

plinary perspectives, while they are also learning about models and ideas which they might not otherwise have considered. From their growing understanding of one another, the Group's members are sharing more information and engaging in more open and constructive criticism. It is hoped that the members' experience with the Group will enhance their future thinking, cooperation and contributions to their societies.

Please work with us:

The ESC Working Group on Unemployment wishes to consider innovative programs, no matter where they are, if they can serve as

models or sources of different conceptual approaches. The Working Group's philosophy is that socio-economic problems like unemployment require cooperation rather than competition. To that end, the Group solicits information about local, national, bilateral and multilateral programs. The Group also welcomes opportunities to share its progress with other individuals and groups engaged in efforts to address unemployment and related problems. To exchange information, please contact the author at the European Studies Center in Prague (tel: 42-2-235-84-35).

*Marcia Greenberg*

### **The Luxembourg Income Study and East-West Comparisons**

The Luxembourg Income Study (LIS) has functioned already 10 years as a databank and international center providing researchers with comparative data about incomes and social situations of households. It also gathers an informal community of scholars on income inequality, social redistribution, poverty, and related socio-economic issues.

The LIS project began in 1983 under the joint sponsorship of the Luxembourg government and CEPS/INSTEAD (Center for Populations, Poverty and Policy Studies) in Walferdange, Luxembourg. LIS is funded primarily on a continual basis by CEPS/INSTEAD and national science foundations of the respective countries involved.

Currently, it consists of over 45 datasets spanning one or more years for more than 20 countries. The countries involved are those in Europe, North America, and Australia. Recently, several East Central European countries were included, specifically Poland, the former Czechoslovakia and Hungary. Negotiations are underway to receive members and data from additional countries including Korea, Taiwan, Finland, Portugal, Spain and also other East European countries.

Objectives of LIS are manifold and include:

1. To test the feasibility for creating a database containing social and economic data collected in household surveys from different countries;
2. To provide a method which allows researchers to use the data under restrictions required by the countries providing the data;
3. To create a system that would allow research requests to be received from and returned to users at remote locations; and
4. To promote comparative research on the social and economic status of various populations and subgroups in different countries.

Among comparative questions the most important are: the distribution of household income and the relative income position of population groups; the distribution of earnings, the changes of income over a worker's life-cycle, including the transition to retirement; the effect of transfers and taxes on unequal social and economic well-being; characteristics of poor populations and effectiveness of various kinds of transfers in reducing the incidence of low income; and studies of the workings of the welfare state and its policies towards the underprivileged population. All these questions are of utmost importance for the countries in transition towards market economy, when income inequality starts to increase and the state withdraws from its previous overprotective functions.

The dataset is globally accessible via electronic mail networks. Documentation on

the technical aspects of the survey data and national social institutions of income provisions in associated countries is available to users.

Reports by LIS project participants have resulted in books, articles, chapters within books, and dissertations. Over 90 papers currently exist in the LIS working paper series. Each summer, a workshop is held in Luxembourg to give scholars experience in using the LIS data as applied to social policy issues. Timothy M. Smeeding (University of Syracuse, Project Director), Lee Rainwater (Harvard University, Research Director) and Gaston Schaber (President, CEPS/INSTEAD) supervise the LIS project.

In the summers of 1991 and 1992, special conferences on East-West Comparisons were held under the auspices of the LIS. The primary aim of the conferences was to ascertain which sources of data available from the East Central European countries could be used to assess the impact of the transition from centrally planned to market economies on households and individuals and for comparisons with Western countries.

The first year's conference included papers on social benefit systems, issues of comparability within the measure of economic well-being, data comparability, and LIS based comparisons for the 1980's. Considerable time was devoted to developing an agenda for research on these topics, which were to be conducted before the next conference. A discussion was conducted on how to systematically work out the problems and progress of emerging East Central European democracies, as they affect the income distribution as a whole and particularly the elderly, the retired, and other socially supported groups (e.g., the poor and vulnerable populations) in these countries.

During the conference, country teams were organized to work with LIS over the next several years in order to research and develop data on the changing income distributions of East Central Europe. Conference participants included representatives of the countries' statistical offices and university and institute researchers. Representatives from the following countries attended: Austria, Czechoslovakia, France, Germany, Hun-

gary, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Yugoslavia. A summary of the conference proceedings, "Gold Mines and Mine Fields," is available as LIS Working Paper #68. The main suggestions of the conference were, among others, to concentrate on social protection and poverty as guideline issues for exploration in a cross-national context and to monitor changes in social security systems and their impact on various population groups.

The 1992 conference was dedicated primarily to updating the findings from the previous year on the economic and social changes in the East Central European countries. Country studies were presented from Czechoslovakia, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Russia, and Yugoslavia. Cross-national comparative research and related studies and progress on data comparability were investigated. A paper with results from the Taganrog Study - a 20-year panel data survey on one Russian "Middletown" was used. Results from a German panel survey (for the comparison of western and eastern parts) were also discussed. It was decided that, in anticipation of "new" LIS East Central European data to come with the next year, release of mid-1980's LIS datafiles from Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Yugoslavia would be outdated. If funding can be found, Russian data will be added to the LIS database over the next few years. Conference guests were from Czechoslovakia, German, Italy, Hungary, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Switzerland, Yugoslavia, and the United States.

The next East-West Conference is expected to be held in the fall of 1993 in Washington, D. C.

Aside from summer workshops, where students from East European countries are invited to participate, the LIS initiatives are inspirational also in the national framework. LIS country teams work together even between times to spread advanced methods for the study of income distribution to universities and research institutions. By this, the currently lacking empirical research of the socio-economic matters will be stimulated.

Eastern Europe will participate also in the last LIS initiative, which aims to establish a new database from labor force surveys. Luxembourg Employment Study (LES) would complete the perspective of households' well-being with the perspective from their economic participation. LIS/LES base of the statistical microdata would expand comparative analysis of the transformation processes considerably. It could help to cap-

ture the social dimension of an enlarged European integration in some advance as well.

For further information on LIS or to purchase copies of the working papers, interested persons should contact Smeeding via bitnet at "smeeding@suvm" or by fax at (315) 443-1081, or Caroline de Tombeur at "sslisbb@luxcep11" or by fax at (352) 33 27 05.

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### **Department of Sociology, Faculty of Philosophy, Charles University, Prague**

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This **department of sociology** is a part of the Faculty of Philosophy at the Charles University where such famous sociologists as T. G. Masaryk and E. Beneš demonstrated interest in social sciences. Looking back the Department has a long but not always flourishing and easy past. After the Sociological Seminar begun by Masaryk at the end of 19th century, the seminar was closed and then re-opened due to Second World War, unfortunately only until 1948/49. The department (the chair) of sociology was actually established in 1965. The political climate after the 1968 invasion forced a temporary closing of the department in 1970 and its next period was penetrated by strong influences and supervision of political *nomenclature*, of ideological press. After 1989, the "velvet revolution", and following general reconstructions of the department, the present staff tries to continue in the tradition of this classical and academic sociological education to cover the recent need of a global educational program in sociology. Its basic values are the freedom of thought, multiparadigmatical approaches, free and large contacts with the international sphere of sociology. It aims to have high quality teachers and students, representing famous traditions in sociology at the Philosophical Faculty.

The scientific profile of the department is connected with teaching and the education

of students in graduate as well as postgraduate and doctoral programs. In 5 years it is possible to get a M.A. degree in sociology or interdisciplinary in sociology with demography, economics, logic, esthetics or other options. There is a specific advantage to this type of faculty: it is really a faculty of Arts making it possible to study sociology in combination with languages, art history, etc.

The studies are oriented especially towards theoretical sociology, with a deeper, historical-comparative background. However the applied disciplines such as sociology of culture, of life style, of work and organization, of management, of public opinion, of youth and generation are also cultivated. The department ensures the standard practical basics in methodology, statistics, etc.

The department also offers two options of postgraduate programs for the public sector (1 year-long, with a re-qualification or innovative character).

A new program on Industrial Relations will be developed within the TEMPUS program in co-operation with Germany, Great Britain and the Netherlands. This shows that there are already some important international contacts. A successful student exchange has existed now for two years with George Washington University in the U.S.A.; the department members went as visiting scholars to universities in Boston and Texas, and there are traditionally many contacts with Austria and Germany.

### **Research Programme**

Concerning the research activity, the department has no laboratory or other specialized basis for a larger empirical survey, but uses good contacts with such institutions as