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Education  
In Europe**

In this issue:

**Ranking and League Tables of Higher Education Institutions**

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# Higher Education in Europe

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## From the Editors

The articles making up the topic of this issue of *Higher Education in Europe* reflect a UNESCO-CEPES Conference, the “Invitational Roundtable on Statistical Indicators for Quality Assessment of Higher/Tertiary Education Institutions—Ranking and League Tables Methodologies” that was held in Warsaw, Poland, from 13 to 15 June 2002. The meeting and the resulting publication of proceedings, however, are part of a larger, three-year (2001–2003) project titled “Strategic Indicators for Monitoring Higher Education in the Twenty-First Century”. Already, and prior to the holding of the Warsaw Roundtable, the project had given rise to the organizing of an “Invitational Roundtable on System-Level Indicators for Higher/Tertiary Education”, in Hiroshima, Japan, from 11 to 13 June 2001, and a resulting publication of proceedings (Akiyoshi Yonezawa and Frans Kaiser, eds., *System-Level and Strategic Indicators for Monitoring Higher Education in the Twenty-First Century*, Bucharest: UNESCO-CEPES, 2003). This activity had been followed by a first meeting of the Working Group on Indicators for Institutional and Programme Accreditation in Higher/Tertiary Education, titled “Approaches to Standards/Indicators for Institutional and Programme Accreditation in Higher/Tertiary Education”, organized by UNESCO-CEPES and held on 5–6 April 2002 in Bucharest, Romania. A final meeting, also organized by UNESCO-CEPES, an “Invitational Roundtable on Indicators for Institutional and Programme Accreditation in Higher/Tertiary Education” will be held from 3 to 6 April 2003 in Bucharest.

The project as a whole was conceived and is being implemented in the context of the follow-up to the World Conference on Higher Education—“Higher Education in the Twenty-First Century: Vision and Action”, held at UNESCO, in Paris, from 5 to 9 October 1998. Among its outcomes was confirmation of the need for the renewal and the reorientation of higher education at system and institutional levels. In order to bring about the kind of renewal and reorientation required, policy-makers and administrators need a quantitative, solid system of fact-reporting, applicable even to daunting cases, so as to be able to quantify the intangibles of a set of complex teaching, learning, and research phenomena, and the administration, functioning, and financing of higher education.

The overall aim of the project was threefold:

- to undertake a thorough analysis of the currently used statistical indicators in the
- quantitative description and assessment of higher education;
- to introduce eventual changes in the elaboration of existing indicators, and to explore the needs and possibilities for formulating new ones;
- to elaborate closer links between statistics based on indicators and higher education

policy-makers.

The project has been implemented in the following three lines:

- a) system-level indicators for higher/tertiary education;
- b) indicators for institutional and programme accreditation in higher/tertiary education;
- c) statistical indicators for the quality assessment of higher/tertiary education institutions by the study of the methodologies used in producing “ranking and league tables”.

The holding of the Warsaw Roundtable and the articles published herein are the outcome

of the third line.

We shall not further introduce the articles, for that task has been ably accomplished by the Rapporteur of the Conference who also accepted our invitation to serve as the Guest Editor of this issue of the review.

James Merisotis, the Rapporteur and the Guest Editor, is a well-known American specialist on higher education policy, particularly the financing of higher education. He is the founding President of the Institute for Higher Education Policy of Washington, D.C., and the former Executive Director of a bipartisan National Commission on Responsibilities for Financing Post-Secondary Education, a Commission charged with the task of exploring the long-term restructuring of the way post-secondary education is financed in the United States.

This issue of *Higher Education in Europe* brings to a close the publication activities of the Thirtieth Anniversary year of UNESCO-CEPES. The first issue of 2003 will publish a number of documents and papers arising from the Jubilee Conference that was held in September 2002 in Bucharest, Romania.