

RECTOR'S REPORT

This is an abbreviated version of the report delivered at the last Collegium Budapest Assembly meeting on 6 September 2004.

Renewal of the Common Declaration

Since the last Assembly meeting in June 2003, eight Assembly members, including Austria, France, Germany, Switzerland, Hungary, Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation, Cultural Foundation Landis & Gyr in Zug, and the Fritz Thyssen Stiftung, have signed the third "Common Declaration", declaring their willingness to further support CB for the coming years (until 2007).

Enlargement of the Group of Sponsors

Italy and Morocco declared their intention to join the group of sponsors of Collegium Budapest in the Spring of 2003. This was followed by a visit of a delegation from the Italian Foreign Ministry in June 2003, and that of Prof. Boutaleb-Joutei, President of the University of Rabat Mohammed V, which had been designated by the Moroccan government to take responsibility for the links to CB, in May 2004. During the latter visit an agreement was signed between Collegium Budapest and the University of Rabat.

In addition, overtures have been made towards Finland and Norway.

Fellows and Activities in Academic Year 2003/04

- The number of core fellows during the entire academic year 2003/04 was 42 (167 man-months), including 2 guests from the Swiss Zuger Kulturstiftung Landis & Gyr, and the focus group members on "Precursors to Culture" and on "Molecular Biology";
- The number of resident fellows; who are related to projects totalled 18 (57 man-months)
- The distribution of fellows between branches of science was as follows: A total of 60 fellows: 27 from the natural sciences (102 man-months) and 33 from the humanities/social sciences (122 man-months).

As well known, the capability of the institute to offer scholarships has been seriously reduced lately. Remarkably, however, we have been very successful in attracting first-rate scholars who are able and willing to bring in all or part of their funding, either in the form of a partial sabbatical salary, or with the assistance of a third partner. In an effort to ensure continuing resources for scholarships, agreements have recently been concluded with the American Council of Learned Societies and with the Fulbright Commission, who will offer Collegium Budapest as a host institution for their stipendees. The very significant grants won by Gábor Klaniczay from the Thyssen Foundation and the Getty Foundation will provide additional funds for scholarships. Note that the Collegium has retained its right to have all the applicants

supported by these organizations assessed by the Advisory Board, and accept or refuse them according to its own criteria. It is also important to observe that all those arriving with their own money or under any of the schemes indicated above will be free to pursue their own research agenda, and will, therefore, belong to the rank of core fellows.

There were fears that the different status of the fellows working at the institute during the year (scholars pursuing their own research agenda vs. those related to projects, fellows receiving a scholarship from the institute vs. those bringing in their own resources) would lead to a certain tension between them. I am happy to report that absolutely nothing of this kind has taken place. There was an overall collegial and amicable atmosphere all through the year, with fellows actively seeking one another's company at lunches and at spontaneously organised social events in the guesthouse. Two events, the mini-symposium on Precursors to Culture, one of the focus group themes, and the ECAGENTS Parade, a presentation of an EU-financed project on robotics, were organised in response to an express demand from the side of the „soft sciences”, and a lot of interactions took place between the various groups, including humanists and social scientists on the one hand and natural scientists on the other. The two philosophers: Tamar Gendler and Tim Crane played a particularly important role as catalysts of interdisciplinary discussion and interaction.

Very much in line with the mission of the institute, several of the workshops, seminars, etc. were of a widely interdisciplinary character. For example, the workshop on Form and Function, co-organized with the Santa Fe Institute (www.santafe.edu), brought together people from architecture, anthropology, archaeology, music, art history, mathematics, computer science, biology, economics, neuroscience, sociology, and linguistics. The one on Precursors to Culture had participants from neuroscience, psychology, archaeology, biology, anthropology, ethology and zoology. As further examples, we may mention the workshop on Risk and Regulation that featured mathematicians, economists, bankers and lawyers, or the EU-sponsored four-week long workshop („thematic institute”) on Networks with participants from mathematics, computer science, physics, engineering and sociology (www.complexityscience.org/index.php, <http://gawain.elte.hu/ThematicInstitute>).

In addition to the above four programs bridging the social sciences-humanities vs. natural sciences divide, the other workshops and conferences were fairly evenly distributed over these large branches of knowledge: two programs belonged to the social sciences, and two to the EU accession and to science policy, respectively. Of the 11 public lectures organized or co-organized by the Collegium, 9 were connected to the social sciences or the humanities, the other 2 to mathematics.

The distribution of the fellow seminars reflected the composition of the team: as compared to the 6 lectures on biology, we had 16 lectures on topics belonging to the humanities or the social sciences, with 5 of the latter being directly related to the analysis of the political and social consequences of transition in the region.

Funding Issues

After the financial difficulties of the previous year(s), 2004 has brought about a remarkable stabilization of the institute's situation. This is due to a number of factors:

- the painful austerity measures introduced in 2002 have been consistently upheld;
- careful planning of cash flow;
- several fellows were able to bring in their own resources without us having to make compromises on the selection;
- a noticeable amount of support arrived from the private sector; and, most importantly,
- successful grant applications brought in very substantial funding.

We are continuing our efforts to identify third partners who are willing to assist our future fellows with funding their stays at the Collegium.

Project funding has played a decisive role in the stabilization of the institute. I would like to emphasize that full credit should be given for this to permanent fellows János Kornai, Gábor Klaniczay and Eörs Szathmáry, and resident scholar Gábor Vattay. Due to Kornai's effort, the immensely successful Honesty and Trust program in the previous academic year (www.colbud.hu/honesty-trust), which has, by now, produced two excellent volumes published by Palgrave Macmillan [New York, 2004], was almost completely self-financed. The workshops organized by Klaniczay last year as a preparation for the coming „Multiple Antiquities” program were also 100-percent externally funded, and the substantial support he was able to ensure from the Fritz Thyssen Foundation and the Getty Grant Program guarantees the success of the focus groups planned for the near future. Szathmáry is responsible for the EU project ECAGENTS (www.ecagents.org) and the ESA project on Mars, both not only covering their own costs, but also providing contribution to the administration of the institute. The same applies to the other EU project EVERGROW (www.sics.se/~kersti/evergrow), led by Gábor Vattay. This project has already made a very substantial investment into the information technology infrastructure of the Collegium: the supercomputer, set up in the cellar, is a formidable tool that has started to attract the interest of other computer centres, which are approaching us with offers of time sharing and other cooperation.

I firmly believe that these projects greatly enhanced the institute's scientific standing. At the same time, they have left ample room for uncommitted, free, curiosity driven research, and in fact, have also contributed to its institutional costs.

The Evaluation of the Institute

One of the most significant events of the past year has been the evaluation of the institute and the completion of the report of the Evaluation Committee. They have done a tremendous job, spent 5 days at the Collegium on two separate site visits, interviewed a large number of people associated with the institute in one way or another, studied hundreds of pages of documents, and offered valuable advice at the end of their report. We are thoroughly obliged to the members of the Evaluation Committee, Jürgen Kocka, Hans-Jakob Lüthi, Ernő Marosi, Lewis Wolpert and Björn Wittrock, and we are particularly grateful to Björn Wittrock who acted as chair of the Committee and put a huge amount of work into editing and composing the final version of the report. The conclusion is as follows:

“The purpose of the Collegium is to advance scholarship by making possible encounters between different disciplines, theoretical traditions, scholarly temperaments and styles of argumentation. These aims have been reached to a remarkable extent. The scientific results have been manifold and in many cases of very good and sometimes even outstanding international quality.

One prominent objective of the Collegium has been to serve the wider region in which it is located and to be an institution that would take seriously the scientific, intellectual, and cultural needs of this region. This goal has been reached to a remarkable degree. Collegium Budapest provides a unique meeting place for scholars from the West and from post-socialist Central and Eastern Europe. In coming years it may perhaps even come to serve as a major vehicle in allowing Budapest to re-emerge as an internationally leading scientific centre.

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Clearly, the Collegium now plays a significant role in the intellectual, cultural and scholarly life of Budapest. It was the first institute for advanced study in Central-Eastern Europe. Since then, it has been active in efforts to set up additional institutes of this or an analogous kind in the region. The very success of these efforts by no means diminishes the need for continued international support of the Collegium. On the contrary, it remains the only full-blown institute for advanced study in Central-Eastern Europe. Its role in setting standards of scholarly excellence is as great as ever.

The Collegium aims at and does provide a range of excellent services to its Fellows. These entail substantially better working conditions for Fellows than those normally encountered by regular scholars in the region. Again in this way, the Collegium helps scholars from the region but also helps to promote new standards. The management is, as far as we have been able to ascertain, fully professional.

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Collegium Budapest is a unique European institution. Its success has been made possible by a bottom-up, multilateral co-operation between countries and private donors. This feature should be looked upon as exemplary. It constitutes a possible model for the type of European-wide institutional co-operation that is needed, if the scientific excellence of Europe is to be maintained and strengthened.“