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in Europe**

In this issue:

**Public Relations: An Instrument for the Transformation and
Development of Higher Education**

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CONTENTS

From the Editors	405
Public Relations: An Instrument for the Transformation and Development of Higher Education	
Public Relations, Advertising, and Even Some Propaganda: Romanian Private Higher Education Institutions and Their Communication Campaigns <i>Mihai Coman</i>	409
Private Colleges in Hungary - Seeking Students and Striving for Recognition: The Example of the International Business School of Budapest <i>Ervin Gömbös</i>	421
The Strategic Role of Public Relations in Creating the Competitive Advantages of Private Higher Education in Poland: The Example of the School of Banking of Poznań <i>Maciej Kolasinski, Arkadiusz Kulig, and Piotr Lisiecki</i>	433
University Heritage - An Institutional Tool for Branding and Marketing <i>Nijole Bulotait</i>	449
The Public Relations Strategy of Alexander Herzen State Pedagogical University in St. Petersburg: The Dialogue between the Heritage and the Present of a University <i>Elena Kaverina</i>	455
Institutional Accreditation as an Instrument of Public Relations: The Case of the Poznań University of Economics <i>Przemysław Deszczyński</i>	461
Public Relations: The Process of Communication between a Higher Education Institution and Its Environment: The Case of the Wrocław University of Economics <i>Aneta Szymańska</i>	471

Approaches to and Instruments of Public Relations: Higher Education in the Czech Republic <i>Petr Pirožek and Marie Hesková</i>	487
Public Relations Higher Education - A Russian Experience <i>Lyudmila Azarova</i>	495
Seeking Synergy: Theory and Practice of Education and Research in Public Relations and Communication Management in Estonia <i>Kaja Tampere</i>	499
Public Relations Education: An Instrument for the Transformation and Development of Human Resources <i>Minka Zlateva</i>	511
Public Relations: An Instrument of Co-operation Linking the Private Sector and Higher Education Institutions <i>Izabela Pabich</i>	519
The Role of Student and Alumni Associations in the Democratization Process in Spain <i>Alfredo Arceo</i>	523
Why Transitional Public Relations Methodologies are Needed for the Reform of Higher Education in Central and Eastern Europe <i>Ryszard Ławniczak</i>	529
Tribune	
Towards Quality Private Higher Education Institutions in Central and Eastern Europe <i>Kate Galbraith</i>	539
Who Should Pay for Higher Education? A Japanese Perspective <i>Masateru Baba</i>	559
The Perceptions of Protégés in Academic Organizations in Regard to the Functions of Monitoring <i>Ferda Erdem and Janset Özen</i>	569
Book Reviews and Studies	577
Notes on Contributors	585
UNESCO-CEPES Publications	589
Contents and Authors Index, Volume 28.....	591

From the Editors

This issue of *Higher Education in Europe* publishes most of the papers that were delivered at a two-day conference, held at the Poznań University of Economics, on the subject of “Public Relations - An Instrument for Transformation and Development of Higher Education in Central and Eastern Europe”.^{*} Organized by the Chair of Economic Journalism and Public Relations of the Poznań University of Economics, by UNESCO-CEPES, and by PRELITE PR, its overall aim was to bring together professional people and academics working in the areas both of higher education and public relations in the transitional economies of Central and Eastern Europe. The organizers sought presentations aimed at an audience seeking to understand current issues of reform and development in the field of higher education in countries undergoing transition and to analyze and to situate the working relationships (that embody both vigorous competition and co-operation) between the public and the newly established private higher education institutions. An expected outcome of the various presentations was an evaluation of the concept of “Transitional Public Relations”, that had been formulated and developed by Professor Ryszard Ławniczak.

The typical paper (of which there were notable exceptions), which was prepared for the conference and presented, was a case study on the development and use of public relations at the presenter’s home institution or in neighbouring institutions. The articles resulting from three of these presentations focus on private higher education institutions and reflect the much-repeated thesis that the private institutions that appeared on the scene, virtually overnight and from scratch, after the collapse of communism in Central and Eastern Europe, had, perforce, to develop advertising and public relations campaigns early-on in order to survive and to occupy niches in a “market” that had been dominated by public institutions.

Thus, Professor Mihai Coman, Head of the Media Department at the University of Bucharest, in Romania, focuses on the self-promotion methods of the new private Romanian universities. Professor Erwin Gömbös of the International Business School of Budapest describes the ways in which private higher education institutions in Hungary recruit students and promote themselves. And Maciej Kolasiński, Arkadiusz Kulig, and Piotr Lisiecki offer a similar discourse with regard to the School of Banking of Poznań. They make the point that a higher education institution, in fact, competes simultaneously in two markets: the market in which it obtains its students and the job market into which it places its graduates.

However, the public institutions, which found their monopoly positions challenged both by the private newcomers and by the vastly reduced public funding available to them in the transition period, have been forced to adopt and to use the techniques of the new private institutions in order to hold onto their shares of the market and even to increase them in competition with one another and with the private sector of higher education. Hence the opening of fee-paying enrollments in the public institutions and efforts, on their part, at self-promotion through public relations and marketing.

The five articles (reflecting five presentations at the Conference) dealing with public relations in public institutions in transition illustrate several approaches to the activity, both narrow and broad. The authors of the first two articles in this group, being associated with old, traditional institutions, show how tradition can be used to promote such institutions. The approach is particularly relevant to Nijole Bulotaite, Head of the Information and Public Relations Office of the University of Vilnius, in Lithuania, that traces its founding back to

1579. She describes a whole strategy of public relations based on the cultural patrimony of a venerable but, at the same time, modern institution.

Elena Kaverina of Alexander Herzen State Pedagogical University of St. Petersburg approaches the question of public relations at and for her institution in the same way, by stressing tradition, her university having been founded in 1797 as the oldest higher education institution *of its kind* in Russia. However, there is a contradiction, given the author's perceived need to deny an enduring aspect of the tradition whereby the University has been and still is, officially, a teacher training institution. The pedagogical university image, according to Kaverina, clashes with her target image, that of a broad-spectrum university, which is very good in many domains.

Newer public institutions that cannot, because of their short histories, base too much of their public relations on the evocation of tradition need to stress utilitarian arguments and, in the case of Poland, to play on the underlying feeling in Polish society that the public institutions are still the best.

For Professor Przemysław Deszczyński, the factor that must be confronted, even in the case of his well-reputed public university, the University of Economics of Poznań, is that the level of competition will be greatly increased and broadened as Poland joins the European Union and becomes part of the European Higher Education Area and the European Research and Innovation Area. Evoking the creation, in December 2000, by five Polish public higher economics education universities, of the Foundation for the Promotion and Accreditation of Economics Programmes, he describes the process whereby his institution sought and obtained accreditation by this Foundation. The process and the successful outcome have served as high-impact PR for the participating higher education institutions.

Evoking a similar institution in another Polish city, Aneta Szymańska of the Wrocław University of Economics examines the types of institutional research that must be conducted before a higher education institution can undertake a successful public relations campaign. She gives a detailed description of a situation analysis that she undertook of her university by means of a poll of the opinions and the attitudes of students towards their university. The results will serve as an underpinning for other types of very targeted PR.

The fifth article in this group moves the spotlight to the Czech Republic, in particular to the University of Economics of Prague. Here again an established and well-regarded public institution has had to deal with competition but also with the need to promote a branch campus, the Faculty of Management, located at some distance south of Prague, in Jindřichův Hradec. The authors, Petr Pirožk, the Vice-Dean for External Relations of this Faculty, and his colleague, Marie Hesková, describe several strategies that have been used to support and to build up this new campus, one of which is insisting on its "brand" obtained by being a branch of an "Ivy League" Czech higher education institution.

Three other participants in the Conference presented the topic of public relations in transition countries in a completely different way. The resulting articles emphasize descriptions of the ways in which PR is taught in their universities. The first author in this group, Lyudmila Azarova of St. Petersburg State Electrotechnical University of Russia, describes the university-based degree programme in public relations offered by her university. It was the first one of its kind to be created in the Russian Federation. Set up in 1993, in co-operation with Towson State University in Maryland, it meets the requirements of both the Russian State Educational Standard in Public Relations and of the Public Relations Society of America.

Dr. Kaja Tampere of the University of Tartu in Estonia describes the evolution and the various course programmes in Public Relations at several degree levels that have evolved since the first programme in Public Relations was set up in 1996 in the Department of Journalism of the University of Tartu that, itself, was set up in 1978. Currently, the public

relations programme places much emphasis on research in Public Relations and derives much support for the Department and for the university as a whole from the reputation and tradition of the institution itself, a very old university that was founded in 1632.

Finally, Dr. Minka Zlateva of the St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia surveys the teaching of public relations in Bulgarian higher education, particularly at her university. Instruction in the field, she adds, is stimulated by the need of social institutions in her country to understand and to make use of public relations, a basic element in a democratic society.

A third approach to the subject, a presentation of the mutually fruitful relationship of the Polish branch of a major international business consultation firm, Ernst & Young, and a major Polish higher education institution, the Warsaw School of Economics, is adopted by Izabela Pabich, the Recruitment Manager of the company in question. The two institutions assist each other with jointly organized courses and seminars, student internships in the Company, positions for adjunct faculty members in the School of Economics drawn from the Company, etc. In general, Ernst & Young promotes itself, to the best higher education institutions in Poland, as a very good employer of their graduates, going to some effort to familiarize itself with these institutions and in turn recruiting top graduates who have learned of the Company through its public relations efforts. In short, higher education institutions and employers can and should develop symbiotic relationships.

A fourth approach to the subject of the Conference, reflected in the article by one of the participants, was to demonstrate the political role of public relations in higher education including its possible ramifications in the larger society. Dr. Alfredo Arceo of Complutense University of Madrid, explains how the student and alumni associations of Spain, in their roles as interfaces and boundary spanners in regard to information transmission, eased the transition in Spain from Franco's dictatorship to liberal democracy in ways that favoured the granting, by the government, of university autonomy and academic freedom.

A summing-up article, by Professor Ryszard Ławniczak, could be considered as the concluding text of the Conference. It outlines the concept of "transitional public relations", that designates both public relations adapted to the special conditions of post-socialist, transition economies and societies and the use of public relations to combat the hardened mentalities of the past and to explain and extol the virtues of democracy and market economy and to suggest ways by which both can be achieved. To a greater or lesser extent, he considers that most of the papers presented at the Conference reflected "transitional public relations".

Turning to the "Tribune" section of this issue of *Higher Education in Europe*, the first article, by Kate Galbraith, a British journalist, discusses, in general terms, the rise of private higher education institutions in Central and Eastern Europe following the collapse of communism. While recognizing that the quality of the new private institutions is variable and that they depend on tuition fees and on good public relations pitches, she feels that they are structurally better suited to serve the post-communist world than the impoverished and overly-rigid public institutions, despite the generally excellent reputations that the latter have retained - mainly because they are old and established.

In the next article, Professor Masateru Baba of Shinshu University in Japan asks, rhetorically, who should pay for higher education. Citing the situation in his country, he argues that those who benefit from higher education should pay for it, and since the learner obtains the greatest benefit, he or she should pay the largest share. The method of payment proposed is a student loan system with repayment based on future earnings.

We close the "Tribune" with an article by two Turkish academics, Ferda Erdem and Janset Özen, who report on a survey they undertook of eighty-nine research assistants, who were mentored by senior research and teaching staff, at Akendiz University in Turkey. Generally, the experience of having been mentored- was viewed as positive and quite important for the career advancement of the individuals concerned.

As in the case of so many previous issues of *Higher Education in Europe*, we are concluding this issue with a set of insightful book reviews and studies. The set has been prepared by Professor Eric Gilder of Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, Romania and by Fen Ying Zhu, a visiting scholar at this university, from China. The next issue of the review, the first for the year 2004, will be devoted to “Thematic Reflections on Higher Education”.

* The papers presented during the conference were selected by its Scientific Committee the membership of which included Professor Klaus Hübner, Chairman of the Advisory board of UNESCO-CEPES; Professor Ryszard Ławniczak, Advisor to the President of the Republic of Poland and Holder of the Chair of Economic Journalism and Public Relations at the Poznań University of economics; Mr. Andrzej Nartowski, a journalist for Cracow, Poland; and Dr. Jan Sadlak, the Director of UNESCO-CEPES.