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The Agrarian Sector Competitiveness and the Integration Processes

An international academic conference, The Agrarian Sector Competitiveness and the Integration Processes was held in Prague on 23–24 November 1999 on the initiative of the Faculty of Economics and Management, Czech University of Agriculture, Prague. The topic under discussion was agriculture in Central Eastern Europe during the process of integration with Western economic structures considered from the point of view of the economy, management, marketing, information technology, law and social science.

Competition in the agrarian sector was raised at the beginning of the conference. This phenomenon was viewed as a negative aspect of globalization and integration with the European Union. Lawyers concentrated their attention on the legal aspects of the future integration of the Czech Republic with the European Union, pointing to the differentiation in the civil law code using the Czech Republic, Germany and Switzerland as an example. In the educational section there were discussions on the standards of higher education in European Union countries, the significance of culture in the teaching curriculum, the application of information technology in the teaching process.

A few months after the conference, the Faculty of Economics and Management, Czech University of Agriculture, Prague, published a two-volume publication entitled *Collection of Papers of International Scientific Conference. Agrarian Prospects VIII. The Agrarian Sector Competitiveness and the Integration Processes*, Praha 1999. The materials in the publication were divided into six topics: 1. Management and Marketing 2. Economics 3. Quantitative Methods and Informatics 4. Law 5. Social Sciences 6. Pedagogics. The majority of the texts were published in Czech, preceded by a brief English summary.

I was particularly interested by the papers in the social sciences section. Four of them were published in English (A. Kaleta; K. Ludek, E. Dienes, H. Gert, N. Noordenhaven; Z. Pechačová, J. Hradecký, J. Hraba, F. O. Lorenz; D. Stehlik). In her presentation, *Transition Questions Concerning Rural Women's Employment*, Věra Majerová (Czech University of Agriculture) raised

issues concerning the difficulties faced by rural women on the labour market. In his paper *Man and his position in the environment* Miloš Belohoubek (Czech University of Agriculture) presented the concept of ecological thinking according to which Earth is a synonym of good, precious values and therefore must be respected. Zdenek Bigl (Czech University of Agriculture) made a comparative analysis between the concept of the scientific revolution by Thomas S. Kuhn and the idea of epistemological schism of G. Bachelard. Sylvie Cikanova (Czech University of Agriculture) presented post-modern reflections concerning the *small philosophy of big desires*. Karel Hauzer raised the issue of methodology in social sciences, concentrating on research methods. The text by Andrzej Kaleta (Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń, Poland) presents issues concerning quality of life in rural areas in the context of literature on the subject in the nineties. Kolman Ludek (Czech University of Agriculture), Erszébet Dienes (Hungarian Council for Work Psychology, Estergom), Hofstede Geert and Noorderhaven Niels G. (Brabant Catholic University, Tilburg) presented the conference participants with the results of comparative research concerning the cultural differentiation in four countries in Central Eastern Europe: the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Poland. Michal Kubálek presented the differences between two political concepts: 'the anti-political policy' of Vaclav Havel and the 'non-political policy' of Masaryk. In their paper *The Assertion of University Graduates on the Single Labour Market* Ivana Leitmanová, Anna Čermáková and Martin Maršik presented the situation of university graduates on the Czech labour market. A similar issue was raised by M. Matysková, M. Slavik and J. Pošta (*Professional Application of the Graduates of the Czech University of Agriculture and Their Expectations about their Future Job*), presenting research results on the attitudes and aspirations of Czech university graduates towards job offers. Jana Pánková (Czech University of Agriculture) presented research results concerning people carrying out collectivization of individual agriculture in Czechoslovakia after the 2nd World War. Zdenka Pechačová, Jiří Hradecký, Joseph Hraha (Czech University of Agriculture) and Frederick O. Lorenz (Iowa State University) made a comparative analysis of the causes of stress in Czech society in 1996 and 1999. The final paper was by Daniela Stehlik (Queensland University) who presented the prospects of agrarian production in Australia, pointing out tendencies such as: a wider access to electronic media, information technology, the change of the social position of rural women on the labour market, migration from the countryside to cities and a growth in ecological awareness among consumers.

I believe that the issues raised during the conference are interesting as regards the discussion about the future of the countryside in the context of integration with the European Union. However, a disadvantage was the fact that despite intending to be international, the conference was dominated by academics from the Czech Republic and Slovakia.