

## ŠVIETIMO INSTITUCIJOS

### The Network of Education Policy Centers

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The Education Policy Centers (EPC) emerged in the region in the last couple of years addressing the need for independent and information based policy analysis, advocacy for equity, and effective, sustainable solutions in education policy processes. They took on the role of an independent voice in maturing democracies and open societies. The Centers are diverse in nature, organizational structure, professional background, scope, size, and role in education change. Most of the Centers established social partnerships with key stakeholders in education in their countries. The common feature of the Centers is that they are based on strong local knowledge, have developed international contacts, and have built links with key international organizations. Education Support Program of the Open Society Institute (OSI ESP) mapped and helped bring together the Education Policy Centers from a wide geographic area.

Large number of Education Policy Centers is OSI-related and contributes to open, democratic and participatory policy processes. They promote and monitor transparent, nondiscriminatory, nonselective education for all by offering quality research and analysis. Centers are successful in providing alternative sources of

information and alternative policy options and facilitating open public debate and raising awareness through advocating for policies aimed at equal access to all levels of education.

The OSI Education Support Program helped to lay the foundation for the networking of OSI related Education Policy Centers by initiating two meetings where participants shared their centers' experiences and also discussed joint projects and future cooperation. An initial meeting of five Education Policy Centers of EU accession countries was held in May 2003.

OSI ESP has started to map out the education policy centers and has facilitated the exchange of information and expertise among the centers.

A meeting of OSI network related Education Policy Centers was held in Bratislava from November 28-29, 2003 followed by a training session on Education Policy on November 30th. The OSI Education Support Program together with the Education Policy Center at Orava Association, Slovakia, organized the meeting.

Second annual meeting was organized in Tbilisi, Georgia July 2-4 by the Center of Education Policy Planning and Management, Georgia.

The Education Policy Centers have few joint activities already: they have developed the Directory of the EPC Network, publish electronic Newsletter 'Education Policy' which can be found on the Network's Internet site <http://epc.objectis.net>.

Education Policy Center at Vilnius University is coordinating activities of the Network in 2005. The next annual meeting of the Network of the Education Policy Centers will be organized in Vilnius, October 2005 with the support of OSI Education Support Program.

The Education Policy Centers through networking have opportunities to gain new ideas and contacts, plan joint projects and learning events, develop education policy analysis and advocacy capacity. The OSI ESP will continue to encourage development of the Network and professional communication on education change in respective countries in line with the open society education agenda.

The Directory of the EPC Network was published recently. The Directory presents

profiles of more than 20 centers in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, including contact information, summaries of the centers' activities, recent projects and partners.

The Directory, initiated by the Network of Education Policy Centers, brings much hope that it will become an important tool for the exchange of information and experiences thus strengthening capacities of the centers and will serve as a good information source for the wider educational community.

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