Research on vocational education and training at the crossroads of transition in central and eastern Europe

Olga Strietska-Ilin

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VOLUME 3

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Training and employment perspectives for lower qualified people
Jitte Brandsma

Part Six: VET research activities outside the European Union
Research on vocational education and training at the crossroads of transition in central and eastern Europe
Olga Strietska-Ilina

VET research in other European and non-European countries
Uwe Lauterbach et al.

Annex: VET related research on behalf of the European Commission
Research on vocational education and training in the current research framework of the European Commission
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Targeted socio-economic research (TSER): project synopses
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Research on vocational education and training at the crossroads of transition in Central and Eastern Europe

Olga Strietska-Iлина

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Abstract

The following analysis provides an overview of state of affairs in vocational education and training research in eleven countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The report attempts to analyse the responsiveness of the VET research to the major socio-economic challenges occurring in the process of transition. The objective of the study is to identify main research gaps and to bring about better transparency on VET research, its achievements and failures in these countries. The report is a first attempt to map the existing research results in the field of VET in the region, and therefore has an illuminative rather than evaluative character.

The author argues that the VET research in CEE has found itself in the middle of a double reform process, where transition from a state planned to a market economy has been multiplied by the global changes. The VET research has successfully reacted to major challenges of the transformation period. It is, however, argued that there have been certain drawbacks, where national research was not in place to justify the transfer of foreign models and had a somewhat passive role in the reform process in the initial stage of the transition. Nevertheless, the recent years demonstrated the growing maturity of the national research and its increasing importance in the support of the reform process. Although there is still a lack of comprehensive conceptual strategies that embrace different aspects of initial and continuing vocational education and training in the perspective of lifelong learning, the shift from highly fragmented research has been noticed.

The report demonstrates systemic inefficiencies (organisational, institutional, financial) that create obstacles to research development. The hardship of the transition period caused many challenges for the research community, the brain drain not being the least. The paper comes with the set of recommendations for the support of comprehensive multidisciplinary VET research in the priority fields, as well as suggests organisational measures to make the research process more efficient.
# Table of contents

1. **Introduction** .................................................................................................................................................. 211
   1.1 Approach and definition of the scope of the study .................................................................................. 211
   1.2 Objectives and hypotheses ...................................................................................................................... 212
   1.3 Methods and sources .............................................................................................................................. 213

2. **Context and challenges of transition for vocational education and training in CEE** ....................................................... 214
   2.1 Research and democracy ....................................................................................................................... 214
   2.2 Recent socio-economic developments ................................................................................................. 215
   2.3 Initial setting and future challenges ...................................................................................................... 221
   2.4 Conclusions ........................................................................................................................................... 223

3. **A conceptual framework for the analysis of change in regard to education and training** .................................................. 224

4. **Institutional framework, organisation and development of VET research in CEE** ................................................................. 226
   4.1 Institutional framework of VET research ............................................................................................... 226
   4.2 Financial aspects and coordination of VET research ........................................................................... 231
   4.3 Role of international activities .............................................................................................................. 236

5. **Systems, concepts, requirements, arrangements: what does VET research in CEE enquire into?** ............................................ 244
   5.1 Research into systems in the lifelong learning perspective ....................................................................... 244
     5.1.1 Research on financing of VET ........................................................................................................ 248
     5.1.2 CVT and HRD ................................................................................................................................ 249
     5.1.3 Teaching and learning: a one-off task or a lifelong perspective? .................................................. 252
     5.1.4 Social partnership ......................................................................................................................... 254
   5.2 Contextual research ................................................................................................................................... 255
     5.2.1 Employment and unemployment: factors of transition ................................................................... 255
     5.2.2 Human capital and social exclusion: the prize and price of transition? ....................................... 258
     5.2.3 Transition from school to working life: transition in transitory societies .................................... 261
     5.2.4 Labour market requirements and skills mismatch .......................................................................... 263
     5.2.5 Prognostic research and strategies ................................................................................................. 265

6. **Conclusions and recommendations** ............................................................................................................. 270
   6.1 Conclusions: shortcomings and ‘gaps’ ...................................................................................................... 270
   6.2 Policy implications .................................................................................................................................... 274

References ................................................................................................................................................................. 276

Bibliography ......................................................................................................................................................... 281

Annexes ............................................................................................................................................................ 296

Annex 1: Tables ..................................................................................................................................................... 296
Annex 2: Diagrams of systems of education of eleven CEE countries ........................................................................... 298
Annex 3: List of the international institution networks involved in VET ........................................................................ 309
Annex 4: List of national institutions and associations involved in VET analysis and policy ........................................................................ 314
1. Introduction

1.1 Approach and definition of the scope of the study

This part of Cedefop’s research report is a comparative analytical overview of research in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) in the field of vocational education and training (VET). The study covers a wide geographical area of eleven countries: Albania, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. The countries were chosen on the principle of the geopolitical ‘commonality’ of the region of CEE. All countries in question share a socialist past and are undergoing the reform process from a state-owned to a market oriented economy. All countries, apart from Albania, are candidates for membership in the European Union. All countries are covered by the European Community’s Phare assistance programme, and therefore, in this text will be referred to terminologically as Phare countries or partner countries. In spite of the certain degree of similarity, the countries of the CEE region differ greatly, and do so from their very point of departure in the pre-reform period, at which time Slovenia belonged to Yugoslavia, (the most democratic and open of all socialist countries), the Baltic republics were part of the Soviet Union, Albania remained in almost complete isolation, and all other countries also differed greatly in terms of their socialist “pathways”. The countries undertook different approaches to economic reform, and the reform progress that has thus far been achieved also varies to a great extent.

From a cultural perspective, the region enjoys vast diversity, which has implications for all aspects of society. For this reason, generalisations about the region and the typologies used in the study represent general trends rather than judgements on each particular country, and certain reservations must be considered when looking at different countries.

The paper provides an overview of state of art of VET research against the background of vocational education and training in the context of socio-economic development in the partner countries. The cultural diversity presents a semantic challenge for understanding not only of what vocational education and training is, but also for what research into VET means. In this view, VET is understood in its broader sense, which embraces not only initial education but also continuing vocational training (CVT). The overview analyses research that has been produced so far on the problems, challenges and developments in the relationships between VET, the labour market, and the economic and social aspects of the reform process in the countries undergoing transformation. Therefore, the study also looks at contextual research, primarily dealing with the labour market.

There have been several attempts to give a definition of research into VET (e.g. Sellin and Grollman1 (1999)), but it is difficult to find an exhaustive one. Therefore, we will adopt the following definition of education research and development (the ‘Frascati Manual’): ‘Educational R&D is the systematic, original investigation or inquiry and associated developmental activities concerning: the social, cultural, economic and political context within which education systems operate; the purpose of education; the process of teaching, learning and personnel development; the work of educators; the resources and organisational arrangements to support educational work; the policies and strategies to achieve educational objectives; and the social, cultural, political and economic outcomes of education’.

Without attempting to give an exhaustive definition of VET research, for the purpose of this paper and with a certain amount of oversimplification, we understand research into VET as those analytical studies that base

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1) Sellin and Grollman use a too rigid definition of VET research in the view of the scientifity of criteria and methodology. Through this strictness perhaps we will not be able to take count of analytical studies produced in the framework of development projects and even some applied research. The definition also overlooks the labour environment and the world of work as such, looking instead at psychological and behavioural aspects in the socio-economic context (see more Sellin and Grollman 1999).
themselves on accurate methodology and focus on one of two aspects: the requirements, and the process and the outcomes of VET.

The first aspect involves not only research into VET as such, but also and above all contextual research aimed at the identification of social and economic change (both macro and micro), labour market requirements, the development of new technology, the changing nature of work, the shifts in job profiles and qualification systems, the identification of vocational standards and the approximation of curriculum development to meet the needs of employment, key skills and competency-based qualifications, financial incentives to support training provision and access to training, problems of the transition from schooling into the labour market and so on.

The second aspect involves research on teaching and learning methods, mechanisms of quality assurance, evaluation of study results, certification, curriculum innovation, modular training, etc. Although the traditional division between fundamental (or basic) research, applied research and development projects is used hereon in the text, the division is somewhat artificial and must be considered with some limitations. It is rather difficult, or almost impossible, to distinguish pure examples of each type, as most projects contain some elements of another type. Moreover, to draw a strict line between applied research and development projects might in some cases be not only artificial but also misleading. Pure theoretical research is very rare and one may even question the significance of such research without thorough empirical support. Thus, the aforementioned typology is used in very general terms.

1.2 Objectives and hypotheses

The objective of the study is to provide an analysis of current research in the field of initial and continuing VET in CEE with reference to its theoretical and methodological foundations, its research results and its research “efficiency” in policy making and practice. The overview of VET research seeks to identify the structures and “products” of research in VET, irrespective of whether the research has been produced in or outside the region. Therefore, the study covers research at the international level, the national level, and when available also at the regional or local level. Although an analysis of the institutional framework of VET research is not a primary task of the study, the paper does make an effort to identify deficiencies in the research systems of the countries. The paper does not attempt to assess either the institutes involved in VET research or the studies and analyses produced by them. This is not our objective.

The major objective of the study is to identify the main research gaps in the field of VET (areas of research, which are insufficiently covered) and systemic drawbacks that create obstacles for further research progress. Furthermore, the overview of VET research in CEE attempts to bring about the transparency of analyses in the field of VET produced in the region and to give examples of good practice in VET research where possible.

Thus the study is composed in the following way: first, it looks at the main challenges for VET research in socio-economic context; second, it examines the institutional and financial environment of VET research; then it looks at types of research and topics which are tackled by VET research in CEE, and its basic findings in thematic clusters (research into systems and contextual research) and finally, the paper defines the problem areas in CEE VET, which are not covered by research – the research ‘gaps’. The concluding part of the study offers a set of recommendations for policy makers, researchers and practitioners at both the national and international levels.

The paper hypothetically suggests that identified priorities for research into VET will often coincide among the countries of CEE. The nature of the transitional period in CEE along with the process of globalisation and change has placed special importance on socio-economic contextual research as far as VET is concerned. Therefore, priorities will concentrate on the requirement aspects of research (see above). The future priorities of research are not necessarily gaps, i.e. neglected or
abandoned areas of research, and in many cases will be dictated by the challenges of recent developments, introducing either new areas of research or rather new challenges in areas explored. The problems and priorities of VET research in CEE are, hypothetically speaking, not unique to the region, and in the majority of cases they will be similar to ones seen in the EU member states. However, the degree of specificity of the regions and the milestones of recent socio-political and economic change will to some extent render the future needs and objectives of research also specific in nature. Hypothetically we may suggest that VET research has a higher level of production and maturity in the countries where VET itself enjoys a long-term tradition and prestige.

1.3 Methods and sources

The study was commissioned by Cedefop and was supported by the European Training Foundation (ETF)² for the preparation of additional short overviews produced either by the National VET Observatories or by experts in the CEE countries nominated by them. The Czech National Observatory of Vocational Training and the Labour Market at the National Training Fund coordinated the work of the ten sub-contractors. National Observatories are small institutions established under the initiative of the ETF in the partner countries to provide accurate and up-to-date information on VET and the labour market. Different types of institutions host the National Observatories, varying between the governmental and the non-governmental sector, research institutes, academic centres, development agencies, independent non-profit foundations and private establishments.

Due to the wide scope of our overview on the state of affairs of VET research in CEE, in most cases only the recent studies and papers were considered, i.e. not extending beyond the period of the last two years, and only in few cases we looked at earlier analyses. The paper is based on four types of sources: National Observatories were sub-contracted

1. for preparation of a short overview on the basis of the standard Terms of Reference, with a commonly identifiable structure; and

2. for delivery of publications and other materials that represent research results in their countries (theoretical studies, surveys, reports, evaluations, etc.

3. The ETF commissions thematic analytical projects mostly with the help and direct participation of the National Observatories, but sometimes with the assistance of other national experts and institutes. On the basis of these thematic reports, cross-country, comparative reviews are produced by international experts or the ETF themselves. The transnational reports and sometimes the country thematic reports served as another important source of information for the present paper.

4. Additionally, studies commissioned by other international institutions as well as international statistics were used (OECD, World Bank, European Commission, Cedefop, ETF, Unesco, etc.).

In respect to the latter, it is important to note that not all, international studies are produced with the direct or indirect participation of national experts. Therefore, the paper might not always provide an adequate impression of state of art of research within the countries of CEE. This is especially true in the case of some of the less developed countries, where research has not been a priority in recent years, national analytical works have been largely abandoned and consequently foreign expertise has represented the foremost analytical operation there.

The summary of preliminary findings was presented first at a National Observatories’ meeting in Tampere, Finland in November

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2) The European Training Foundation is an agency of the European Union which works in the field of vocational education and training in Central and Eastern Europe, the New Independent States, Mongolia and the Mediterranean partner countries and territories. The Foundation also provides technical assistance to the European Commission for the Tempus Programme.
1999, and later at the conference \textit{Shaping social innovation and VET – the contribution of Leonardo surveys and analyses projects}, in December 1999, where main priorities of VET research in CEE were presented. Comments from the audience were taken into account as well as commentary on the draft version of the paper, which was distributed to National Observatories and selected experts. The author is extremely grateful to all those who did their best in collecting information and commentary on the paper in the given limited time frame\(^3\). Despite the numerous contributors to the preparation of the paper, the author takes complete responsibility for statements expressed herein.

The author had to rely mainly on the information provided by the National Observatories, although a great deal of additional publications, expert judgements and comments were used. Given the limited time frame and the broad scope of the study, the analysis could only provide a general overview of the state of art of VET research in the region. The author had to take into account the natural limitations of the study. In some countries more materials were available in English than in others. The country background papers differed in terms of the quality and the scope of information and reference materials provided. For instance, there was very limited access to studies and other research materials produced in Hungary, and the country overview on research provided rather vague information. Another important limitation must be mentioned with regard to Albania, where most statistical data is not available, which made the inclusion of the country in the analysis very difficult.

Therefore, the analysis is not completely balanced and some countries are more comprehensively presented than others. Areas of research might also be presented with a certain imbalance, as it highly depends on the specialisation of the institutes or experts involved in the preparation of the paper. In the identification of country-specific research gaps, the author also had to rely on reporting from the countries, where in many cases, however, this was prepared from the perspective of one institute without a consensus necessarily being reached on a national level. Therefore, the so-called research gaps in the countries may have a different meaning, varying from neglected research areas to topics that have received considerable attention from researchers but need further elaboration. Taking into account all aforementioned shortcomings, we must still point out that this paper is the first attempt to analyse the research situation in CEE in the field of VET and could act as a useful tool for discussion. A more in-depth analysis may be useful in the future, commissioned in a series of papers on specific topics of VET research, in order to avoid rendering the scope of analysis too broad and to a certain extent fusing the task as a result.

\section*{2. Context and challenges of transition for vocational education and training in CEE}

\subsection*{2.1 Research and democracy}

For half a century, scholarly discourse in CEE was dominated by writing in the spirit of official political rhetoric. At the same time one should not ignore the tremendous role the research community and intellectual forums did play in supporting democratic ideas under the previous regime and the role of re-
search in the advancement of new ideas immediately after the break-up of the socialist system. Resourceful thinking and an intellectual debate appeared to be the main driving force of change at the end of the 1980s. The new polity introduced new chances for the research but also new challenges.

Of all political arrangements, it is democracy that is the political context most fertile for science, ‘because it encourages and strengthens the scientific ethos’ (Kazancigil and Makinson 1999 p.261). Approached from the opposite direction, ‘democracy requires an interested, competent, knowledgeable, educated public’ (Ibid, p. 262). It requires an elaboration of the reform rational by researchers, and researchers seek for recognition and public consensus on the value of this rational. Democratic polity demands a scientific background for political decisions and thus creates a favourable environment for research.

The new universal democratic values in science have introduced the principle of diversity into scientific thoughts and traditions, cultural pluralism, academic autonomy, and scientific freedom. Research in CEE could not remain in isolation, and in the environment of the global internationalisation of the research community, the CEE countries have gained the most from benchmarking comparisons with contemporary international scientific achievements. In the field of VET, the modern Western theories and concepts of the systems and content of education served as a point of reference for an elaboration of the national concept of VET reform. The initial ‘stocktaking’ phase of the reform has expired in most countries of CEE, and a turning point has now been reached when the scientific community is to elaborate its own national concepts and approaches. Innovation in the field of VET on the basis of foreign know-how turns to original national innovative abilities in research and exchange with the international community on the basis of equal partnership.

This is an important challenge for the CEE research community which is undergoing a transformation itself. In the past, not only political rhetoric dominated the research but in addition the forms of research were influenced by the regime. Applied research had not been sufficiently employed, as the regime did not require support for political arguments with empirical data, or if it did, it often turned to falsification and scientific discourse. VET research, to the same extent as VET itself, served the political power and was fully dominated by it, not being an equal partner of the decision-maker but rather an instrument, serving the needs of the centrally planned economy with the precise provision of the workforce.

At present the research community in CEE is pursuing global developments in science: internationalisation, universal principles and culturally-centred concepts, multidisciplinarity of research, inter-institutional cooperation, diversification of the institutional base of research (incorporation of civil society and the private sector), cooperation in decision-making and in the world of employment, putting results into practice. The transitional context, however, is not always favourable and imposes certain implications on the development of research in CEE at the present time. For instance, the current interests of research are largely defined by their financial needs, and so turn to applied research, while theoretical elaborations are largely abandoned. For many researchers this presents the dilemma of the choice between ‘paid’ research or other work and private scientific interests. In the following sections we shall see what the main socio-economic and political challenges for VET research are. Further we shall also look at what the shortcomings of the institutional, organisational and financial contexts of VET research are, and where the VET research in CEE has or has not been successfully addressing the challenges of transition.

2.2 Recent socio-economic developments

All eleven countries in question had a four-decade history of socialism before 1989, following either the Soviet pattern or their own socialist path (Albania, Yugoslavia). During socialist rule, the region maintained member-
ship in CMEA\(^4\), which involved a division of labour between the countries, with specialisation in the production of certain goods. Therefore, after the years of cooperation within CMEA, the countries suffered from overspecialisation in particular industries and agricultural products. Vocational training, being closely linked to enterprises, and education in general, and provided in accordance with a meticulously calculated manpower supply for the state planned economy, repeated the pattern of overspecialisation of the economy itself, with narrow branches of specialisation at the top. Training was often directed towards lifetime jobs (ETF 1999a). The nature of the centrally planned economy was reflected in an under-representation of market-oriented branches, for instance in the services sector. Poor technological development in the economy was reflected in poor equipment for education. The school system and as well as the content of education were defined by the state and its structures, neglecting modern innovative methods of curriculum development, teaching and learning. Passive learning and encyclopaedic knowledge (Parkes et al. 1999) along with an old-fashioned mechanical mediation of the knowledge defining teaching methods, were features of schooling prior to 1989.

The process of democratic and economic reform began in CEE countries between 1989 and 1991. The political transition commenced in most countries in 1989 (with the exception of the Baltic states and Slovenia which gained independence in 1991), but substantial market reforms were not initiated before 1991 (with the exception of Hungary and Poland, where reforms started before 1990).

Since the beginning of the process of economic restructuring, the progress achieved in transforming economies into competitive and dynamic markets has differed to a significant extent. The early 1990s were characterised by a collapse in output and a decrease in labour productivity throughout the entire region. GDP in terms of output volume fell by at least 20% in all countries at the beginning of transition, and only in Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia had the GDP by 1998 re-gained its pre-transition level (in Poland it was some 17% higher than in 1989) (European Commission 1999, p. 52). Productivity growth has been a feature of the majority of countries in the region in recent years, although output per person employed in the Czech Republic is still at the pre-transition level. In Bulgaria, Romania (European Commission 1999) and Albania, both output per person and GDP are well below the pre-transition level. These countries have yet to rationalise their economy, making it more efficient, and reducing the excess in manpower in industry and agriculture.

At the beginning of the economic transition from a planned to a market economy, in most CEE countries there was an immense drop in employment in the state-sector industry, which was then followed by a steady decline. Whilst there has been a net creation of jobs in the private sector, it could not absorb the entire labour shift from the state sector. This resulted in continually increasing unemployment. Even in the countries that initiated intensive economic reform in the early 1990s and where growth in employment has been stable over the last four years, this increase in employment was still unable to compensate for job losses in comparison with the situation in 1989. In 1998, the average employment rate in CEE countries (with the exception of Albania, where comparable data are missing) was around 63%, slightly above the EU average of 61%, with the highest employment rates, at around 70%, registered in Romania, Estonia and the Czech Republic (68%), and the lowest, at around 55%, in Hungary (European Commission 1999). In all three countries with a high rate of employment, however, employment declined in 1998. In the Czech Republic and Romania, the deterioration of the employment situation could also be explained by economic decline (GDP fell by 2.5% and 7% respectively in 1998, see table 1), and above all by the delayed imple-

\(^4\) Council for Mutual Economic Assistance was established in 1959 and included Albania (only until 1962 when the country stopped any cooperation within CMEA after the break-up of relations with the USSR), Bulgaria, GDR, Hungary, Poland, Romania, USSR, Czechoslovakia. Yugoslavia had a status of associated partner in CMEA, underlying its independency in the socialist path. The latter was a member of the Non-Aligned Countries.
VET research in CEE countries

The unemployment rate in Hungary and Slovenia was below 8% in 1998, and in all other countries close to 10% (Estonia, Poland, Slovakia) or above 13% (Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania) (European Commission 1999).

Here Tables 1 and 2

In all transition countries unemployment and income decline caused the spreading of poverty and demographic crisis. The demographic situation has been characterized by the sharp fall of natality rates, the rise in mortality in a few CEE countries and the large flows of international migration, particularly from more deprived countries and regions (Ellman 1997). Furthermore, the ageing of the society brings many implications on social policies and the burden on the public budget.

As in the EU Member States, unemployment has fallen in most CEE countries in recent years. The exceptions are Slovakia, Romania, Slovenia, and especially Bulgaria and the Czech Republic, where the unemployment rate increased significantly (see table 2, annex 1). The Czech Republic and Romania have still enjoyed the lowest unemployment rates5, at about 6.5% in 1998, though the tendency toward unemployment is strongly increasing in the Czech Republic. The unemployment rate in Hungary and Slovenia was below 8% in 1998, and in all other countries close to 10% (Estonia, Poland, Slovakia) or above 13% (Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania) (European Commission 1999).

In all transition countries unemployment and income decline caused the spreading of poverty and demographic crisis. The demographic situation has been characterized by the sharp fall of natality rates, the rise in mortality in a few CEE countries and the large flows of international migration, particularly from more deprived countries and regions (Ellman 1997). Furthermore, the ageing of the society brings many implications on social policies and the burden on the public budget.

The structure of unemployment has been changing in all countries, manifesting increasingly higher proportion of young people, fresh graduates, people with low or no qualifica-

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Table 1: Key data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population (thousand)</th>
<th>Territory size (km²)</th>
<th>Working age of population (15-64) (% average annual change)</th>
<th>GDP annual (% change)</th>
<th>GDP per capita in PPP (EUR)</th>
<th>Private Sector (% of GDP)</th>
<th>Inflation (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALB</td>
<td>3 354</td>
<td>28 748</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>8,0</td>
<td>912</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>BUG</td>
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<td>110 993</td>
<td>-0,2</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>3 364</td>
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<td>0,5</td>
<td>-2,3</td>
<td>11 866</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EST</td>
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<td>45 227</td>
<td>-0,8</td>
<td>1,1</td>
<td>4 000</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUN</td>
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<td>5,1</td>
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<td>80</td>
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<td>3,6</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>EU-15</td>
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<td>x</td>
<td>0,3</td>
<td>2,8</td>
<td>19 007</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Notes: 1) estimation; 2) year 1996; 3) year 1997

5) For the reasons of comparability unemployment rates, used here, correspond to the ILO definition. The differences with the registered unemployment rates can be significant in some countries (please, see further elaborated in 5.2.1).
tions, elderly, ethnic minorities and people with disabilities. Youth unemployment increased during the transition period in all countries, and the situation has only started to slowly improve in Bulgaria, Romania and the Baltic States. Youth unemployment as a percentage of the unemployed varied in 1998 from about 22% in Latvia and Lithuania to 43% in Romania (European Commission 1999, pp.146-149, see also table 2). In all countries, with the exception of Romania and Slovenia, job losses brought about the withdrawal of a substantial number of people from the labour force, which led to a significant rise in early retirements and the subsequent fall in the employment rates of those aged 50 and over (European Commission 1999, p.60).

The two age groups mentioned above – the young and the elderly – already suffer from a lower level of participation in the labour market, and when this is multiplied by low or inadequate qualifications, they may find themselves as being at a high risk for marginalisation and social exclusion. This challenge has been reported by many CEE experts. Lithuania represents a peculiar example of an even more dramatic situation due to economic disorder experienced in the early transition period, as a large portion of the youth population (reportedly almost two entire age cohorts) do not possess any vocational qualifications recognised by the state (Gurskiene 1999). Thus if the state will not conceive special training programmes which could help these people to obtain a vocation, they will constantly be found knocking at the doors of the labour exchange office (Dienys and Pusvaskis 1998). The same holds true for the older part of the population, which has an even higher risk of marginalisation in that they face greater difficulties in adapting to the new conditions than do the youth, and also in that they are somewhat disadvantaged in re-training provisions during times of economic hardship, when training authorities often need to prioritise their subsidies for training courses.

### Table 2: Key employment indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Employment rate (15-64) %</th>
<th>Share of employment in agriculture (%)</th>
<th>Share of employment in industry (%)</th>
<th>Share of employment in services (%)</th>
<th>Unemployment rate (15-24%) %</th>
<th>Unemployment rate (%)</th>
<th>Youth unemployment (15-24%) %</th>
<th>Long-term unemployment (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1998</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>SLO</td>
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<td>10,2</td>
<td>41,6</td>
<td>48,2</td>
<td>9,0</td>
<td>7,7</td>
<td>33,6</td>
<td>54,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EU15</strong></td>
<td>61,1</td>
<td>5,0</td>
<td>29,5</td>
<td>65,6</td>
<td>11,1</td>
<td>10,0</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Notes: 1) ILO Methodology; 2) year 1997; 3) year 1995; 4) year 1996; 5) year 1998, 2nd Quarter
In all countries of the region, a certain proportion of the respective age group leaves the general and vocational education system prematurely and without qualifications. It is estimated that this proportion can be up to 20% of the age group in vocational types of education in some countries (ETF 1999b). The factors behind this lack of achievement are essentially not very different from those in EU member states, but obviously, the specificity of the transition period add to their particular dimensions (ETF 1999b).

Although activity rates decreased in all CEE countries in the transition period, employment among women aged 25 to 49 was still higher than in the EU average throughout the entire region (European Commission 1999). Nevertheless, the employment rate among women decreased in at least two countries of the region, Hungary and the Czech Republic, where with the decline in the absorption capacity of the labour market females often withdrew from employment and opted to stay at home. This temporary withdrawal may turn into lifetime exclusion if there are no special supportive measures assisting women in their return to the labour market (including re-integration into the labour market after maternity leave).

The opening up of the economy and the subsequent pressure from competitive markets has pushed the transition process into adjusting to global changes. Although the basic pattern of the employment shift and the restructuring of output and trade was the same in CEE as in the EU and global markets, the excess of manpower in industry and, in some countries, agriculture on the one hand, and the underdevelopment of the services sector on the other, have demanded an even higher rate of adjustment. The characteristics of employment have changed dramatically since 1989, when in majority of countries there was a big shift from the primary and secondary to the tertiary sector.

At least in several CEE countries the issue of unemployment and especially hidden unemployment is closely related to agriculture. A decline in employment in the agricultural sector was registered in the majority of countries, and only in Bulgaria and Romania has employment in agriculture slightly increased (European Commission 1999), absorbing part of the job loss from the industrial sector. Agricultural sector had been overstaffed in the whole region under previous regime, and although substantial shifts in employment from agricultural sector have been marked, still far too many people work in agriculture. In all countries the proportion of employment in the agricultural sector is above the EU average (about 5%), especially in Romania (about 40%), Poland (about 20%) the Baltic States (see more table 2), and Albania. In the situation of reforming economies it is not a facile exercise to provide sufficient amount of jobs in alternative sectors. Therefore, two aspects are important in this view. First, development of infrastructure and agriculture-related jobs in rural areas such as food processing and distribution, banking and other services (Bialecki et al. 1996), agrotourism and other innovative semi-rural activities, which introduce ever-new challenges to traditional skills. In this respect widely available vocational guidance services and re-training courses are crucial. This cannot be implemented without a thorough analysis of regional development and labour market needs. Second, in order to make agriculture more efficient and competitive as compared to a highly subsidized EU agriculture, adaptation of education and training to the new demanding requirements is necessary.

Despite the extensive job losses in industry, the proportion of employment in this sector was still above EU average (about 30%) in the majority of the countries, exceeding 40% in the Czech Republic and Slovenia (table 2). The opening up of CEE markets also introduced an important qualitative shift in the industrial sector, featuring a move from heavy industry and labour intensive production to sophisticated manufacturing and technology and knowledge intensive production. This shift has brought about quickly changing skill requirements in the industrial sector.

Employment in the services sector has risen throughout the entire region since early 1990, although in 1998 it was still far below the EU average (European Commission 1999, for
Thus the absorption capacity of the services sector still maintains the potential to compensate for job losses in industry and agriculture. Taking into account the underdevelopment of the sector and the negligence in the vocational preparation for it during the pre-transition period, the shift in labour towards the services sector often occurred without any specific vocational preparation and large scale re-training activities (this is especially true for less demanding occupations). In order to cope with the competition in open markets in terms of providing client-oriented quality services, the need to pay particular attention to the provision of training in this sector speaks for itself.

The shift in employment from large to small and medium-sized enterprises followed the pattern of EU countries, but saw a greater rate of change due to the restructuring of large state industrial enterprises. In spite of the significant employment shift towards SMEs, the proportion of those employed in large industries in CEE still remains larger than in the EU. Given that the tendency will continue, it is important to take into account the special skill requirements of SMEs, where highly adaptable manpower with multiple qualifications and the ability to learn during their employment life signifies focal challenges for VET. The latter change is closely related to changes in work organisation with flexible job definitions, greater responsibility and independence of employees, more emphasis on team working and adaptability to quickly changing new technologies with ability to ‘undertake a variety of tasks at the shop floor’ (ILO 1998, p. 42).

In addition to the specific problems of transition economies, the CEE countries face the same challenges as EU member states, such as facing demands involved with the globalisation of the economy, technological change, and the rise of the information society. These challenges impose a special role on VET, which is to produce a highly qualified, flexible and employable labour force. The figures in all countries show that the higher the level of education attained, the lower the risk of unemployment (table 3).

The consequences of globalisation have an ambiguous impact on education and training. On the one hand, the increasing importance of knowledge-intensive industries, cumulating new technologies and ICT in the production process, the employment shift to the services sector and SMEs, increase the demand for upskilling and multiskilling. On the other hand, globalisation trends cause a more severe competition, which, under the conditions
of the turmoil of transition economies, increases the danger of troublesome access to training, especially after the completion of the initial training, These challenges impose a demand in the elaboration of national policies and the introduction of special incentives for companies to support training provision. The initial education needs to enhance access and capacities at higher levels of education and provide a broad basis as a primary incentive for lifelong learning.

2.3 Initial setting and future challenges

Virtually all CEE countries had an advanced system of education that had developed in pre-socialist times and during the socialist period. Under the communist regime, elementary and lower secondary education was provided on a compulsory basis by state-run schools. Upper secondary education (ages 14-18) was provided in the three main streams of general, technical and vocational education. General education was provided mostly for a small cohort of potential enrolments into higher education, the capacity and selection of which was rather limited. The republics of the former Soviet Union, in particular Estonia and Lithuania, represented an exception, where VET had very low prestige, general education enjoyed higher participation rates and access to higher education was somewhat better. The vocational education and training available was traditionally broad, enjoying high participation rates and relatively high prestige in many CEE countries. VET had primarily narrow specialisation schemes, often attached to state-run enterprises. VET had to fulfil its basic function of producing semi-skilled and skilled workers to meet the occupational needs of state industry and agriculture, based on the rigid, central manpower-planning framework. The process of democratisation had serious implications for VET in CEE countries. The lack of flexibility in training, too narrow specialisation, over-production of semi-skilled and skilled workers and underproduction of highly qualified labour force were features of the VET systems in CEE at the beginning of the 1990s, at which time VET began to find itself increasingly irrelevant to the quickly changing demands of the reforming economy.

The weakening of state-based enterprises and the process of restructuring the economy worked to fracture the links between enterprises and vocational schools, and as a result the danger of vocational knowledge and skills remaining irrelevant to labour market requirements has increased. Companies, concerned with their own survival on the market have ceased to operate on-site schools and have lost interest in making contracts with vocational schools for the practical training of apprentices. This has led to a situation in which the VET system in CEE countries is predominantly school-based (the case of the Baltic republics, Romania, Bulgaria). In some countries, elements of partial, enterprise-based apprentice training have been preserved, but the extent of this continues to diminish (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland), and only in two countries (Hungary and Slovenia) was the dual system of apprenticeship training either preserved or re-introduced. Hungary is virtually the only country where the attempt to keep enterprises interested in participating in the provision of VET, has been relatively successful as compared to other countries. This is largely due to the early establishment of a system of financing through a national levy fund for vocational training and of tripartite bodies at the national and county levels. Economic hardship in enterprises as well as their shortsightedness have also depreciated training and development in human resources, and participation in CVT in many countries has been decreasing over the past decade.

The communist legacy has had an impact on trends in the participation rates in education even up until the present. The analysis of the Key Indicators (ETF 1998) shows that most of the countries with traditionally high participation in vocational education (ISCED 3) as compared to general education (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovenia) still have substantially higher enrolments in VET. A shift away from VET towards general education is evident in Bulgaria and Hungary. In all CEE countries there has been an increase in enrolments in general education providing preparation for entry into higher education. Lithuania and Estonia that have traditionally seen higher
participation in general education than in VET, experienced an increase in enrolments in VET between 1993 and 1996, but also a further increase in enrolments in general education. Latvia, the only Baltic country that had somewhat higher participation in VET but still very low prestige of it, has experienced a significant increase in enrolments in general education, and a decrease in enrolments in VET during the same period, which has almost levelled proportions enrolled in the two types of upper secondary education. Another country with substantially higher participation in general education as compared to VET is Albania, which suffered an overall drop in enrolments at the upper secondary level in recent years, especially in VET, although there was a slight increase in enrolments in general education in 1996. Additionally, in all countries (except Latvia and Poland) the proportion of enrolments in VET culminating in final examinations (Matura) has also increased. This demonstrates the increasing demand for higher qualification levels among students and on the market. The limited capacities at general secondary and higher education levels in a vast majority of CEE countries do not correspond to the demand of the economy and the society, and support ‘creaming’ of small proportions of age cohorts on the one hand and the underskilling of early school-leavers and the low qualified on the other hand.

The process of democratisation and the transition to a market economy presented the VET system with challenges, and instigated the need for substantial reform. The reform process in VET in CEE featured a high rate of diversification in available education, the introduction of private education, an improvement in access to complete upper-secondary education programmes, especially in general education, and subsequently in higher education. The reform encouraged innovations in teaching methods, standards and curricula, promoting the efficiency of VET, putting an emphasis on core skills and on the relevance of skills/capabilities to the labour market. The reform process has not been completed in any CEE countries yet and is considered rather as an on-going process with a long term orientation. In all CEE countries, reform has been supported by Phare and other international donor support programmes.

Preparation towards EU accession introduced new challenges for the VET systems in the CEE countries. The countries stress an objective of focusing on the development of the human capital, prepared to compete at global markets. The competitiveness, based on low labour costs, clearly is not a solution in a longer run. The CEE countries need to concentrate on investment into human resources, the provision of diversification of the training offer, an increase in the suitability of given qualifications to the new competitive requirements and ensuring equality of opportunity in access to education and training for all. The EU policy guidelines increase the demand for the employability of the work force, which must be tackled by reforming the content of education as well as teaching and learning practices. The goals and contents of education need to integrate education for democracy, the European dimension and multicultural aspects in education. The shift from input quality control to output control of education, and the elaboration of vocational and qualification standards shall be enhanced in close collaboration with social partners. The EU accession prospects will introduce greater labour mobility across Europe; under these circumstances a highly qualified labour force is the key to success. In the context of labour mobility it is also important to ensure transparency and recognition of qualifications, provided in the CEE countries and beyond.

Preparation for the EU accession also involves activation of the process of institution building, improvement of systems of social partnership and enhancement of the principle of subsidiarity in decision making. The latter point is especially important in the context of the initiated regional reform in most CEE countries. The specificity of the region is still large hidden unemployment in rural areas and high redundancy in state enterprises that cause significant differences in unemployment rates between regions. The unemployment is especially high in rural areas and in the regions with heavy industries (coal mining and metallurgy). In the disadvantaged areas further shrinkage of employment in ag-
VET research in CEE countries

...riculture and heavy industries is expected. An elaborate policy, including education and training measures, to promote social cohesion in such regions is important. The process of institution building at a regional level needs to go hand in hand with expert capacity building of institutions and individuals at regional and local levels. The regions need effective collaboration in partnerships, inter-institutional cooperation, exchange of information for analysis and definition of priorities for regional development. The lack of expertise and capacity at a regional level in defining problems and suggesting solutions in a broader perspective (‘think globally, act locally’), may become an obstacle in further development. The next stage of the VET reform process needs a great deal of strategic thinking and conceptualisation in order to utilise the human potential in the CEE countries at all levels.

2.4 Conclusions

In all countries of the region, vital changes have occurred since 1990, the lasting importance of which should not be underestimated. Nevertheless, the progress made by the countries during the period of transition varies markedly throughout the region. The countries that have advanced economically are already experiencing some growth in economic output and employment. However, the excess of manpower in the industrial and agricultural sectors is still an issue in most parts of the region, and a further shift towards the services sector could be expected in the coming years. Job losses and a decrease in employment in the early years of transition, though partly compensated for by the expanding private sector, especially in successful transition economies, still affects large portions of the population. Disadvantaged groups on the labour market have suffered from the increasing rates of unemployment in the region, putting young people and the elderly, especially with low or no qualifications, people with different forms of physical and mental disabilities, and national minorities all at a high risk for social exclusion. The nature of the issue of social exclusion and an analysis of the causes and effects of the situation become especially important under these circumstances. The countries have tackled the problem through specific employment and training measures, the effectiveness of which has been measured in some countries (see further), providing a useful benchmarking perspective for the others.

The crucial challenge faced by the counties of the region is to complete the transition to a competitive market economy while at the same time creating sufficient jobs to avoid excessive rates of unemployment or inactivity (European Commission 1999), especially among the risk groups. The analysis of the socio-economic context has provided evidence of a double transformation in CEE, in which the countries of the region experience not only the single transition from a state to a market economy, but also undergo (and to no less an extent) a global transformation. The latter involves shifts in employment towards SMEs, deindustrialisation, changes in the world of work with the stress being placed on information technology and knowledge-intensive industries.

The opening up of economies to the highly competitive global markets introduces a dilemma of there being a need for ever higher standards of skills and competences (upskilling) and at the same time a lack of training provision by enterprises as a result of severe competition on the market. The latter point is not unique to CEE, but its severity is certainly exacerbated by the transition period, when many firms are faced with the question of survival. In this respect, the provision of initial and continuing vocational education and training becomes increasingly more important, and for the CEE countries the role of VET in preventing and combating the negative consequences of transformation has additional accountability. The role of the state in providing initial VET and re-training for adults under the aforementioned conditions becomes indispensable, but even more so is its role in the systemic re-organisation of training provision in such a way as to allow for alternative methods and sources of financing the system, better access to training among all age cohorts, and increasing the relevance of education to the needs of the labour market. The VET systems are undergoing tre-
tremendous changes, trying to meet the challenges of “both” transformations, and finding themselves in... the middle of the reform process. In the surroundings of such profound and fundamental change the role of research speaks for itself. Research into VET and the labour market must be of sufficient aptitude to analyse the change that has occurred against the background of global trends and suggest further evolutionary steps. But is there a conceptual framework that can allow for this type of thorough analysis? Does research itself in the turbulent times of transformation have the adequate capacity to tackle this challenging task?

3. A conceptual framework for the analysis of change in regard to education and training

Indeed, the change that had to occur after 1989 was almost taken for granted, without any particular specification of what needed to change and how. In the conditions of global change (see above) the challenge is even to find the point of departure, as well as the one of intention.

A great deal of literature has been written on change and even on the management of change, most of both concentrating on social and political theory and social psychology. The conceptual framework for change from the perspective of transition and with a strong reference to education aspects is missing, especially as far as research in CEE is concerned. Mestenhauser (1998), a scholar of Czech origin residing in the US, sought the answer to this problem in comparative thinking and in the key concept of “culture”. He turned to cultural anthropology, using literature (Kluckhol and Strodtbeck 1961) as a reference point, and on this built up the concept of system diagnosis and knowledge recovery by the means of cross-cultural comparison. Indeed, the remarkable post-socialist change appears not to be merely a change within the same system, but rather an unprecedented transformation from one major system to another, which is not a simple linear change (Mestenhauser 1998) but a qualitative shift from one cultural perspective to another. Thus, the cross-cultural analytical perspective is a multi-dimensional variable where each research environment represents certain cultural values not only in a spatial dimension but also in a temporal perspective. Different cultural perspectives have different values of education, work, motivation, achievements, etc. The change in the period of transition, therefore, is an ongoing (non-static) change from one culture to another with the aid of an adaptation of values inherent to other cultures. The latter point is crucial.

The transition period, especially its early phase, was characterised by a high volume of research and development projects, produced with the help of foreign expertise, in which the mechanical transferral of their knowledge and skills could not be directly applied to the environment of CEE countries. While not intending to undervalue the contribution of foreign consultants to the revival of the region, it is difficult to deny that their intervention was not always efficient and workable. There is a great deal of evidence in social and political theory that the mechanical application of replicas of Western conceptual models in societies with different history and traditions may lead to scientific and existent discontinuity. However, complaints about this matter by the Eastern scholars were not accompanied by any elaboration of a local conceptual framework for development, often for the simple reason of a lack of thorough knowledge on strategic development. Dramatic change and profound societal developments require a massive infusion of ideas everywhere. It is, however, a dilemma to find a balance between universal and unique values. This balance is difficult to determine from the outside. The answer is certainly to be found not only in

6) This part is predominantly based on Mestenhauser’s essay (1998) on Cross-cultural perspectives of change. The author, however, addressed the essay as a point of reference for conceptual framework, and the following text does not directly repeat Mestenhauser’s statements.
the mere collaboration of scholars across borders and cultures, but also in effective dialogue, value sharing and a joint search for balance from both sides. This cannot be achieved without a massive “knowledge recovery” programme aimed at assisting Eastern scholars in acquiring intellectual knowledge, critical and comparative thinking and an elaboration of their own insight regarding future evolutionary needs. This will bridge the gap between “external” and “internal” cultural influences (Mestenhauser 1998).

The Lithuanian scientist Lauzackas (1998) pointed out that ‘the focus of continuous vocational training change is the preparation of the participants and their predisposition to change themselves and the surrounding environment. Hence, only systematic knowledge of vocational training and anticipated problems can guarantee a well-grounded, strategic vocational training policy’ (p.6). Lauzackas attempted ‘to develop a complete, systematic, theoretical model of constantly changing vocational training, meeting educational needs of an individual and preparing him for the world of work’ (p.6). The change of VET was tackled as ‘an all-rounded development, determined by ever-changing relationships between a person and the surrounding economical social environment, as well as personal actions of vocational training participants’ (p.11). Therefore ‘the main quality of vocational training is the ability to change together with the changes in the surrounding environment so as to confirm to the most general principles of democracy and humanism’ (p.21). Thus, provision of general qualifications, lifelong learning and the ability to learn, VET as a continuing process of human development, are crucial principles of contemporary VET (Lauzackas 1998). ‘Having described vocational training change presumptions and principles, the object of vocational Education science is defined as the object of interdisciplinary science’ (p.21). Therefore, ‘labour market research, research of vocations, qualification research and vocational training research’ are integral parts of the single system of research objectives.
A comprehensive understanding of the entire system and the dynamics of change is therefore an important aspect. What has been demonstrated in VET research in general and especially in the research in CEE is an examination of the autonomous parts of the system without an attempt to analyse it as one whole consisting of interacting and mutually shaping parts. Indeed, reductionism to one particular field (e.g. provision of initial vocational education at the upper secondary level) in the high dynamics of change and subsequent induction analysis does not allow for an account to be taken of all aspects of systemic change and mutual interference. Deduction from the complexity of system dynamics to the dynamics of its integral parts is an alternative conceptual approach, thus far not sufficiently exploited. This is subsequently reflected in the separation of institutional structures, researching bits and pieces of the system, with a lack of awareness of the achievements, information, knowledge and appraisal of the others. What is even more peculiar and novel for CEE, with the introduction of competitive relationships, the separate institutional structures within one country and one field of VET, including analytical structures, started to act as rival entities just as though they were not parts of one and the same system. This phenomenon, although not necessarily typical for all countries, was evident in a few, not only in the private sector, where such behaviour could be explained by their market-oriented nature, but also among public or state institutions.

4. Institutional framework, organisation and development of VET research in CEE

4.1 Institutional framework of VET research

The following section is mainly prepared on the basis of a discussion paper written by M. Csako Identifying and assessing VET research institutions in the Phare and Tacis countries (1998) and the country overviews of VET research. As the former was commissioned by ETF with the specific purpose of analysing the situation in research institutes and the feasibility of establishing a network of research institutes in partners countries, the country overviews for the purpose of our study did not pursue the objective of assessing the situations of and in the research institutes. Furthermore, this is not an objective of our analysis. Logistical and financial arrangements are considered only in terms of the constraints or advantages they induce in research. Therefore, information from Csako's paper (drawn from the analysis of two questionnaires distributed among experts in partner countries) was used above all, and only additionally compared with the information supplied by the National Observatories and their experts. The patterns of institutional organisation for the purpose of the analysis of VET differ somewhat throughout the region. An attempt at typology in the later section of the paper provides only a general framework and is not intended to take into account the entire complex of arrangements of structures involved into VET research, which are at any rate in a continual process of change. Institutional arrangements for the provision of research in partner countries are still suffering from the consequences of the socialist past. VET research shared the fate of VET in general amidst the turbulent changes of the transition: many institutions have not survived, others have been reorganised, split into parts or re-emerged into new organisational structures. VET research has no uniform institutional structure throughout CEECs and the CIS. Central VET institutes seem however serving as foci of crystallisation of research efforts where they exist’ (Csako 1998, p. 4).

Here it is important to emphasize one methodological remark about what actually Csako looked at in his paper. In the CEE region, he noted that only two countries established an institution called research institute in the field of VET: communist Czechoslovakia (in 1950) and Lithuania (a research centre of Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas established in 1993). Other countries have governmental institutions developing and supervising VET, or methodological or academic centres. No matter what the institution was called, our
analysis demonstrated that there is no strict
difference between them, and while research
institutes deal with theoretical research as
well as (and even predominantly) with develop-
ment projects and applied research, this
fact also applies in reverse. Even in countries
where there is no institute in the field of VET
with a major research capacity (Estonia and
Latvia, Jogi 1999; Ramina 1999), other institu-
tions have emerged as substitute structures
(other sectoral institutes, universities, and
National Observatories that under the cir-
cumstances seem to serve as focal points for
VET research in these countries). Irrespec-
tive of whether the institutions involved in
VET research are or are not research institu-
tes, in CEE they have a far better capacity
to carry out applied research (e.g. labour mar-
ket analyses, school to work transition,
sectoral studies) or development projects (e.g.
curriculum development, elaboration of
standards, evaluation of outcomes of educa-
tion, etc.) and ‘less ready to analyse the rela-
tionship between VET and labour market and
even less fit to do theoretical research of larger
socio-economic context of VET’ (Csako 1998).

‘Research in VET can be distinctively [highlight-
ing by OSI] split into two main parts: research in
vocational education, (under the Ministry of Edu-
cation and Sciences) and research in vocational
training, (under the Ministry of Labour and Social
Affairs or other ministries). The first part is rela-
tively broader than the second one, having qual-
itative advantages also’.

Mustafai A., 1999,
VET research in Albania

These facts in no way question the aptitude
of the research personnel: researchers are of
high quality in terms of level of scientific de-
gree, volume of publications, involvement in
international projects, etc. A lack of analyti-
cal capacity in the countries to cover the
multidisciplinarity of the analysis of links
between VET and the labour market reveals
the traditional, old-fashioned, inductive ap-
proach of VET research, also heavily mirrored
in institutional specialisation. For instance,
institutes of labour and social affairs would
mostly deal with research on labour and so-
cial issues, VET institutes would concentrate
on the curriculum of initial education, peda-

In general, the VET research community in Alba-
nia is limited, in terms of quality and quantity. Only
during the last years, close cooperation of Alba-
nian and foreign VET experts has influenced the
improvement of their expertise.

Mustafai A., 1999,
VET research in Albania

The actual research and development work is of-
ten hindered because of a lack of researchers.
There are only few people who could be called
VET researchers and they are either of retirement
age or close to it, while there is no young generation emerging. There are also no schemes available or planned for initial training, continuous or retraining the researchers.

Jogi K., 1999, \textit{VET research in Estonia}

Although in general the high quality of expertise of the researchers in CEE is not questioned, there are certain limitations to expertise and deficiencies observed and reported by the countries (e.g. Bulgaria, Albania, and Estonia). It is interesting to note that it is for the most part (although not only) in the link itself between VET and the labour market, the world of work, and social partnership and VET, that a lack of expertise is pointed out. The problem is again derived from the same sources: the old-fashioned separation of the research function in education and the employment field. One peculiar complaint is found in the Estonian paper, (Jogi 1999) concerning the lack of training provision for researchers. The intellectual potential in the society actually emerges out of higher education, in which Estonia is not exactly an example of the “creaming” of small intellectual cohorts. According to data, this country enjoys the second highest rate of educational attainment in ISCED 5-7 (tertiary level) among all age groups, although somewhat decreasing among the young (here table 4). The only suggestion is that this is an indication of a lack of preparation at the university and postgraduate level in the field of VET and its macro-context.

There are certainly other reasons for expertise shortages than the lack of appropriate knowledge in the field: the limited number of experts in small countries (the majority of them in CEE) on the one hand, and numerous projects on the other hand, create a deficit among analysts; in some countries also the issue of the brain drain is not of little significance (the latter will be approached further on). Nevertheless, a programme of massive knowledge recovery seems to be a healthy and appropriate measure in all CEE countries, not merely by attracting foreign expertise (this will be further explored later on), but rather by sending existing and future experts for training and temporary work placements abroad (here more Mestenhauser 1998). Joint research projects are another invaluable tool for knowledge recovery and a strong stabilising factor in science: the analysis of data collected in one comparative survey (Bobeva 1997) shows that the higher the participation in joint research projects in the country (e.g. Hungary, CR, Slovenia), the lower the outflow of researchers from science.

‘There is no one single central institution dealing with research in the field of VET. In 1990 the Institute of Vocational Education and Training, the only agency in the education sector that dealt with research in this field, was closed. During almost ten years since the institute had been closed, a gap emerged, which has not been really fulfilled’. It is also worth adding that at the beginning of the 1990s other sectoral institutes, that operated in such important fields, as education programmes, teachers training and research of youth, were also closed. The reason for abolition of these institutes was low effectiveness and inconsistency with the new conditions of the state functioning. The rational behind these decisions was assurance, that higher education and science will undertake research in this field, but in practice it did not bring about the expected results.’ [Translation by OSI].

Drogosz-Zablocka et al., 1999, \textit{VET research in Poland}

‘It is estimated that actual inclusion of faculties is importantly connected with the interests of their researchers. It has to be mentioned that the most important research projects which led to the introduction of new vocational education and training system were carried out within the research activities at university. Out of three research projects from the field of vocational education and training, currently carried out within the National research programme, two are carried out within university research activities. Research projects dealing with the relation between vocational education and the labour market are also mainly carried out by the researchers at independent research institutes and university research institutes.’

Ivancic et al. 1999 \textit{VET research in Slovenia}

The analysis of background country reports has demonstrated that in most countries the institutional arrangement is still suffering from the consequences of the socialist period,
when research was separated from universities and placed mainly within the structure of national Academies of Sciences, or was transferred to state ministerial research structures. Pedagogical faculties were often closed under the communist regime, and were re-opened only after 1989. Research at pedagogical faculties, however, mostly tends to cover general and academic education and deals little with VET. Pedagogical research (didactics, educational psychology, etc.) also takes place primarily in the pedagogical faculties of universities.

Exceptional cases are Lithuania, Slovenia and to some extent Romania and Poland, where university VET research is quite well developed. In Slovenia, a great deal of applied research is undertaken at Slovene universities which also actively participate in the development projects of national interest. Vytautas Magnus University in Lithuania is a central VET research point where substantial applied and basic research has been carried out. In Poland, schools of higher education are active in research into agricultural training, and in the field of management and human resource development, done mostly by economic schools. A high share of profit from the research activities of Polish institutions of higher education (Drogosz-Zablocka et al. 1999) is an indicator of the activity of research function there, although the data refer to research in general without particular reference to VET.

In Romania, approx. 15% of the state budget for universities is allocated to research (Balica et al. 1999). The orientation of university research toward the field of VET came to be a component of Romanian reform. VET research constitutes a considerable share of the university research in this country. Universities in Romania mostly focus on fundamental scientific research, analysis of programme contents with reference to labour market requirements, regional development and other aspects (Balica et al. 1999). In the Czech Republic, although the Institute of Educational Research and Development at the Pedagogical Faculty of Charles University does not study VET as its primary topic, it has played substantial role in strategic studies and the formulation of policy documents working with experts from other institutions.

At present, the research function of universities throughout the entire region is undergoing revival. Although VET research at universities is fairly active in some countries (e.g. Lithuania, Romania, Poland, Slovenia), it still remains inactive in the majority of countries in the region.

The cooperation of universities with industry and the business sector in general is very exceptional even in countries where university research into VET is well developed (e.g. Lithuania). Only Romania and Slovenia reported somewhat better cooperation. In Romania, cooperation between universities and the business sector concentrates on human resource development requirements and makes up approximately 30% of university research financed by business (Balica et al. 1999). In Slovenia, universities are involved in developmental and advisory projects for the needs of companies in the field of human resource development (HRD), education provision, career planning, etc. The extent of this cooperation, however, has decreased during the years of transition due to financial constraints in companies (Ivancic et al. 1999). It seems that businesses prefer to work either with private sector consulting firms (applied research and consultancy) or with management development advisors from the MBA type of higher education. Unlike the other countries, cooperation between the university and VET schools is lively in Lithuania, where the results of master theses are often used by VET schools (Gurskiene 1999).

Social partner organisations are involved in VET research still only to a limited extent. During the period of transition, the institute of social partnership had to be re-instituted in the countries of CEE. From rigid, highly politicised and largely discredited structures, social partner organisations had to transform into active organisations representing the interests of the employer and employees at all levels of societal development. This process has been very challenging, and the role of social partner organisations in VET as such is rather limited in all countries (only Hun-
Gary and Estonia seem to be more successful in this transformation). Cooperation between research institutes as well as universities with social partners is also very weak. The role of social partners undertaking research into VET is negligible. Slightly more active are employers’ organisations, which conduct analyses of enterprise training and qualification needs and their HRD policy (e.g. Czech Confederation of Industry and Transport\(^7\), Latvian Confederation of Employers\(^8\), Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry\(^9\)). There is no evidence of the active involvement of trade unions in VET research in CEE.

The role of private, for-profit companies in VET research within CEE is extremely limited. The process by which VET experts working in state institutions go private is only starting. So far a process of accumulation of VET knowledge from the perspective of international achievements and management skills has occurred. Harsh competition in the consultancy market comprised of leading European firms has also not been a supportive factor for entrepreneurship in the field of VET expertise by national specialists. This situation has started to change slowly and we can find a few studies produced by private firms in all countries. They mostly concentrate on applied research, surveying the training needs of companies, supply and demand in education, CVT offer (DHV Prague), assessing competences in the telecommunication sector (Telekomunikacja Polskiej S.A.), elaboration of the system of qualification standards in the banking sector (Polish Foundation of Banking Education and Research), assessing the graduates in enterprises and company skill requirements (AMD and Universitas in the Czech Republic), conducting regional (GAREP – Czech Republic) or subsectoral analyses (Gradua in the CR, AS PW Partners in Estonia). Sometimes private firms combine analytical work with training courses (mostly trainers training) and publishing activities (CIVET in Albania).

Studying human resource management, human resource development in companies, management training needs and management development are other fields where private firms are relatively active. Often national surveys are done by the national branches of international consulting firms, which are already well established and have national experts working with them (e.g. PriceWaterhouseCoopers\(^10\)). Access to the results of such surveys is often hindered either by client-related policy (delivered only to a client, otherwise confidential) or by a strong, for-profit orientation, meaning that the price of the final product is extravagant. It is important, however, to note that private consultants often participate in open tenders announced either by public/state institutions or by agencies with international funds in both the narrowly defined applied research and in comprehensive strategic studies (e.g. Euro-In Consulting\(^10\) in Romania, Deloitte & Touche\(^11\) in the Czech Republic, EMOR Ltd\(^12\) in Estonia).

7) The company survey was conducted in 1998 by the Czech Confederation of Industry and Transport, examining *inter alia* human resources development and skills needs in enterprises.

8) LSE has conducted two company surveys: Specialities and qualifications requested in the labour market - in 1996-1997, and Links between the labour market and the vocational education system in Latvia - in 1997 (Ramina 1999).

9) Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry organised a questionnaire survey among employers on the quality of qualification provided in existing vocational schools in textiles sector (1997) (Ramina 1999).

10) Euro-In Consulting coordinated the *Study on labour market and related implications on the manpower provision by the vocational education and training system within the framework of Phare Project No. RO9405* carried out in 1998 (Balica et al. 1999).

11) Deloitte & Touche produced *A study of needs, demand and supply of management training in the banking and financial sector of the Czech Republic* in 1996 on the basis of a contract with the national Training Fund, Phare HRD programme.

12) Emor Ltd. Conducted qualitative research among SMEs in three focus groups in Tallinn and Rakvere. The study *Training of skilled workers and personnel management of companies* (Tamm 1997) was initiated by Estonian National Observatory. Similar studies were undertaken in 1998: *Using skilled labour in enterprises* (Tamm 1998a) and *Survey on vocational schools* (Tamm 1998b).
The recent strengthening of the private sector of VET expertise (research and consultancy) is evident in all CEE countries, although the extent varies. It depends not only on the level of advancement of the country in terms of the economic transformation, but also on the state tax policy, market competition (both private and public) and the employment environment in public sector research. The private status has its own advantages in VET analysis, as it presupposes independence from state structures, and therefore, provides a good incentive for objectivity and equality in cooperating with all public bodies. However, it may impede the implementation of findings and recommendations insofar as state decision making is concerned. Some of the National Observatories or their host institutions have had or have even recently attained a private non-profit status (Bulgarian Human Resource Development Fund, Czech National Training Fund) or the status of a non-governmental organisation (Estonian Foundation for Vocational Education and Training Reform, Albanian National Observatory, Latvian Academic Information Centre, Polish BKKK-Cooperation Fund). This positive development is also a big challenge, not only for these organisations, but also to the reciprocity of society.

Civil society sector research is still rather inactive in the field of VET (unlike the social sciences in general where quite a few studies have been conducted by non-governmental organisations (NGOs). This is connected with the insufficient development of civil society institutions and the still rather ‘centralised’ (state oriented) mentality of the public. Nevertheless, it seems that where funds are available (often allocated from international assistance programmes), NGOs are more active. Apart from non-governmental foundations with partial foreign funding, very few significant research projects undertaken by NGOs are reported.\footnote{One such project is the research \textit{TOP 500 Gazety Bankowej Kadry}, which has been the first comprehensive analysis of human resources, recruitment and training provision in 500 biggest Polish companies (Drogosz-Zablocka 1999).}

### 4.2 Financial aspects and coordination of VET research

The financial constraints of the transition period affected all sides of research life in CEE. Some institutions have been closed down (e.g. Poland) or were never created after the introduction of state independence (e.g. Estonia, Latvia, Slovakia\footnote{Slovakia and the Czech Republic are a classical example of the consequences of disintegration. Following dissolution of the federal state in 1992, there is a number of sister institutions in Prague and Bratislava, where only Prague’s central VET institute (Research Institute of Technical and Vocational Education) maintains its predominantly research identity, and Bratislava enjoys a higher capacity Institute of Labour, Social Affairs and Family than its sister institution in Prague.}). All research structures have reduced the number of staff in an effort to make research more efficient. Large research institutes were replaced by smaller, but more flexible and autonomous research units as a logical reaction to a common problem of all post-socialist countries – overstaffing and the too narrow specialisation of research structures (Bobeva 1997). The other side of the coin is that with poor economic conditions and tight budgets in the early transition period, research often failed in the category of least priority areas. Reliable data on the number of staff engaged in VET research are not available, as numerous institutions and individual researchers are involved. We assume that VET research is experiencing the same trends as research in the CEE countries in general. Aspects of financing VET research are also difficult to analyse, as information on this point is very scarce. Therefore, general data on research and development have been used for the purpose of our analysis.

\begin{quote}
\textquotedblleft\ldots institutions are vastly underfunded and lack a wide range of well-qualified personnel to adequately respond to the complex needs of the VET subsector\textquotedblright
\end{quote}

\textit{Mustafai A. 1999, VET research in Albania}

Comparing the number of scientists and engineers in research and development (R&D)
per million people, we can see that the CEE-10 average (data for Albania are not available) is about 93% of the EU average (calculated on the basis of World development indicators 1998). The Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania fail in the category of being understaffed. However, the number of scientific staff in Bulgaria is about twice the EU average, in Estonia – about 1.5 times, and slightly above average in Slovenia. The latter two cases are specific examples of very small countries where the reported numbers represent almost the total of the small research community there, while Bulgarian science is clearly overstaffed. At the same time, expenditure on R&D as a percentage of gross national product (GNP) in Estonia (0.6%) and Romania (0.7%) are far lower, not only than the EU average (1.8%), but also than the CEE average (slightly over 1%). In the more stabilised economies, after a sharp reduction of the number of staff at research institutions and the number of institutions themselves during 1990-1997, the number of scientific personnel has started to grow slightly since 1998 (CSO, 1999), building on the rational of development and the consequent necessity of increasing investment into R&D. Indeed, although the number of staff in research had been decreasing in all countries up until recent years, in their efforts to rationalise and make the research field more effective, investment into research increased, at least in some of the CEE countries. Nevertheless, the expenditure of partner countries on R&D still lags behind the expenditure of EU member states, approximately to the same degree as the latter lag behind US spending (2.8%).

15) It is important to mention the relativity of the above statistics as the GNP absolute numbers between CEE and the EU member states differ to a great extent, which is only an additional confirmation of the poor financial conditions of science in CEE.
Thus, in spite of personnel reduction, which occurred in all countries, research is still overstaffed in a few of them, although in several CEE countries the redundancy policy was exaggerated and scientific establishments there suffer from understaffing. In most CEE countries, the academies of sciences and state research institutes were mainly affected by the reduction of personnel, while staff at universities did not experience personnel redundancy to the same extent (Bobeva 1997). The number of staff / expenditures ratio still signals that, in CEE, researchers are poorly paid, and work under poor conditions with very limited funds for undertaking research. Indeed, salaries in the science sector in most countries are low and even lower than the national average salary (Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, Estonia, Latvia), varying from the highest paid research personnel in the region – in Slovenia, followed by the Czech Republic, and the least paid in Lithuania (Bobeva 1997).16

Working conditions showed the greatest variety, as revealed by Csako's survey (1998): 'Financial shortages and in some countries organisational limitations also hinder access to modern communication'. Access to modern technology, software, the Internet, the results of international research, etc., directly influences the mode of work undertaken by researchers in CEE (see table 5 on the rate of Internet usage in CEE). The financial constraints of the transition period imposed particular difficulties on the development of research and often prevented the initiation of innovative research projects. In many cases, financial constraints on research activities, low salaries and poor working conditions led to an outflow of experts from the research field and for the most part into the private sector. The big difference between the number of employed researchers and those working on research projects, discovered by Csako (1998), 'supports the assumption that in transitory conditions, with restructuring institutional system, there are far too many factors to keep even prominent VET researchers outside VET research institutions' (p. 16). The situation is so complex that even directors and senior researchers can be seen undertaking private activities at the same time (Csako, 1998). They are mostly involved in research or development projects, conducted by other agencies, and financed either by national sources and granting schemes or, even more frequently, by international ones. This issue is not obvious, and the consequences are rather ambiguous. Indeed, on the one hand, involvement in work of other institutions and especially international projects increases the mutual awareness of ongoing projects and interinstitutional co-operation. On the other hand, it leads to a de-concentration in the work of researchers and the atomisation of the scientific aspirations of research institutions.

The wage gap between the East and the West, as well as the other factors mentioned above, also creates a high incentive for emigration. Research on a problem of the brain drain and brain waste in the period of transition has been largely neglected. The only exception was Poland, where the massive emigration of scientists had been an issue even before initiation of the reform process. In 1997, the European Commission – DGXII supported a collaborative survey carried out in ten CEE countries within the framework of the COST programme (Bobeva 1997). The main findings showed that the highest volume of emigrating scientists out of the overall outflow from science between 1989 and 1995 occurred in Poland (15%), Estonia (14%), Bulgaria and Slovakia (above 11% in each). It is worthy to note that all four countries also belong to the group where scientists' salaries are below the national average. Most of those who emigrated were young (mainly between 30 and 40), with a high professional profile, and prevailingly in possession of doctoral degrees. The analysis of the situation in Albania showed an even more dramatic situation: nearly 15% of the entire population, the most active and qualified, emigrated to neighbouring countries (Mustafai 1999).

The report revealed, however, that internal migration of scientists was a far more signifi-
cant problem for the countries than external migration. The internal outflow (internal brain drain) mostly occurred in the direction of the private sector and self-employment, but also into other research institutes, government administration, or unemployment. Unfortunately a large part of the outflow from science proved to be not only a real loss for science, but also a brain waste. Part of the internal brain waste was an outflow into types of work with lower qualifications in the private sector and into entrepreneurship for the sake of higher income. Moreover, the mass outflow of scientists could not be fully absorbed by the labour market, and a considerable proportion of the outflow from research is reported as being unemployed: in Bulgaria – 28% of the outflow, Latvia – 9%, Slovakia 8%, Estonia 4.5%, and Romania 3%. The brain drain primarily affected the natural and technical sciences, but also, though to a lesser extent, social and economic sciences (Bobeva 1997).

Although the outflow of scientists from the sector is declining as a result of stabilising factors, the problem remains significant. At the same time, the opening of borders and the intensification of research cooperation has changed profile of migration of researchers: the number of scientists employed abroad is increasing (especially in Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic), where short-term employment or involvement in research projects abroad are especially widespread (Bobeva 1997).

Coordination mechanisms of VET research at a national level vary among the countries. Whatever the mode of research organisation and its coordination at the decision-making level is, coordination was reported as either insufficient or entirely missing in all CEE countries. The problem of research decentralisation was understood by national experts in two distinctive ways: the first tackled general institutional and administrative decentralisaion of the state as an integral part of the reform process (positive connotation); the second associated decentralisation with the highly scattered VET research function and very poor coordination of projects among numerous institutions involved (negative connotation). The first meaning was referred to by all CEE countries as virtually non-existent or negligible, while many countries reported the second one as a serious obstacle to greater transparency and cooperation between the institutes. It is peculiar to see that in the countries where VET research is in fact highly centralised and very close to the state sector, a lack of coordination (even under one and the same ministry!) and cooperation between different institutions was reported (Mustafai 1999). The reform process has imposed certain improvements in inter-institutional cooperation, noticed in recent years (Drogosz-Zablocka et al. 1999).

‘In Poland state budget resources for R&D activities form above 60% of all R&D expenditures, and this is far more than in European Union member states. For comparison in EU member states state budget funds for R&D reach about 40%, and in OECD countries – about 33%.’ [Translation by OSI].

Drogosz-Zablocka et al., 1999, VET research in Poland

Research into VET in CEE countries is predominantly funded by the state budget and concentrated around the main VET (research) institute or several institutes (e.g. institute of pedagogical studies, adult education centre, etc.), mostly financed by the Ministry of Education. Research into the labour market is mostly organised around the institute, studying issues on the labour market and social aspects, and financed through the Ministry of Labour. This arrangement leads to the fragmentation of research, lack of inter-sectoral collaboration and a lack of contextual perspective in narrowly defined (as determined by sectoral bodies) research topics.

Research in general is normally regulated by the law on research (Estonia 1995, Czech Republic 1992 with amendment in 1995, Slovenia 1991, Lithuania 1991), although not all countries have reported so. The laws define the status of executive, administrative and advisory structures in the field of research and development, and main financing principles and methods (including granting procedures where available). The state usually provides seed funding for research institutes,
financing its current expenditures and the salaries (fully or partially) of the personnel. Financing is channelled through relevant sectoral ministries, and therefore in the case of VET it is mostly the ministries of education which finance and request for research. Project funding comes from national grant system, state research orders (e.g. ministerial), and significantly from international assistance programmes. Universities as independent entities receive financing for their teaching and research activities as part of their budget (allocated through the ministries of education), but can also apply through the national grant system or participate in tenders for the announced research project. Institutes of academies of science receive separate funding allocated for this purposes out of the state budget.

As the ministries of education are the main funding source for research in education, some countries have an executive body which runs grant procedure under or within the ministry (e.g. Estonian Science Foundation, Grant Agency at the Czech Ministry of Education, Polish Ministry of National Education, the Romanian National Agency for Employment and Vocational Training): announcing calls for tender, allocating competitive research grants on the basis of peer reviews, monitoring projects and in some countries also identifying the research priorities of the subsector in the coming period. Similar executive bodies operate under other ministries. Their linkage to state level advisory or another type of body (e.g. Governmental Council on Research and Development in the Czech Republic, Estonian Research and Development Council, Polish Committee of Scientific Research, Romanian National Agency for Science, Technology and Innovation, Lithuanian Council of Science, Slovak Council for Research and Technology) is to provide coordination at a national level, avoid duplicity in project funding and ensure transparency on research projects already available. Even in countries that have such arrangements it does not seem very efficient, as coordination has been noted as being weak in all countries. The mere existence of research coordination structures at the national level, however, does not mean that they allocate funding or announce research projects in VET (e.g. Poland) and sadly enough they almost never have any reference to VET research.

The crucial question remains as to how these bodies can be made functional and integrate VET issues. Perhaps these structures with a complex hierarchy have become too bureaucratic to be efficient, or VET research has not been a priority. Moreover, coordination of research in the ministerial domain is not beneficial enough for such a multidisciplinary field as is VET. It would seem that the nomination of one of the existing VET research institutes, or even the establishment of an intersectoral group of VET experts and the subsequent nomination of them for the task of coordination, could be helpful, in this way separating the coordination function from the bureaucratic machine. This has been partially achieved in Lithuania where no coordination specifically for VET research is foreseen at the state level. The Centre for Vocational Education and Research (Vytautas Magnus University) is coordinating research in the field of VET, while other leading institutions in the field of VET are responsible for VET policy formulation VET (Lithuanian White Paper 1998). The establishment of coordination structures or the improvement of the existing coordination framework is especially important for Latvia and Estonia, where no major VET institute which could be a focus for all major VET activities in the country exists.

Information provision on the existing or completed research projects is achieved by constantly updating databases, mostly operated by the same (executive or advisory) coordination structures (e.g. Poland, Czech Republic). Without questioning the value of such information systems, we would however stress the importance of broad information provision for the public. This can facilitate not only the mutual awareness of institutions about the research work in the country, but also may help to identify potential partner institutions and individual researchers for future projects, and consequently facilitate cooperation. Some institutions have been publishing for these purposes periodicals with information about ongoing projects and their outcomes. These
periodicals mostly remain based around a single institution and a central scientific magazine in the field of VET research is rarely available (the exception is Lithuania where the journal Vocational education: research and reality covers the entire VET research field in the country (Gurskiene 1999)).

The declaration of national priorities for research in general is rather common for the whole region, but the definition of priorities in VET research is systematised only in a few countries (in the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Latvia, Romania and recently partly in Poland), though mostly done at the ministerial level without the involvement of other interested parties. Slovenia, for instance, has a National Research Programme, enacted by the parliament, which defines public service in research activity with a definition of the aims and extent of particular disciplines (VET is part of social science research in the programme and deserves about 8% of the budget earmarked for research activity) (Ivancic et al. 1999). In Estonia, identification of research priorities is done in a more ‘informal’ way through discussion among VET actors in the Estonian Education Forum and subsequent statements on future priorities for research. The latter approach is acceptable as it brings about at least a certain level of consensus, while the mere declaration of research priorities at the political (decision-making) level does not mean that there had been any identification process with the involvement of different experts and other actors in VET. In Lithuania, future research priorities were defined in the White Paper – EU Phare 1998, which also presupposes a prior discussion process.

The research institutions and universities in Poland that conduct research projects from their own main budget turn to their founders with the request to define research priorities, but in the end they usually define them themselves. This all leads to the fragmentation of research topics and demonstrates a lack of policy in the field (Drogosz-Zablocka et al., 1999)

National ‘granting’ procedures seem to be rather rigid, whereby the majority of research is done either on the basis of an addressed order to a particular institute or on the basis of terms of reference with a tender procedure. There are very few cases in which the state defines only broad research fields (priorities) and announces open calls for proposals. This is the case of Slovenia and the Czech Republic. The former runs such granting procedures for broad intersectoral topics, the latter may change the system due to low transparency and poor practical outcomes of such ‘ground-generated’ projects. Both of the countries attempt to promote inter-institutional cooperation, taking into account the intersectoral nature of VET research. A balance must be found between assigning the research tasks and allowing the institutes to generate the project according to their understanding of the current needs in research fields broadly defined by the state.

In Albania as in other CEE countries, ministries are the main clients that determine studies at research institutes, but there is no system of national granting procedures for undertaking research in VET (Mustafai 1999). In general, the role of national actors in VET research in Albania was reported as very limited for two main reasons: financial constraints and the absence of the habit of analysing the situation before making a political decision (Mustafai 1999). ‘Scientific’ culture in political action and rhetoric is still rather low in CEE, and in Albania in particular.

4.3 Role of international activities

As we have seen, the issue of the outflow of researchers from science is directly connected to the level of salaries among researchers, and also to the volume of investment in research. In a period of economic hardship, assistance to research and development by international donor organisations has become indispensable. D.Bobeva (1997) in her synthesis report comes to the conclusion that while the long-term migration of researchers is mainly in the direction of the USA, the exchange of research contacts and cooperation in general (‘brain exchange’) is more intensive with EU countries. This tendency is reflected in the volume of financing research within the framework
VET research in CEE countries

In all CEE countries, financial support from the EU has been far more substantial than from the USA.

Financial support from international donors has often been a major source of sustainability for research institutions and researchers themselves. We would have suggested that this has especially been the case in those countries where national resources have been very limited, but the available data do not actually confirm this. Only some donor organisations have clearly identified priority regions, based on the principle of aid intervention in areas with worse economic conditions (e.g. USAID was one of the major donors in early transition years in Central Europe but with an improved economic situation and a pre-accession status of these countries, USAID moved its priorities further to the East). As the EU Phare assistance programme has been the major source of financing in the majority of the countries, and because its assistance has been largely aimed at preparing the CEE countries for the entry and harmonisation of their systems with the EU, Phare did not have a preferential funding policy for more deprived countries. The share of the interviewed scientists in the aforementioned brain-drain survey (Bobeva 1997) involved in a joint research project with Western institutions was also the highest in Hungary, Slovenia and the Czech Republic (table 3).

This shows that the farther along the country is in the process of EU integration, the higher the volume of joint research projects. This is also influenced to a great extent by eligibility for the EU programmes (not only Phare but also Tempus, Leonardo da Vinci, Socrates, Youth for Europe, etc.), and especially by the momentum brought about by the enactment of full membership. There has been a certain level of spontaneous coordination at the international level. Where Phare funds were not a major source of support for VET reform, the World Bank or another donor

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**Figure 3: Scientists working on projects financed by EU and USA (%)**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>EU-15</th>
<th>USA</th>
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<tr>
<td>SLO</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIT</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUG</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLK</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>21</td>
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<tr>
<td>CZR</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>LAT</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>HUN</td>
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<tr>
<td>ROM</td>
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<tr>
<td>POL</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>EST</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7</td>
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Olga Strietska-Iлина

(ILO, UN, Soros foundation, etc.) took the lead (e.g. the case of Albania). In some countries also the World Bank loan funds were supplemented with Phare funds to run a more comprehensive national reform of VET (e.g. Poland). Research cooperation is dependent on access to international programmes, but also on information availability and efficiency, the preparedness of the institutional and legal system to incorporate and market international programmes, and to some extent on the traditional openness of the research community to such cooperation.

The role of international donor organisations in research in general and in VET research in particular has been highly appreciated by all countries (Country overviews of VET research (see list of background reports 1999 on first page); Bobeva 1997; National Observatory country reports 1998). The issue of coordination and transparency is less positively referred to, with frequent criticism of the duplication of funding, the lack of information, and especially in the case of bilateral projects, the lack of coordination with national priorities.

All countries, with the only exception of Albania, reported the Phare VET reform programme as the major reform source and often a driving force of change and innovation. Reforms of vocational education and training systems, which took place between 1990-1998 and were supported by Phare, served as a catalyst in curriculum development primarily in the area of initial VET, in the training of school staff, the upgrading of learning equipment, the involvement of social partners in policy and needs formulation, the evaluation of programme results and the drafting of policy papers on further reform steps. The Phare supported reform in VET made an attempt to initiate systemic reform through the development of a new curriculum reform model in a limited number of pilot schools. 'The model was imported from EU countries and, though ideologically attractive, paid little attention to the specific transition conditions of each individual country' (Parkes et al., 1999, p. 30).

The extent to which the research component was present in the reform process varied from one country to another. All programmes started up from some sort of prior analysis, in which the Western consultants normally participated directly or which they mainly carried out and involved the participation of national experts. The analyses were aimed at an assessment of the national VET systems, the institutional and socioeconomic conditions in the countries, as well as at a comparison of existing systems and arrangements in the EU.
member states as far as their appropriateness and feasibility for implementation in partner countries was concerned. ‘One of the main drawbacks of the first phase of vocational education and training reforms in some of the Central and Eastern European countries is the fact that reform programmes were generally launched with little labour market information’ (ETF 1999a, p.15). Indeed, although all reform programmes started from an elaboration of the conception and analysis of the labour market and general socioeconomic and demographic developments, information on trends in employment and prospective information on the labour market was very limited. Indeed earlier Phare VET programmes possessed a thorough concept of the reform, derived from the long-standing needs of education and from a pro-Western model of development. But the analysis of the transitional nature of socioeconomic developments, employment prospects and the changing nature of employment were not sufficiently considered. Sometimes this was taken into account during the following phase of the programme, when a series of feasibility studies and system assessments (e.g. UPET programme in Poland in 1992) and subsequent needs analysis (MOVE in Poland in 1993) were conducted (Dlugokecka et al., 1996).

‘The fact that the Strategic Study was prepared by foreign experts in close collaboration with Czech (and Slovak) professionals contributed to the high quality of the Study and at the same time the broad professional public was made aware of the modern approaches to the issues at hand applied in developed countries as well as of the knowledge and experience in these countries’ (Grootings and Kalous et al. 1997, p.179)

Both Czech and Slovak reforms emerged out of the Strategic study of vocational education and training, developed jointly by foreign (Birks Sinclair and Associates Ltd., 1993) and national experts, which ‘presented the first comprehensive view of the issues of VET after the political turnover of 1989’ (Grootings and Kalous et al. 1997, p.178). The analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of the then existing VET system was performed against the background of social, economic and political conditions. The study remains one of the most respected pieces of analytical work in the countries up until now, and one of the strong aspects of its methodology – collaborative research between foreign and national experts – has been noted many times as its convincing advantage. The study naturally lacked a thorough analysis of current and upcoming employment trends, as these data has been largely missing in both countries.

Later Phare VET reform programmes paid more direct attention to the analysis of employment trends, maintaining labour market analysis as a component of the programme (e.g. Romania, and recently Macedonia). For instance, the Romanian Study on labour market and related implications on the manpower provision by the VET system (CNA Veneto Euro-In Consulting 1998) attempted to substitute the lacking prospective data on labour market trends with specific field surveys, measuring a) the occupational supply of vocational school graduates, and b) labour demand by occupations in stock and flows.

The aforementioned study and others like it attempted to outline the main systemic drawbacks and suggest reform steps leading to a more flexible VET systems and curricula through implementation in a decentralised manner via selected pilot schools. At the end of the programme period, each country conducted an evaluation in which the main results and findings were assessed with respect to European developments in the field of VET. This programme component involved a great deal of research and was very important from the point of view of subsequent political development, outlining the future steps for national implementation.

The pilot character of the reform, though attempting to address systemic problems, has had certain limitations. Without trying to depreciate the added value of the reform programme, it has certainly been difficult to mainstream the specific achievements after the programme’s completion. The countries that succeeded to actively involve decision making and a broad spectrum of social partners at an early stage in the programme, and that managed to reach a consensus on the future of reform, have been doing better in im-
implementing the results nation-wide. Indeed, the innovation of curriculum being run in some 20-40 pilot schools in a flexible decentralised manner certainly brings about an added value, but if the approach is not disseminated at a national level, then the value of the project runs out. Paradoxically the problems of mainstreaming the achievements of Phare (and other) reform projects could be at least partially connected with the direct reproduction and testing of the foreign experience in a sample of schools, where the reform could be seen as something not developed nationally but copied from abroad. The reform models paid insufficient attention to the specific transition conditions of each individual country (Parkes 1999). The eventual success of the implementation of achievements at the national level not only involves the recognition of findings and the consensus regarding the issue, but also involves the question of existing institutional frameworks (and consequently often a need in institution building), reform of other integral parts of education system, mentality of all actors involved, and allocation (or the very existence) of financial resources.

‘VET development projects funded by international donors are normally anticipated by a preliminary research phase to clarify the objectives of the projects and to appropriately define the activities, partners, time schedule, budgeting etc. In the majority of cases there are foreign specialists that lead this process, cooperating with Albanian specialists or local experts that normally have a second hand role (as a source of information). In some cases, this phase is neglected or underestimated and has resulted in not realistic project documents and weak results on the application of it. One of the main weaknesses experienced during the conception and application of bilateral and international VET projects in Albania is not taking sufficiently into account all the aspects of the Albanian context’

Mustafai A.1999, VET research in Albania

In spite of the few drawbacks of the Phare supported VET reform programmes in CEE, the latter are seen as success stories in all countries, and the role of Phare as the main or sometimes even the only VET reform initiative is widely acknowledged. A peculiar case is Albania, where Phare VET reform in comparison with other international assistance projects, has played a very limited role (presumably due to the fact that Albania does not belong to the pre-accession group of partner countries). The Phare VET reform programme was postponed for several years and was finally rushed through in 1998, making it impossible to fully accomplish the objectives that had been started in this country rather late (Mustafai 1999). The research component of the project was vague, particularly represented by an attempt to introduce a new approach for market analysis. However, in a later Phare project, which aimed at piloting a modular curriculum system in Albania (ALBAVET), research played a more substantial role (Mustafai 1999). The adaptation of the Scottish model for the development of vocational qualifications, registration, accreditation and certification, and in conformity with the Albanian context, has demanded research (still ongoing), in which the national institutions are fully involved (Mustafai 1999). Although the Albanian background study is far more critical towards the way foreign assistance reform programmes have been organized and coordinated than are reports from other countries, generally it is admitted that VET research in Albania is almost entirely financed by foreign donors. The limited national funding is used to cover the salaries of state research institutions, and foreign assistance is used for research activities, allowing for normal operations (Mustafai 1999).

Another major, international, expert contribution has been the involvement of some of the CEE countries in the OECD analyses. During the last six years, several countries were engaged in Reviews of national policies on education, labour market analysis, analyses of aspects of transition from school to working life and of the financing of life long learning. All these studies have been done on the basis of background reports produced by national teams with a subsequent analytical reflection (reviews, country notes, comparative reports) of the OECD experts. It is important to note that OECD does not finance projects, and the primary value of its involvement is precisely the expertise, collaboration.
of national and OECD teams, the exchange of knowledge and ideas, recommendations, discussions with national decision making bodies, and the professional follow up on the implementation of proposals. The OECD analyses are among the most comprehensive studies that were produced in the region at the beginning of transition, viewing the VET system as a part of the entire system of education and life long learning in the context of changing labour market conditions. Many of the recommendations produced in 1995-1996 remain acute and significant until even now. This certainly is true of the majority of recommendations produced within the context of the reviews of national policies of education (OECD 1996a, Bialecki ed. 1996), especially in the case of the Czech Republic. Many recommendations have been closely linked to the need for institution building in the field of VET (Czech Republic), which requires substantial financial resources or a radical reorganisation of existing institutional structures. Therefore, the implementation of these recommendations is hindered by the lack of consensus at a national level as well as the lack of financing required for the implementation of such demanding reforms. In 1998-99, Slovenia (OECD 1998), Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania benefited from participation in the OECD education policy reviews (in the latter cases the drafts are not officially available yet). OECD also produced many comparative studies, either examining only a few countries of the region within a bigger, international group (OECD 1998, Green A. et al. 1998), or examining the CEE region with the involvement of all countries (OECD1996b). The comparison with other CEE countries and advanced democracies has been a very useful benchmarking attribute of OECD studies.

The World Bank has also contributed to the comprehensive analysis of VET and the labour market in CEE: it started with a comparative analysis of the systems in the region (The World Bank 1995); its loan programmes have substantially contributed to an up-grading of VET systems in some countries (e.g. Hungary); it has been a major reform driving force and implementation tool in the countries, where Phare funds were limited (e.g. Albania).

Another principal contributor to transparency and a greater comparability of CEE vocational education and training systems and matters is the European Training Foundation. It has been operating actively since 1995 in close cooperation with national experts. The creation of a National Observatories network in 1996 brought about a standard comparative perspective in studying major VET issues, a comprehensive understanding of the VET system in the wider context of the labour market, and continuity by following main trends and indicators in VET and the labour market on an annual basis. ETF projects attempted to narrow the gaps in VET analysis in CEE. During recent years its projects concentrated on studying the role of social partners in VET within the CEE countries, systems of continuing vocational education, standards, employment policies, teachers and trainers training, tertiary professional education, VET in the context of regional development in the partner countries, etc. ETF has contributed to the coordination of donor activities in some countries by organising donor workshops (e.g. Albania 1997). It has supported preparatory activities for the initiation of the Leonardo da Vinci programme and directly participated in the implementation of the Phare VET reform programmes in CEE countries.

Despite the indisputable great value of the ETF activities in CEE, there have been certain drawbacks, often noted by national contributors. The ETF became operational rather late and the changes in partner countries that occurred between the decision to establish the ETF (1990) and its actual operational start up (1995) were already enormous. In this situation the ETF had to define its role in the development process when transition was already well under way and many structures and concepts were already in place. At the same time, the initial transition period in most CEE countries was largely undertaken on the basis of bottom up initiatives, spontaneous developments and often intuitive thinking in the situation of the lacking conceptual vision of the education and training reform at the central level. This shortcoming was tackled by the ETF through the introduction of analyses and recommendations within the many dimensions of VET. The main reason
behind the occasional criticism of these efforts seems to be the ETF’s endeavour to run many projects with relatively limited funds and very short time frames. This approach resulted in a certain fragmentation of projects and tasks. The projects aimed to tackle the most urgent areas for reform and were expected to have immediate results, i.e. recommendations for future reform steps. The latter approach has been rather typical for the internal mechanisms of support of the CEE research at the national level as well. This sometimes led to a lack of support for thorough theoretical research per se in CEE, which would be necessary in the future, but lies beyond the scope of the Foundation’s activities. Early announcement of the planned studies and projects and subsequent agreement at a national level (sort of OECD model) may facilitate not only a consensus and, consequently, the success of project implementation, but also co-funding from the national sources.

As the ETF is not directed at supporting research projects and infrastructures, the studies produced under its auspices have been of a mainly developed and applied nature. Therefore, as it has been mentioned above, there has not been support for basic research in the field of VET in CEE. In 1998, the ETF initiated assessment of research institutes in CEE (Csako 1998) with the view to establish a network of such institutes in CEE and the CIS. Support for research agencies was limited to a marginal contribution for the initial sustainability of the CEE Club for VET Research Institutes (exists since 1995) and (co-)financing of meetings of researchers. However, the very establishment of National Observatories in the countries where research institutions had been missing contributed to the revival of VET research there. The ETF also supported the present overview of VET research in CEE, and in general intends to assist in strengthening the research function of National Observatories, an initiative received very positively by NOs themselves. A wider involvement of the research community and support for research projects, including fundamental research, would be desirable.

CEDEFOP maintains long-standing cooperation, albeit still limited, with research institutes and independent researchers in CEE. Between the two EU decentralised agencies that deal with VET in synergy but with a different mandate and scope of activities, it is CEDEFOP which is the more research oriented and has well established links with the leading EU research structures. The CEE countries would certainly welcome more extensive cooperation with CEDEFOP and its partners in the research field, while further cooperation with the ETF in applied analyses and development projects would be necessary also beyond the point of EU accession.

A big step forward in knowledge and methodology sharing between member states and partner countries has been the gradual opening of the possibility to join EU programmes for CEE countries (Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci, Youth for Europe, Research Framework programmes). Of special importance for VET research has been the Leonardo da Vinci programme, with its Surveys and Analyses (S&A) strand, opened to partner countries during 1998-1999. Unfortunately so far there has been only one call for proposals in this period, which allowed for applications under the S&A strand. The data on recent calls is very scarce and does not allow for a comparison of the share of S&A projects out of the entire number of approved projects in member states and in CEEC under the same call. The most recent project compendium refers to the 1997 call, in which CEE countries still held primarily the roles of associate (‘silent’) partners and could not promote the projects. Thorough information on the 1998 Call is not yet available.

As a result, we could only compare the results of the 1997 Call for member states and the 1998 Call for partner countries. The share of S&A projects within the total number of

17) Although Pilot Projects – another type of the Leonardo da Vinci projects – also often contain a research component, their primary objectives are innovation and development, and analysis often present there is only a tool (assessment, comparison, etc.) for application.

18) Information on the 1998 Call - S&A successful projects – was collected with the help of the Czech national Resource Centre for Guidance through National Coordination Units.
projects is traditionally low in all European countries, which is possibly due to the relative complexity of the application requirements in the S&A strand. In 1997, this share was 7% in all participating countries, which corresponded to approximately two to four S&A projects per country with population of 10 to 20 million people (Compendium 1997). In CEE we could identify only two S&A in the whole region: one in Romania and one in the Czech Republic. In the latter case, this corresponds to an approximately 1% share of S&A projects out of the total number of approved projects in the country under the 1998 Call. It is worth noting that both institutions that generated and submitted the successful S&A project bids possess considerable previous experience in international cooperation and presumably a capacity for project generation and management skills. Needless to say, the excessive complexity of procedures in project administration and financial management often hampers participation of institutions in such programmes. Project management capacity and foreign language skills are insufficiently developed in research (and other) institutions in CEE, and deserve special attention at all levels so that it will be possible to benefit in the future from the EU programmes.

Participation in such programmes is invaluable as it supports the ‘brain exchange’ (one should not omit mentioning the special importance of the TEMPUS programme in this respect), the sharing of scientific knowledge and research tools, and a from the ground up initiative in project generation. If the national decision-making bodies succeed in defining the priorities for international programmes in accordance with national priorities, such participation also turns into a direct contribution to the reform process at a national level, and makes available funds that are otherwise limited. The definition of national priorities is especially important in the case of EU programmes, as governments allocate financial means for the programme each year.

Among the reporting CEE countries, it seems that Romania has paid significant attention to the development of a strategy for identifying national priorities for the Leonardo da Vinci II programme. This country initiated the Study on national training priorities, which is being elaborated by the Romanian National Observatory with an extensive inter-institutional team (Balica et al. 1999). By means of a survey, case studies and an analysis of available data and national legislation, the team intends to examine the needs of the labour market in terms of qualifications and competences, the mismatch between demand and supply, and training needs for specific disadvantaged groups on the labour market. Such a systematic approach to the identification of national training priorities could be used well beyond the preparation process for Leonardo II. It seems that the country, being in the situation where World Bank funds have ceased, has also made a substantial effort to introduce the coordination and transparency of various funding sources in VET by creating the National Centre for the Development of Vocational and Technical Education (Balica et al. 1999). Romania is a good example of the utilisation of the main conclusions from the evaluations of Leonardo I (Birzea et al. 1999) and Phare VET programmes for the formulation of future strategy and priorities.

‘So far, in Romania there is no strategy meant to utilise the recommendations and conclusions of international research programs. We notice an insufficient correlation between the studies and analyses resulting from the implementation of international grants and programs, on the one hand, and the research activity carried out in specialised research centres and institutions, on the other hand. In some cases, substantiating new projects does not benefit from the conclusions of the external efficiency of some finalised projects or the conclusions of fundamental research in the field.

With reference to the activities for continuing the programs, evaluations have highlighted the fact that some projects often have a reduced capacity of adjustment to situations undergoing change, in the sense that they tend to be carried out according to the logic of the initial context that generated them. The mode of administrating the projects is often centralised and continuation of the projects is extended in the immediate proximity of co-ordinating institutions, without involving other interested partners and institutions’.

Balica M. et al. (1999), VET research in Romania
Assessing the general impact of international assistance in the field of VET, with a specific reference to research, it must be said that the overall outcomes are invaluable. However, certain steps could be taken to improve the efficiency of international assistance and matching it to better meet with the national needs. It is necessary to concentrate on the support of development follow up projects, aimed at the implementation of research findings and recommendations. However, it is also important to strengthen the research component of development projects. The early involvement of the local/national experts and institutions at all steps of programme implementation, including the planning stage, strategy elaboration, analysis and research components, is crucial, as it is the key to reaching consensus at a national level, with the direct involvement of all actors, and consequently also the key to effective implementation. At a national level, there must be mechanisms for coordination in order to increase the transparency of research projects already undertaken with international assistance, to avoid duplicity, and to ensure that the national priorities are taken up.

Since 1990, the CEE countries have undergone several phases of transformation, and in each of them the role of international assistance was different. The initial phase was largely defined by enthusiasm after the collapse of the totalitarian regime, and was characterised by spontaneous developments, decentralisation and ground up initiatives. Deep confidence in the legitimacy and the universal value of the Western democratic approaches and traditions in education on the one hand, and a high degree of interest and good will among international donor organisations and experts on the other, drove foreign experts into CEE en masse. The majority of comprehensive analytical works during this period were undertaken by or with the help of international experts. In the second half of the 1990s, and especially during recent years, the countries began to formulate national strategies and priorities in a more systematic way. The reform process had been more regulated with from the top down approaches more clearly articulated. The international assistance and research engendered in its framework during this period mostly appeared to be a joint product of international experts and national teams.

At present, the countries are experiencing the reinstitution of their own traditions and values in education with a more cautious attitude towards foreign advice. The contemporary challenge is the elaboration of clearly defined and comprehensive national priorities and strategies. The latter development appears ‘as yet another logical step in the overall evolution of research of this topic – i.e. a step away from individual pieces of research of partial issues undertaken by national professionals, possibly in collaboration with foreign experts, or its comprehensive examination undertaken exclusively by foreign experts’ (Grootings and Kalous et al. 1997, p. 183).

5. Systems, concepts, requirements, arrangements: what does VET research in CEE enquire into?

In this section we shall look at the range of topics encompassed by the CEE researchers in the field of VET in recent years in two broad areas: research into VET and contextual research. The overview given herein is far from being exhaustive. Instead of giving a detailed inventory of the research projects in CEE we try rather to see what sort and range of questions are asked by the researchers there, to what extent they tackle the CEE reform dimension and how they cope with the global changes. This approach would assist understanding whether the CEE research has actually supported the national reform process, and whether it manages to follow the scientific argument in other countries. Nevertheless, the line we have embarked upon is illuminative rather than informative or evaluative.

5.1 Research into systems in the lifelong learning perspective

It was not the end of the communist regime that suddenly made people realising the need
for the reform of education and training. In the 1980s in many countries of CEE there was a lively debate about the need to reform the system. It was also realised that such reform was especially needed in VET, the social esteem of which was very low. Too narrow specialisation, poor training facilities, inadequate teaching quality, were all seen as features that hampered the provision of skills adequate to the economic objectives and development of new technologies. At the beginning of the reform process the countries faced the challenge of the new, market oriented, economic objectives and the need to reform the VET provision to trigger off the overall reform process. There was no deliberate planning on the government side though, and the VET experts simply looked at VET systems in the advanced countries in order to obtain a benchmarking perspective.

Comparative analysis of VET systems, therefore, has become the most frequent topic in CEE as well as among international organisations analysing the CEE systems throughout the 1990s, ranging from a comparison of system organisation, administration and legal provision to financial arrangements, the system of social partnership, curriculum policy, and segments of education and training (e.g. CVT, tertiary education). It is important to note in this context that the CEE research has been rather concentrated on comparison of the systems of the advanced European countries aspiring toward future reform steps, while the international research analysed mostly the progress made by the CEE countries, and thus compared them to each other. The latter appeared as being a form of the reform progress assessment. The former type of comparison has somewhat neglected the debate about advantages and deficiencies of systems, taking place in the EU member states on the research arena; pros and cons of each of the systems were considered at first glance without concentrating on the in-depth analysis of the suitability of the system to the country and without following a multifaceted scientific argument taking place in the West.

The National Observatories of the Baltic countries with the support of the ETF and in the light of the Common education space agreement between the three Baltic Countries, carried out comparative study on the VET systems, legislation and regulated professions between the countries. The report has been the first attempt of the Baltic National Observatories to compare VET related issues.

Comparative analysis of VET systems and regulated professions in Baltic states.

The initial VET is provided in two basic types of schools: the secondary technical/professional schools, providing qualifications of technicians and white-collar workers (four to five years of studies), and vocational schools leading to the skills level of blue-collar workers (one to three years of studying) (see annex 2). One of the common features of the process of restructuring of VET systems in CEE was elimination of the strict division between the two types of VET, introducing the combined programmes, diversifying the range of choice among educational programmes, and providing vocational types of programmes leading to complete upper secondary education (matura). The general positive trend has been an increase in enrolments in the programmes that provide higher qualifications.

These positive systemic developments, however, occurred against the background of changing economic conditions of the VET system, where former ties between schools and enterprises were impaired and a former semi-apprenticeship system was damaged or completely abandoned. The former system of (semi-)apprenticeship itself, though it provided necessary work experience and linked trainees to their potential workplace, had a dubious character. The central point was not the learner, and therefore the form of apprenticeship was not intended to ease youth transition into working life but to provide the state enterprise structure with a workforce (Grootings 1998).

With the collapse of the state enterprise structure, the CEE VET systems found themselves almost exclusively school-based (Baltic countries, Albania, and Bulgaria) or enjoyed only very limited enterprise participation in the
model (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland). This has increased the danger of skills provision at schools being irrelevant to the labour market needs. Only two countries – Hungary and Slovenia – managed to re-introduce elements of the old (pre-Soviet) tradition of the dual system.

Yet in the CEE research, unlike that in the West, the discussion about alternatives of integration of work and learning into the VET system has not been adequately addressed. Indeed, the different analyses of responsiveness of CEE systems to the new economic objectives and requirements of the labour market demonstrate the need for higher proportions of vocational theory subjects in the content of education on the one hand, but on the other hand the necessity to provide adequate practical training and work-based learning. The latter can and is provided in a variety of forms (enterprise training, enterprise-based workshops, school based workshops, creation of intermediary labour markets, etc.) but there is no assessment of such practices, especially in the private sector (Romania).

The international research and rhetoric in the field of the changing role of the school – from being a mediator of knowledge to becoming a mediator of knowing how to apply the knowledge – and the changing role of the workplace – from an end in itself for knowledge application per se to the learning organisation – has not influenced the research debates in the CEE countries. A certain improvement was stimulated by preparation and then first phase of implementation of the project Integration of work and learning in the two countries.

Integration of work and learning is a three-year development project, initiated by ETF and implemented through the national teams in Hungary and Slovenia. The project will be completed in 2000. The project seeks to support and supplement innovative VET actions in the field of the integration of work and learning; to improve the conditions for further integration of work and learning for both individuals and educational and work organisations; and to establish the co-operation and exchange of experiences between organisations that are most advanced in the implementation of integration of work and learning in and between the countries concerned. There are four organisations involved in the project in Slovenia (two school centres, two companies) and four organisations in Hungary (three school centres, one company) (Ivancic et al. 1999).

The theoretical background of the project was based on the assumption that schools must develop a new identity by which school ‘is no longer seen as the only institution and location for work-relevant learning’, and where the humanistic paradigm of education as ‘learning through theoretical understanding’ is obsolete (Grootings 1998, 2.3, Buck 1997). The ‘increased blurring of education and work’ (Grootings 1998, 2.7) introduces a different theoretical perspective to various aspects of VET development, such as systemic arrangements and enhancement of social partners’ involvement, contents of education, skills and competences, and teaching and learning methods. This is recognised in the advanced western democracies and in CEE, although it is not at the top of the priority list when compared to the still more acute problems in the immediate CEE reform process. Taking into account that the CEE countries are gradually leaving the phase of curing the diseases inherited from the previous regime and entering into a new phase of transformation in which these countries must harmonize conceptually with the developments in Western Europe, adequate theoretical perspectives for the research need to be introduced. Thus what range of questions to be involved in research in CEE appears crucial: for the time being, equilibrium must be found between the acute issues and the issues of a global concern. This would correspond to the challenges of the double transformation mentioned earlier.

Knitting the two worlds – education and employment – must eventually bring about knotting the two systems and its structures in order to provide a flexible and adaptable lifetime studying workforce. The CEE wider research suggests actually two key notions: ‘flexibility’ and ‘partnership’. Taking into account that ‘the paradigm of learning society implies weakening the barriers between the persons learning life and working life’ (Tempus CME-
97-3007 1999, p.16), researchers in CEE advocate support for flexible learning strategies at all levels. Diversification of education systems by introduction of alternative pathways and integrated programmes at a secondary level, and non-academic type of tertiary vocational education, was one, systemic step forward in adaptability to the new circumstances. From the conceptual point of view, however, it is not sufficient, as in the new environment we must think from a perspective of the lifelong learning concept, where the initial education is only a starting point of learning for one’s whole life. The functions of continuing vocational training (CVT) and professional development must be advanced in secondary VET schools, universities and higher vocational education establishments to make them flexible units of learning for various target groups (Tempus CME-97-3007 1999, Kofronova et al. 1999). The attempts to integrate the various segments of VET (youth, adult and retraining) under one roof is evidenced in the EU member states (Parkes (ed.) 1999), while in the CEE such innovative examples are not yet systematic.

From the perspective of the lifelong learning concept it is especially important from which angle researchers approach VET and how they include different education and training segments in their analyses. The experience of the study of the emerged sector of post-secondary and tertiary professional education in CEE, for example, demonstrated the complexity and variety of the systems appearing in CEE in recent years (Hennessey, M.A. et al. 1998). In a number of cases the complexity came into view, given by the ad hoc development of the system, when the necessity of such reform was recognized by the educators and asked for by the society. The general up-skilling trend and the changing nature of the world of work in the direction of knowledge-based performance was displayed in the shift of enrolment trends towards higher and more general qualifications at a secondary level, providing for the possibility to enter higher education. The increased importance of the higher level of qualifications ‘as a determinant of labour market status and earnings potential has encouraged students to prolong their education and to continue on to university’ (Laporte and Ringold 1997, p.33). The restructuring of higher education has therefore become important, especially in the countries with insufficient participation at this level (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, Romania). Moreover, for the countries where higher education enjoyed high participation rates (Bulgaria and the Baltic states) but enrolments in VET were comparably lower (ETF 1999c), the restructuring of higher education was a means by which to diversify the provision of vocational qualification at a higher level.

No ready-made unique model of a non-university professional education system was at hand (Hennessey, M.A. et al. 1998). The countries had to build the system upon the existing VET and higher education provisions. Other countries introduced tertiary/post-secondary professional education in its remarkable complexity at least partly in a deliberate manner, in which the complexity of the system is meant to correspond to the complexity of the world of employment and social choice. As a result post-secondary/tertiary professional education in the CEE countries differs in the length of the programmes (from two up to four-five years), in the level of qualification provided, entry requirements, institutional provision, etc. The system often overlaps with university-type higher education on the one hand, and with secondary vocational education on the other hand. The demarcation between post-secondary and tertiary as two levels of professional education is also not very explicit in the CEE countries (with the exception of the Baltic countries) (Hennessey, M.A. et al. 1998). The complexity of the system is in line with the context of lifelong learning, where all sub-categories of education and training system become interrelated, overlap and interact.

Higher levels of participation at the tertiary level, driven strongly by demands reflecting the diverse interests of students, employers and society at large, have created challenges which must be met. In 1995, the OECD’s Education Committee launched a multi-country ‘thematic review’ of the first years of tertiary education. Redefining tertiary education, a comparative report of its findings and conclusions was published by the OECD
in the first half of 1998 (http://www.oecd.org). The CEE countries were not covered by the thematic review but they benefited from the study *Tertiary professional and vocational education in central and eastern Europe*, co-produced by the ETF and the Council of Europe in 1997 and published in 1998 (Hennessy, M.A. et al. 1998). The latter analysis covered sixteen countries of CEE and the CIS.

The above study (Hennessy, M.A. et al. 1998) ‘provided evidence that many phenomena of this range of education programmes and qualifications and of related institutions tend to be overlooked if one focuses solely on higher education or solely on vocational education and training’ (p.45). Therefore, the system must be comprehended in its full variety. Inclusive research must be encouraged; fragmentation in analyses and in practices (the major drawback of the reform process in CEE) must be avoided. It is, unfortunately so far a prevailing mode 19, and initial VET is studied separately from CVT and the rest of the system, as well as often without a particular reference to the labour market and socio-economic context. Moreover, each segment is often put under the responsibility of a different institution, which further exacerbates the intersectoral and interdisciplinary approach.

There are, however, positive attempts to comprehend the system in its entirety within CEE. For instance, the last two years featured the generation of a number of research outputs such, as the synthesis report *Initial VET in the framework of lifelong learning* (Kofroňová 1998), report *The role of employment policy and employment services in the state education policy* (VUPSV 1999), Estonian *Education scenarios 2015*, study *The model of integrated career guidance in Poland* (Trzeciak, Drogosz-Zablocka (eds.) 1999), *Restructuring alternatives for Albania’s vocational/technical education and training subsector* (Lamoureux et al. 1999), *National strategy for human resources development* (Birzea et al. 1999), *Human resources in the Czech Republic* (Hendrichová (ed.) 1999), *Czech Education and Europe* (Čerych et al. 1999), OECD education policy reviews, and others. A number of projects of comparable comprehension are under preparation.

### 5.1.1 Research on financing of VET

Recent years have also featured analyses of the financing of initial education and training (though still very limited), its mechanisms and trends in the CEE countries, where one of the recent OECD projects analysed alternative methods in financing lifelong learning. The study analysed various aspects of the role of financing in promoting access, participation and quality assurance of lifelong learning. Only two CEE countries could benefit from participation in the study, even though with certain restrictions given by the lack of data. The latter is a characteristic common to the CEE countries in this field: data on financing by employers, private sources, and data on CVT participation in general are very scarce. The OECD study also revealed that the mere understanding of the concept of lifelong learning differs between the OECD countries to a great extent. The CEE countries lack a thorough elaboration and common understanding of the concept and further research in this field is desirable.

The OECD report on *Alternative approaches to financing lifelong learning* (Green et al. 1998) aimed at analysis of emerging strategies for mobilising investment for implementation of lifelong learning for all, and for improving its returns and reducing its costs (p.2). The study is based on background reports submitted by ten OECD countries, including Hungary and the Czech Republic.

The CEE countries equally lack thorough comparative research on systems of financing lifelong learning in these countries, where the above-mentioned lack of data is certainly a drawback. Nevertheless, such research is badly needed, it may actually by itself instigate *inter alia* the data collection. The CEE countries, which enjoyed a steady increase in public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP between 1990 and 1994, have suffered from a decrease or stagnation in spend-

19) Our analysis in this context is not an exception, indeed, and although there has been an attempt to have an integrated structure, still the segmental approach in research is directly reflected in this paper.
The difficulties in public budget allocation in the transition period were multiplied by inefficiency of resource allocation, where the bulk of funding was spent on personnel (though the teachers salaries being protected still are far too low to maintain or to gain prestige for the profession) and capital expenditures remaining extremely low. The latter has been a crucial issue over years, as the education facilities become outdated and become an obstacle to implementing modern education programmes, including ICT education. The research on Efficiency in Bulgaria’s schools suggests to increase efficiency in using classrooms without jeopardising learning objectives, by e.g. consolidating several grades in a multiple grade system in rural areas where classes are small (Bogetic and Chattophadyay 1995).

There is, however, the question as to how this instrument would affect the quality of education provision. Further research on different means of making the system more efficient is necessary. The CEE countries particularly need to introduce a system of incentives for individuals and employers to participate in education and training, including tax incentives, a system of benefits and indirect ‘qualitative’, systemic incentives to encourage participation in education and training. The system thus far of financing in the CEE countries is somewhat inflexible, with the per capita or per-unit financing prevailing as a nucleus system with certain variations (e.g. elements of output-based funding in combination with per capita funding in the Czech Republic), low involvement of enterprises in financing due to severe economic conditions, and a low, though steadily increasing, private component (ETF 1999c).

The low financial involvement of enterprises in training increases the danger of the irrelevance of the practical skills and competences, provided by education and training. Therefore, finding the instruments for encouraging employers to participate financially in VET or to directly provide training for their current and future employees becomes crucial. Hungary is an example of a CEE country which has provided certain financial incentives, namely tax allowances for non-profit making organisations engaged in educational services (Green et al. 1998) and through a levy fund paid by employers or alternatively direct contribution to VET schools or on-the-site workshops (20% of total VET secondary schools expenditures are paid through the levy fund (ETF 1999a)).

Such a system, however, presupposes a high level of participation of social partners in VET, which is still rather weak in the CEE countries. In any case a thorough analysis of the Hungarian system, its evaluation and comparison with other similar systems of incentives in CEE (Poland, Lithuania, in the latter a contribution from employees is also levied, (ETF 1998a)) and in the EU member states (the Netherlands, Finland, Spain, etc.) as well as a feasibility analysis of its applicability in different CEE countries is highly desirable. The CEE countries should concentrate on the analysis of whether it is preferable to tackle the issue of financing by merely increasing resources allocated to training or by setting up training funds (ETF 1999a).

5.1.2 Continuing vocational training and human resource development

Continuing vocational training has been tackled by research very sporadically. The concept itself is not very elaborate and all research exercises in the area of CVT experience difficulties with the exact definition of which types of training to include. Numerous definitions of CVT created perhaps more confusion than clarity, and eventually arrived at a very vague definition of ‘learning that improves employability of adults who have left the compulsory education system’ (ETF 1999d). Some definitions involve employment or keeping/improving the employment position as a virtual objective of CVT, by this means setting up CVT in opposition to training as a leisure pursuit (Palan 1997). It is, however, questionable as to where the line can be drawn between the
two, and what kind of 'leisure' training may eventually bring about better employability and employment.

Nevertheless, the crystallisation of certain types of training of adults under CVT has naturally occurred, involving (from the viewpoint of participants):

- CVT as an instrument of active labour market policy for unemployed, young graduates and those at risk of unemployment,
- CVT as a part of human resource development policies of companies for those with employment, and
- CVT as an individual initiative.

From the perspective of lifelong learning CVT has attained a new importance: it is no more a mere second chance, retraining or further training, but a regular lifelong educational path for everybody (ETF 1999d, p.4). At the same time 'CVT has received a little intention so far, apart from labour market retraining measures20' (ETF 1999d, p.9).

The ETF report on Continuing vocational training was prepared in 1999 and used the information from the country reports, written by National Observatories in CEE in 1998. The reports appeared to be an invaluable mapping source, where all major surveys and studies existing at the time were recorded and the results were evaluated. This has been a first step in appallingly demanded research in the field of CVT, which should be tackled, however, in a wider perspective of lifelong learning.

The evidence of participation in CVT is inadequate, but the one available evinces higher participation among people with higher qualifications in all CEE countries. This is evidence of people’s individual commitment and initiative, and perhaps also of greater capability to get access to CVT (where not only money matters but also, and even more so, access to barely available information). The system of CVT (if one can speak about a system in this context at all) suffers from a lack of transparency and lack of information on the offer and quality of training. The system of monitoring and evaluating CVT (as well as initial VET) is insufficiently developed. Conceptually this must be tackled by research in both segments (initial and continuing). While the initial VET is relatively well monitored in all countries, CVT suffers from a lack of data and particular indicators that can provide evidence of the sub-sector development. Furthermore, interlinking the initial and continuing VET involves the issue ‘of educational and occupational standards and their related certification and qualification’ (ETF 1999d, p. 13).

The debate so far has taken place in the field of initial VET although some CEE countries have decided to introduce a unified system of national competence-based qualifications and the corresponding system of standards and certification for both initial and continuing VET (e.g. Estonia, to some extent Hungary). This appears to be an optimal solution from the perspective of lifelong learning. It must, however, go beyond the point and involve assessment of prior learning and recognition of informal learning – issues that are actively debated in the EU research arena but so far almost totally neglected in the CEE research (Slovenia prepares to introduce such a system).

The research on quality assurance and linked to the certification and accreditation in CVT is equally scarce in the CEE countries. There are very few examples of research, one of them being the feasibility study initiated by the National Training Fund in the Czech Republic in the area of quality assessment and quality assurance of management training (Zaludová et al. 1997). It set up principles and drew up procedures for quality assessment at the level of training organisation (both self-assessment and a third-part certification), but also in a company training department. The study provided pilot field testing and suggested the steps for implementing a standardised model of quality assurance according to the ISO 9000 series as a first step to total quality management. The study also sug-

20) Research in the field of retraining will be dealt with later in the chapter.
gested measures and recommendations for the implementation of a system to assure and improve the quality of management training at a national level (Žaludová et al. 1997, p.100). Such research in the area of CVT provision beyond management training is needed, especially if the national system of qualifications with the credit system, unique for VET and CVT, is not in place. There are other positive examples of research into quality assurance in education (e.g. Hungarian project Comenius 2000) which could be disseminated.

The CEE research materials provide very poor evidence of CVT or human resource development (HRD) in enterprises. Several international company surveys will perhaps shed light on the problem in the near future, namely the Second CVT survey by Eurostat, which included several CEE countries this year, and the Cranfield project on European human resource management, which was conducted the last time in 1998 and would announce the comparable longitudinal results in the near future. The surveys will give the information on training provision, participation, financing, HRD policy at a company level, recruitment problems, flexible forms of employment, etc. The results would present an invaluable primary source for further research in the field of CVT and HRD. The preliminary results thus far show that the CEE countries have somewhat lower participation in CVT than the advanced EU member states, the systematic HRD policy elaboration is not a rule for the majority of companies yet, companies spend on education and training less than their EU counterparts. The bigger companies enjoy higher participation and expenditure on CVT. The research on methods of support for CVT and HRD among SMEs is another area where analyses and suggestions of innovative solutions could be especially welcomed.

The report Key indicators for human resource management in CEE 1999, summarises the key issues of human resources departments in companies from the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia. The survey covers a very small sample and cannot serve as a comparative study; it is a benchmarking analysis (PriceWaterhouseCoopers 1999).

The benchmarking survey Key indicators for HRD appeared to be one of very few existing sources in this field. The companies which participate in the survey are interested in obtaining a benchmarking perspective which helps them to grasp where the company stands. The survey revealed that in all CEE countries middle management had the most training days, the highest frequency numbers being found in professional (technical) training. Leadership training, ICT and languages training are also in demand. The survey also demonstrated that it was not HRD, HRM or education and training that kept the HR departments busy but personnel and payroll administration – the activities that take up the most time of the HR departments in the CEE companies (PriceWaterhouseCoopers 1999).

The Second International Adult Literacy Survey (SIALS), supported by OECD, UNESCO and Eurostat, was conducted in 1996-1999. The survey was a second wave of IALS, conducted in 1994. The two surveys included inter alia several CEE countries, namely Poland (IALS), and Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovenia (SIALS). The survey, based on a representative sample, analysed functional literacy (prose, document and quantitative literacy) among the adult population at five levels. The comparative results for SIALS will be published in mid 2000.

The Second International Adult Literacy Survey (SIALS) analysed the outcomes of education among the adult population. The preliminary results of the SIALS unfortunately do not yet make it possible to compare the results cross-country, and to see where participating CEE countries stand. It is possible, however, on the basis of the preliminary results of the Czech Republic as compared to the first wave (IALS), to conclude that the Czech respondents demonstrated the incapability of working actively with information given in a particular context, but demonstrated excellent functional numeric skills and formal document literacy. Poland showed very poor overall results in the survey, but also performed the worst in the active usage of information (Matějů 2000). These results derive from the mode of education provided in CEE schools, which provides encyclopa-
dic knowledge rather than an ability to work with information actively, to use the knowledge and be innovative (‘to know’ vs. ‘to know how”).

The survey also gave evidence that people with higher educational attainment perform with better results, but different levels of education demonstrate different efficiency, as compared to the performance of respondents with the same level of education. Those Czech people with full secondary education and with vocational training qualification performed, when compared with the same level in other countries, much better than the higher education graduates as compared to their counterparts in other countries (Matějů 2000). The analysis of intergenerational mobility revealed at the same time that higher education is characterised by the lack of openness and eliteness (Matějů 2000). Taking into account the insufficient capacity of higher education in the Czech Republic and the poor performance of its graduates when compared internationally, the results are rather striking. The restructuring of higher education and its better integration into the system of lifelong learning needs to be enhanced. The role of CVT in this process is indisputable as well. At this point we come back to the conclusion that the whole system must experience better integration of its different, and so far rather fragmented, segments.

5.1.3 Teaching and learning: a one-off task or a lifelong perspective?

The perspective of an individual learner in the educational process and outcome has been somewhat neglected in the CEE research. At the same time individual development is a crucial democratic value. The education must provide an individual with the best possible chances for life success. What kind of education can provide this?

A re-thinking of the two paradigms – education and employment – and their role in the life of the individual brings us to a new appraisal of initial education and a re-assessment of the roles of different actors in the education process. The school must provide a basis of knowledge broad enough to create incentives for further learning. Two aspects are important in this respect: what is learned and how it is learned.

It is important to perceive the content of education from the point of view of the eventual outcome for the individual, be it employment, further learning, entrepreneurship or self-development. Therefore the system should presuppose a flexible form of learning and a flexible award system of qualifications. Under new conditions the CEE countries are trying to find different approaches and concentrate on combining the two basic ones: an orientation toward curriculum input (a more traditional one) and the output control, based on output occupational standards and the national system of occupational classification and vocational qualifications.

In curriculum innovation the countries try to develop flexible competence-based systems. There is little research, however, on competence-based training and especially on the methods and tools for implementing such approach. The research is needed to suggest how to modify the traditional way of teaching, which is divided between theoretical and practical teaching, and turn it into an integrated competence-based approach. The cross-country analysis of curricular reform has demonstrated that in spite of the considerable progress achieved, so far ‘there is a sharp division between theory and practice, between classroom and workshop, and between vocational teacher and trainer functions in most Central and Eastern European countries. This separation between the intelligence of the brain and the intelligence of the hands is very problematic for the combined learning outcomes of the vocational students and must eventually change’ (Parkes ed., 1999, p.24).

A cross country analysis of curricular reform in VET in CEE (Parkes (ed.) 1999) was a report commissioned by the ETF and was drawn on the basis of ten CEE country case studies. The report evaluated the reform experience of the countries and outlined the key issues for the future actions.

The experience of pilot schools under the Phare VET reform programme resulted in the proc-
Two points are especially important as far as the VET research is concerned. First, in spite of obvious advantages of the modular system, thorough research is needed to analyse the possible impacts of a modular system in the context of the CEE countries. The experience of the pilot schools is invaluable but the countries should be aware of the current debate in the EU member states on the shortcomings of the modular system, as well as analyse its impact as applied to the CEE context. Second, due to the decentralisation of the school system and the greater independence of schools research on different types and methods of evaluations and assessments is important as a part of the quality assurance system. The research on standardisation of output assessment, though it has been developing in recent years, requires further research and concentration on alternative methods (examination, portfolios, etc.) more appropriate in the context of lifelong learning.

No matter how perfect the VET system is, and how good the content of education and school facilities, the crucial task of the reform for the CEE countries, and so far largely unsolved, remains that of the quality of teaching. The new flexible forms of learning assume innovative, informal forms of teaching and the existence of necessary teaching and learning materials. But again, no matter how wonderful the teaching materials and tools are, the teacher remains a cornerstone of mediation in the learning process. The task cannot be narrowed down to the reform of the preparation of teachers and trainers. It involves the much deeper problem of redefining the roles of individual partners in the educational process, where the mentality of all actors must be changed. The teacher is no more an intermediary of knowledge but a student partner. The methods shall become more informal, pro-active, and integrative. Research on innovative methods of teaching (e.g. project, team work, etc.) must complement the research on the preparation of teachers and trainers recently widely implemented at a national level by many countries and at the international level.

The question of the reform of training for teachers and trainers, which still suffers from many drawbacks of the old system, shall be tackled

In the framework of the introduction of flexible forms of learning and as a result of the pilot Phare reform, a debate on modular training has become very popular in the CEE countries. Modules are conceptualised in their linkage to occupational tasks. Most countries try to gradually introduce a flexible and adaptable system of modular training, which embrace both initial and continuing VET, allowing for transparency, recognition of qualifications and mobility. The most flexible systems are based on credits allowing for mobility and flexibility inside the system (e.g. Estonia under implementation, Slovenia in planning, in Hungary implemented at a post-secondary level). Such a system corresponds best to the needs of learners, as it presupposes open pathways and is a step forward toward recognition of informal learning. The latter is in the direct interest of an individual as well as of the society. The issue of assessment of prior learning and informal learning, widely discussed in the West, has not yet appeared on the agenda in CEE, nor has how it may be linked to CVT.

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in the wider perspective of the integration of work and learning. The preparation of teachers and trainers, its transparency, standardisation, upgrading, and other aspects should be considered along with such aspects as the integration of the teaching function with employment, the changing role of agents in the teaching and learning processes, the new flexible methods of learning, school openness to the external environment, its integration with the employment environment, and in the comprehensive context of the lifelong learning system.

The ETF report *Innovative practice in teacher and trainer training in VET* (Oldroyd D., 1999) was prepared on the basis of the survey conducted among the members of the ETF Advisory Forum Subgroup D. The report collected information about innovative practices of teacher preparation and expert opinion on problems and priorities in the CEE countries in this area.

A cross country review *Reshaping the focus of vocational teacher and trainer training* (Nielsen et al. 1999) was commissioned by the ETF and prepared on the basis of country reports submitted by National Observatories. The report scrutinises the existing situation and arrives at proposals and recommendations.

The project major *Trends and actors of education policies and reforms in Central Europe* was implemented with the support of Soros Foundation and include Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia. The project has contributed also to a better understanding of recent developments of teacher training in CEE (Nagy 1998).

*Reshaping the focus and structure of VET teaching personnel training in Latvia and Lithuania* is a project (1999-2000), supported by ETF and the governments of Denmark and Finland. The project has a common frame and objectives for both Latvia and Lithuania. It seeks to open the VET schools to the world of work, introduce organisational development within schools, promote training of teachers, modernisation of teaching and learning methods.

### 5.1.4 Social partnership

It must be remembered that earlier in this chapter we stated that the challenge of blurring the worlds of education and work and the concept of lifelong learning involve two key notions – flexibility and partnerships, being indeed present in all the rhetoric on each segment of VET. We have tackled the point on flexibility and we shall come back to this later on; we shall now look at how the system of social partnership has been researched. Analyses of the role of social partnership in VET appeared in CEE very recently as a part of an on-going pilot project on the role of social partners in VET, launched by the ETF in 1997. The study examined the state of the art in this area and came up with recommendations for the future, which were verified during workshops and public discussions. As the overall exercise involved social partners’ representatives from the early stage, the project itself has contributed to improvement of the situation. The ETF continues to work with partner countries in this field, and the project will eventually attain a development character.

*Enhancing the role of social partner organisations in the area of VET in the candidate countries of CEE* (ETF 1998a) was prepared in the framework of an identically named project, launched by ETF in 1997. The report was prepared on the basis of country reports submitted by National Observatories. The reports analysed social partners involvement in financing of VET, elaboration of vocational standards and systems of qualifications, quality assurance, and VET planning. The analysis was produced in close collaboration with social partners’ representatives and their close involvement in the follow-up discussion at a national level and at the international conference organised by the ETF.

Although the project is not purely of the research type, the analysis has contributed greatly to mapping out the current situation. It showed that in spite of the general immaturity of the system of social partnership in CEE, the countries have reached quite different levels of development in this field, and have also undertaken rather different patterns of development. The common obstacles to the higher involvement of social partners in VET are the above mentioned lack of incentives for employers, lack of commitment from their side, and the lack of resources.
Some countries still lack the legal framework or suffer from insufficient institutional development. Nevertheless, it is possible to state that the countries that have managed to set up a system of financing with the participation of employers through a fund mechanism enjoy greater involvement of social partners in VET in general (e.g. Hungary).

Similarly those that started developing the system of national vocational qualifications (e.g. Hungary, Lithuania, Estonia) and worked with social partners on development of vocational and occupational standards (e.g. Slovenia, Estonia and Lithuania – in selected sectors) were more successful in developing systemic ties with social partners. Their involvement in the development of vocational standards is relatively low in all CEE countries, as is their involvement in quality assurance or identification of future labour market needs.

The Phare VET reforms have pushed forward significant progress in the area of a systematic consultation process with social partners, covering, though, only a limited number of pilot schools. Some countries have been more successful in involving social partners at a regional level within the framework of the overall regional administration reform (e.g. Poland), and many countries have succeeded in securing social partners’ involvement at a community or school level (ETF 1998a). The latter is a peculiar point, which showed a great potential of flexibility at a very local level. The weak social partnership system in CEE is a part of the overall weakness of civil society and the instruments for its provision.

The issue of finding mechanisms for the rehabilitation of the institutions of civil society, NGOs, public and professional associations, trade unions, the whole third sector, after the compromising of ‘public’ organisations under the previous regime, could perhaps be tackled in research from a wider sociological perspective.

5.2 Contextual research

Contextual research is a provisional expression for research which, although it does not deal with VET exclusively, looks at the contextual aspects of VET that define e.g. qualification requirements of the labour market, skill requirements in companies, and various social aspects as far as education and employment are concerned. The ‘contextual’ research in CEE, although concentrating on the same range of topics as in the EU countries, sometimes actually analyses somewhat different models and processes, when it comes to employment, unemployment, social exclusion, poverty, transition from school to working life, etc. Needless to say most of the mentioned notions are also new or have a new meaning for countries in transition: under the state planned economy unemployment, poverty, and social exclusion purportedly did not exist. Therefore these are also new research subjects in the countries of transition.

5.2.1 Employment and unemployment: factors of transition

All reporting countries enjoy better analytical and statistical coverage of unemployment than in the area of employment. Unemployment appeared as a new notion in CEE countries in 1990s as compared to the imaginary ‘full’ employment during the communist regime. In this situation the state had to generate social policy, a system of benefits, and employment measures on a principally new basis. Information from official registers of the unemployed was quickly generated for subsequent analyses and evaluation of national policies to fight unemployment. Comparable data with the standard ILO definitions appeared, however, in the CEE region only with the commencement of the national Labour Force Surveys (LFS) from the first half of 1990s.

Labour Force Sample Survey (LFS) was commenced in CEE countries between 1991-1995 with the exception of Slovenia where LFS has been in place since 1989. LFS applies standard ILO definitions of employment, unemployment, activity, and others, and therefore, appeared to be the major source of comparable data at the international level. Although LFS itself is not a study, the majority of reporting countries mentioned the importance of the survey for the research. Through LFS data, collected through a representative sample of households, the coun-
tries have acquired an alternative to the official registry picture of the unemployment situation, and additional data not only on the unemployed but also otherwise largely missing employment data. LFS therefore being a major stocktaking source contributed to the research development.

As far as unemployment data are concerned, there are marked differences among the countries in the relationship between registered and LFS (ILO definition) unemployment, reflecting the efficiency of employment services and the level of unemployment benefits in CEE. For instance in the Baltic States, the number of registered unemployed is very small (between one half and two-thirds) as compared to the LFS data (European Commission 1999). The trend is similar in Bulgaria (Beleva et al. 1999). This shows that there are very limited incentives for people to register due to the low level of unemployment benefits and the underdeveloped nature of public employment services (European Commission 1999). This was confirmed by Background studies on labour market and employment (e.g. Eamets et al. 1999; Beleva et al. 1999). The situation is the opposite in Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia, where the number of registered was 40-60% higher than recorded by LFS, which reflects that those registered as unemployed did not comply with the ILO criteria (e.g. were not available for work or were not actively seeking a job). This may mean that they were involved in very short-term temporary work, or may indicate fairly high unemployment benefits and effective public employment services in these countries. This however may also imply that a relatively large proportion of the population is still involved in the grey economy (European Commission 1999).

Educational planning, structural adaptation of the system, curriculum development, career guidance, all need to be based on sound labour market analysis, derived from the monitoring of actual labour market developments, and identifying the current and forecasting the future qualification requirements (ETF 1999a). The studies in the field of monitoring the actual situation in the labour market could be found in all researched countries. As labour market instruments and policies were introduced by states in the early 1990s, naturally the states have mostly financed studies evaluating the effectiveness and efficiency of active and passive measures. This sort of study is available in most CEE countries. However, the impact measurement in these studies has been rather weak and analyses mostly display insufficient attention paid to measurement of (re)-employment after participation in active labour market measures as a major indicator of policy success. The available studies mostly measure the efficiency of the programme by calculating the cost per unit, and accessibility of programmes by participation rates. There are some attempts in alternative measurement and its analysis (e.g. Svetlik (ed.) 1992; Pert 1998) which can serve as a good foundation for future research. Generally speaking, although the studies stress the usefulness of programmes for particular disadvantaged groups in the labour market, they also note relatively small proportions of participants and insufficient spending on the active measures. The latter features certainly vary from country to country to a great extent; nevertheless, they are a common characteristic in the region.

Background studies on labour market and employment were conducted in all countries in Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia in 1999. The studies were initiated by the European Commission, DGVI, and the European Training Foundation for preparation of the background analysis for the labour market and employment policy assessment in ten pre-accession countries (see Beleva et al., Munich et al., Eamets et al, Horvath et al, Trapenciere et al, Gruzevskis et al, Sztanderska et al, Lubyová et al, Ciobanu et al, Pirher et al, 1999).

Unemployment, inactivity of the population as well as employment have their specific characteristics in CEE, stemming from the huge shift from the state-owned to private sector economy and between agriculture, industry and services (see more 2.1). Hidden employment and hidden unemployment, early retirement and women’s withdrawal from the labour force, structural unemployment in ‘mono-industrial’ regions (especially mining and metallurgy) and rural areas, which in-
creases long term unemployment, are some of the employment characteristics typical for the different countries in the CEE region, each to a different extent. There is no strong correlation between gender and unemployment in the region (it varies from country to country but it seems that female withdrawal from the labour market has obscured unemployment among them at least partly). Unemployment is highest among the young, poorly educated, and older age groups. The level of educational attainment proved to be a crucial success factor in the labour market. Background studies on labour market and employment as well as other studies in the field of the labour market (Allison and Ringold 1996; Guegnard and Cvetkova et al 1998; Martuzans et al. 1998; Rutkowski 1998; ETF 1999c; OECD 1998; Vecernik and Mateju et al 1999) proved that the higher the qualification level, the higher the level of employment. They also demonstrated high proportions of people with low or no qualifications among the unemployed and especially the long-term unemployed. The latter trend has been confirmed by the annual collection of key indicators on VET and the labour market (ETF 1999c), where the vast majority of the CEE countries have demonstrated an appalling correlation between low skills level and unemployment.

'Key indicators' is the annual statistical publication on VET and the labour market in the CEE countries, compiled by the European Training Foundation through the network of National Observatories. The data are provided by national statistical services and the ministries of education. For the purposes of comparability the publication also includes EU data for selected indicators, provided by Eurostat.

Rather few analyses have focused on the relation between unemployment and employment as two specific paradigms and stimulating factors of transition. One of such studies (Jackman and Pauna 1997) attempted to build the analysis on the examination of the reallocation of employment between sectors (public and private sectors, and sectors of growth and decline). The analysis questioned the fact that unemployment in the particular circumstances of the transition was an inevitable factor in facilitating of the move-
ment of workers to growth sectors. The authors justified their views through two pieces of evidence: first that private firms appeared to recruit almost exclusively from those with jobs in the state sector or new entrants to the labour force rather than from the unemployed; second the example of the Czech Republic with the highest rate of new job creation in the growth sectors (trade and finance) had the lowest unemployment rate in Europe. Jackman and Pauna, therefore, questioned ‘the rationale of policies directed at speeding up the shake-out of labour from the excess employment sectors’ (p.386). The analysis proved that unemployment in the transition economies was ‘neither necessary nor efficient from the perspective of labour market restructuring’ (p. 387).

It is, however, a dubious conclusion, taking into account later developments: the so called Czech miracle is no longer the case; economic recession and the fast growing unemployment rate are largely explained by the delayed restructuring of the state sector there; in the countries that started the economic reform earlier and intensively restructured the state sector, the initially high unemployment has already started to decline. A further analysis of unemployment and the effects of employment policies as factors in the transition process would be useful as a comparison of the development in the last decade in all CEE countries.

5.2.2 Human capital and social exclusion: the prize and price of transition?

Background studies on labour market and employment demonstrated that the process of differentiation of income, which increases with the advancement of the process of transition to a market economy, is remarkably linked to the relation between wage growth and the level of educational attainment. The previous regime put certain social groups in the ill-fated circumstances of the egalitarian society, hampering their life success and income growth, a fact which namely concerned specialists with higher education and people with entrepreneurial inclinations. After the change of regime the social stratification started to modify, and this has been reflected in the change of values.

One of the greatest among such changes has become the association of education as a crucial characteristic of life success. Although the CEE countries still tend to undervalue education as a crucial factor in life success as compared to the advanced democracies in Western Europe, the rate of importance given to the education factor increases along with the advancement in the process of transition. The higher the level of educational attainment, the more value is conferred on education as a factor of life success. The transition period in CEE countries has been characterised by the gradual formation of the value of human capital, the rehabilitation of career rising, and a steady transformation of stability values into mobility values as factors of employment success.

The trends are partly evidenced in the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), in particular in the Social inequality survey (1992, 1999) and the Work orientations survey (1997). The longitudinal study Returns to human capital under the communist wage grid and during the transition to a market economy (Munich et al. 1999) demonstrated through the example of the Czech Republic that while during the decades of communism an extremely low rate of return on education was maintained, it increased dramatically after the change of regime, and that the inter-industry wage structure varied substantially after the economy switched from central planning to market orientation. Human capital embraces not only the attained education but also initial skills, competences, talents, motivation and commitment to further develop and use the skills and competences. Human capital represents a very important capacity of the workforce, which can eventually activate economic capital (Matějů 2000).
vidual national studies. Thirty-four countries are members of the ISSP, including Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Latvia, Slovakia, and Slovenia (http://www.issp.org).

The reverse side of the healthy differentiation processes, increasing returns on education and formation of the human capital value were, however, raising inequalities: the greater the life success of the educated, the fewer the chances received by those without qualifications. The overall income decline and rising differentiation in the CEE societies have become major pitfalls of transition and put the disadvantaged groups at the high risk of social exclusion. ‘In this respect, it is necessary for human resources policies to combine social policies for the human capital protection... with policies for human capital development’ (Romanian national HRD strategy, p.4). Some analyses show the growing inequality in access to education in the CEE countries (e.g. Matejů 2000) and predict its further deepening. The growing importance of education for life success on the one hand, high intergenerational reproduction of educational qualification on the other hand, and finally insufficient participation in higher education in a number of CEE countries will contribute to rising social inequalities.

Social exclusion is a young topic on the research agenda in CEE, as is the problem itself, and very little research can be found in this field. Under the communist regime the existence of social exclusion as well as poverty was not admitted; marginalisation was perceived as a social choice. Therefore these phenomena were not scientifically and empirically addressed. In the early transition period, with the rapid growth in poverty, the countries and international society focused on studying poverty, though with a certain reduction of the concept of poverty to measuring income and consumption based definitions of poverty, and insufficiently focusing on the educational and occupational aspects of poverty (also criticised by Szalai 1999). UNDP focused on studying poverty in transition economies in 1997, where limitations of the income-based perspective were realised and the Human Poverty Index was introduced, which includes indicators of different dimensions of deprivation, including lack of education (United Nations Development Programme UNDP 1997). The latter report revealed the enormous social cost of transition, which in most CEE countries, particularly in the early transition period, led to a decline in income, the highest ever growth in income inequality, crime growth, loss of social protection, decrease in life expectancy and a sharp decline of the birth rate.

Atal (1999) noted that ‘careful sociological investigation is needed to understand the phenomenon of poverty in these countries. Is it a new form of poverty that is emerging, or is it suppressed poverty that is resurfacing?’ (p.6). His work (Atal 1999) was a subsequent attempt to summarise different approaches to poverty definition and measurement in the selected CEE and CIS countries. This has been a first step, which certainly demands further elaboration, and especially analysis of marginalisation and social exclusion from the perspective of education and training.

The latest UNDP report (1999) revealed that in the process of globalisation and the rising importance of the development of information and communication technology, as well as biotechnology, the race to lay claim to knowledge becomes inevitable. The lack of access to knowledge (PC skills, language skills) and to information tools (the Internet), widens the gap between ‘knows and know-nots’, not only between “conventional” ‘haves and have-nots’ (UNDP 1999). Therefore the topic of social exclusion, so far insufficiently considered, deserves more attention on the CEE VET research arena.

Every year since 1990, the United Nations Development Programme has commissioned the Human Development Report to explore major issues of global concern. The UNDP reports look beyond per capita income as a measure of human progress by also assessing it against such factors as average life expectancy, literacy and overall well-being. This year’s Report focuses on the positive and negative aspects of globalisation. (http://www.undp.org)

So far the scarce research in this field has mostly been tackled from a sociological or eco-
Only recently the research started to focus on issues of the role of VET in the promotion of social cohesion, as a tool of ‘systemic inclusion of the generation of youngsters in the vocational education and training, and in all forms of education and training of adults – those related to jobs and those not directly related’ (Trbanc 1999). The question therefore should be tackled from the point of view of access to education, flexibility and permeability of the systems, financial incentives to promote participation in education, especially among disadvantaged groups, and finally the content of education to promote participation, achievement of qualifications and the relevance of educational output to the needs of the labour market. Trace studies and analysis on drop outs from education and training, as well as on the causes and effects of low participation rates in education may shed the light on how to reform the system to promote access to education and life long learning. These studies are so far missing, which has been noted by most of the countries, especially the ones where drop out rates are high – above 10% (Hungary, Slovenia, and the Baltic states).

The ETF initiated extensive studies on VET against social exclusion in the CEE countries. The project is in its starting phase, and the first results shall be available in mid 2000. The very preliminary results demonstrated that social exclusion has several tendencies common to CEE countries: it occurs in the case of an accumulation of a number of disadvantage characteristics (e.g. low skills, long-term unemployed, belongingness to/membership in a national minority); there is a spatial accumulation of risk factors (deprived regions); it has a reproductive intergenerational tendency. This makes research from the spatial and social accumulation and reproduction perspectives crucial for finding mechanisms to fight the social traps.
Studies on VET against social exclusion, commissioned by ETF at the end of 1999, and currently under preparation by the National Observatories, shall tackle the problem from the starting point of identification of groups under the risk of social exclusion, collection of factual information about the situation of these groups in education and training and on the labour market, analysis of policies, actions and best practices to promote the social cohesion in the countries. The studies shall come up with the set of preventive and reactive recommendations for targeted policy measures and projects to support the disadvantaged groups and promote social cohesion.

5.2.3 Transition from school to working life: transition in transitory societies

The growth of youth unemployment in CEE facilitated relatively frequent trace analyses of school leavers’ integration to the labour market and research in the field of transition from school to employment.

Roberts (1998) looked at the school-to-work transition in CEE from the perspective of an analysis of basic categories of the transition process, examining the relevance of the Western models. He argues that although the basic categories of transition such as employment, self-employment and unemployment are the same, their meaning and impact may be quite different. Indeed, he demonstrates that variations inside the employment status of young school leavers in CEE are much wider than the ones in the West. With the emergence of the private sector and especially ‘westernised’ types of employment (local offices of Western firms) employment conditions vary a great deal, often providing wages well above the national average. Employment in unstable jobs in the private or public sector, and especially in the redundancy sectors, or self-employment often mean low or vulnerable income and insecurity regarding the future. The young people in CEE appeared more likely to work on their own accounts, being self-employed, than their Western counterparts.

K. Roberts’ analysis is based on the enquiries undertaken in Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Georgia and Armenia, based on the methodology which allows for broad comparisons within the group of countries and with experiences of young people on the labour market in the West, developed by the Anglo-German foundation in the early 1990s.

Similarly the unemployment status among the youth in CEE appeared to have a different connotation as compared to the West.
ditionally much closer intergenerational family ties in CEE affected deprivation as a direct consequence of joblessness, where the unemployed young people often relied rather on the assistance of their parents than on the employment services, managing to maintain the reasonable standards of living and leisure patterns, unlike their Western unemployed counterparts. A relatively high rate of withdrawal from the labour market, especially among young women, was found characteristic for the CEE youth (see also OECD 1998, p.28 for Bulgarian case). Unemployment often actually meant employment in the grey economy, casual labour practices or part-time studies. The young people in CEE also often demonstrated being more likely to be involved in the growth sectors, private SMEs with foreign capital, or successful entrepreneurship than the older population, diminishing by these means the age income inequalities. Thus although the categories of transition to the labour market are the same in the West and in the East, their connotation differs substantially. Roberts, therefore, defines ‘westernised’ employment, public sector, self-employment, partial employment, and unemployment as more appropriate categories to address in research on the school-to-work transition (Roberts 1998, p.236). He proposes, therefore, to research career routes rather than labour market statuses.

The thematic review of the transition from initial education to working life was conducted by OECD between 1997 and 1999. The review covered fourteen nations, including two CEE countries – the Czech Republic and Hungary. The review was built upon Background Reports (NTF 1997, OECD 1998a), prepared by all involved countries, and Country Notes (OECD 1997, OECD 1999a), prepared by expert reviewers. The final comparative report focused on the analysis within the lifelong learning framework of how transition has been changing during the 1990s, and what policies are the most effective (OECD 1999).

The OECD thematic review of the transition from initial education to working life (1999) tackles the topic primarily from the point of view of the flexibility of educational pathways and also of the effectiveness of systems and policies. It was remarkable that both the Czech and the Hungarian post-compulsory schooling pathways were found selective, and the system of partnership to promote effectiveness of education pathways leading to integration to the labour market, insufficient. Moreover, the general trend of the growing length of the transition process in both CEE countries was partly connected with inadequate capacities of tertiary level education, making therefore the overall system of lifelong learning even more selective. The study puts a particular emphasis on the lifelong learning perspective, where high drop-out rates from secondary education in Hungary should be tackled in elementary schooling, and higher levels of qualifications should be achieved by offering a broad basis of both general and vocational qualifications at an upper secondary level and by restructuring higher education in both countries (OECD 1997, 1999a). The role of CVT in improving the employability of young people on the labour market is especially important in this respect (ETF 1999d), as it provides a quick solution by supporting employability of the young before the systemic changes come into being.

The sociological survey School leavers in the Czech Republic conducted in the framework of the OECD project Transition from school to working life (Kuchař 1999) was carried out among population of 20-29 years old who are graduates of standard full time education of all types or are without education, who are employed, unemployed or inactive. The survey analysed educational paths and their length, professional paths, (mis)match of the first job after graduation and the obtained vocational qualification, evaluation of quality of the school education from the employment perspective, and intergenerational mobility.

Both research perspectives – analysis of the educational pathways and career routes – have been combined in a sociological survey, carried out in the framework of the OECD project Transition from school to working life in the Czech Republic (Kuchař 1999). The survey confirmed that the key reason for prolongation of the educational paths was unsuccessful attempts to enter into higher education. The survey also demonstrated linear
school pathways, an early start in professional pathways (combined studies and employment), most frequently out of self-employment, relative instability of professional pathways for people with vocational type qualifications, given by a high concentration of these qualifications in restructuring industries. The survey revealed that particular problems in the transition process were experienced by people with no qualifications, and that the higher the level of education, the stronger the tendency toward social reproduction in the educational and professional mobility (Kuchar 1999). The trace studies on school graduates were also undertaken in other countries (CNA Veneto Euro-In Consulting 1998, and Jigau et al. 1998 in Romania; Study of graduates of VET schools in Estonia, 1998; Pavelson 1999 in Estonia and others). An absolute majority of the trace studies confirm that the higher the level of educational attained, the less the likelihood of unemployment, and the smoother the transition process. They also mostly agree on the need to provide broad-based qualifications with substantial general knowledge and social skills. They confirm that the majority of both the current students and those already in the labour market seek to enhance their knowledge and obtain a higher qualification.

All countries report the lack of a regular system for tracing school leavers’ success and failure on the labour market. The above-mentioned surveys are irregular (most of them are one-off surveys financed on an accidental basis), and they lack a consistent methodology. Several countries tried to elaborate a mechanism for the regular measurement of youth integration in the labour market by using the standard available statistics (e.g. Horáčková and Ryška 1998, 1999 used unemployment registry, Vojtěch 1998 employed LFS data, Markausa 1997), but the analysis is circumscribed by the data sources and often happen to be somewhat mechanical, unable to follow the whole complexity of categories and factors of the school-to-work transition. Moreover, not all countries witness research in this field, but all of them report the school-to-work transition as one of the under-researched fields. Finally, our overview of the research on transition revealed that perhaps it is some-what reduced to the school-to-work perspective, neglecting other transitional aspects, such as transition from unemployment to employment, from one type of employment to another one, inter-occupational transition, transition from the labour-intensive type of employment to the knowledge- and technology-intensive type of employment, transition between employment in large enterprises and SMEs and so on. Analysis of these notions from the perspective of the role of lifelong learning in lessening the transitional encumbrance may bring the analysts to useful recommendations.

5.2.4 Labour market requirements and skills mismatch

The research on school leavers in the labour market is closely connected to the research on labour market requirements. Indeed, while the trace studies on school leavers in the labour market try to understand the reasons for success and failure in integration into employment, measuring the failure by type, level and branch of education, there are a number of studies that attempt to undertake a preventive approach. They survey the employers’ needs in terms of the qualifications and skills of the new labour force, and draw up conclusions on the implications for education and training. It should be admitted that this type of study is not very widespread in CEE yet, and the main reason behind the limited analysis in this area is the costs connected to such types of research. The system of social partnership is still very weak in these countries, and it is rather difficult to persuade branch associations and employers to take interest in and to take charge of generating this type of data and information.

The lack of employers’ commitment to cooperate with educators in defining qualification standards is partly compensated by the surveys on employer’s needs, mostly paid and organised by the state, the non-governmental sector or foreign donors. The surveys, which have been reported by CEE countries, either take the form of questionnaire surveys among employers or embrace a wider scope of the pro-active operation, involving social partners in the discussion and verification of
the survey results and statistics otherwise available. The latter approach is particularly important as in the long run it may help to activate the role of the social partners in the development and adjustment of VET provision in their branches.

The questionnaire survey Graduates on the labour market: what do employers expect?, conducted in the framework of the OECD project INES, was designed to measure employers demands in terms of skills and competences. It was carried out among 820 Czech companies that employed more than five employees, at least one of them being a school graduate recruited within last two years (Šťastnová et al. 1998).

The survey Graduates on the labour market: what do employers expect? (Šťastnová et al. 1998) revealed that Czech companies expect first of all to recruit young candidates with a comprehension of quality and entrepreneurship, a propensity to learn in order to deepen their knowledge or obtain a new qualification, and who are flexible and adaptable to new environments. The schools are assumed to be primarily in charge of providing broad general knowledge, developing verbal and writing skills, and learning aspirations. The companies declared their preparedness to train young people in vocational subjects, health and safety at work, and develop their entrepreneurial skills; they, however, expect schools to take charge of the provision of foreign language proficiency, managerial skills, quality comprehension and customer-oriented skills, self-confidence, motivation, and initiative. Therefore, employers primarily lack social or core skills among school graduates rather than professional competences, and moreover, the employers assume their readiness for providing necessary vocational training leading to excellence in qualifications.

Transition economies have been characterised by a situation in which the job profiles were changing more rapidly than the system of occupational standards. Many jobs are new on the list of occupations or their content has changed so much that the skills required do not correspond to vocational qualifications formally requested for job performance. Therefore the mere measurement of shortage and surplus occupations or enquiries into recruitment problems are insufficient. The added value of the research into particular skills and competences is therefore unquestionable. Another aspect of possible research is the reconstruction of actual job profiles as a tool to upgrade vocational standards. Job analysis (the nature of tasks performed, work environment, responsibilities and perceived skills required) was undertaken in the survey on needs in management training in the banking and financial sector (Deloitte & Touche, 1996). The latter survey also scrutinised customer attitudes in order to enrich the skills perspective.

VET in the context of regional development was a project initiated by the ETF in four pre-accession countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia) and implemented by National Observatories in 1998. The studies analysed the
VET research in CEE countries

education and training provision, labour market and institutional development in selected regions of the four countries. The Czech Republic conducted a company survey to help to measure qualification supply and demand mismatch in the coming two years in the Ostrava region. Although the project did not involve other CEE countries, some of them took their own initiative and conducted research at a regional or local level, displaying a particular need in such studies.

A number of studies on labour market requirements were undertaken at a regional or county level, varying from a quantified measurement of the present shortage and surplus occupations (Rittau et al. 1998 in Poland) and the training needs analyses (Podravje region 1997-1999, including SMEs needs analysis in 1998, in Slovenia) to rather complex studies on VET in the context of regional development (Versa 1998 in Slovenia, Kidyba and Kozak 1998 in Poland), including the supply/demand analysis (PMU/OBS/IC003, 1998 in Bulgaria, Czesana and Strietska-Ilina et al. 1999 in the Czech Republic, and Cvetkova et al. 1999 in Latvia). Regional development is a process still in its starting phase in the CEE countries. Some of them have established regions and basic structures and responsibilities (Poland, Hungary), others have just undergone the legislative process or are still engaged in debates over the regional reform. In this context the regional perspective of socioeconomic development, labour market requirements, and education and training offers becomes very important. Matching supply and demand may best be addressed at the local level and support the establishment of regional and local ties among key institutions. In the context of preparation for EU accession and entering into pre-structural funding, including the European Social Fund, the regional research perspectives are rendered ever more important. Moreover, if such research is undertaken and discussed in collaboration with broad partnerships in the region, it may by itself promote regional development. Therefore, as in the case of other research seeking to anticipate the education and training needs at a sectoral or national level, the primary added value of regional studies is its ‘collaborative’ character. This type of research should be further promoted and supported in a systematic way in the CEE countries, where both methods and coverage have immense room for enhancement.

5.2.5 Prognostic research and strategies

Zecchini (1997) rightly noted that existing statistical services in CEE are not prepared to measure facts which are not directly observable in all their detail. He further noted that ‘the tradition of precisely and meticulously quantifying facts related to the implementation of the central plan was suited to an era in which the economy was dominated by few large firms over which the government held strong control…’ (p.4). Indeed, in the past most CEE countries had an elaborate mechanism and infrastructure for manpower planning as an integral part of the overall economic planning. With the end of the communist regime the old practices were abandoned and institutions dissolved. The word ‘planning’ acquired very negative connotation and attempts to conduct prognoses had little recognition in the societies.

The situation has recently changed and in a few countries future oriented studies have been conducted. The research that deals with the needs and requirements of future labour force training, which we provisionally call ‘prognostic’ research, may occur in very different forms. The research also may have a different time span for prediction or planning strategy. Short-term forecasting is much better developed and more widespread than mid- and especially long-term oriented prognostic research. At the same time the need for a longer term anticipation of qualifications and skills requirements, which can go beyond the educational cycle, has started to be recognised.

Prognostic research varies from the relatively simple collective brainstorming of experts and social partners with an attempt to verify existing statistics and to produce an outlook for future development, to quite complex attempts at quantified forecasting models, and to a rather complex mixture of qualitative and quantitative methodologies for elaborating scenarios and strategies for future policies. In CEE prognostic research uses methods
available and at some point applied in the EU member states, where most quantified forecasting models are based on retrospective data and extrapolation of the past trends on the future. In the West, the traditional forecasting models were abandoned by some countries (e.g. France) after the oil shock of the 1970s when the method proved its inability to produce a reliable forecast in exceptional conditions.

Unlike traditional forecasting, scenarios present alternative images (van Wieringen and Dekker 1999), and proved functional in a changing environment. In the case of CEE countries the latter point is especially important, as the reliable retrospective data comparable over a longer time period and the sectoral employment forecasts supplied by macro-economic models, necessary for manpower requirements models, are often not available (NO of VET and Labour Market 1999).

Scenarios certainly cannot fully substitute the presence of data, moreover, the approach itself requires sound statistical data for the initial context analysis. The scenarios method is not meant to ‘de-legitimise the work of those who try to improve the statistical and labour market information base. It is just meant to lay stress on the question of whether there are additional, alternative, faster, and simpler ways of taking decisions about the development of education and training’ (Baumgartl et al. 1999, pp. 186-187). Examining the scenarios method as such is not an objective in our study and we shall simply concentrate on examples of projects using the scenarios approach which either occurred in the countries in question or involved their participation (see more on examples of projects based on the method of scenarios elaboration in van Wieringen and Dekker 1999).

In CEE countries the scenarios approach started to be discussed and subsequently developed in 1997, at which time Estonian researchers were in the forefront. Estonian ‘Education scenarios 2015’ were developed with the objective of initiating discussion in society about the future of education and receiving public support and contribution for the development of strategy in education policies. The idea emerged and started to develop among the members of the Education Forum Committee along with those involved in the elaboration of the nationwide planning Estonia 2010 at the Estonian Institute of Future Studies (Jogi 1999). Thus, the elaboration of education policy scenarios took place hand in hand with the planning process at a macro level. The major assumption for scenarios elaboration was that the future of education cannot be observed separately from the future of the society. Two key factors, which determine the nature of the Estonian society, were chosen as a result of brainstorming meetings and a wider public discussion: cohesion and innovativeness of the society. In the light of these factors four models of the future Estonian society and corresponding education scenarios were drawn: a) Estonia of public schools (nation-centred Estonia), b) Estonia of permanent education reforms (corporate Estonia), c) Estonia of market education and elite schools (Estonia of the rich and the poor), d) learning Estonia (interactive) (Jogi 1999, Baumgartl et al. 1999). The idea of drawing up possible paths of development also implied that the core expert group, civil servants and decision makers would also draw a certain plan of achievement of the most positive scenario, and, even more importantly, would reach a certain level of consensus on how to achieve that.

Scenarios and strategies for VET in Europe is a project initiated by Cedefop, supported by ETF and coordinated by Max Goote Expert Centre at the University of Amsterdam. The project eventually involved five CEE countries (Estonia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia) along with five EU member states. The project ‘aims to develop a tool to improve the understanding of VET systems in their economic-technological, employment-labour and training-knowledge environment’ (van Wieringen and Dekker 1999, pp.3).

Another, most recent example of scenarios elaboration was the international project Scenarios and strategies for VET in Europe. The study is based on the Delphi method – the structured consultation of selected experts through questionnaires. The project intends to identify not only scenarios and strategies
for VET in the involved countries, but also to define the most suitable scenarios and strategies for VET in Europe. As only the first phase of the project has been completed, it is impossible to speak about specific results yet.

It is, however, noteworthy that even on the basis of preliminary results CEE countries often have a sound distinctiveness in defining trends, strategies, key actors and scenarios as compared to the EU member states. The distinctiveness is not necessarily indicated as a difference but rather as giving more or less importance to the same factors. For instance, in scoring the responsible actors for the strategy both the CEE countries and the EU member states assign the same importance to the nation state. However, the EU member states assign a bigger role to the EU agencies than the CEE countries, while the latter undervalue the role of the trade unions as a responsible actor. Furthermore, on average the respondents from the EU countries assign larger responsibility to the individual than respondents from CEE (van Wieringen and Dekker 1999, pp.102). This is given to a large extent by the shared past experiences of the CEE region, its egalitarianism on the one hand, and aversion towards certain types of institutions and partnerships that in some way connote the ‘officialdom’ of the past regime.

The CEE countries also remarkably differed from the EU member states in weighing the relevance of the strategies and scenarios provisionally developed in the project in a number of cases. In terms of importance for CEE in the context of economy and technology, the key issues seem to be those of providing incentives for the private sector and social partners to encourage their engagement in training, developing learning organisation and knowledge management, and forecasting specific needs. In the employment and labour market context a strategy based on the modern flexible workforce (flexible, part-time, employable, entrepreneurial) was rated by all participating in the project CEE countries as highly relevant, whereas scenario dimensions ‘changing in the workplace’ (the organisation becomes multicultural; ICT, knowledge management and social skills become more important whereas hierarchies become less important) and ‘mobility of labour’ (trends towards mobility of labour in flexibilisation, new combinations of work and training, but also higher migration) were not largely shared by the CEE countries, and Slovenia was the only country that supported both scenario dimensions.

The certain contradiction in weighing scenarios and strategies in the context of the employment and labour market is given by the fact that scenarios are built by exploring certain developments, measuring responses on how the selected 23 trends are important and likely for the given country. In other words this means that although the strategy based on the modern flexible workforce may be highly relevant for CEE countries, scenarios based on the ‘modernisation’ of the workplace and the increase in the flexibility and mobility of labour may not yet be feasible.

In the context of training, skills and knowledge, the CEE countries lay stress on reforming the VET system as a whole (decentralisation, flexibility, expansion) rather than changing the role of VET providers and flexibility in training programmes. The CEE countries are at the top of the list for relevance of the strategy based on a transparent qualification structure and mobility, and on individuals investing in their own training (van Wieringen and Dekker 1999, pp.134). Although CEE countries generally support European scenarios and strategies, the above-mentioned preferences show that the systemic reform process in CEE has not been completed yet, whereas other European countries concentrate on scenarios and strategies based on more targeted measures.

As we have already mentioned the above results are only preliminary and may be verified by further analysis. The involvement of the CEE countries in the project on scenarios and strategies in VET in Europe has been no doubt very beneficial, albeit the methodology itself may appear somewhat disputable. Although the scenarios method intends to overcome the limitations of traditional forecasting approaches, based on extrapolation of
retrospective trends to the future, to some extent the same shortcomings could be observed also in the scenarios method itself. The method is based upon the experts' analysis of the past developments, but also upon their comprehension of the present and future evolution. The human brain has natural limitations in its ability to innovate and imagine the future. This drawback could also be in evidence in other anticipative research based on the Delphi method, which relies on expert judgement—the second-hand testimony of the factual state of affairs.

Whether or not the results of the application of such methods are reliable is a long standing scientific debate, but one thing is certain: it is the added value that the method encompasses, perhaps not necessarily in the result itself only but more so in the process of obtaining the result. The scenarios project as well as several other examples of qualitative research undertaken with an attempt to anticipate future developments and qualification needs managed to put partners from different fields together and make them discuss the problems and possible measures for tackling them. These debates bring about the first step to a common understanding and eventual compromise around very urgent problems, and helps people to start working together on their solution.

The project Regular forecasting training needs: comparative analysis, elaboration and application of methodology (LABOURatory) is led by the Czech National Observatory in cooperation with CERGE (Centre for Economic Research and Graduate Education, Charles University). The project involves a broad trans-European partnership of leading institutions in the field of forecasting and anticipation of labour market needs: ROA (Research Centre for Education and the Labour Market, the Netherlands), ESRI (Economic and Social Research Institute, Ireland), IAB (Institute of Employment and Occupational Research at the Federal Institute of Labour, Germany), and OREF (Regional Employment and Training Observatory, Burgundy) and Quaternaire in France. The partnership further involves Slovenia and Poland. The project, which is in its interim phase and will be completed in March 2001, seeks to elaborate a complex forecasting methodology, based on quantitative and qualitative methods.

Forecasting qualification needs is only starting to be developed in the CEE countries. There have been attempts in Hungary and Poland, and feasibility studies in Estonia (Corcoran 1997), Latvia (Guegnard and Perier-Cornet 1997). Recently the Czech Republic started to develop a methodology based on the manpower requirement approach in the framework of the project Regular forecasting of training needs: comparative analysis, elaboration and application of methodology. The project tries to utilise partners' experience with different methods: the manpower occupational forecast, which takes into account all relevant flows, determining the supply and demand for school-leavers on the labour market; analysis of changing trends in broadly defined occupations and sectors, and future skill requirements for the decision making level to help to elaborate medium-term labour market strategies and educational planning; and expertise in forecasting for the Eastern Länder in the similar conditions of economic transition.

The objective of the project is to elaborate the mid-term (5 years) forecasting methodology for use at a national level by decision makers, guidance services and individuals. However, due to the lack of data and the absence of bridges between classification systems in the fields of education and employment, the results will not be valid at a regional, and a sub-sector level (NO of VET and Labour Market 1999). There is a need to complement quantifying forecasting based on partially available data and a relatively short time span of retrospective data with reliable techniques to estimate the correct figure for a given aggregate. Zecchini (1997) was accurate in characterising the situation of data availability in CEE, saying that 'proper estimation is more useful than incomplete data' (p.4). Therefore, the quantified forecasting models will be enriched with anticipation mechanisms for analyses at a regional and a sectoral level, where experience of OREF and Quaternaire will be applied respectively. The result of the project shall be a forecasting model along with alternative corrective instruments adjusted to exogenous shocks of transition economies, and therefore functional in uncertain conditions.
Forecasting as well as different forms of qualitative anticipation of labour market requirements cannot serve as a direct guide to action but rather as indicators of trends and developments which are to be taken into account by the public as well as by the decision making authorities in planning and strategy development. The strategy elaboration process as such did not emerge by itself in the CEE countries and took place no earlier than the second half of the 1990s, being especially notable in recent years when a wave of conceptual analytical documents were elaborated in different CEE countries. This development was stimulated by a number of reasons.

First, after the completion of the Phare VET reform in its pilot phase, the countries needed a comprehensive evaluation of the results and subsequently an elaboration of a national strategy of further development of the system in the new phase of transformation, when the initial reforming euphoria was left behind, and a new, more pragmatic and targeted approach was needed.

Second, the advancement of the transition process brought the nations from the survival mentality to a definition of priorities and concentrated actions.

Third, the process of preparation for EU accession has fuelled the strategy and planning development.

Finally, the research component itself reached the level of maturity when at least partial intersectoral and inter-institutional cooperation became possible, and this collaboration generated the inter-disciplinary analysis and elaboration of comprehensive studies and concepts.

No matter which CEE country the strategy has been developed in, there are certain domains that are relevant for the whole region:

- the move towards a more decentralised VET system and a system of curriculum development and an elaboration of standards,
- enhancing the role of social partners in curriculum and standards innovation and the anticipation of labour market requirements,
- support for financial and tax incentives to increase access and participation in lifelong learning at all levels and in various forms,
- the provision of targeted support measures for disadvantaged groups to reinforce social inclusion, and to enhance system incentives to promote equality of opportunity in access and participation in lifelong learning,
- continued reform of the systems allowing for more flexibility, horizontal and vertical permeability, and diversification of education offered in order to meet the diversity of needs of economy and learners,
- a system of educational standards and qualifications and a system of quality assurance and accreditation,
- allowing for transparency and compatibility, providing a broad theoretical basis and social/core skills in educational preparation,
- enhancing the modern teaching methods, which develop creativity, initiative, responsibility and independence among pupils by improving teachers training.
- improving the teaching materials, tools and school equipment in response to the needs of a knowledge based and information society,
- support for anticipation analyses of the skill needs to provide employable workforce for the future.

All strategies have been based on the assumption that human resources are a crucial component in the development of the societies in all sectors, and on the recognition of education as an opportunity for the whole society to meet the economic objectives of the community as well as individual aspirations (Cerych et al. 1999; Hendrichova (ed.) 1999; Pusvaskis 1998; Lamoureux et al. 1999 and
others). We must note, however, that comprehensive strategic research in its primary sense is still very scarce. A lack of strategic future oriented thinking is compensated by a series of efforts and institutional collaboration, which brings about alternative perspectives and eventually generates policy documents. In the field of research per se, however, this is not enough, and there must be a serious effort undertaken by national authorities and the international community to enhance research capacities, expertise, and comprehensiveness in understanding the issues of concern for researchers worldwide.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

6.1 Conclusions: shortcomings and ‘gaps’

Our initial analysis started from an assumption that the research gaps (i.e. neglected or abandoned areas of research) and the research priorities are determined by the tremendous changes occurring in the countries of CEE. These changes in CEE are a part of the double transformation, where the transition from planned to market economy is multiplied by the challenges of global transformation. We therefore suggested that the gaps and priorities of CEE research would be largely prescribed by the reform process, would concentrate on the requirement aspect of VET and would have much in common among the CEE countries. We also suggested that VET research would have a higher level of production and maturity in the countries where VET itself enjoys a long-term tradition and relative prestige.

Our analysis has brought us to several conclusions. First, indeed the background country reports confirmed that a major demand in research is concentrated in the area of requirement (or contextual) type of research with the emphasis on the needs of the labour market. Nevertheless, at the same time the contextual research with the reference to the labour market requirements was the most frequent in the reports and could be traced in all CEE countries. Somewhat more developed this area seems to be in Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Estonia and Latvia, but, to stress it again, it is also well existent in other CEE countries.

Second, our hypothesis about a high degree of accord between the countries in identification of major priorities was confirmed. This demonstrates that although all CEE countries are at a very different stage of the reform process, and have different VET traditions and cultural backgrounds, the principle features of the transition, which are rather common for all countries, determine the current research.

Third, and most important, the VET research in CEE has fairly successfully reacted to the major challenges of the socioeconomic development, quickly responding and adjusting to the immediate needs. A great deal of research efforts have been undertaken as a reaction to major challenges of the transition process: rapidly rising unemployment, growing social and skills inequalities, skills mismatch, and within this context inadequate diversification of VET programmes and the systems themselves, ineffective financing, teaching methods and qualifications of teachers, too narrow vocational specialisation and insufficient mechanisms for innovation of curriculum, standards and quality assurance. The VET research claimed to play its role in the reform process, adopting a pro-active approach and enthusiastically participating in development projects.

Our initial hypothesis of better research coverage and greater maturity of VET research in the countries where VET itself enjoys higher prestige was not confirmed. The analysis showed that there were other factors that influenced the research development in the CEE countries, where the existence of a research institute, development of the university-based research or participation in international granting schemes had a greater impact on VET research than the prestige of VET. We may, however, suggest that the countries, where recent years displayed a shift towards comprehensive conceptual elaboration of the overall system of human resources
development at the national level in the concept of lifelong learning, enjoyed integration of VET into state or public driven conceptual works. This manifested the most positive development of recent years as far as VET research in CEE is concerned.

Although VET research managed to successfully cover the most acute problems on the agenda of the countries in transitional, the study has revealed an insufficient coverage, inadequate quality, poor methodological approach and inefficient organisation in a number of areas of VET research in CEE:

- Under the turmoil of the reform process, the VET research has tried to find immediate solutions to complex socioeconomic problems. Out of the two components of the transition process, the VET research has rather reacted to the principle demands of transformation towards free market economy and democratic society. The global challenges, imposed by the growing importance of knowledge intensive industries, the services sector, SMEs, and related to these question of access to knowledge, information and ICT have not been tackled to the same extent.

- In the pursuit for quick and immediate solutions, and being under time and financial constraints, the VET researchers and practitioners in CEE often tended to look for ready made answers, which came into being in the form of the models adopted from the West and with the international financial assistance. A thorough systematic analytical work into verification of the feasibility, adjustability and impact of such adoptions was not in place. In spite of the invaluable input of international expertise to the process of advancement of the VET reform, the role of national research in the reform process was often neglected. As the result the VET reform process did not sufficiently contribute to VET research development, especially at the beginning of the transition period. The notions of a primary concern for research in the EU member states are not always adequately tackled by the CEE research. The CEE countries found themselves in the situation where the challenges they have to tackle are primarily the same as in the EU member states but on the top of it they must find quick answers to most urgent questions of the democratic reform process. Being a driving force for change, researchers and analysts happened to be a 'hostage' of the same reform process. The urgent has often prevailed over the conceptually important in a longer term perspective. The recent years have, however, featured a number of positive examples of a thorough conceptual approach in the elaboration of further steps, though still somewhat missing a scientific hand on it.

- The national reports have demonstrated the peculiar domination of the analytical works in the field of labour market requirements over conceptual and theoretical research into aspects of process and outcomes of VET in recent years. This has been strongly determined by the rapid economic change. In spite of the general reproach expressed by all (!) CEE countries about the lack and insufficient development of labour market needs analysis, we may state that the problem was rather a lack of a systematic approach, and effective and efficient methods in such analyses. Moreover, the VET research has been somewhat subordinated to the labour market analysis, while the theoretical research in the field of process and outcomes of VET has been neglected. Slightly more evidence of research into processes and outcomes of VET were observed in Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Romania and Bulgaria.

The subordination to the labour market requirement was not a negative development per se but it threw out the baby with the bathwater. What is it that we are trying to harmonise VET provision with the labour market requirements for? It is the life success of the individual, his employability, but also his ability to learn in the future and to be a successful and active citizen. The role of the individual has been somewhat overlooked in the research, where the success of the individual was reduced to his success in employment in
The concept of lifelong learning gives a broader perspective and needs to be better addressed in the research into different fields of VET. Furthermore, the needs of individual learners must be also better addressed in the context of employment – in the framework of CVT and HRD in enterprises.

The VET research in CEE has mainly had an applied or developmental character. Theoretical scientific research has been almost totally abandoned in a majority of the CEE countries; Lithuania was virtually the only exception where theoretical scientific research into VET is well situated in the academic surrounding of the country. Such development in CEE on the one hand appeared as a positive shift from highly theoretical academic research, isolated from reality, towards more practical and developmental research. On the other hand this can turn into a very dangerous development. The absence of theoretical or basic research is not something that could be felt immediately but it may restrain development in the long run. Putting research closer to practice certainly does not mean abandoning theoretical research. The mechanisms should be found how to implement the scientific findings into practice.

To the contrary of our previous statement, several countries reported insufficient development of applied research (Slovakia, Estonia, Albania, Hungary, Romania). The reasons behind the statements are largely caused by the same reasons: a lack of mechanism to follow up research projects and implement recommendations. There is a gap in between “what to do?” and “how to do it?” (Mustafai 1999). Specific types of projects, aimed at the dissemination or implementation of results of the research, are not frequent and must be enhanced.

The VET research in CEE proved to be highly fragmented, where each sub-sector of the VET system or a particular field were researched separately. This was also reflected in the institutional arrangements that separate curriculum research, research on standards from the labour market research, research on initial VET from research on CVT and HRD, etc. Each institution specialises in its domain, in which they would run both research and development projects depending on the context and funding, but would rarely go beyond their scope of operation.

A comprehensive conceptual approach in research started to be developed in recent years and manifested a new qualitative change in the reform process. The national researchers adopted a more cautious approach in implementation of the foreign models and started to look at the research traditions in their own countries. From taking the value of Western models and methods for granted there has started a shift towards a more thoughtful approach, reliance on the national researchers and practitioners, and attempts to look at the education and training in a broader context of lifelong learning, human resources development and global changes. The positive shift must be further supported and promoted where multidisciplinary research and a corresponding inter-institutional collaboration must take a lead.

In the transition turmoil the VET research has had very limited financial sources in CEE. This has contributed to fragmentation of research, brain drain from research, subordination to the immediate and most urgent problems, attempts to find readymade solutions of complex problems, dependence on the external sources and therefore subject to specific restrictive regulations of the foreign aid. Some countries evidenced insufficient development of the empirical research due to the financial constraints. Where national sources are very limited, efficiency of the research organisation is vital. The research function needs more transparency, coordination and flexible mechanisms of grant support at the national level. Inter-institutional cooperation, coordination of efforts and synergy between different institutional structures, diversification of funding sources and a greater participation of private and civil society sectors in the VET research can contribute to the efficiency.
Under the circumstances of the economic hardship and limited spending on research and development in CEE, the role of international financial assistance is indispensable. It has, however, concentrated rather in the area of development projects than in assisting research to undergo the transition period. It is the duty of each particular CEE government as well as of the international society to help research to overcome the scientific discourse caused by the decades of the realm of the communist ideology. The role of the research as a central support point in the reform process, where research is both cause and effect of the transition, is essential for overcoming short-sightedness and old-fashioned mode of the CEE research.

In spite of fairly successful reaction to most urgent topics, the introduction of many new research fields in the research agenda, and successful coverage of the issues of concern of the reform process by the VET research in CEE, there have been certain 'gaps' or topics which need further elaboration. These topics are of two types: country specific and general for the region. Confirming our original hypothesis, the vast majority of priority fields are common for the CEE countries. All or most countries state the need in supporting and developing research in the following fields: labour market training and qualification needs analysis, competence-based qualifications, broad-based qualifications, innovative teaching methods, teachers training and personnel development at schools, vocational and occupational standards, evaluation and quality assurance, financing of VET, transition from school to working life, systematic trace studies of graduates (including educational paths and career routes), modular training and its impact, the role of VET in promoting social cohesion, CVT, and HRD in enterprises. It is necessary, however, to add that the major drawback of CEE research is not in its gaps as such, but rather in the mode by which the fields are covered. It lacks a comprehensive perspective where each particular issue or field is considered against the background of lifelong learning and the strategic perspective of the systemic development of national human capital.

The country specific research priorities concentrate on particular problematic areas of VET present in these countries. For instance, a rather high rate of dropouts (over 10%) from education in Slovenia, Hungary, Latvia, Estonia, would suggest that the research into causes and effects of early school leaving as well as the identification of mechanisms to promote integration of the young into education or employment would be useful.

Another important aspect of country specific needs lies in the area of initial stock-taking information and data collection. At the beginning of the transition process the information tools were often inadequate for helping to design the policies, monitor policy effects and identify areas for policy adjustment (Zecchini 1997). After a history of governmental manipulation of statistics, a new approach also needed to be elaborated in the statistical services for the purposes of obtaining an accurate and objective record of relevant social and economic phenomena (Zecchini 1997). While in most CEE countries the initial phase of reforming national statistical services and the minimum requirement of reliable stocktaking data for the monitoring and adjustment of social and economic policies has been mainly fulfilled, in Albania it is clearly not the case. The statistical provision in the latter country hinders research and analysis and the subsequent policy innovation. Thus, statistics on education and the labour market should be urgently improved in Albania. Nevertheless, other countries also suffer from inappropriate data coverage, especially in the area of CVT, HRD in enterprises and financing of initial and continuing education and training by type of sources (including private sources and expenditures on education by enterprises).

Involvement of the CEE countries in the process of elaboration of the common terminology in the field of VET and support to a greater transparency in the VET vocabulary is important for promotion of com-
parable cross country analyses and stipulation of a benchmarking perspective to each particular state.

The CEE research in the field of VET must harmonise conceptually and methodologically with the foremost international research community by consolidating its great intellectual potential and by relying on its experience in playing a prominent role, which the CEE researchers and other intellectuals have played in supporting democratic developments in their countries.

6.2 Policy implications

The challenges of double transformation, the increased blurring of education and work, the challenge of the knowledge-based society and a lifelong learning perspective impose especially role for research in the field of VET. The research in CEE is in the process of change itself; at the same time it should become a core point of initiation, analysis and elaboration, and expert support in implementation of the major reform steps. This implies the importance to support the research provision and organisation in the CEE countries in the following dimensions:

- It is recommended to support research in the fields, where either country specific or cross country research gaps have been identified (see above). It is equally important to support research in the fields, which have enjoyed relatively high frequency, nevertheless, lack conceptual maturity, methodological excellence and comprehensive understanding. Stocktaking information gathering is equally a priority, especially in the countries where the absence of data hamper efforts of analysts and present an obstacle in strategic conceptualisation.

- In order to facilitate research generation and effectiveness the following institutional measures are recommended:
  - to support the establishment of cross-sectoral coordination and granting structures for research (e.g. research boards) in the CEE countries, where such bodies are not in place yet;
  - to support building project management capacities at research institutes and universities in CEE in order to promote their better participation in national and international research and development activities;
  - to define and publicise national research priorities and strategy on a regular basis;
  - in commissioning grant schemes at a national level a balance must be found between research projects commissioned on order from the top and open calls for proposals aimed at supporting the local research initiative and inter-institutional collaboration;
  - to enhance information provision and wide dissemination on the available research outputs in order to increase inter-institutional awareness and cooperation;
  - the governments shall seek after diversification of financial sources for VET research, promote incentives to increase participation of private bodies, companies, voluntary sector in research into VET.

- International organisations (especially OECD, European Commission, World Bank, ETF and Cedefop) in many cases have been a driving force of information provision and research generation. It is recommended:
  - to broaden the eligibility of international research programmes and analysis to other countries in transition in order to contribute to a better co-operation of research networks across Europe, facilitating exchange of experiences and methods;
  - in the international support programmes (e.g. Leonardo da Vinci, Vth Framework, projects commissioned by ETF) to ensure the suitability of the topics of selected projects to the national priorities and needs; this implies greater and tighter cooperation
between international organisations on the one hand and the national governments and research communities on the other;

- to support cross/trans-border research projects, international partnerships, international comparative analyses;

- to support the establishment and sustainability of research thematic networks across European countries, both EU and outside.

In order to increase awareness of research results, improve adequacy of research to practice and diversify research outputs, the following types of research should be enhanced and must be taken into account in evaluation of proposals:

- university-based or academic research, linked to the world of work and policy making;

- research initiated by a private and voluntary sector with the involvement of counterparts from the public and academic research community;

- interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary research;

- applied research in a solid theoretical framework;

- comprehensive research which embraces the whole system analysis in a broad perspective of lifelong learning;

- preparatory research, aimed at identification of research needs and subsequent project generation;

- follow-up projects, aimed at implementation of previously done research analyses, tackling outcomes and recommendations of research, dissemination projects;

- prospective, future oriented research and elaboration of methods for such research.

Finally it could be stressed that ‘cross-national studies and increasing transnational knowledge may add to a process of integrating Western and non-Western approaches’ in science, the added value of such cooperation being the increased knowledge about other countries among both the researchers involved in such studies and also those who have access to the results (Oyen 1999, p.190). Our analysis has been only a first attempt to map the research in the field of VET in CEE and we very much hope that further elaboration with a focus on particular topics will bring about greater transparency in the VET research fields and methods in the future.
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**Estonia**


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VET research in CEE countries


Latvia


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Lithuania


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Poland


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Romania


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**Slovak Republic**


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**Annexes**

Annex 1: Tables

Table 1: Key data (see page 213)
Table 2: Key employment indicators (see page 214)
Table 3: Unemployment by educational attainment, 25-59 year olds, 1997 (%) (see page 216)

Table 4: Educational Attainment by Age Groups, 1997 (%) (25 – 59 year olds)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age groups</th>
<th>25 – 29</th>
<th>30 – 39</th>
<th>40 – 49</th>
<th>50 – 59</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>ISCED</td>
<td>ISCED</td>
<td>ISCED</td>
<td>ISCED</td>
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<tr>
<td>0 - 2</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - 7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALB</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUG</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>34</td>
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<td>LAT</td>
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<td>76</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
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</tr>
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<td>LIT</td>
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<td>45</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>POL</td>
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<td>34</td>
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<td>ROM</td>
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<td>78</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLK</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLO</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU15</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Key Indicators 1999, European Training Foundation, 1999

Table 5: Internet hosts per 10,000 people (1997)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CEE countries</th>
<th>Selected EU/OECD countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>0.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>6.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>47.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>45.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>33.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>21.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>7.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>11.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>2.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>20.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>85.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>106.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>49.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>653.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>18.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU average</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>442.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>75.80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Annex 2: Diagrams of systems of education of eleven CEE countries
VET research in CEE countries
Education system in Estonia
Education system in Lithuania

- Doctorate
- Master
- Universities
- Colleges
- Vocational schools (Stage 4)
- Secondary Voc. school (Stage 3)
- Secondary Voc. school (Stage 2)
- Gymnasium
- (Upper) Secondary school

Compulsory education:
- Primary school
- Basic school
- Youth School

Diploma (exit to labour market):
- Simple occupation certificate
- Vocational
- Matara
- Associated specialist
- Vocational and Maturity
- Diploma/Bachelor
- Master/Doctor

This diagram represents the first stage in the ongoing development of a standard graphical model for vocational education and training systems. Further refinement may include the further alignment of terms, student enrolment and dropout figures, and local language terms.
Education system in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

1. Kindergarten
2. Infant-schools
3. Classroom teaching
4. Subject teaching
5. Faculties and institutes
6. Post-Graduate Studies
7. Doctorate of Sciences

- High school education
- Four-year vocational for different occupations
- Art school
- Two-year colleges
- Specialist education
- Other vocational with programs of shorter duration
- Education of adults (Elementary and Secondary for different occupations)

This diagram represents the first stage in the ongoing development of a standard graphical model for vocational education and training systems. Further development may include the further alignment of terms, curriculum enrichment, and diagnostic training.
Education system in Poland

Continuing training

Post-Lyceum school

Basic vocational schools

Technicum

Special vocational schools

Primary school

Matura

Vocational/ professional

Matura + vocational

Master

Doctor

Vertical passing

Grades

ISCED Level

Diploma (exit to labour market)

305 VET research in CEE countries
Annex 3

List of the international institution networks involved in VET research

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Mr Cesar Birzea

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List of national institutions and associations involved in VET analysis and policy

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Institute of Labour and Social Affairs
Ministria e punës
Rr. Kavajës
Tirana
Tel./Fax (355) 42 47672

Centre for Information, Vocational Education and Training
Pallati Bogdanëve
Rr. Kavajës
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Albanian Education Development Program
Soros Foundation
Rr. “Themistokli Gërmenji” Nr.3/1
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Fax (355) 42 30506

Vocational Education Development Project
German Organization for Technical Co-operation
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National Institute for Education
Centre for Vocational Education and Guidance
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Tel. (359-2) 73 571

Confederation of Independent Trade Unions in Bulgaria
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1040 Sofia
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Confederation of Labour
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Institute of Economics of the Bulgarian Academy of Science
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Bulgarian Industrial Association
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http://www.bia-bg.com
e-mail: office@bia-bg.com

Bulgarian Union of Private Entrepreneurs “Vazrazhdane”
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Union for Private Economic Enterprise
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Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
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Fax (420-2) 26 71 37
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Association of Management Trainers and Consultants  
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Association of Institutions of Adult Education  
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