

BUDAPEST FUTURES COURSE 2001 – THE PROJECT

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The World Futures Studies Federation (WFSF) supported by the UNESCO, decided in 1997 to revive the European Course on Futures Studies in Budapest as “Budapest Futures Course” (BFC). The authorised lead organiser is a board member, Prof. Dr. Erzsébet Nováky, Head of the Futures Studies Centre at the Budapest University of Economic Sciences and Public Administration, Budapest, Hungary.

From the special cultural-political position of Hungary between West and East, North and South, Budapest represents a particular culture reflecting the values of the Euro-Atlantic development as well as those of alternative social frames at the same time. The Budapest Futures Course emphasises the expression and the possible synthesis of the different cultural, political and economic traditions, which shape the coming futures today.

The Budapest Futures Course 2001 is held between 25th August and 1st September, entitled

SOCIAL VALUES – FORMING NEW SOCIETIES
– Youth for a Less Selfish Future –

1. Backgrounds

The 1996-2001 middle-run strategy of UNESCO underlines the importance of youth (see points 234-237) from several points of view. In accordance with this the main concept of the Budapest Futures Course is an interchange of ideas, which aims at the mobilisation of youth to participate in the active and conscious formation of the future as well as at making surveys and comparisons of the cultural, political and economic features of the different futures articulated by youth.

At the 16th World Conference of the WFSF, the Board decided to organise the next World Congress in Brasov, in summer 2001 entitled Many Cultures, One World: Local Development and Globalisation. The challenges of maintaining cultural diversity while enhancing universal values, and ensuring local development in the new era of globalisation, will be the central theme of the 17th WFSF Conference.

The Budapest Futures Course 1999 started a discussion on the theme “Youth for a Less Selfish Future”, which became the main principle of the programme planned for the long range. The expression ‘for a less selfish future’ points out that the leading principle is future orientation in harmony with the new programmes of UNESCO: ‘future talks’ and ‘future discussions’.

The BFC 1999 has emphasised ‘youth’. Our task was to study the future orientation of youth and compare the results of international surveys. The presented papers, surveys and the outcomes of the course have been published by the Futures Studies Centre, Budapest (*Nováky, Kristóf* eds 2000).

2. Aim of the course

The aim of the course is to connect the background tendencies and to discuss new values on which new societies can be built. We want to focus how these changes appear in futures studies and in future visions of the youth. We aim at discussing the cultural surroundings of shifts in values. The course is structured on a three dimensional approach: time, space and field.

Time refers to the global need to changing values. While the technological revolution has been transforming the economic and political subsystems of developed countries, the dominance of the cultural leadership is still ahead. The future calls for the globalisation and democratisation of self-governance, which can be achieved along values different from the principle of individual economic benefit.

Space-dimension incorporates the different local appearance of values and social visions. Multiculturalism and one-world appear themselves as a value of the future. The course is to outline how social development models are connected to values in multicultural regions of the world such as Asia, Balkan, America or Central Europe.

Field represents different aspects of values. It is only the materialisation of values that enables cultures to dominate social development. The course focuses on the technological, environmental, political, etc. changes that are initiated by

new values as well as the transformation of values following from global technological development.

The ‘youth for a less selfish future’ programme highlights the problem of ‘selfishness’ this time. The BFC 1999 participants have agreed that ‘selfishness’ is always embedded in cultural-economic environment, which needs further investigation. The articulated hypothesis was that the expression ‘less’ refers to the desirable future where common values of societies do not suppress unique local features of the world, at the same time multiculturalism has significance beyond global fragmentation and serves the common existence of people.

3. Outcomes

The main outcome of the course could be a more definite future orientation of youth along different and new values. It will be possible to explore and explain how new values influence social development. The participants can make a picture about the role of future and future orientation in different academic fields. New values will be connected with methodology as well. The course will reveal the ways of investigating multicultural global world, how one can interpret them and to what extent science and technology contribute to the reformation of social values.

The course provides a chance to the lecturers and participants to change fruitfully their experiences in the education of futures studies and in the ways of extending the influence of future orientation.

4. Characteristics of the course

4.1 International workshop

The BFC is mainly an international workshop, which determines the features and aims of all other forms of education such as introductory lectures, small group work or informal presentations.

4.2 Postgraduate course

The BFC is postgraduate and invites 30-35 young fellows who actually participate in education, research work, economic policy, business etc., those who have the ability, possibility and willingness to spread the spirit and the very practical result of the BFC.

4.3 Output orientation

Our intention is that the participants could formulate a message from the analysis of the given programme for their own special field. The participants are to actively contribute to the course with interchanging of ideas, sharing their own research results, discussing those of the invited lecturers. Thus the programme of each summer course is particular and relatively narrowly defined.

4.4 Follow-up work

The BFC is more than just a summer course. We would like to make available how the participants manage to put the message of the course into practice, what experience they have. We plan to issue publications from these contributions, from the materials and the outcome of the course, as well as the new results of research work on the topic of previous courses.

4.5 Series of courses

The BFC is a series of events progressing on a biannual basis. Forthcoming courses are organised in accordance with the previous messages, with up-to-date challenges, future interest and financing.

5. Participants and course site

We have invited well-known futurist colleagues from all over the world who have performed research studies on the Course topic. We expect 30-35 young, future oriented fellows with experience in research and its applications.

The course mainly consists of workshops with introductory presentations. As the spirituality of the Budapest Futures Course is an interchange of ideas, participants are expected to prepare and take part in the discussions. Participants who meet output orientation will be recognised by a certificate.

The site of the course will be the Budapest University of Economic Sciences and Public Administration, where all facilities are at our disposal. Accommodation and meals are provided close to the University.

References

Nováky, E., Kristóf, T. (eds) (2000): The Youth for a Less Selfish Future, Papers of the I. Budapest Futures Course, Department of Futures Studies, BUESPA, Budapest, p. 236