Conference 12
November 4-7, 2001

Transforming Higher Education and Civil Society

Rectors, faculty, administrators, and students from 65 institutions of higher learning and non-governmental organizations, from 19 different countries gathered at the Metropol Hotel in Belgrade for the 12th Annual Conference of the Alliance of Universities for Democracy (AUDEM). The four days of the conference were full of excitement, intense academic discussions, intercultural and personal learning. There were 120 registered participants in addition to a great number of academics, university administrators, junior faculty, and graduate students from conference co-host Belgrade University who joined those sessions that were of particular interest to them and actively participated in the discussions taking place outside the session halls. Participation of colleagues from Yugoslavia was remarkable as was the level and scope of discussion that took place.

The theme of the Conference, Transforming Higher Education and Civil Society, was addressed in 24 sessions, featuring more than 65 titled presentations (details in the program enclosed). The keynote address entitled "The Balkans in the New Global World" was made by Prof. Ognian Minchev, Director of the Institute for Regional and International Studies, Sofia, Bulgaria. Among the 6 plenary speakers, there were two professors from the University of Belgrade. Several sessions were devoted to the relationship between the university as institution and the community and higher education and civil society; there were sessions exploring the challenges of inter-ethnic and national relations, the problems of brain drain and higher education reform. Participants had a chance to learn about new technologies in higher education and discuss practical issues, especially curriculum development.

One special session was devoted to higher education in Yugoslavia, where different faculties and programs were presented along with the challenges Yugoslav colleagues are currently facing. The general feeling of the participants was that in the numerous sessions and discussions that followed, there was a lot of learning – participants felt that they could get and offer advice, discuss possible partnerships, be exposed to new ideas and grow both personally and professionally. As organizers we feel that the conference was successful in providing the venue for developing further networks, enhancing cross-border activities for the promotion of good neighborly relations in the Southeastern region, and promoting intercultural dialogue and transatlantic educational co-operation in the interests of peace and democracy.

Eight of the Conference sessions were broadcast in real time over the Internet. The broadcast was realized by Free Serbia, and the archive of the sessions was hosted at a web site especially made for the occasion at http://live.freeserbia.com two weeks after the Conference was over. The full video material is now available at the AUDEM Business Office. Free Serbia informed us that during the first day of the Conference, there were 78 visitors in total. The second day - 212 visitors, with the majority of visitors (53.79%) being from the US. Total, from conference beginning until the morning before the web hosting of the archive by Free Serbia was terminated, the website with archive (http://live.freeserbia.com), had 3816 visits (about 10% by Free Serbia for maintenance reasons).

Registered participants included:
52% high level administrators
27% faculty, incl. junior faculty
8% graduate students
11% representatives of the NGO community
2% spouses

Countries represented:
Armenia, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, Georgia, Hungary, Macedonia, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovak Republic, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Ukraine, USA, and Yugoslavia

Universities/ NGOs represented: 65+

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