
**The Role of Education and Universities
in Modernization Processes in Central
and South-Eastern European Counties
in 19th and 20th Century**

Edited by
Peter Vodopivec
and
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Peter Vodopivec and Aleš Gabrič

Introduction

For some time, the researchers studying various aspects of social and economic development in the 19th and 20th century have been pointing at the crucial role of education, schooling system and high-education institutions in the processes of social and economic modernisation and political and social democratisation. These processes could not take place without the spread of literacy, professionalization and communication using written language and media; and neither without the formation of educated and business elites, which became an indispensable dynamic factor of social, economic and cultural changes. In particular in the countries and nations with only weak urban middle-class population and slow development of non-agrarian economy (small trades and industry), educational institutions and universities were one of the most important factors of social mobility and transformation, which paved the way for the emergence of urbanized middle-class population and modern social and economic flows. In the 19th century, a large part of higher-education and university students were schooled outside their home environment; until 1918 students in the Habsburg monarchy were mostly schooled at the university centres within the monarchy, whereas the students from the South-Eastern European countries attended also Western European universities. Afterwards, they all conveyed their knowledge and economic, social and political development views to the local and wider national environment. With gradual establishing of higher-education and university institutions in the environments and countries where they had not existed before, new scientific and university centres started to emerge in Central and South-Eastern Europe in the second half of the 19th century; they accelerated the formation of educated elites and encouraged their modernisation efforts.

This publication includes the contributions presented at the symposium “The Role of Education and Universities in Modernization and Europeanization Processes in Central and South-Eastern European Countries in the 19th and 20th Century” organised by the Institute of Contemporary History and the Austrian Science and Research Liaison Office in Ljubljana on 26 and 27 November 2009. The main purpose of the symposium was to present and compare the latest research on this subject and encourage discussions on how modernity was perceived,

understood and put into effect by the educated elites in the Central European and South Eastern European countries with in many aspects different, but also comparable social, cultural and national historical experiences. The diversity of approaches proposed by the authors of the papers clearly reveals the complexity of this subject, which could be studied from many various perspectives and in various manners.

The organisation of the symposium and publishing of the collection of papers was made possible by the financial support of the Austrian Science and Research Liaison Office in Ljubljana and its director Dr. Miroslav Polzer, Slovenian Research Agency and the Institute of Contemporary History in Ljubljana.

Miroslav Polzer

Universities and Societal Change in Central and South-Eastern European Countries – Yesterday – Today – Tomorrow

The International Symposium “The Role of Education and Universities in Modernization and Europeanization Processes in Central and South-Eastern European Countries in 18th and 20th Century” organized by Institute of Contemporary History (INZ) Ljubljana in cooperation with Austrian Science and Research Liaison Office (ASO) Ljubljana has been an important scientific meeting which shed light on many interesting links and intellectual foundations of present day societies in Central and Southeastern Europe connected with the development of educational systems and universities in the region over the last one and a half centuries.

Prof. Peter Vodopivec succeeded to invite many outstanding historians from the region to look in a systemic way into the role of education and especially higher education as the central element of structured societal transformation and universities as important places where visions of desirable futures (although often not accommodating interests of all segments of society) are being developed.

Austrian Science and Research Liaison Office (ASO) Ljubljana has been delighted to be partner of this event and publication initiative as we share the conviction that knowledge generation, dissemination and application are at the heart of any socio-economic development and that educational systems that respond to changing societal needs and universities that function as some kind of windows to the world are needed today more than ever before and not only in Southeast Europe but all over the world.

Publication of the proceedings of the symposium comes at a time when Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research decided to close ASO Ljubljana after more than 21 years of work in the field of promotion of international scientific cooperation in the triangle Austria-Slovenia and Southeast European countries.

I would therefore like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to prof. Peter Vodopivec and the many outstanding scientists in Slovenia, Austria