have played a stronger role of making higher education research and researchers more visible among higher education policy makers and practitioners. Moreover, some higher education researchers claim that research in this domain would benefit more through mingling with representatives of various disciplines rather than through intensive communication among higher education researchers. Finally, the question was raised in one of the annual meetings, whether CHER plays a role stimulating research on higher education in developing countries and supports higher education in those regions.

V.

When we look at the changing context of higher education research since the inauguration of CHER, two phenomena can be called as most striking. First, higher education became more international and higher education research became more international. In this respect, CHER was a successful pioneer. The strong comparative thrust in communication among CHER members has facilitated collaboration of higher education researchers across borders.

Second, higher education policy and practice has become much more interesting in some kind of systematic knowledge as a basis of practical decision-making. But we note a by far more impressive spread of “evaluation”, “indicators”, “expertises”, “white papers”, commissioning of studies with detailed conditions, etc. than support of what really could be called higher education research. The pressure on higher education researchers seems to be enormous to extend financial resources and to be visible by doing activities close to the main stream of such policy-dominated modes of information gathering and discourse as well as by concentrating on current policy paradigms. Higher education research has expanded, its theoretical and methodological quality seem to have improved, but there remain challenges to make a visible footprint on the dominant higher education policy discourse dominated by a narrower vision of the role of systematic information on higher education.

VI.

Communication among higher education researchers across borders has become easy, and CHER has facilitated this readiness to communicate and collaborate irrespective of divergent concepts, varied disciplinary and thematic priorities as well as irrespective of national idiosyncracies and rivalries among individual scholars. The tasks ahead are so challenging that a good spirit among the higher education researchers will be needed in the future as well.

Please e-mail to the Editorial board at cher.newsletter@gmail.com with your comments and suggestions on the topics you would like to see being discussed in this section: At the Pulse of Higher Education Research

BOARD'S ROOM : WHAT IS CHER

WHAT IS CHER?

CHER was founded during a first conference on November, 24-26, 1988 in Kassel (Germany) where some 30 scholars met to discuss the current state and future avenues in the field of higher education research. These scholars agreed to form an international network of higher education researchers. A steering group of seven persons was established. In 1993 CHER was changed into a foundation under Dutch law. The foundation CHER has a board of governors of seven persons.

There are some principles that were accepted by CHER as being relevant for the activities to be undertaken:

- A first principle is that the emphasis of CHER should be on the exchange of ideas with the objective to improve the theoretical bases and the quality of research on higher education.
- A second principle is that CHER develops links with international organisations involved in research and policy on higher education. CHER seeks support of these organisations, without becoming closely associated with a single one of them.

- A third principle is that in order to structure the organisation CHER is an individual membership organisation.

Given these objectives, CHER aims at developing activities in the field of research on higher education.

It wants to stimulate cooperation in research projects and to develop further the internationalisation of higher education research.

CHER stimulates the development and implementation of an advanced international training programme on higher education in Europe.

Finally, CHER regularly organizes an international symposium to discuss the developments in higher education and higher education research.

WHO CAN BE A MEMBER OF CHER

CHER is a membership organization. Membership is open to individuals, both active researchers in higher education and students. No institutional and associate membership is possible.

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT CHER?

Please contact:

CHER Secretariat

Prof. Dr. Barbara M. Kehm

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Prof. Dr. Jussi Välimaa Institute of Educational Research, University of Jyväskylä, Finland

Dr. Don F. Westerheijden Center for Higher Education Policy Studies, University of Twente, The Netherlands

CHER – Members' page

CHER is a truly international organisation and is represented by members from more than 29 countries worldwide. Leading researchers from Europe, North America, Japan, New Zealand, Australia, South Korea, Brazil, South Africa and America are members of CHER.

CHER always welcomes the applications from new members. New members are admitted by the board of governance of CHER, based on an application addressed to this board. Members are entitled to attend the events organized by CHER, including the Annual Conference, and receive all

those papers whose forwarding is deemed desirable by the board of governors. All members may come forward as candidates for the board. Members will receive the CHER directory. In this directory the research interests and recent relevant publications of all members are listed.

ABOUT THE CHER CONFERENCES
(Previous CHER conferences)

10-12 September 2012 CHER meeting in Belgrade, Serbia
"Higher Education and Social Dynamics"

23-25 June 2011 CHER Meeting in Reykjavik
Prospects for Higher Education in the 21st Century Research, Ideas and policy

June 10 to 12, 2010 CHER Meeting in Oslo, Norway "Bologna and Beyond"

10 - 12 September 2009 CHER Meeting in Porto, Portugal
"Public Vices, Private Benefits? Assessing the role of markets in higher education."

September, 11 – 13, 2008 CHER meeting in Pavia, Italy
"Excellence and Diversity in Higher Education. Meanings, Goals, and Instruments."

August, 30 - September, 01, 2007 CHER meeting in Dublin, Ireland
"The Research Mission of the University"

September, 07-09, 2006 CHER meeting in Kassel, Germany
"Systems Convergence and Institutional Diversity?"

September, 01-03, 2005 CHER meeting in Jyväskylä, Finland
"Higher Education: The Cultural Dimension - Innovative Cultures, Norms and Values"

September, 17-19, 2004 CHER meeting in Enschede, The Netherlands
"Public-Private Dynamics in Higher Education: Expectations, Developments and Outcomes"

September, 4 - 6 2003 CHER meeting in Porto, Portugal
"Reform and Change in Higher Education: Renewed expectations and improved performance?"

September, 5-7, 2002 CHER meeting in Vienna, Austria
"Higher Education in the Global Age"

September, 2-4, 2001 CHER meeting in Dijon, France
"Higher Education and its Clients: Institutional Responses to Changes in Demand and in Environment"

September, 14-16, 2000 CHER meeting in Lancaster, United Kingdom
"The Institutional Dimension: Organizational Aspects in Higher education Research"

June, 17-19, 1999 CHER meeting in Oslo, Norway
"The Research Function in Higher Education"

September, 3-5, 1998 CHER meeting in Kassel, Germany
"Higher Education Research – Achievements, Conditions and New Challenges"

September, 18-20, 1997 CHER meeting in Alicante, Spain
"Evaluation and Higher Education Research"

June, 27-29, 1996 CHER meeting in Turku, Finland
"Governance and Management in Higher Education Institutions"

September, 28-30, 1995 CHER meeting in Rome, Italy
"Cross-National Studies in Higher Education, the state of the art in the disciplines"

October, 5-7, 1994 CHER meeting in Enschede, the Netherlands
"Cross-National Studies in Higher Education"

July, 1-3, 1993 CHER meeting in Stockholm, Sweden
"Graduate Education"

July, 23-25, 1992 CHER meeting in London, United Kingdom
"Higher Education and the world of work"

October, 19-21, 1991 CHER meeting in Dijon, France
"Higher Education Finance"

November, 9-11, 1990 CHER meeting in Brussels, Belgium
"A Changing Europe: challenges for higher education research"

September, 1-3, 1989 CHER meeting in Enschede, the Netherlands
"Decision Making in Higher Education"

November, 24-26, 1988 Foundation of CHER in Kassel, Federal Republic of Germany

**25th CHER CONFERENCE – Enlarging the Map of Higher Education Research in Europe
10-12 September 2012, Belgrade, Serbia: “Higher Education and Social Dynamics”**

by Jelena Branković



The 25th annual conference of the Consortium for Higher Education Researchers (CHER) took place in Belgrade on 10, 11 and 12 September 2012 and it was jointly organized by the Centre for Education Policy and the Centre for Education Policy Studies of the University of Ljubljana. This year's CHER conference gathered more than a hundred researchers in the field of higher education studies from all parts of Europe, as well as from Canada, South Africa, Hong Kong, South Korea, New Zealand.

Last year's CHER conference was entitled “Higher Education and Social Dynamics,” by which the organisers tried to, once again, stress that the interaction between higher education and society is always a two-way street and by all means a vibrant one. In the course of three days, theoretical and empirical contributions in more than 80 research works were presented, covering a variety of topics - academic profession, governance, funding, policy, quality, internationalisation, access, to name a few.

Each of the conference days was opened by a keynote speech. Hugh Lauder (University of Bath) challenged some of the conventional wisdom on the link between higher education and

human capital, followed by Srbijanka Turajlić (University of Belgrade) insight on some of the higher education reform dynamics in the Western Balkans region, focusing on the changing nature of the teacher – student interaction. Finally, Maarten Simons (University of Leuven) challenged the audience to look at the university through the prism of what it used to be in the medieval period - “a kind of public gathering with education at its heart,” in order to better understand the contemporary university – society dynamics. Notably, these three perspectives respectively, global, local and historical, complemented and inspired numerous debates which took place not only across the session rooms, but also during the breaks and social events around the conference.

The organisers were especially honoured to host the conference at the unique occasion of celebrating 25th anniversary of the Consortium of Higher Education Researchers. The Anniversary Panel, organised to mark this occasion, represented an opportunity to look back at how CHER came to be, how it grew and what it is today. Ulrich Teichler and Frans van Vught, one of the consortium's “Founding Fathers” joined us for this occasion.

Since this year's conference was also special as it for the first time takes part in this part of Europe. At this year's conference, we were particularly glad to host more presentations and participants from the countries in Eastern, Central and South-Eastern Europe than it has been the case at the CHER conferences to date. Not only because this conference takes place in Belgrade, but also because there is a

notable increase in intensity of higher education research in these countries in the previous years. The conference was followed by the symposium entitled “Past, Present and Future of Higher Education Research: Between Scholarship and Policy Making,” which took place on September 13 in Ljubljana.

Through a series of discussions, the participants sought to address the relationship between higher education research and higher education policy making in the past and in the future.

Prior to the CHER 2012 conference, on 8 and 9 September, the first workshop of the recently established ECHER network was held in Belgrade. The Early Career Higher Education Researchers (ECHER) network was established to respond to the need for early-stage higher education researchers to have more opportunities to gather, meet, network and collaborate. ECHER is a network for early career researchers in the interdisciplinary field of higher education research, institutional research and researching higher education practitioners. For this occasion, ECHER organisers invited experienced researchers to share their experiences in higher education research and publishing, such as Jussi Välimaa, Editor-in-Chief of the journal *Higher Education* and Christine Musselin, one of the coordinator editors in the same journal and member of the CHER Board of Governors.

Jelena Branković, M.Phil.
Researcher at Centre for Education Policy

REFLECTING ON CHER 2012 CONFERENCE

10-12 September, Belgrade, Serbia: "Higher Education and Social Dynamics"

by the Editorial board



The 25th CHER annual conference took place in Belgrade, Serbia from 10 to 12 September 2012. The conference was followed by the Ljubljana Symposium in Slovenia on September 13. CHER conference was organised at the University of Belgrade Rectorate (Studentski trg 1) and at the Faculty of Philosophy, both located at the very centre of Belgrade.

The conference was an engaging three day event, attended by the CHER members, higher education researchers and those involved into study of policy and practice of higher education. Every member was welcomed at the Welcome reception which took place on Monday, evening at the Ethnographic museum and followed by a Conference dinner on Tuesday in "Caruso".

Keynote Speeches

The opening and closing of the conference, keynote speeches and CHER Business Meeting took place in the Ceremonial Hall of the University of Belgrade Rectorate. And the parallel sessions and CHER Anniversary Panel have taken place at the Faculty of Philosophy. Three Keynotes were delivered at the conference: *"The Global Auction for Jobs and its Consequences"* (by Prof. Hugh Lauder, University of Bath), *"Higher Education in the Region; Can we bury the hatchet between professors and students?"* (by Dr. Srbijanka Turajlić, University of Belgrade) and *"University, res publica and slow education"* (by Dr. Maarten Simons, Laboratory for Education and Society, KU Leuven, Belgium)

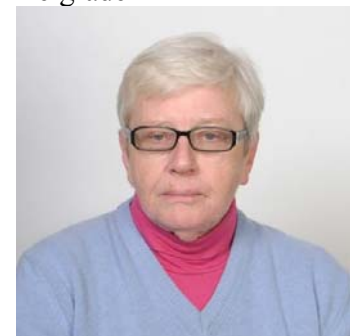
Prof. Hugh Lauder, University of Bath



For decades, the idea that more education will lead to greater individual and national prosperity has been a cornerstone of developed economies. Indeed, it is almost universally believed that university degrees give Americans, and Europeans a competitive advantage in the global knowledge wars. The presentation challenges this conventional wisdom. Drawing on a major international study, the presentation argues that the competition for good, middle-class jobs is now a worldwide competition--an auction for cut-priced brainpower--fuelled by an explosion of higher education across the world. It highlights a fundamental power shift in favour of corporate bosses and emerging economies such as China and India, a change that is driving the new global high-skill, low-wage workforce. Fighting for a dwindling supply of good jobs will compel the middle classes to devote more time, money, and effort to set themselves apart in a bare-knuckle competition that will leave many disappointed. It is argued that we need a new conversation about the kind of society we want to live in and about the kind of global economy that can benefit workers, but without condemning millions in emerging economies to a life of poverty.

In spite of the extensive higher education reform all countries in the region have undergone within the last decade there seems to be an unprecedented tension between professors and students. While professors are claiming that they never had to deal with such ignorance and a complete lack of curiosity, students are complaining that professors are focused only on profits and do not put in the effort to seriously prepare them for professional life. It is hard to expect that real progress in the higher education system can be achieved without full cooperation of both major stakeholders (professors and students). Therefore this talk will try to focus on the effects of the reform process which seem to be at the root of this mutual lack of confidence and dispute. Once the cause is identified it might be possible to start to seek the solution to the problem.

Dr. Srbijanka Turajlić, University of Belgrade



REFLECTING ON CHER 2012 CONFERENCE
10-12 September, Belgrade, Serbia: “Higher Education and Social Dynamics”
(Continued)

Dr. Maarten Simons, Laboratory for Education and Society, KU Leuven, Belgium



The concept university originally referred to a specific, qualified assembly or *universitas*. The medieval term *universitas magistrorum et scholarium* indicated an assembly or community of masters and students that were preoccupied with the public search for truth. From its origin the university thus refers to a kind of public gathering with education at its heart. It is challenging to look from this perspective where and how university takes place today. The lecture hall and the seminar room for instance are about making things public and gathering a public of students around a *res publica*. Drawing on these past and present examples, the presentation attempts to articulate how university education is organized as a collective/public practice. The university as the name for those public assemblies with their potentially disruptive practices is of course dangerous for all those who have particular interests. Perhaps this explains the ongoing attempts to tame or neutralize the university – from inside or outside, by institutional or societal strategies.

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Organising Committee

Local Organising Committee:

Jasminka Čekić-Marković

Jelena Branković

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CONFERENCE TRACKS WERE:

1. The role(s) of higher education institutions in contemporary society
2. The effects of the wider societal dynamics on higher education
3. Higher Education at the borders of Europe
4. Core themes in higher education research

Ljubljana Symposium in Slovenia

The Past, Present and Future of Higher Education Research: Between Scholarship and Policy making, CHER 2012 Post-Conference Symposium, has taken place in the University of Ljubljana, on September 12, 2012. The symposium discussed the possible challenges around the relationship between higher education and higher education policy making in the past and in the future. It was acknowledged

that this to was the leading question of the CHER 2012 post-conference symposium and a number of subthemes and questions were also identified and discussed: what is the impact of research on policy making (and vice versa); are there any particular tensions that appear between research and (inter)national policy making; what are the specific tensions

between research and institutional policy making; what is a future research agenda on higher education in Europe.



REFLECTING ON CHER 2012 CONFERENCE: FEEDBACK FROM THE PARTICIPANTS

by Andrew Kretz,
Graduate student (PH.D - Higher Education), University of Toronto, Canada

After several months since the conclusion of CHER's 2012 conference in Belgrade, Serbia, I remain with two outstanding impressions. The first is of how wonderfully organizers incorporated into the conference a variety of social spaces: Coffee and tea breaks, lunch at restaurant "Aeroklub," the welcome reception at the ethnographic museum, dinner at restaurant "Caruso," and optional boat and city tours all worked well to strengthen interactions with higher education researchers from across Europe and beyond. My second lasting impression of the conference is of audience engagement during paper presentations. During each paper session I was struck by the large percentage of people eager to share their thoughts and questions, each of which usefully extended the discussion on the given topic and offered productive feedback for presenters. Together, the inclusion of multiple gathering spaces in the organization of the conference and the collegial atmosphere during paper sessions created a memorable experience.

A South African view on the 25th CHER Conference,

by Prof. Dr. Laetus OK Lategan,
Central University of Technology, Free State, South Africa

It was with big excitement that I travelled to the 25th CHER Conference in Belgrade. The theme of the conference, Higher education and

social dynamics, was in particular relevant for South African higher education. A central focus of the conference was on the future of higher education research as part of CHER's 25th year celebrations. From the discussions it was evident that one may need to reconsider one's understanding of classical themes such as access, the markets, etc. due to new developments such as internationalization and the Bologna process, state funding and the economic meltdown and quality assurance due to the requirements from business and industry.

by Dr. Rajani Naidoo,
School of Management University of Bath, United Kingdom

The 25th CHER Anniversary Panel was a good addition to the conference. It was astutely chaired and steered by Christine Musselin and panellists such as Ulrich Teichler have the capacity to analyse very well the longer term trajectory of our field. It was productive to have panellists like Ulrich Teichler and Frans Van Vught who disagreed about what the delimitations of our field are; as well as possible future trajectories. It would however have been even better to have included a more recent and critical recruit that could have added another voice to the discussions. The questions and discussion from the audience was also exciting especially when terms such as 'Marxist' and 'normative' were bandied about. But more importantly, it gave us the chance to get off the publication treadmill and reflect on how our work is situated in various knowledge fields and the critical and political importance of research on higher education.

by Dr Terhi Nokkala,
Finnish Institute for Educational Research, University of Jyväskylä

Having participated in the CHER conferences since 2004, I was happy to see the 2012 CHER conference taking place in Belgrade, with a post-conference symposium in Ljubljana. The higher education in the Balkan countries has gone through significant changes in the past decade, and vibrant centres of higher education research have emerged especially in the Western Balkans. It was a pleasure to learn more about these higher education systems, and I hope the conference paved way for fruitful collaboration with those centres. And: Thank you Predrag, and the whole CEP and CEPS group for excellent organisation!

by Dr. Romulo Pinheiro,
Agderforskning, Centre for Advanced Studies in Regional Innovation Systems, Norway

I found the CHER 2012 event to be remarkably well organized. On the social front, the food was delicious (the best I ever had in a conference setting) and the location of the social events was well chosen. The local organizers in particular went to great lengths to make our visit as pleasant as possible, and they even arranged for a direct connection – by taxi - to the airport, for those of us leaving earlier. I also enjoyed the provocative keynote on day 1 (critical take on knowledge economy and of human capital theory), and a number of individual and special sessions. I was particularly keen on a special session on developments across the region, and have learned a lot about the Western Balkans and the ways in

REFLECTING ON CHER 2012 CONFERENCE: FEEDBACK FROM THE PARTICIPANTS

(Continued)

which the West (“old Europe”), as an homogeneous group, is characterized. I was also inspired by the number of new faces and young researchers. many of them female and originating from the region, and their exciting projects. The best of CHER, in my view, is the intimacy it offers given the size of the event, and the possibility to touch base with colleagues, junior and senior, interested in higher education affairs from a scholarly perspective.

Three snapshots,

by Prof. Dr. Michele Rostan,
CIRSIS – University of Pavia, Italy

First. Ulrich Teichler and Frans van Vught debating on the roots and perspectives of CHER, 25 years after

its foundation, and providing a full list of topics and trends on higher education to look at in the next decade. In between, Christine Musselin, firmly chairing the session: good job, Christine! Second. A session of presentations on institutional autonomy. In the debate, different views on how to set up research projects are exchanged but a strong common argument is shared: CHER is there to enhance international research collaboration among individuals, institutions and countries. Third. The great view on Belgrade from the terrace of Caruso’s, and the even more intriguing view on the buffet. On top of everything, the wonderful hospitality of our hosts and a warm sense of friendship. But beware: don’t drink too much slivovitz!

by Prof. Dr. Pavel Zgaga,
Centre for Educational Policy Studies (CEPS) University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

Personally, I will remember CHER 2012 primarily by its location. This was the first time that the conference was organized in South-eastern Europe. Over the past two decades, higher education in the region went through deep changes and now it is becoming obvious that there is time to critically reflect them. On the other hand, the higher education processes in this part of Europe have remained rather on the margins of research interest. However, at this conference, a number of mainly junior researchers presented on the problems of higher dynamics in the region and finally brought this issue to the international research map.

REFLECTING ON CHER 2012 CONFERENCE:

OFFICIAL ECHER LAUNCH: Belgrade, September 8th and 9th 2012

by Yurgos Politis & Bojana Ćulum

The official launch of ECHER network (Early Career Higher Education Researchers’ Network) was held a bit over a year since its establishment at the end of June 2011 during the CHER conference in Reykjavik. In the time that passed since then, ECHER has created a website where members and non-members can find information about the aims of the network (<http://www.echer.org/>), a member’s directory (which has grown to almost 70), information about its members, information about relevant upcoming events such as conferences and the make-up of the temporary executive committee – Jana Bačević, Bojana Ćulum, Rachel Sweatman, Filipa Ribeiro, Yurgos Politis and Christian

Schneijderberg. The Belgrade event was held over two days prior to the CHER and brought together 14 members who were intensely discussing the status, role and the future of the network. There were valuable contributions from Prof. Jussi Valima, on challenges we all encounter on the way to publish in relevant journals, about publishing policy of *The International Journal of Higher Education Research* where he acts as an Editor-in-Chief, and opportunities for early career researchers to publish there; and from Dr David Hoffman and Prof. Christine Musselin about CHER’s role in the academic community as well as about opportunities and challenges for the ECHER network and future

cooperation of the two. A point that proved very contentious was defining the role of ECHER. The consensus was that ECHER should not be a network with political agenda, but should rather support the efforts of groups such as EURODOC or ESU, by linking up with them through the ECHER website. However, there is a need to make senior higher education researchers aware of the needs of junior researchers to secure more stable positions (not only short-term project money) and to persuade them to reflect upon the current state of master education and doctoral programmes school in higher education.

OFFICIAL ECHER LAUNCH: Belgrade, September 8th and 9th 2012
(Continued)

After a vigorous and constructive debate it was agreed that ECHER should be established as a loose international web-based network that would:

- initiate events connected to conferences (e.g. CHER)
- create a platform for sharing information (conferences, project and job opportunities)
- organize workshops, talks, seminars, colloquiums
- create space to meet and connect ECHERS
- become a platform to start future co-operations

MAKE-UP of ECHER MEMBERSHIP & WAYS of COMMUNICATION

Another point that was discussed briefly was the make-up of the ECHER membership, which was agreed was MA students, Doctoral and post-Doctoral researchers and early-stage career researchers in Higher Education.

Since we established that we are a loose web-based network, the main way of communication would be through our website. At this point Christian and his colleagues at Incher Kassel who did the ECHER website were congratulated for their efforts and for a great result. The discussion then centred on the content of the website that was lacking.

The first 5 points could be on the website, since that info wouldn't change much over the period of a year; however the other points would require a different approach. The web page itself would be too static for such a dynamic development; therefore there is a suggestion to create part of the web page called *FreshNews* where texts/news uploaded would be automatically e-mailed to all the members. The result of the discussion was that in order to achieve these goals, it would be necessary to split the labour among our members. A Communication committee was seen as a necessary next step. Since Belgrade, ECHER developments include but are not limited to Christian resuming his

It was suggested that the ECHER webpage still needs:

1. Link of major/minor HE Research Groups in Europe
2. List of relevant HE Centres/Institutes
3. List of HE conferences/seminars/summer schools
4. List of Masters Courses and Doctoral Programmes offered through major languages (English, French, German, Spanish and Italian)
5. List of HE journals
6. Link with jobs – e.g. link to HEDDA job section
7. Space for ECHER members to upload a list of publications and papers on their profile
8. A Web Calendar of upcoming events
9. Short 'reports' on the events ECHER members had attended
10. 'Social corner' that would help in connecting ECHER members planning to attend the same events

role as website administrator, Ekaterina participating in the group of editors for the new annual newsletter of CHER, Filipa and Yurgos (with help from other ECHER members) establishing a list of Higher Education journals (containing areas covered/mission statement; publisher; impact factor; success rate; word allowance) which can be found on the ECHER website and Bojana, Filipa and Yurgos agreeing to help organizing the ECHER event at CHER 2013 in Lausanne. Post-CHER business meeting of the CHER board of governors came as a very pleasant surprise – ECHER was invited to nominate one member for the CHER board of governors for the election in 2013 in Lausanne. Bearing in mind that

this opportunity came on top of ECHER being asked to suggest a member that would participate in the group of editors for the new annual newsletter of CHER and invited the Network to help promote the EUREDOCs conference, we can say at the end that the Belgrade event was very successful and has set out for all of us new opportunities and challenges.

Looking forward to the next ECHER meeting in Lausanne next summer.

For ECHER,

Yurgos Politis & Bojana Ćulum