

## **Annex N:8**



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# CONFERENCE REPORT

## INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

*Recognition and Accreditation of  
Short-Cycle Higher Education Programs  
in Europe and the United States:*

*Aligning Educational Systems*

**June 15-17, 2009**

***Organization: International University College***

***Venue: Melia Hotel Grand Hermitage, Golden Sands***

**Bulgaria**

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*“Education is simply the soul of a society as it passes from one generation to another”*

***G. K. Chesterson***

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## I. Overview of the Conference

### 1. *Aims of the Conference*

- Presentation of the national studies on the Recognition and Quality Assurance of Short-Cycle Higher Education in carried out in Bulgaria, Netherlands, and USA
- Build-up of an international forum for exchange of ideas and best practices in “Recognition and Quality Assurance of Short-Cycle Higher Education” worldwide



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- Evolvement of a long term perspective of Short-Cycle Higher Education Programmes worldwide
- Extend partnerships between education institutions from different countries and continents

## 2. *Topics of the Conference*

- Short-Cycle Higher Education in Europe and the United States: Main Goals and Values of Short-Cycle Higher Education Programmes
- Quality of Higher Education in Bulgaria: Issues and Values
- Building Bridges: Improving Interactions between Business and Education

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- Sharing Best Practices Worldwide
- The Business-Education Relationship: Strategic Investment in Human Capital
- Building Bridges in Quality Maintenance: Recognition and Accreditation
- Building Bridges in Quality Maintenance: Professional Performance

### *3. Programme of the Conference*

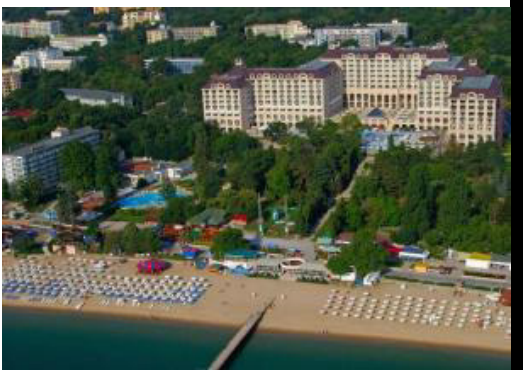
#### *The Venue...*

The International conference took place in the premises of Melia Hotel Grand Hermitage, Colden Sands, Bulgaria.

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Our guests had the unique opportunity to combine the working rhythm with the relaxing ambiance provided by the Hotel Complex situated on the seaside.



The Conference Hall was also situated in the premises of Melia Hotel Grand Hermitage. It was a full advantage for the guests to fully enjoy their stay on the Black Sea Coast.



## *Programme*

**June 15, 2009**

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08:45 – 12:00 Registration of the participants

09:00 – 10:30 *Opening Session and Presentations*

***BOB MILLER – Chairman of the Board of Directors International University College***

- SCHE in the Framework of the Bulgarian Higher Education System

**Assoc. Prof., PhD Todor Radev, International University College, Bulgaria**

- The Atlantis project on SCHE Programs

**Snejana Slantcheva-Durst, Asst. Prof., College of Education, University of Toledo, USA**



*Assoc. Prof. Todor Radev, PhD  
Rector of International University College*



*Bob Miller  
Chairman of the Board of Directors International University College*

10:30 – 10:45 Coffee break

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**10:45 – 12:15 SCHE in Europe and the United States: Main Goals and Values of SCHE Programs**

**MODERATOR: Stanislav Ivanov, PhD, International University College**

- SCHE in Europe and the USA: Emerging Challenges and Innovative Responses  
**Snejana Slantcheva-Durst, Asst. Prof., College of Education, University of Toledo, USA**

- SCHE in the European Bologna Process. The survey in 2002 and the implications of the outcomes for the Bologna Process  
**Magda Kirsch, Expert of SCHE in the European Bologna Process, Educonsult**

- Developments in Aligning the Educational Levels in Ohio  
**Penny Poplin Gosetti, Assoc. Prof. and Interim Provost of Academic Innovation, University of Toledo, USA**



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12:15 – 13:15 Lunch break

13:15 – 15:00 *Round Table: Quality of Higher Education in Bulgaria: Issues and Perspectives*

**MODERATOR : Assoc. Prof., PhD Todor Radev, International University College, Bulgaria**



15:00 – 16:30 *Building Bridges: Improving Interactions between Business and Education*

**MODERATOR: Snejana Slantcheva-Durst, Asst. Prof., College of Education, University of Toledo, USA**

- Branding Employer

**Ina Masleva, HR Expert and Consultant, I'm Consulting Bulgaria**

- Internationalization of Community Colleges

**Gretchen Carroll, Professor, School of Business, Owens Community College, Toledo, USA**

- New Collaborative Practices in Aligning SCHE in Europe and the USA, two representative cases in Europe

**Ivelina Yoveva, International University College, Bulgaria**

- US Community Colleges on Collision Course? Mission and Money

**David Meabon, Assoc. Prof., College of Education, University of Toledo, USA**

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16:30 – 16:45 Coffee Break

16:45 – 17:45 *Sharing Best Practices Worldwide*

**MODERATOR: Gretchen Carroll, Professor, School of Business, Owens Community College, Toledo, USA**

- Research on Successful Workforce Development Programmes of US Community Colleges  
**Dan DeVries, University of Toledo, USA**

- Traineeship Programmes, Tourism HR Management...  
**Ina Masleva, HR Expert and Consultant, I'm Consulting Bulgaria**

- Social Dimension of the SCHE: Instrument for Specific Target Groups to Find their Way in Higher Education  
**Magda Kirsch, Expert of SCHE in the European Bologna Process, Educonsult**

- Higher Education in Kazakhstan and the Bologna Process  
**Gulnar Mukhametkatlieva, Dean of Faculty for Foreign Languages and Tourism, Kainar University, Kazakhstan**



19:00 Buffet-Dinner

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**June 16, 2009**

**09:00 – 10:30**    *The Business-Education Relationship: Strategic Investment in Human Capital*

**MODERATOR: Dr. Vesselin Blagoev, Director University of Portsmouth Programme, International University College, Bulgaria**

- Possibilities for Developing an Associate Degree in Tourism in Bulgaria  
**Stanislav Ivanov, PhD, International University College, Bulgaria**

- US Accreditation and the Quality Maintenance Mechanisms of Community Colleges  
**Rose Kuceyeski, Professor, School of Business, Owens Community College, Toledo, USA**

- The Importance of Stakeholders' Engagement in Programme Quality  
**David Beamont, Special Advisor, Central Michigan University, Center for Charter Schools, USA**



**10:15 – 10:30**    Coffee break

**10:30 – 12:00**    *Building Bridges in Quality Maintenance: Recognition and Accreditation*

**MODERATOR: Jan Nienhuis, LEIDO, Netherlands**

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- Correspondence between Learning Organizations and (East-Eastern) Educational System  
**Jozef Hvorecky, College of Management, Slovakia**

- Enhancing Quality of Teaching and Learning in the US: Factors Supporting Involvement and Development of Part-time Community College Faculty  
**Jamilah Jones, PhD student and CC Presidential Fellow, University of Toledo, USA**

- **Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area: a General View on Actual Developments**  
**Magda Kirsch, Expert of SCHE in the European Bologna Process, Educonsult.**

12:00 – 13:30 Lunch break

13:30 – 16:30 *Building Bridges in Quality Maintenance: Professional Performance*

**MODERATOR: Snejana Slantcheva-Durst, Asst. Prof., College of Education, University of Toledo, USA**

- Owens Community College: Aligning Institutional Leadership and Quality through a Shared Leadership Model  
**Gretchen Carroll, Prof., School of Business, Owens Community College, Toledo, USA**  
**Rose Kuceyeski, Prof., School of Business, Owens Community College, Toledo, USA**

- Country Specific Examples: the Example of Braganca Polytechnic Institute, Portugal  
**Louis Pais and Prof. Joao Sobrihno, Braganca Polytechnic Institute, Portugal**

- Monitoring of the Pilots with the Associate Degree in the Netherlands: Outcomes, Quality Assurance and Actual Developments  
**Hans Daale, Chairman of LEIDO, Netherlands**

Closing Remarks and Building the Bridge to the Next Conference in Toledo  
**Snejana Slantcheva-Durst, Asst.Prof., College of Education, University of Toledo, USA**



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**16:30 – 18:30** Special edition of the film “Geratsite” – Case of implementation of national strategy for developing education and culture through cinema

**June 17, 2009**

**Visit of International University College  
&  
Tourist Objects in North-Eastern Bulgaria**

**11:00 – 11:10** Gathering of the group to leave to Dobrich

**11:10 – 12:00** Organized travel to Dobrich

**12:00 – 14:30** Visit of International University College

**13:30 – 14:30** Lunch at International University College

**14:30 – 14:40** Gathering of the group to leave to Balchik

**14:45 – 15:15** Organized travel to Balchik

**15:15 – 16:15** Visit of the famous botanic garden of Balchik and the queen’s castle

**16:15 – 16:30** Gathering of the group to leave to Cape Kaliakra

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16:30 – 17:00 Organized travel to Cape Kaliakra

17:00 – 18:00 Visit of the Cape Kaliakra and its medieval Fortress

18:00 – 18:10 Gathering of the group to leave to Melia Hotel Grand Hermitage, Golden Sands

18:10 – 19:45 Organized travel to Melia Hotel Grand Hermitage, Golden Sands

20:15 Buffet Dinner

### *The Trip...*

All guest had the opportunity to visit the premises of International University College and to meet the team of the College.



Our guests visited together one of the most splendid nature sights in Northeastern Bulgaria :  
Cape Kaliakra

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#### 4. List of the Participants in the Conference

### Recognition and Accreditation of Short-Cycle Higher Education Programmes in Europe and the United States: Aligning Educational Systems

Venue	Melia Hotel Grand Hermitage, Golden Sands, Bulgaria
Date	15-16 June 2009

- Aliyeva, Tamilla, Azerbaijan Medical University, Baku, Azerbaijan
- Antonini, Dominique, Perrimond Institute, Marseille, France
- Bazilova, Gulzhaz, KazHACA, Kazakhstan
- Beaumont, David, Central Michigan University; Center for Charter Schools, USA
- Bernaert, Yves, Educonsult, Leuven, Belgium

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- Blagoev, Vesselin, International College, Sofia, Bulgaria
- Bochkov, Plamen, New Bulgarian University, Sofia, Bulgaria
- Bukova, Anna, Moscow State Forestry University, Moscow, Russia
- Carrol, Gretchen, Owens Community College, Toledo, Ohio, USA
- Daale, Hans, LEIDO, Amsterdam, Netherlands
- Dencheva, Silvena, International University College, Dobrich, Bulgaria
- DeVries, Dan, University of Toledo, Ohio, USA
- George, Christopher, University of Wales Institute, Cardiff, UK
- Grant, Philip, University of Wales Institute, Cardiff, UK
- Guseletova, Elena, Russian State University of Trade and Economics, Moscow, Russia
- Hare, Jacqueline, University of Wales Institute, Cardiff, UK
- Hvorecky, Jozef, College of Management, Bratislava, Slovakia
- Ivanov, Stanislav, International University College, Dobrich, Bulgaria
- Jones, Jamilah, University of Toledo, Ohio, USA
- Kaltchev, Georgi, International University College, Dobrich, Bulgaria
- Kirsch, Magda, Educonsult, Leuven, Belgium
- Kuceyeski, Rose, Owens Community College, Toledo, Ohio, USA
- Kuokouravas, Theo, University of Wales Institute, Cardiff, UK
- Masleva, Ina, I'M Consulting EOOD, Sofia, Bulgaria
- Mukhametkatlieva, Gulnar, Kainar University, Almaty, Kazakhstan
- Nienhuis, Jan, LEIDO, Amsterdam, Netherlands
- Opp, Ron, University of Toledo, Ohio, USA
- Osborne, Paul, University of Wales Institute, Cardiff, UK
- Païs, Louis, Bragança Polytechnic Institute, Bragança, Portugal
- Poplin Gosetti, Penny, University of Toledo, Ohio, USA
- Radev, Todor, International University, Dobrich, Bulgaria
- Roberts, Andrew, University of Wales Institute, Cardiff, UK
- Sarkisyan, Agop, Academy of Economics, Svishotov, Bulgaria
- Slantcheva-Durst, Snejana, College of Education, University of Toledo, Ohio, USA
- Snel, Ria, LEIDO, Amsterdam, Netherlands
- Sobrinho, Joao, Bragança Polytechnic Institute, Bragança, Portugal
- Urumova, Fatima, Russian State University of Trade and Economics, Moscow, Russia
- Van Zwol, Marjanne, LEIDO, Amsterdam, Netherlands
- Vunova, Kameliya, International University College, Dobrich, Bulgaria
- Walker, Darren, University of Wales Institute, Cardiff, UK
- Yoveva, Ivelina, International University College, Dobrich, Bulgaria

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## II. Achievements of the Conference

### *Introduction: At a Glance... Short-Cycle Higher Education in Europe and the United States*

The importance of Short-Cycle Higher Education has considerably expanded its scope in Europe and the United States from the mid of 20<sup>th</sup> century until today. At the Lisbon European Council in March 2000, government leaders set the EU a 10-years mission to become the *most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustained economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion*. This phenomenon took part of a broad development process at world level where Education and Training

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systems have a key role to play in making this vision a reality.<sup>1</sup> Short-Cycle Higher Education takes its active role in the world development...

Two main factors have stimulated the extension of Short-Cycle Higher Education. One is the need to expand tertiary education in response to pressure from student aspirations and from the perception that in a flexible, knowledge-based economy, more people from varied social and economic backgrounds will need high-level skills such as communication, problem-solving and advanced vocational skills (OECD, 2004). The other factor takes on the pressure of market demand towards the development of programmes which are more accessible, affordable and responding to the professionals' demands.

Short Cycle Higher Education Systems have been developed in order to respond to the following needs and challenges:

- ✓ Increasing demand of higher education;
- ✓ Greater equality of educational opportunity;
- ✓ Growing need for a diversified range of qualified manpower;
- ✓ Generation and facilitation of Innovational Practices not usually accepted or adopted at the universities;
- ✓ Decentralization and Regionalization of higher education.

In the light of the transversal and complex process of the development of Short-Cycle Higher Education, a large group of scientists, representatives of Educational and Business Organizations were committed to meet Today's challenges of Short Cycle Higher Education in June 2009 identified in the problematic of Recognition and Accreditation of SCHE in Europe and the United States through the alignment of Educational Systems.

## *1. SCHE Area in the Netherlands*

Higher education in the Netherlands is divided into two branches: higher professional education (HBO) and university education (WO). These types of education are provided by HBO institutions ("hogescholen") and universities as well.

### **HBO – higher professional education**

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<sup>1</sup> "Tertiary Short Cycle Education in Europe: A Comparative Study", Kirsch M., Bernaert Y., Norgaard S., EURASHE, 2003 (p.4)

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HBO institutions provide theoretical and practical training for occupations for which a higher vocational qualification is either required or useful. Afterwards, graduates find employment in various fields, including middle and high-ranking jobs in trade and industry, social services, health care and the public sector.

### **University Education (WO)**

Universities combine academic research and teaching. University education focuses on training in academic disciplines, the independent pursuit of scholarship and the application of scholarly knowledge in the context of a profession and aims to improve understanding of the phenomena studied in the various disciplines and generate new knowledge.

The distribution of government grants to the universities partly depends on such performance indicators as the number of diplomas, first-year students and doctoral degrees. Universities may divide their state aid between “education” and “research” as they see fit. Each university bears the cost of its housing and infrastructure.

Institutions for Higher professional education (HBo institutions) receive funding from different sources. In complement to government grants, these institutions rely on tuition and fees and revenue from external work. Of the total state contribution, nearly 92% is made available in the form of a lump sum.

In 2002, the important change in higher education was the implementation of the Bachelor’s and Master’s degree system, intended to give students further international mobility. The purpose of this new shift is to make the study programmes easily recognizable and characterized with high quality.

### **Quality Assurance and Accreditation:**

A guaranteed standard of higher education, and alignment with the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area, is maintained through a national system of legal regulation and quality assurance, in the form of accreditation. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science is responsible for legislation pertaining to education and the agriculture and public health ministries play an important role in monitoring the content of study programmes in their respective fields.

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## About NVAO (Accreditation organization in the Netherlands and Flanders)

This organization was established by international treaty and it ensures the quality of higher education in the Netherlands and Flanders. NVAO independently ensures the quality of higher education in the Netherlands and Flanders by assessing and accrediting programmes and contributes to enhancing this quality.

In 2000, the Netherlands and Flanders expressed the intention to establish a joint accreditation organization. This organization would be charged with the accreditation of higher education programmes in both the Netherlands and Flanders.

Short-Cycle Higher Education degree is new to the Netherlands – the Associate degree was officially introduced in 2006. The new degree reflects the government's efforts to find effective pathways to open the higher education system to different student populations and to further the development of the higher levels skills and building lifelong learning networks and recognition of prior learning.

The pilot Associate Degree is provided in 20 hogescholen and two private institutions. The business sector plays an important role in the introduction of the new degree. This innovative turn in the education policy in the Netherlands includes basic principles and procedures for recognition of prior learning on the basis of learning outcomes regardless of whether the knowledge, skills and competences were acquired through formal, non-formal or informal learning paths.

### • *Trends of European SCHE Area*

- 1960s- wider diversification according to types of higher education institutions
- 1980s-1990s- Academic "drift" and "upgrading" of non-university institutions
- 1999 – the Signatory of the Bologna Declaration
- 2003 – First study of Tertiary SCHE (Kirsch et al. , 2003)
- 2008 – EQF – SCHE through the prism of student outcomes
- SCHE exists in all Bologna signatory countries, except Belgium, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Liechtenstein, Poland, Portugal, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia



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- There are established links between higher education and short-cycle higher education in all Bologna signatory countries, except Germany, Netherlands and Czech Republic
- Legislation on SCHE is recent in European countries – less than 10 years
- In most European countries where SCHE is recognized it is funded by the State
- Most SCHE programmes take 1-2-3 years

### ***Conclusions:***

- SCHE contributes to the social dimension of higher education and to expansion of lifelong learning and life-wide learning opportunities
- Need for a Common title of the delivered diplomas in SCIs
- Multiple learning pathways for students are an asset in the perspective of lifelong learning as part of the SCHE area
- Close-cooperation between HEIs and institutes delivering SCHE has an impact on the quality of SCHE and on the motivation for students to go on to courses later on

## ***2. SCHE Area in Bulgaria***

Drift on the waves of world tendencies of education such as 1) expansion of the higher education, 2) diversification, 3) lifelong learning, 4) changing nature of knowledge and skills, Bulgaria observes increasing the number of students accessing to higher education growing two and a half times. More than 60% of all high school graduates enroll in higher education programmes.

The great variety of higher education institutions in Europe and in the world is a response to the market demand for different types of professionals. SCHE programmes focus on professional skills necessary for full integration in the labour market. It is observed that there is a variable range of higher education institutions in Europe and around the world providing the population with greater opportunities for inclusion into the education system at various lifetime stages and with a wider choice among types and levels of education. In Bulgaria, however, the structure of higher education institutions is outdated and needs further developments.

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The observed tendency in most of the higher education institutions is offer of too many study programmes in too many professional fields whereas the choice for further qualifications remains limited. Nevertheless, due to phenomena such as globalization, transformation in various spheres (in society, industrial development, types of labour products, equipment and technology, organization and management), new products, new markets and other factors, individuals are compelled to learn continuously in order to remain competent and competitive.

This is why “continuing education” is an important element of the development of higher education in Bulgaria. As a result after signing the Bologna Declaration, has been the integration of the concept of lifelong learning into the framework of higher education.

Nowadays, a few number of education institutions in Bulgaria assign themselves the crucial task to reorient their system behaviour – from this time on, their task is to teach students to learn on their own. Bulgarian education institutions need to adopt a systematic approach as a principle pathway to modernization of education.

Bulgarian government aspires to harmonize Bulgarian education with the European Education Area supporting and implementing decisions that have already been taken at European level:

- Incorporation of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System;
- Introduction of Bachelor’s and Master’s degree;
- Modernization of National Qualification Framework.

At the present moment, many universities continue to be administratively dependent on the State as it is the State that determines the number of students who could enroll, the budget of the State universities, the scale of investments etc. The system of Higher Education in Bulgaria remains disconnected from the demands of the labour market and the individual “consumers” of education.

- ***Trends of Bulgarian SCHE Area***

- Shortening the Education duration
- Broadening the access to higher education
- Enlarging the network frontiers of non-university higher education institutions

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- Arising needs to involve higher education institutions in LL programmes – technological development, competitiveness and adaptability to the labour market.
- Continuing dependence on state funds of Higher education
- Two-year post secondary education is not considered part of higher education

### ***Conclusions:***

- Need for a change in the system – better control on the students during their studies – better quality of their education
- The variety of higher education institutions in Europe and across the globe provides better opportunity for social inclusion and larger access to education at different stages of lifetime.
- The business holds sporadic connection with academic world and is not interested in short –cycle higher education programmes, because mostly unknown, do not seem to meet its needs and the lifelong learning system is therefore poorly developed.
- The short-cycle graduation and labour market entering would provide many people the opportunity to return to the higher education system and continue further on their education cycle.

### ***3. SCHE Area in USA***

The United States of America are one of the first countries providing strong impetus to the development of education and training. The most important form of education is SCHE (short-cycle higher education) which is gaining powerful positions in the education areas in response to socio-economic arisen needs of the American society:

- ✓ Economic crisis and the need for skilled professionals in a knowledge-based economy;
- ✓ Need to raise educational attainment nation-wide in order to remain globally competitive;
- ✓ Needs for regional Initiatives and community invigoration.

Short-Cycle Higher Education holds evolving parameters shortly defined as : “post-secondary education of mainly terminal character designed to train students for middle level manpower positions...” provided in institutions established outside universities (SCIs)... in a few countries the universities offer a certain number of such short-cycle programmes, while

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in others this training is the responsibility of secondary level establishments (technical training in Sweden, teaching training in France) (OECD, 1973).

This originated definition of SCHE sets a specified and narrow framework of the arising phenomenon of Short-cycle higher education. Two major features characterize SCHE: 1) although OECD used the term of “short-cycle higher education” its major concern was essentially with the institutions offering short-cycle higher education programmes. Those short-cycle higher education institutions (SCIs) were defined as : “all types of post-secondary schools established outside universities... the common denominator of SCIs as defined here is the extra – or non-university character of these establishments which poses for all of them a problem of identity and of appropriate recognition within the overall system of higher education.”

The university-non-university distinction was crucial for understanding the nature of SCIs and of their place and functions in the overall national system of higher education. Based on the relation of these institutions to university establishments, three main models were identified:

*The multipurpose model*, where SCIs a) had close links with universities thus allowing transfer of some students and inter-institutional mobility; b) offered a highly diversified curriculum – both academic and vocational; and c) were generally geared to meet local or regional needs. The Junior or Community Colleges in the US exemplified this model.

*The specialized model*, training mostly graduates of non-academic secondary schools for immediate professional occupation. The SCIs in this model had very limited links with universities, low academic autonomy and offered terminal programs. SCIs in most of Continental Europe shared these characteristics until 1960s.

*The binary model*, represented typically by British polytechnics and the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology in Ontario, Canada, in which higher education is divided into two independent sectors which are separately administered (Ross, 1972; OECD, 1973; Furth, 1973).

Second, SCIs were seen as offering mainly terminal degrees of vocational nature. Later, vocational was often replaced with the term occupational, to signal the distinction between



vocational secondary training and occupational/professional education at the post-secondary level.

Short-Cycle Higher Education in the USA is knit in a definite but very flexible structure. Most institutions implicated in the Short-Cycle Higher Education Area provide 2 year Associate's degree representing the first post-secondary degree. The most important educational branch are the so called Community Colleges which are actually the major SCHE providers in the US. The majority of SCHE degrees and certificates are offered by public-two years institutions which are comprised of community colleges and technical colleges. These institutions offer almost half of all certificates and 77% of all associate degrees in the US.<sup>2</sup>

Three main factor induce the Community Colleges to become an important and main catalyst of achieving a national knowledge-based economy and society:

- *Economic factors:*
  - ✓ Severe economic crisis and erosion of manufacturing base – need for re-training the workforce
  - ✓ Competitive global knowledge-based economies requires:
    - Shortening of the “degree gap” (difference in the rate of degree production between the USA and its top competitors)
    - Raising of Educational levels of the population:
- *Social factors:*
  - ✓ Need to provide equality of educational opportunity
  - ✓ Need to serve adult and non-traditional students – “the new majority”
  - ✓ Offer opportunities for lifelong learning
- *Financial factors:*
  - ✓ Rising tuition and constrained financial support threaten college affordability for majority of the population.

Community colleges and their programmes are accredited by the regional and professional associations the accredit four-year institutions, too. Institutional accreditation is administered by one of the six Regional Accrediting Organizations which covers the region of the related college. Community colleges mostly have a state-level organization representing them before

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<sup>2</sup> Table (5), “Short-Cycle Higher Education in the United States”, Slantcheva-Durst S., Background Report, 2009, USA

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the policy decision-makers. At federal level, they are represented by the American Association of Community Colleges.

Most of the community colleges increasingly become the first choice for high school graduates by reason of their non standard format of education. Furthermore, the compact format of the provided education at the community colleges attracts more and more students which formal untraditional profile of student – adults, returning workers, college graduates and others. Community colleges in the United States of America are attractive because: 1) graduates from low-income or educationally disadvantaged backgrounds can enroll during the open admission sessions; 2) the community colleges provide affordable fees; 3) flexibility of the provided courses and study programmes.

- ***Trends of American SCHE Area***

- Short-cycle system respond to increasing demand for higher education
- Short-Cycle higher education contribute towards greater equality of educational opportunity
- SCHE allows decentralization and regionalization of higher education.
- Accelerating power position of 2-year institutions, and mostly community colleges.
- Community Colleges Play active role in international involvement
- In spite of the strong commitment in international partnerships, few students study abroad
- Community colleges are characterized by the identical to the nation features but different to the state programmes.

***Conclusions:***

- Need to serve adult and nontraditional students - “the new majority”
- At Federal Level, President Obama’s administration embraces the ambition to renew America’s status as the world leader in College Attainment.
- International education must be part of the community’s college mission
- Evolving role of community colleges in fostering workforce

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### III. Conclusion

#### *“Closing the Equity Gap in Higher Education...”<sup>3</sup>*

Nowadays, the scale of universities and short-cycle institutions striving to align educational levels and to implement “social inclusion” for disadvantaged individuals is increasing and becomes a competitive ladder of the globalization of short-cycle higher education.

The deepest typical trend of SCHE is to close socio-economic gaps through the establishment of divers SCHE programmes and partnerships, flexible enrollments, open international scientific forums of rethinking national and international policies for education in a general framework.

Today’s education system shows that there is still a rich set of opportunities before all Higher education institutions to re-conceptualise what higher education could and should offer to society, from a social, multi-cultural and “free-open” perspective.

The main step it is needed to be done is to all for “closing the equity gap in higher education” and to give every one his (her) chance in life because:

“Closing the Equity Gap provides a radical new look at the issues facing higher education in UK and the USA. As both countries seek to widen participation so that those from low-income groups can benefit from higher education, they are faced with the dilemma to finance – becoming increasingly reliant on higher fees and delayed debt – and securing change within universities and colleges. ...The analysis...need to shift the paradigm from thinking merely about participation in higher education to focussing on the success of that

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<sup>3</sup> “Closing The Equity Gap In Higher Education – New Analysis On The Challenges Ahead”, Banks E., [http://www.innovations-report.com/html/reports/social\\_sciences/report-45058.html](http://www.innovations-report.com/html/reports/social_sciences/report-45058.html), 07.06.2005

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participation.... If the student community is changing, and we have moved from an elite system of higher education where only a few participate, to a universal system where everyone is expected to be able to access HE, the key question is to what extent does higher education have to change its approach”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> idem.

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