

Integration Through Regionalisation

Representatives of physical societies from east and central Europe met on 20 November 1995 in Budapest with Herwig Schopper, the EPS President, and Norbert Kroó, the Executive Committee member responsible for east-west coordination, to review progress and to develop new strategies.

The most striking feature of any discussion about science in east and central Europe (ECE), is the region's desire for integration in the European Union (EU). The physics community aims to be one of the driving forces, and this is the main reason why representatives of the region's physical societies stressed at their second meeting with the EPS President – the first took place last February [EN 26 (1995) 45] – that participation in the EU's Framework programme for science remains a principle objective. The November meeting, recommended that the EU's PHARE programme, along with national governments, should support Framework participation, and the EPS President was asked to communicate this recommendation to the European Commission (EC). The societies also view the EU's TEMPUS programme for student mobility as being an extremely important element for promoting integration. Once again, the EPS President was asked to contact responsible decision makers to seek support for extending the programme's funds for student mobility, both in time and in geographical coverage (five ECE countries presently receive EU TEMPUS programme support for student mobility within the EPS European Mobility Scheme for Physics Students).

Owing to the dramatic effects that economic restructuring is having on research and development, the meeting recommended that physicists working in industry in ECE should be included in EPS east-west initiatives. Many representatives felt that this was especially important at the present time because recent new openings for physicists in areas outside research and teaching may dry up as more specialists become available. One needs to stress the role of physicists as broadly trained, flexible problem solvers capable of addressing strategic issues.

In order to reinforce job opportunities it is necessary to ensure that modern and up-to-date training is available to young

physicists. The meeting suggested that EPS should ask the heads of the larger European laboratories to support scholarships for scientists from ECE. CERN's Associates scheme was noted as providing an excellent example of what can be achieved, and discussions with the organization's Director General have indicated that it should be possible to arrange for CERN scholarships for all ECE countries independent of whether or not they are a member of CERN. This follows on from earlier initiatives that promoted efforts to facilitate the access of ECE scientists to experimental facilities. For instance, the Central European Initiative which aims to promote a lasting fabric of personal and institutional links throughout ECE [EN 26 (1995) 93] has generated opportunities for participation in regional facilities such as Trieste's ELETTRA synchrotron and Budapest's modernised neutron source.

There is an urgent need to improve the circulation of accurate and timely information throughout ECE concerning topics of mutual interest, notable student mobility, curricula, conferences, and job opportunities. Special attention should

also be given to information about EU programmes because it is often somewhat confusing owing to the size and scope of the programmes, and because there are multiple interpretations depending on the source of information within the EC. A regional news service based on the World-Wide Web and forming part of the EPS EurophysNet service (<http://epswww.epfl.ch>), with information supplied largely by organizations within the region, is one important possibility.

The meeting decided that the best way to follow up on these and earlier east-west initiatives would be to form a regional working group made up of national society secretaries or their equivalents. While the region is geographically very large, specific problems are common to many countries and can be tackled effectively on a regional basis. The group, which reflects a shift in focus from east-west initiatives coordinated by the former East-West Coordination Committee to a more "self-help" philosophy, would formulate suggestions for Presidents and coordinate initiatives while taking care to integrate the work of the EPS Action Committees and Interdivisional Groups.

In reflecting the meeting's recommendations and earlier actions, the main areas in which the new working group could act involve:

- the public awareness of science;
- government policy, notably integration of ECE science with EU programmes;
- a regional news service;
- journal subscription support to match the INTAS/EPS Journals for the FSU programme and November's announcement that *Europhysics Letters* would offer 30 free subscriptions to ECE;
- expansion of mobility, access to large facilities, and training opportunities;
- locating conferences in ECE;
- extending conference participation via initiatives such as the EPS Solidarity Fund which supports ECE participation through a levy on conferences organized by EPS.



The PHARE countries in 1993. At present six Central and Eastern Countries (BG, CZ, HU, PL, R, SL) have Europe Agreements in force; three others (EE, LT, LV) have signed Agreements and another three (AL, HR, SI) have initiated negotiations.



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