

A Short Presentation of the CEFRES' Activities

The French Research Center in Social Sciences (CEFRES), located on the third floor of the Emauzy abbey in Prague, was created in late 1991. It stands at the same time as a research institute and as a mediating place of scientific contacts between French, Czech, Slovak and other researchers and academics. Its activity covers all fields of social and human sciences (history, sociology, economy, political science, anthropology, ethnology, philosophy, and so on.)

CEFRES has a specialized library, open to researchers and students. It subscribes at the moment to eighty-four French reviews in the social and human sciences' field and has a collection of approximately 3,000 books.

During its first two years of existence, CEFRES' action mainly took the form of work seminars, round tables, and colloquiums. Two series of lectures have taken place in the course of the year 1992, one of them on the political and economic transition in the Central and East-European countries (including three round tables, one seminar and one colloquium) and the other on the cultural history (including a series of twelve half-day seminars, with the French historians Jacques Le Goff, Jacques Revel, André Burguiere, Marc Funaroli, Bartolomé Bennassar, Jean-Claude Schmitt, Jérôme Baschet and Krzysztof Pomian.) In 1991 and 1992, CEFRES and the School of Post-Graduate Studies in Social Sciences (EHESS) in Paris have organized and led a monthly workshop dedicated to *State of the Art of the Social Sciences*, with the historians Francois Hartog and Bernard Lepetit, the art historian Louis Marin, the sociologist Daniel Pécaut, the philosopher Jacques Derrida, the

anthropologist Jean Bazin, and the linguist Oswald Ducrot.

In 1993, CEFRES has organized lectures within the Prague University, along with the different institutes of the Academy of Science (some of those lectures, for instance from the sociologists Louis Pinto and Daniel Bertaux, took place at the Sociology Institute and at the Social Sciences' Faculty.) Furthermore, a series of meetings on the theme *State, Nation, Ethnicity* has gathered together historians, anthropologists and political scientists of the School of Post-Graduate Studies in Social Sciences (R. Descimon, A. Guéry, J. Bazin, F. Dubet.) Two round tables have been organized at the CEFRES in January and March. The first one, *Ante- and Post-Modernism* was introduced by Petr Král, Petr Wittlich and V. Lahoda. The second one brought together for two days French, Czech and Slovak historians who are currently studying the relationship between memory and history, basing their work on the analysis and perception of the resistance and collaboration movements in the different countries involved in the study. A third round table will take place in June on the theme of the agricultural decollectivization in Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

CEFRES has also organized in February 1993, along with the French Institute, a colloquium on the subject of *Revolution and Intelligence* notably with the sociologist Michel Crozier.

CEFRES brings out in French and in Czech a *Bulletin* and a thematic *Journal*, on an irregular basis.

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Marie-Elisabeth Ducreux

Supporting Reconstruction of the Social Safety Net: A Working Group Searches for Programmatic Responses to Unemployment in Central Europe

The Problem:

In nearly every country public policy-makers are caught in a three-way squeeze: global competition to produce efficiently is eliminating jobs; low rates of economic growth, high interest rates and global recession are slowing job creation; and increasing claims

for unemployment benefits are straining national budgets.

And, while unemployment may trouble relatively rich and stable countries, it poses particular problems in former Communist countries. Communism did have an employment policy: it avoided unemployment through over-employment and redundant labor. Now, however, global competition is compelling governments to privatize and to streamline state enterprises, thereby forcing managers to reduce their work-forces dramatically. But for much of a population accustomed to a system that guaranteed them not only jobs, but also the associated wages used to buy basics like food, housing and health care, unemployment is confusing and frightening. Newly democratic governments committed to free market economies must respond to unemployment with new institutions, policies and programs. But the problem is exacerbated by several factors: the mis-allocation of labor pending completion of structural change; the loss of traditional trading partners in the East who lack hard currency for purchases; the disappointment of new trading partners in the West who raise trade barriers; and a recessionary drop in investment, aid and trade.

The Project:

In April, 1992 the European Studies Center of the Institute for East-West Studies (the "ESC") organized a conference at Štěřín Castle outside of Prague to discuss *Market Economies and Social Safety Nets in Central Europe*. Experts attended from Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia, as well as from Western Europe and the United States. At the conference's conclusion, the participants recommended formation of a Working Group to focus on Unemployment.

The ESC's Working Group is unusual for several reasons: First, its membership is composed primarily of experts from Poland, Hungary, the Czechlands and Slovakia. In addition, the Group is multi-disciplinary, including economists, sociologists and government-affiliated policy-makers. With such membership, the ESC has strived to cultivate a perspective that is different from groups that focus only on economics, only on one

country or only on academic literature. Yet, while aiming for diversity, the ESC has also kept the Group small in order to encourage the group cohesion and understanding necessary to facilitate open dialogue and debate.

Second, the Group's leadership offers expertise and a strong commitment. Its leader, Stephen Heintz, is the Institute's Executive Vice-President, and has served as Commissioner of both Welfare and Economic Development for the state of Connecticut in the United States. The Group's full-time coordinator, Marcia Greenberg, practiced employment law in the U.S., followed by a degree from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy.

Another distinguishing characteristic of the ESC Working Group is its search for effective programmatic responses to unemployment. A fundamental understanding of macroeconomic conditions and alternatives is essential. At the same time, however, public policy-makers face decisions at two levels. First, the pain and dislocation caused by unemployment require efforts to reach some societal consensus about the degree and manner of government assistance, both in the short-term and for the long range. Second, it is necessary to design systems which are efficient, effective and responsive to current and anticipated needs of the unemployed.

Obviously it is impossible to design the ideal system. But there are political realities: while governments often lack both the time and the resources to engage in-depth studies, they must still move to establish the best programs they can. The Group will study different prototype programs - be they national, regional or local, and be they governmental, private or voluntary - to recommend measures to prevent long-term unemployment and to assist the re-entry of long-term unemployed into the work-force. Assuming, therefore, that governments must choose among program alternatives, deciding which to support and to fund, the Working Group will try to facilitate informed decision-making.

The Process:

To encourage in-depth analysis, the ESC plans to gather the Group six times over the course of eighteen months. During their first meeting, in June, 1992 at Štěrín castle outside of Prague, the Group's members began to learn about one another and to plan the first phase of the project. Given their different national and professional backgrounds, they decided to build a common understanding by commissioning Background Papers.

At the second meeting, in November at Štěrín, the members discussed papers on Czechoslovakia by Alena Nešporová, on Slovakia by Pavol Ochotnický, and on Poland by Mieczysław Kabaj. The Group also learned of Jiří Večerník's research on unemployment in Czechoslovakia. In planning their next meeting, the members decided that to ensure first-hand knowledge of conditions, they would rotate future meetings among the countries being studied and would hold the meetings in areas of severe unemployment rather than in prosperous capital cities.

Recognizing the scope of the problem, the nature of their own resources, and the roles of other international organizations, bilateral programs and national institutes, the Group decided to focus on active employment measures that would prevent and respond to long-term unemployment beyond the period of transition.

The Group's latest meeting was in March in Szirák, Hungary. The first day, the group visited employment offices in Nograd County, met with representatives of the unemployed and of new business ventures, and viewed a documentary film about the unemployed. The next day, the Group continued its study of unemployment in Hungary with papers by Endre Sik and Gyula Nagy, and by Katalin Tardos; with a discussion led by Janos Kollo of private and public sector shares in creating and eliminating jobs; and with presentations on the informal economy by Endre Sik and on union activities in Hungary by Tamás Réti. Later, the Group learned from Christine Allison of the World Bank and from Betty Duskin of the OECD about their programs relating to unemployment.

As it adjourned, the Group agreed that it was ready to delve into program analysis. The next meeting will be held in Lodz, Poland, followed by a meeting in Slovakia. Those meetings will focus on understanding programs from the perspectives of both supply and demand. On the supply side, the members will study a range of prototype programs. On the demand side, there will be further public hearings and field visits to ascertain the distinctive characteristics of long-term unemployment and of public expectations in each country.

The Product(s):

The ESC formed this Working Group with two interrelated objectives. The traditional goal is to produce a report by the beginning of 1994 that will promote programs deemed effective responses to long-term unemployment; advocate systems consistent with each country's expectations for the balance between free market principles and social safety nets; and propose a vision of future responses to unemployment that recognizes an increasingly competitive and ever-expanding global labor market.

It is hoped that such recommendations by a group of the region's experts will contribute to decision-making on several levels. First, the Report should help the region's leading policy-makers to assign resources and design programs. Second, if the Group recommends systems that the public advocates, the Report may support their arguments. Third, the Report may help sources of financial and technical assistance, be they governments or international organizations, to target their assistance. Rather than offering the definitive word on any level, the Report should offer a foundation and framework for dialogue and decision-making both among public policy-makers in government, and between government and the organizations and individuals whose interests and preferences play a fundamental role in a civic society.

The ESC's second objective is that the Working Group members should benefit from participating in its investigation, debate and analysis. The members are exchanging cross-national comparisons and cross-disci-

plinary perspectives, while they are also learning about models and ideas which they might not otherwise have considered. From their growing understanding of one another, the Group's members are sharing more information and engaging in more open and constructive criticism. It is hoped that the members' experience with the Group will enhance their future thinking, cooperation and contributions to their societies.

Please work with us:

The ESC Working Group on Unemployment wishes to consider innovative programs, no matter where they are, if they can serve as

models or sources of different conceptual approaches. The Working Group's philosophy is that socio-economic problems like unemployment require cooperation rather than competition. To that end, the Group solicits information about local, national, bilateral and multilateral programs. The Group also welcomes opportunities to share its progress with other individuals and groups engaged in efforts to address unemployment and related problems. To exchange information, please contact the author at the European Studies Center in Prague (tel: 42-2-235-84-35).

Marcia Greenberg

The Luxembourg Income Study and East-West Comparisons

The Luxembourg Income Study (LIS) has functioned already 10 years as a databank and international center providing researchers with comparative data about incomes and social situations of households. It also gathers an informal community of scholars on income inequality, social redistribution, poverty, and related socio-economic issues.

The LIS project began in 1983 under the joint sponsorship of the Luxembourg government and CEPS/INSTEAD (Center for Populations, Poverty and Policy Studies) in Walferdange, Luxembourg. LIS is funded primarily on a continual basis by CEPS/INSTEAD and national science foundations of the respective countries involved.

Currently, it consists of over 45 datasets spanning one or more years for more than 20 countries. The countries involved are those in Europe, North America, and Australia. Recently, several East Central European countries were included, specifically Poland, the former Czechoslovakia and Hungary. Negotiations are underway to receive members and data from additional countries including Korea, Taiwan, Finland, Portugal, Spain and also other East European countries.

Objectives of LIS are manifold and include:

1. To test the feasibility for creating a database containing social and economic data collected in household surveys from different countries;
2. To provide a method which allows researchers to use the data under restrictions required by the countries providing the data;
3. To create a system that would allow research requests to be received from and returned to users at remote locations; and
4. To promote comparative research on the social and economic status of various populations and subgroups in different countries.

Among comparative questions the most important are: the distribution of household income and the relative income position of population groups; the distribution of earnings, the changes of income over a worker's life-cycle, including the transition to retirement; the effect of transfers and taxes on unequal social and economic well-being; characteristics of poor populations and effectiveness of various kinds of transfers in reducing the incidence of low income; and studies of the workings of the welfare state and its policies towards the underprivileged population. All these questions are of utmost importance for the countries in transition towards market economy, when income inequality starts to increase and the state withdraws from its previous overprotective functions.

The dataset is globally accessible via electronic mail networks. Documentation on