

2000



COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

CC-HER (2000) 4
Strasbourg, 16 February 2000
Or. Engl.

Higher Education and Research Committee (CC-HER)
7th plenary session
Strasbourg, 28 – 30 March 2000
Room 5, 09.30 hrs

SOCIAL SCIENCES AND THE CHALLENGE FOR TRANSITION

**Draft Final Report by Professor Giandomenico Amendola
(Italy)**

Draft decision

The CC-HER:

- (i) *took note of the progress report on the project;*
- (ii) *approved the draft Recommendation on Social Sciences and the Challenge of Transition and decided to submit it to the CDCC Bureau and the Committee of Ministers for adoption;*
- (iii) *thanked the working party and in particular Professor Amendola, as the main author of the draft final report;*
- (iv) *mandated the Bureau to finalize the draft final report on the basis of the views expressed in the debate.*

Directorate General IV: Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Environment
(Directorate of School, Out-of-School and Higher Education/
Higher Education and Research Division)

ITEM 7

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*To the memory of our dear friend and colleague Roland Marx
whose knowledge and wisdom have been a constant source of
inspiration throughout the project*

The Working Party and the Secretariat deeply regret the recent death of Professor Roland Marx (France) who has been one of our most active members and who has contributed substantially to the implementation of the project

Foreword by the Secretariat

Recommendation 1264 (1995) of the Parliamentary Assembly on “Social sciences and the challenge of transition” called for urgent action in support of the social sciences in the Council of Europe’s new member states. These disciplines, often censored or marginalised by the former political regimes in Central and Eastern Europe, needed strengthening in order to be able to participate effectively in the process of democratic transition.

Following exploratory work in 1996, the Higher Education and Research Committee (CC-HER) launched in 1997 a new project on “Social sciences and the challenge of transition” and set up a Working Party, under the chairmanship of Professor Luc Weber (Switzerland), to steer the activity.

The method of the Working Party consisted in collecting information on the current state of the social sciences in the form of national reports drafted by experts appointed by the national delegations of the countries in Central and Eastern Europe. A General Report based on fifteen national contributions and a number of expert presentations served as a background to the discussions at a Workshop on “Social Sciences and the Challenge of Transition”, held on 11-13 June 1998 in Bled (Slovenia). The Workshop analysed the situation of the social sciences and identified a set of key elements for policy recommendations. A Draft Recommendation has been elaborated, which following a series of consultations at different levels, has been finalised and presented to the Plenary CC-HER for approval, before its submission for adoption by the Committee of Ministers.

As an additional outcome of the activity the Working Party has asked one of its members, Professor Giandomenico Amendola (Italy), to draft a final report summing up the information collected as well as the discussions and consultations carried out by the Group throughout the project.

The present draft report prepared by Professor Amendola has already undergone one revision, in accordance with the preliminary discussions and suggestions made by the Working Party at its meeting held in Geneva on 9-10 December 1999. The Working Party agreed that the author had been asked to cope with an extremely challenging and delicate task. The lack of a consistent and universally accepted definition of social sciences, the complexity and the sensitivity of the theme, the marked disparities between the countries in transition and last, but not least, the lack of reliable and comprehensive information on several issues, did not allow a clear-cut picture of the situation to be drawn. Nevertheless, the Working Party acknowledged the effort of the author to identify a number of common problems and trends in the development of the social sciences in the countries undergoing the complex process of transition.

The Working Party has expressed its satisfaction with Professor Amendola's report and considers that it gives a good overview of both the concerns of the Working Party and the state of the social sciences in the newer member states. However, one member of the Working Party, Professor Janusz Grzelak (Poland), does not share this view and wishes to put on record that he disagrees with large parts of the report, which he does not consider a valid description of social sciences in the period of transition in Central and Eastern European countries.

The CC-HER is invited to examine the draft report and to make comments and suggestions with a view to its improvement and finalisation by the Bureau and the Working Party.

1. The Project “Social Sciences and the Challenge of Transition” and its raison d’être

Following exploratory work in 1996, the Higher Education and Research Committee (CC-HER) launched in 1997 a new project on "Social sciences and the challenge of transition". A Working Party composed of Professors E. Haavio-Mannila, (Finland), R.Marx (France), G. Amendola (Italy), J.Grzelak (Poland), M. Sirok (Slovenia) and chaired by Professor Luc Weber (Switzerland), was set up to steer the activity.

In 1997 work was focused on gathering information on the state of the art in the countries in transition. Fifteen national reports have been drafted by experts appointed by the national delegations of the new member states according to guidelines prepared by the Secretariat and finalized by the Working Party. A General Report summing up the national contributions on the current situation of the social sciences in Central and Eastern Europe has been prepared by Professor Paul Dembinski (Switzerland) with the assistance of Ms. Aigul Jarmatova (Kirghizistan). The report has been discussed in a workshop jointly organized in July 1998 in Bled by the Council of Europe and the Slovenian Ministry of Education and Sport. The Bled Workshop participants were from Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Switzerland, “ the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia “, Turkey, Ukraine. The general and national reports have been discussed by participants with members of the Working Party and with experts from the European Science Foundation (ESF), the Central European University (CEU), and the Institute for Human Sciences (HIS).

The participants in the Workshop were called upon:

- To analyze the main trends and problems faced by social sciences and social scientists in the period of transition, with a special emphasis on Central and Eastern Europe.
- To identify and compare specific problems faced by social sciences and social scientists in Europe.
- To identify examples of good practice and key elements for policy recommendations to decision- makers at government and institutional level.

The Workshop has produced:

- A thorough analysis of the situation of the social sciences and social scientists in the period of transition with special emphasis on Central and Eastern Europe
- Identification of policy measures, for the development of social sciences, as key elements for a preliminary draft recommendation, to be submitted to the Committee of Ministers of member states on social sciences and the challenge of transition.

National reports and the Bled Workshop have produced many suggestions, proposals, accurate analyses, rich and acute description of national cases. Our knowledge of

social sciences situations in Eastern Europe's former socialist countries has been enriched by new insights and additional information. Nevertheless, the main results of the joint efforts of both national analysts and Workshop experts consists in adopting a comprehensive approach adequate to analyse, to intervene and to implement, the complex and delicate issue of social sciences and the challenge of transition in the former European communist countries.

The logics underlying the Council of Europe's Project are evident in the Project title itself. "Social sciences and the challenge of transition," clearly indicates that the issue of transformation and modernization of social sciences in the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe is not a simple matter of educational engineering, scientific upgrading or epistemological modification. Social sciences' role and destiny in Eastern Europe's epochal transformation is such an important and multifaceted issue that it cannot be handled as an academic or scientific matter and in consequence it cannot be assigned as a specialized theme to the international scientific community or to the networks of foundations and higher education institutions.

The problems addressed by the Project are greater and they touch many contemporary crucial social and political issues starting with the relationship between social sciences and the process of democratisation / modernization through which Eastern European countries are going.

Recommendation 1264 of 1995 of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, makes of the social sciences change and development in the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe a strategic step in taking back these countries to democratic modernity. The social sciences importance has been stressed by the Parliamentary Assembly in order "to strengthen their ability to:

- address effectively the pressing current problems in society;
- maintain a dialogue with policy-makers and the public;
- preserve scholarly rigour and objectivity in research and teaching ."

The first two functions that, according to the Recommendation, social sciences have to accomplish are essentially political and society and institution-oriented.

In this, the Parliamentary Assembly has formalised the widely shared belief that social sciences are a pivotal issue in the democratisation and modernisation of countries emerging from regimes that were both authoritarian and backward.

The project, that is an output of the Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation, shares this bias and stresses the open-ended nature of modernisation and transition; concepts that, by definition, cannot be captured in pre-built or closed definition, because of their changing and elusive nature. The issue has been enriched by adding the concept of "Challenge of transition " that gives to the project a broader meaning that links Eastern Europe social sciences to those of the Western world.

The Project is chiefly about social sciences in the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe. But the core problem is the one that social sciences has been coping with since the beginning and regardless of the parallel or meridian (north / south or east / west) they belong to the relationship between social sciences

on the one hand and democracy and development on the other. The concept of challenge is the very core of the project title which calls back a traditional and important *topos* of the best tradition of social sciences: the classical challenge is not internal or disciplinary, but external and deals with the development and social change of society and with people's needs and demands.

2. Some preliminary notes

- The shift to democracy and their experience of being part of the “ other “ Europe has pushed many countries with different history, tradition and even economic, cultural and political resources and potentialities into a single analytical unity. This entity, whose definition can be Former Communist Countries of Central and Eastern Europe or real socialism countries, etc. , is still widely used in political affairs and analyses though differences among these countries become more and more great and visible. It is very difficult and risky to assume to deal with an homogeneous group of countries. In spite of their common political experience and their common belonging to the Soviet Union Empire – with the notable exceptions of the former Yugoslavia and Albania – the so-called Former Communist Countries of Central and Eastern Europe are very different . They were different when the communist regimes took over, the take-over itself took place in different ways and in different periods, they played different roles and had different experiences during the communist regime. As a result of such a great variety, when the communist regime collapsed the broad range of situations has come back. One of the main effects of the explosion of the communist world is the collapse of a fallacious and artificial homogeneity, the appearance of a world of differences that the ongoing transition process is making even greater. Approaching and coming nearer to the Western world means also becoming as different and assorted as are Western European countries. Dealing with the “former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe” as a culturally, socially and economically homogeneous entity is misleading. What these countries share are problems (e.g. building new democratic and efficient institutions, organising a market-centred economy and controlling the perverse effects of marketplace, etc.). Ways and modes in which problems come into existence and how they are thematized and handled, means and strategies with which such problems are tackled, models and experiences that steer and direct solutions, are different and nationally specific.
- Dealing with social sciences as a homogeneous disciplinary group is difficult and risky. Diversities among different social sciences are such that, as we shall see later, there is not even an international agreement about the disciplines that can be labeled as social sciences. Major problems arise from epistemological differences, from diversities in academic tradition, from segmentation of the labour market-place. In Eastern Europe the internal differentiation of the social sciences domain is even more severe because of: (a) political and ideological relevance of some social sciences (e.g. government and political sciences) that created special privileges; (b) national traditions that made, in some countries, some disciplines stronger and more able to resist excessive political control; (c) transition process has been making labour market based differences more obvious.

- The scientific community has established, since the end of XIX century, a set of rules and values that are the shared principles of scientific research, of interaction among scientists, of relationships between scientists and political institutions, of use and diffusion of research products and outcomes, of teaching and of transmission of knowledge and skills, of co-optation and of training of young scientists. The importance of such a set of values and norms – the so called *scientific ethos* – is even greater in the social sciences domain because of the traditional slippery border between analyses and normative judgements, between facts and values, between political relevance of social sciences and political use / abuse of them. A great deal of social sciences history is in their continuous efforts to define such principles. Today, a scientific ethos exists and scientific communities live and develop thanks to such a shared corpus of norms and values whose validity is not jeopardized by violations or misbehaviors that can exist and even survive everywhere. Becoming a member of the international scientific community requires assuming the current scientific ethos (and its cornerstone principle about the prohibition to subordinate scientific ethos to political ethos) and the international scientific community practices as working models. Adopting these models both in analyses and recommendations does not mean that such a corpus is without problems or shortcomings, or that countries and communities that use it are better than others. It points out the conditions to which national scientific communities can become fully-fledged members, both competitor and co-operator, of the international scientific community.
- Social, economic, cultural and political changes in the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe are so fast and so deep that even two years can make analyses outdated. Such a risk is even greater in our case because our conclusions are based chiefly on national reports collected during the Project and on experts' and national representatives' discussions and statements in Bled.

3. Coming back home

The basic *raison d'être* of the Project, and one of the most important aspects of the condition of social sciences of the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, is the current fast move of those countries from a condition of strong diversity to the common status of a European country. “*They are coming back home*”, has been said to point to the former communist countries efforts to become like other Western European countries. In such a context, becoming *equal* to other Western countries means taking a place in the range of diversities that exist in contemporary Europe. Such a diversity that ranges from culture to economic development, thanks to the shared values of modern democracy, has been the very basis of European union.

From this point of view, understanding diffusion and limits of the concept of “normality” can be easier. The concept of “normality” has been widely used, both in Western and Eastern Europe, to describe the goal of current modernisation and democratisation processes of Eastern countries. The concept was first adopted by newspapers and afterwards, because of its communicative effectiveness, by politicians. The wide success of the concept comes from the fact that “normality” does not rely on theoretical and axiomatic models but on existing practices that,

because of their quality and / or their diffusion, are thought to be the best. By this token, getting into normality means sharing both solutions and problems, answers and questions that are embedded in the so-called best practices of countries taken as working models. On the other hand, “normality” has a strong ethnocentric bias that makes its use dangerous mainly when dealing with political, cultural and scientific issues. This is why in spite of its wide adoption in everyday and layman analyses, both in Western and Eastern Europe, the concept of normality has been progressively dropped. Concepts like, for instance, “democratic modernity” can better point the objective – if any – of the great ongoing transformation of the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

Social sciences in the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe have to handle major issues that belong to the common set of problems of all countries – regardless of their power and their experience – that are trying to design and to implement proper strategies. The difficulty and the complexity of the task is greater because of the weakness and lack of experience of new and late arriving countries.

In the social sciences domain, there are many issues that are not assumed to be “problems” anywhere any longer. There are experiences, knowledge, skills and methods, practices and attitudes that can be taken for granted and can be assumed as working and reasonable models. Examples of the so-called core of social sciences are: autonomy and independence from political power, tight links between research and teaching, a shared *corpus* of professional and ethical values, methods and criteria of scholars selection and training, ethos and practices of interacting in the scientific community, etc.

This set of values, knowledge, habits and skills can be assumed as a common heritage of the international social sciences community and can be taken as an implicit or explicit model by latecomers. Adopting such a shared and basic model does not solve transition problems.

As the so-called shift to democratic modernity is taking place in a scenario that is fast changing, the goal itself is a moving and hard to pin down target. Even countries that, because their best practices, are assumed as models, have to cope with major and brand new problems concerning transition. Western world social sciences communities are facing theoretical and practical problems arising out of the ongoing epochal change from modernity to its “post”, however it may be labelled some uncertainty should remain.

Three new major issues are in the forefront of all the countries regardless of their status of latecomer:

- Globalisation and its effects on circulation, integration and competition of goods, people, capitals, values, knowledge and skills;
- Change from an elite-oriented higher education system to a mass-oriented one;
- Structural and permanent mismatch (by quantity and quality) between higher education output and labour market-place demand.

The former are problems that affect not only social sciences but all the research and education systems across the world; social sciences have a special concern because they are both aspects of the scenario and means to control and to regulate it.

4. From authoritarian inefficiency to efficient democracy

A clear-cut definition of “ transition “ or of “ democratisation “ is difficult, if not impossible, because of the great many models and approaches that can be assumed. Moreover, every country needs, and has the right, to design and to build its own future giving specific content to historical models and examples. Nevertheless, regardless of their open and loose conceptual nature, it is possible to assume “modernization “ and “democratisation“ as current key political and operational principles of former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe in the current situation. We can borrow them directly from the lexicon and political agenda of the countries that have embedded this process as their main historical challenge and have made modernization and democratisation key words of daily public life.

In all the countries coming from the experience of “ real socialism “ there is a widely shared need to move as fast as possible from a situation of “authoritarian inefficiency “ to “ efficient democracy “. In order to become as soon as possible “efficient” and “democratic” as other countries of the Western world (or of the north, since political and economic cleavages and borders on meridians are becoming outdated) are thought to be , countries coming from the communist experience of authoritarian inefficiency need to transplant Western experience though they are fully aware of its problems and limits . After this model, they are consciously and wilfully committed to build: effective democratic political institutions; a market economy able to stimulate economic development to the country and to provide well-being to the people; an efficient system of welfare and services able to counterbalance market-place drawbacks and perverse effects; international integration; a pluralist and shared system of values.

The existing and stressing need to renovate and to remodel social sciences in the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe can be considered both as a demand for means to achieve such global and comprehensive goals and as an indicator of a comprehensive and extended demand for a global social and institutional change.

The current demand for new and proper social sciences is a multifaceted one. It is scientific, educational, economical, political, institutional and cultural.

Such a variety of contents of the demand for new social sciences is an expression of three different, although connected, sets of problems from which arises the historical specificity of each country: (a) relationship with the past; (b) current problems of transition ; (c) political, cultural and social objectives of the change.

For many aspects the way to handle the problem of renovation of social sciences is a function of relationship with the past.

The political and institutional use of social sciences in the former communist countries: how they were organised, their functions, the staff selection and training,

their public image, were precipitate and a symbol of the *ancien régime*. As a consequence, when socialist regimes collapsed, the quick change in social sciences use and organisations has been emphasised as a major symbol of the move to a new era of democracy and efficiency.

The political purge following the collapse of communist regimes and the issue of Academies of Sciences highlight the extreme diversity of situations in Eastern Europe.

For social sciences some signs of a break with the past have been: interruption of courses and classes, abolition of disciplines from academic curricula, firing or forced retirement of many professors and researchers considered politically compromised and symbols of the former regime. The political purge has been particularly tough in social sciences because these scholars, mainly in some disciplines like political sciences, history and government, were supposed to be in most communist countries regimes ideologists and theoreticians.

Reactions to political change have been widely different in the former communist countries. Variety of reactions (from heavy political cleansing of universities and institutions to smooth and light changes) depends on the national political climate. In some countries (mainly the ones of Central Europe) many actions have been carried out during the eighties in order to “ liberalise,” to some extent, scientific and educational institutions. Relationships and exchanges with Western world universities and research centre, co-optation on meritocratic and universalistic basis, relative freedom in research and, to a minor extent, in teaching were allowed in many disciplines and faculties of many of *Mittel Europa* communist countries. Though limited and controlled, according to Western Europe standards, freedom granted to social sciences researchers represented a substantial leap forward from the repressive mood of the seventies.

The crisis has been violent, mainly in Academies of Sciences where the socialist regimes have concentrated their most influential and celebrated scholars and ideologists. In many Academies, even more than in capital cities universities, criteria of staff selection and rewarding were mainly political and particularistic (loyalty, adaptability, political utility were some of the most used criteria). Removal of Academy privileges or forced retirement of the staff itself, has been one of the first, symbolic, acts of the move to democracy and efficiency in many communist countries.

Such tough reactions to and harsh attacks on Academies did not take place in all the countries. On the contrary, the case of National Academies of Sciences can well epitomize variety and fragmentation of former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe. In some countries, where the political control was tighter and academies have been playing a role of ideological supporter of the regime, national academies of sciences have gone through a real and heavy political cleansing. In some cases concrete proposals to leave National Academies to die were made. On the other hand, there is evidence that in some countries, chiefly the ones with stronger traditions, the Academies' function and experience have been highly appreciated, both by researchers and by the new democratic governments. There are even some cases in which Academies of Sciences were held to be major symbols of national identity and have been protected and empowered. In this case Academies of Sciences

have been given the function to represent the historical continuity of national cultures that communist parenthesis could not cancel.

According to the working definition adopted by the Working Party, the scope of "social sciences" covers a number of core disciplines, namely, *sociology, anthropology, political sciences, contemporary history, psychology, educational science, economics and law*, which are closely related to professional training in management, communication, journalism, social and health care and teacher training.

Since the beginning, the definition of the disciplinary domain of the project, "Social sciences and the challenge of transition," has been more a pragmatic choice than an epistemological option. Only a small number of countries - Belarus, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Slovenia and Ukraine - have been using a formal and official definition of social sciences. All definitions are tentative and unlike because of national traditions and local academic equilibrium of powers: in some cases even foreign languages have been considered social sciences.

Finding a shared and proper definition of social sciences is a tough task in every country because of different biases, traditions and opinions about border disciplines, for example, law or economics, whose very special and stronger status comes also from their particular labour market-place.

The very basic problem, whether considering social sciences autonomous or accompanying disciplines, is still on the floor in many countries. The substantive vague and thinkable nature of disciplinary borders belongs to the classical tradition of Western social sciences.

Political connections and the lack of autonomy is an additional reason for vagueness in defining social sciences in the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe. In many socialist countries, mainly the ones with a less academic tradition, the well-known trend towards autonomy of every science – that is a basic aspect of cultural modernization – has stopped or slowed down. Many sciences (e.g. sociology, history, economics) have been considered for a long time no more than a gemmation of philosophy and ideology, regime sciences *par excellence*. As a consequence of the old hierarchical organization of sciences, philosophy is still considered in many Eastern European countries a social science and not a discipline belonging to the Humanities area. A clear distinction between social sciences and the Humanities is to be made but it looks hard and unlikely even in the medium run.

Regardless of definitions, the rigour and exactness of which are not always accurate, social sciences can be considered in some former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe as a relatively homogeneous reality. A common condition is more an effect of their story at the breakdown of the communist regimes than an output of their epistemological similarities.

At the end of the eighties, when the great revolution started, social sciences in Eastern Europe had a status of privilege, that, though relative and declining if compared to previous decades and not uniform in all countries and in all disciplines, was still worthwhile.

Until the collapse of the communist political systems, social sciences were considered by state rulers to be an important means in:

- legitimating political power;
- selecting and educating the new ruling class.

This very special role gave to most of the social sciences a condition of advantage and privilege in most communist countries. At the same time, such a politically strategic function marked strongly the disciplines, imprinting them with special characteristics – theoretical, organizational and political – which social sciences, mainly political sciences, history, government and to some extent sociology, maintained for almost fifty years.

Until the collapse of the socialist regimes, social sciences had:

- a special status of privilege in educational and research institutions that granted an easy access, second only to technical disciplines, to national financial resources and to all benefits that the system could produce and distribute;
- a very strong power in selecting and recruiting some of the best staff in the country, because of the high social status, privileges and salaries they could offer. Attractiveness and an ability to select the best students did not belong equally to all the social sciences: law and economics, for instance, appealing to smart students more than other disciplines and faculties;
- the ability to attract students thanks to the weight that social sciences disciplines had in university curricula and in professional requirements.

The dark side of such a status of privilege and advantage was in the very peculiar nature assumed by social sciences in the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe. With the exception of some countries and universities with stronger cultural traditions and more intense contacts with the Western world, social sciences had in common with Western sciences, mainly until the eighties, chiefly the labels.

To make them different there was:

- a. the influence of so-called scientific socialism (exceptions were few and they mainly occurred during the seventies) whose ideological bias has imprinted social sciences of communist countries for half a century;
- b. a lack of interest in research because knowledge of reality was considered a risk to be avoided (even the knowledge to be produced for the internal use of institutions was imperfect and partial and it was often a result of individual analyses and intelligence contributions more than the outcome of systematic and scientific research. Some analysts claim that the abrupt and unexpected way the collapse of regimes took place can be considered a viable indicator of the poor ability that socialist countries had in monitoring themselves);

- c. the subordination of all Eastern European countries to a leading country - USSR - whose influence was not only political and military but cultural and scientific as well;
- d. a substantive segregation from international research and academic networks, to which only a few and selected Eastern European scholars could access with limited benefits for their national backgrounds.

For a long time, such characteristics have been making social sciences living symbols of former socialist regimes, of their authoritarian nature, their inefficiency, their lack of concern for reality, their isolation from the rest of the world, their inability to understand people's demand and their resistance even to minor changes.

The situation of social sciences has not been the same across all of Eastern Europe. Because of the scientific landscape there were some differences in countries such as Hungary or Poland, for instance. In these countries a milder political mood, a more active cultural life, more frequent and intense contacts with Western world research, deeper and stronger academic traditions, have been affecting social sciences, making them more similar to consolidated Western models. As a way of expressing such a diversity, labels like "new social sciences," "young social sciences," "non-official social sciences," "critical social sciences," have been widely used during these last years to signify the differences that were both methodological and political.

5. The burden of the past and its inertial effects

It did not take a long time, after the collapse of communist regimes, to understand that the hope of a quick shift to modern and democratic models had no reasonable basis. It was wishful thinking and an illuminist attitude and not the result of a realistic and rational analysis.

Lack of financial resources, a backward and outdated nature of production structures, an absence of a modern ruling and managerial class, a traumatic impact on the domestic and international market-places made the transition to modernity and to democracy a tough and risky task. The illusion of a prompt and risk-free jump into the Western world lasted only a short span of time under the clash of economic problems and political instability.

One of the first things that not only scholars and political leaders, but also common people in the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe understood after the first few days' enthusiasm, is that the past lives in the present and, although rich in potentiality, it is our heaviest burden.

The way Eastern Europe social sciences were organized and managed until ten years ago is important, on the one hand to pinpoint some aspects of their present situation, and, on the other, to forecast effects of current actions and projects aimed at creating modern acceptable scenarios whilst removing old and irreconcilable structures, habits and practices.

The main problems of social sciences in the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe descend directly from their former condition during the years of isolation. Actions and policies, both national and international, carried out to renovate

and to better social sciences in the former communist countries can be better understood by highlighting their nature of *removal* and / or *equalisation* tools. Their objective is:

- a. to try to remove factors and conditions that in former regimes made social sciences so distant from Western world standards;
- b. to make them equivalent – by methods, values, organization and composition – to the best practices of Western countries and, chiefly in the last years, of European ones.

Most of the major sets of actions and policies can be better evaluated if they are linked and analytically connected to the former setting and situation of social sciences.

Former setting	_____	New targets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Political Monopoly → → strengthening of private actors / pluralism of educational and research institutions; - Political control and instrumental use of social sciences → political independence and autonomy; - Ideologization of education and poor concern for research → integration of education and research ; - Political function of social sciences and lack of concern for the labour marketplace → market-oriented education and training; - Cultural isolation and autarchy → international integration; - Political and particularistic criteria in the recruitment of young people → universalistic and transparent selection criteria; 		

Below, are some examples of inertial effects that descend from the old order of social sciences in the former communist countries which affect the current situation. Most of these long-lasting effects come down from the core features of socialist social sciences that are still rooted in both the institutions and cultures of many Eastern Europe countries.

- A. Old order : The ideological bias of social sciences considered to be a mere by-product of Marxism whose scientific nature has been one of the cornerstones of the *real socialism world* culture. Current problem: Scientific nationalism.

Half a century of cultural, political and ideological experiences cannot but produce deep roots in the values and practices of institutions and the cultural world. The shorter and weaker are the cultural traditions of a country the deeper are the effects of Marxism as an official culture. A long-term effect of the so-called scientific socialism is in the Ukrainian case. In 1993, the Ukrainian Ministry of Education asked universities to create courses in “Scientific Nationalism” in order to diffuse “the Ukrainian national bias as a scientific objectivity “. Lexicon and arguments of such a policy directly

descend from the experience of Marxism – Leninism and its claim of being scientific.

- B. Old order: Social sciences have been accomplishing for fifty years the strategic function of legitimating political power and the existing socialist order. Current problem: The new social sciences control as a political *enjeu*.

Today, nobody contends the autonomy and independence of social sciences. In theory, a working autonomy of scientific research is assumed to be a must in all the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe. At the dawn of democracy, the first points of the political agenda of the socialist countries have been the establishment of laws and rules able to enforce this principle of independence and autonomy. In reality, such a principle cannot be taken for granted. Chiefly, in conflict situations and in political turmoil, the independence of social sciences can be at risk. A political control on education and research is still pursued by conflicting parties as a major means of power. There is a growing gap between laws and declarations of principles about the independence of science and the not rare attempt to take control over it chiefly in countries with less academic tradition and weaker international scientific contacts.

There is still sluggishness in moving from the former particularistic and politically biased methods of the selection of scientific staff to universalistic and transparent criteria – the ones shared by the international scientific community. This problem – that has been highlighted in most national reports – does not result entirely from selecting actors' according to their personal interests (family, money, discipline, etc.); it is also a lasting effect of political relevance that is still attributed to social sciences in many countries.

- C. Old order: Social sciences research and education institutions have been one of the most effective means of selection and cooptation of the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Current problem: The scientific generation gap and the brain drain.

Political functions accomplished by social sciences in the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe had, as main consequences, an extraordinary status of privilege granted to these disciplines. Such privileges meant high salaries, fast careers, high social status, special benefits for social sciences people involved both in education and in research. As an effect of such a condition of advantage, social sciences could attract, following only strategic and applied disciplines, some of the best young researches and scholars. Two or three generations of the national elite of communist countries have been filtered and educated by social sciences in capital cities universities and in Academies of Sciences. The latter institutions, especially where they have been built *ex novo*, better performed the political cooptation role because of their greater stability and political reliability. In universities - chiefly in the countries with more autonomy from the Soviet Union and with stronger academic identity – political loyalty could not always be taken for granted and selection processes were more risky and less trustworthy because of student vitality, foreign influence and disseminated critical cultural mood.

By this token, social sciences performed both the functions of political reproduction (cooptation on a political loyalty basis) and of political criticism. Many of the new leaders that in the nineties took over power and institutional control came from the universities, mainly from social sciences departments and schools.

In the tremendous turmoil of the nineties, social sciences lost both their old, compromised top class and the new critical and liberal one. Many of the old scientists had to resign, some because of their political involvement, some because they were feeling inadequate for the new scientific tasks. On the other hand, many young critical social scientists also quitted university in the first half of the decade.

Professors, scholars, researchers and students have been providing resources and skills for the new, growing demand of a brand new ruling class. Because of their criticisms, political awareness, know-how, updated skills and familiarity with the Western world, knowledge of the institutional machine and its logic, young social scientists were the best candidates for the new leading roles.

Today, social sciences have to tackle a shortage of staff that is more and more difficult to fill because of the decreasing ability (because of lack of resources) of social sciences to attract bright young people.

- D. Old order: The structural condition of dependence and subordination to the Soviet Union has highly polarised the economic and cultural organization of most Eastern Europe countries. Current problem: The growing imbalance between developing capital cities universities and the weak rest of the country.

One of the most long-lasting consequences of Soviet Union domination on Eastern Europe is in the concentration of higher urban functions in a few cities (mainly the capital ones) and in the weakening of smaller cities' infrastructures and facilities. This trend – typical of colonial or controlled countries – struck heavily on higher education and research national orders. Even larger and more balanced countries that, at the moment of communist take-over, had well balanced and organized university and higher education systems – for example, the D.D.R. – suffered from neo-colonial polarising policies . The polarised organization of research and higher education institutions, chiefly located in capital cities, or in the single “university city” – for example, the Baltic Republics – helped a tighter political control on intellectuals by communist government and on national institutions by Moscow.

Today, although there are no political reasons to continue polarization policies, regional imbalance is growing and it affects higher education and research facilities. In order to change such an unbalanced distribution of educational and research facilities, most of the countries of former communist Central and Eastern Europe are committed to re-equilibrate their higher educational and research system. The severe lack of resources – both human

and financial – is still a tremendous factor in preserving the old concentration that is even consciously enforced in the name of poor national budgets.

6. Political agendas and social sciences

It is possible to understand and to assess the response of social sciences to the “Challenge of transition” in the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, starting from the social and political tasks that have been assigned to them. It is by consequence important to pinpoint the targets that the new Eastern Europe democracies have chosen to pursue in their great change to modernization and to democracy.

Eastern Europe latecomers’ political agenda is not a homogeneous one, as it reflects a variety of starting points, experiences, resources, social and political options and strategies. Regardless of the huge differences, in all political agendas of the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, there are at least four basic issues that represent the very core of the new countries’ challenge. All the countries must, though still with a different intensity:

- Make democratic institutions secure and effective. In order to achieve this objective new democracies must enforce and boost participation, increase discursive and rational communications, better institutional transparency, establish and defend citizenship rights, shift from particularism to universalism of norms, values and practices, diffuse and implant democratic values.
- Build, strengthen and preserve national identity. Building national identity and preservation of country borders are basic issues in all political agendas because many of the existing countries lost their national independence with the communist take-over (after or during World War II) or even earlier with the Romanoff empire.

In 1990, ten out of the fifteen countries of the Project survey were not autonomous and independent: seven were part of the URSS (Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Ukraine and Russia itself), the Baltic Republics, whose membership of USSR was not a result of a “spontaneous and popular revolution” but of a military annexation during the Second World War, former Yugoslavian members are now autonomous and their number is likely to grow.

- Strengthen and preserve the market-place and the efficiency of the economic system in order to cope with international competition and to match people’s and firms’ growing demand for goods and services.
- Eliminate or reduce the social drawbacks of a clash with the market-place and perverse effects that can arise from aggressive economic competition and weak political institutions.
- Provide adequate chances to people, chiefly to the younger generation, to improve their life and to ameliorate their social status, to take advantage of

technological developments, to become fully fledged members of the international community.

All these tasks, that have been exposed without any hierarchical order, represent by themselves a tremendous challenge that is even tougher, because of the burden of the past on the one hand, and the lack of required resources (money and consensus) on the other. Furthermore, all the political agendas' main objectives have to be achieved in a day-by-day endeavour: the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe challenge is so hard that it could be defined as "Rebuilding the ship at sea" (Jon Elster, Claus Offe, and Ulrich K. Preuss, *Institutional Design in Post-communist Societies – Rebuilding the Ship at Sea* -, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1999).

In spite of national diversities, political agendas of the former communist countries share a common set of core problems. Social sciences agendas have an analogous structure. They point to two different sets of problems: issues related to the organization and to the functioning of social sciences and border problems pertaining to social functions to be accomplished by social sciences. The former set of issues is internal to the disciplines and deals with problems common to every science since the second half of the nineteenth century.

In order to cancel the communist period differences and become like their Western counterparts, that are by no means perfect, Eastern Europe social sciences have to recover and to renovate themselves. Social scientists must:

- a. rebuild scientific ethics and praxis;
- b. obtain and preserve social sciences autonomy and independence from political power;
- c. be able to give a response to society, institutions, people's needs and demands.

The national conditions of social sciences are highly different in each country: in academic and cultural traditions, starting points, quality and quantity of human resources, access to international research networks, and dynamics of the labour market. Nevertheless, in most countries expectations towards social sciences are similar. To a certain extent, similarities come from the central core of national political agendas.

Social sciences tasks and their social and political challenges have been defined after Eastern Europe's new democracies' political agenda. Social sciences are expected to help to provide:

- a social system with diffused abilities of reflexivity and forecasting;
- a political system with consensus and with compatible shared values;
- a cultural system with values, knowledge and skills able to make modernization faster, smoother and more effective.

Moreover, similarity in defining the content of social sciences challenge comes down from the experience of Western countries and from functions social sciences have been accomplishing in contemporary societies.

The key points of the social sciences challenge are a mix of traditional Western functions and of brand new tasks developing from contemporary and national problems.

Social sciences in the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe are expected to:

- make new democratic systems stable and effective with an institutional and normative engineering and by acting on cultural prerequisites of democracy and modernization;
- contribute to create, to strengthen and to preserve national identity;
- make new reformed institutions more effective and able to tackle people's growing demands on the one hand, and deal with domestic and international competition needs, on the other;
- provide society and institutions with knowledge and skills to accompany and to support the transition;
- provide the labour market and the new market-oriented economy with a proper supply of an educated and flexible labour force;
- create and disseminate a new culture whose main features are criticism, universalism, adaptability;
- make the country and its specialized communities (scientific, economic, etc.) active members of international networks and communities.

In order to fulfil these functions social sciences have to recover and to renovate themselves. In consequence, they must: (a) rebuild scientific ethics and praxis; (b) acquire and preserve autonomy and independence from political power; (c) match society, institutions and people's needs and demands; (d) recover trust and credibility.

At the dawn of the new democratic era, social sciences in the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe had to renovate both their content and functions and their image.

Until the end of the eighties, there was a common belief that social sciences, because of their ideological bias and the tight link with political power, were unable not only to be critical but even to provide reliable knowledge. Social sciences were thought to be incapable of producing information, know-how and skills required by institutions and society. This shortcoming was an effect of both the prominence of the political functions of social sciences and of a substantial lack of concern of communist regimes for information about reality.

“ The fate of state socialism was actually exceedingly hard to predict, given the systemic opacity of this social order, i.e. its inability to monitor itself and provide reliable information about the state of its critical variables, not only to Western observers and the mass of East European populations, but even to Eastern elites themselves. State socialism, in other words, is a system that does not generate knowledge, least of all public knowledge, about indicators of its malfunctioning “

The public image of social sciences was poor because of the lack of ability to match labour market demand and to provide people with the skills and competence adequate for their expectations of social mobility. A reliable indicator of such a poor image has

been the withdrawal of students from many social sciences courses, with notable exceptions in law and economics, when communist regimes collapsed.

The poor image of social sciences, with the exceptions of some disciplines like, once again, law and economics, has lasted longer than its reality. Today, after ten years of substantial improvement, social sciences has not yet fully recovered its public image. In order to become socially reliable, social sciences must improve its trustworthiness as:

- a means of education and training;
- a means of knowledge and analysis;
- a means of awareness and criticism.

7. Hopes and disappointments

What must be done, in operational terms, to ameliorate the condition of social sciences in Eastern European countries is simple and, thanks to existing experience and to so-called best practices, not difficult. Improving education and research standards, providing research and higher education institutions with enough resources, recruiting and training young and bright scholars, full integration into international scientific networks, are self-evident points for the development of every scientific community, regardless of its country or disciplinary domain. The reason why such a clear programme is hard to implement and its effects are low, compared to social scientists' needs and expectations, is not only caused by a severe lack of resources.

Only a few years after the *ancien régimes* collapse, another major collapse took place: the fall of the great hope that the so long awaited change could be immediate and radical. After ten years, scholars and administrators, and, needless to say, politicians, are more and more cautious about both the rapidity and the depth of change. Moving into modernity and democracy will take time and the move will not be either linear or incremental. Transition is revealing itself as a tough and contradictory process whose results cannot be taken for granted in advance.

Another major disappointment comes from the widely shared, and politically grounded, hope that the ongoing revolution of social sciences in the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe could be a bottom-up process to be carried out mainly by internal actors (professors, scholars, administrators, students) and with endogenous resources (domestic capitals, national know-how and instruments, etc.).

The reasons for such a great disappointment are many. Important factors in making social sciences renovation a tough and a time consuming task are, for instance: the gap created by an excess of expectations and a structural lack of resources, in fast growing international education and research standards, in priority given to other issues in national recovery programmes, in the growing political weight of scientific domains more connected to economic development.

All these factors intertwine and, because of the heavy burden of the past, they have been able to slow down and even to divert the modernization process. The problem is in vicious circles that single actions or short-term policies can hardly break.

Main sets of actions and policies targeted to improve and to strengthen social sciences will be shortly analysed in order, on the one hand, to highlight counteracting factors that can slow down and deflect positive actions, pushing them into vicious circles of the *status quo*. On the other hand, because of poor available resources, both national and international, it is important to choose actions with strong multiplying powers and policies, whose trickle-down can spread interventions of positive effects and make them long-lasting. For this token, three major issues have been focused on by the “Social Sciences and the Challenge of Transition Project”: pivotal collective actors of change (government institutions, universities, foundations, professional organizations, scientific organizations); private and public actors’ roles and joint ventures; international assistance and co-operation.

The above issues can be approached, to some extent highlighting the central themes of human resources that in most countries are the bottleneck of every strategy aimed at developing and modernising social sciences.

8. Human resources and the labour market-place

The 1989 political revolution in Eastern European countries opened the way to democracy and made social sciences free from the former heavy political control. The loss of the legitimation function enabled social sciences to recover their scientific identity and organization but deprived them of any privilege. At the dawn of the democratic era, social sciences of the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe had to start a new life without the benefits and the special resources (money, power, prestige) that, in some countries and for those more government oriented, were the trade-off of a condition of rigid political subordination.

In such a condition of weakness, social sciences had to make its living in a scenario that was – and still is – both highly competitive and poor in most countries of Eastern Europe. Social sciences had to compete for money with other scientific strategic sectors in a scenario made poor by government budget constraints. They had to compete for students and for academic space with trendy and labour market oriented disciplines and courses. It is a tough task for social scientists to ask for additional resources in countries where people’s basic needs are not yet fully fulfilled; where industry claims special attention because of growing international competition and where facilities and infrastructures (power, transport, health, etc.) must be modernised or, at least, reach a minimal efficiency threshold. Such a tough competition has made more evident the difference between stronger and more operational disciplines like, for example, law and economics and the other social sciences.

Ageing staff, low turnover, severe brain drain, decrease of students and of classes are, with some national and disciplinary exceptions, common features of social sciences in Eastern Europe. They are all viable indicators of the ongoing crisis.

The first and most severe consequence of lack of resources has been the loss of the traditional ability of social sciences to attract staff and students. With the exceptions of law and economics, that have a very special status because of their own labour market, social sciences are facing difficulties in attracting and keeping both researchers and students.

For poor and fragile scientific and academic institutions, competition in the market-place is a very tough, if not a hopeless, task. Richer market-place segments are able to attract more and brighter people than social sciences departments. Stronger in attracting and recruiting young scholars are scientific sectors considered more strategic and competitive, for example, high tech, biology, applied sciences, etc.

The impact of educational and research institutions on the market-place has been traumatic. Firms and institutions have been demanding an educated labour force with skills and modern know-how able to match requirements resulting from the modernization and globalization processes. As higher education institutions were not able, in the short term, to provide this supply, firms, thanks to higher salaries, have been hiring young people from universities and laboratories, draining, in such a way, some of the best brains in the country.

Universities had to compete even with politics because the new democratic parties – and the government itself - needed young and modern leaders to replace the old communist elite. The best replacement candidates were some of the bright people of social sciences departments that, thanks to their special status, had a good knowledge of the institutional machine and a cultural and disciplinary background familiar to Western experience.

Nowadays, firms and institutions do not rely any longer on university or research institutions staff to recruit modern and highly educated personnel. Higher education institutions and universities are able, more or less, to match the labour market demand. If, at the dawn of the decade, social sciences institutions were not able to keep their staff because of market-place competition, today they are not able to attract bright young people and to recruit the staff they need – by quantity and quality.

Market competition is hitting universities and research institutions even harder because of hidden brain drain. Often, professors' and researchers' time and university facilities are used for private purposes and not for official use. This is a widely adopted practice because it allows university staff to increase their income. Such a practice is tacitly accepted as a means to increase "*de facto*" salaries and to prevent brain drain. In fact, hidden brain drain keeps professors and researchers in their classes and laboratories but severely lowers the overall quality of research and teaching.

Growing brain drain is a typical example of the unintended effects of some assistance and co-operation policies. International grants and professor exchange policies are aimed at improving the quality of teaching and research in the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, allowing Eastern European universities staff – mainly the younger ones – to spend some time in Western Europe or USA departments and laboratories. An unintended and perverse effect of these policies is in the many foreign grants fellows' decisions not to return home but to stay abroad with higher salaries, better equipped libraries and laboratories and more chance of a better life for them and their families. There are many cases of young scholars that leave academic positions when they return home and, thanks to their foreign experience, can choose better paid jobs.

A central political challenge of the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe is in implementing support policies – both internal and international – which are able to counteract and balance market-place perverse effects on social sciences. The problem is in achieving such an objective without refusing market-place logic and functions and taking back into life outdated state intervention policies.

9. International co-operation as a reflexive and bi-directional process

The extreme diversity of cultural conditions, of historical backgrounds, of links with international academic networks makes it difficult to deal with the international co-operation issue in an homogeneous manner. Anyway, there is a common shared belief that international co-operation and support are essential in any social sciences recovery and renovation strategy. In some of the more marginal countries of the former Soviet Empire, lack of human and financial resources is such that without an external support, social sciences education and research institutions would not even exist or survive. Thanks to international co-operation and assistance programmes, a new and well-educated generation of researchers is changing social sciences in the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

After ten years of assistance programmes, successful or not, there is enough evidence to highlight some international co-operation shortcomings or inadequate actions.

One of the more long lasting effects of the *ancien régime* organisation is the typical polarized national and regional organization. In order to save resources and to ensure a tighter political control most of the higher education and research institutions are located in capital cities. The more marginal is the country, the more regionally unbalanced is the educational system. Such an order is being challenged by new government policies that stress the need of a balanced higher education and research system. International co-operation projects share, as a principle, this attitude but in fact they tend often to privilege the *status quo*. Domestic and international attention has been primarily paid to existing top research and education institutions, whose amelioration was supposed to have stronger multiplying power. Symbolic and political relevance of massive help to major universities has been often stressed though it contradicts the need to reduce regional imbalance.

Flagship projects have been preferred by international organizations and foundations because of their visibility and their high political pay-offs. First-tier universities received most of such assistance policies to the prejudice of the marginal universities. The expected trickle-down to less favoured institutions and areas in the country has been minimum because effective ways and policies to transfer and to spread innovations are still inadequate.

New co-operation programmes show a growing awareness and an explicit reflexive nature; that is to say that the means to assess programme effects – mainly unintended and perverse effects – are embedded in the programmes themselves.

A new generation of assistance and co-operation programmes, chiefly funded and implemented by European international organizations, is paying more attention to small and marginal research and education centres whose existence is at stake because of a severe lack of resources for salaries, libraries, laboratories and facilities.

First-tier universities of the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe are still, though less than in first generation projects, privileged targets of most international programmes because of their ability to keep the pace of international research and to provide staff and facilities at international standards. Top education and research centres are required to adapt national needs and values to international inputs; in other words, they are asked to make nationally specific and relevant international methods and findings.

Thanks to the new co-operative approach, a major issue is in explicitly organizing spread-out and trickle-down mechanisms. The so-called *two steps' programmes* are intended to counteract regional polarisation and window-case projects and to make smaller universities benefit from international co-operation.

A permanent risk of every international co-operation programme and policy is that the powerful actor can influence the weaker partner. In many cases, co-operation is only lip-service, and international assistance projects are one-way programmes whose object is in transferring knowledge, methods, know-how and values from Western countries to Southern or Eastern ones. In the cultural and scientific domain there is only a slight border between globalisation and Westernisation.

Today, the problem of vested cultural influence, that has been widely discussed during the sixties and the seventies when neo-colonialism took over the old fashioned colonialism, is back in assistance to the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The very real risk is that, embedded in textbooks, methods, cross-national researches, educational know-how, a new form of cultural and disciplinary imperialism could take place. However, it is less obvious who is going to be the active partner in such an asymmetrical relationship. The only way to ban such a risk is by making both ways of interaction effective. That is to say both partners – the more affluent and the weakest – must learn from the co-operation experience.

Scientific and cultural co-operation with Eastern European countries could become a major chance for European social sciences to become more self reflexive and to deal with their own challenge of transition. Many problems the former communist countries have to deal with are not that different from the ones that developed countries of Western Europe have to tackle.

Finding additional resources for research and education institutions without compromising market-place and profit-oriented logics; reducing the structural market-place mismatch between demand and supply of an educated labour force; counteracting brain drain and students' disaffection for social sciences, making research and higher education institutions more responsive to society's needs and demands, transferring research output to decision-makers, making social sciences both more politically relevant and more politically independent, are current topics of discussion among European social scientists. Pathologies, like particularistic practices in young researchers, co-optation or hidden brain drain still exist in many countries of Western Europe. Issues, such as the relationship with private actors in education and research, whose presence is fast growing, are very crucial in Eastern, as well as in Western, Europe, mainly in countries like Italy and France, for example, where higher education and research have, in fact, always been shielded from the market-place.

In other words, Western European countries can learn from co-operation with the former communist Eastern countries, as well as the latter can profit from Western European experience. The more Europe is becoming a real unit, the more common are the problems social sciences have to face. Transition, though from different starting points, having different conditions and problems, is, more or less, a challenge for every country and for every social scientist.