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Involvement of CEEC researchers

Contribution to the Round table on European and national research networks at ECER, September 2005

See also > [ECER 2005 Proceedings](#) > [Focus on CEEC](#)

Sabine Manning, Research Forum WIFO Berlin

Introduction

Our concern at this round table, and in general, is to stimulate collaboration between European researchers and, in particular, the involvement of researchers from Central and Eastern European Countries (CEEC) in European network activities of VET and HRD. This brief contribution will address the following questions:

- Which are the major network activities?
- To what extent are CEEC researchers involved?
- How can this involvement be stimulated?

Outline

Selected evidence from accompanying analysis in this field is set out in the figures and comments below.

[Figure 1](#)

Network activities in European VET and HRD research

Networking among European researchers in vocational education has developed over the past ten years in various contexts. EU projects in transnational partnerships have been a major driving force in this process. Collaboration among European researchers in vocational education has been supported in various ways by VETNET (Vocational Education and Training Network) with its annual programme presented at ECER (European Conference of Educational Research), by CEDRA (CEDEFOP Research Arena), which promotes opportunities for sharing and developing knowledge, and by ERO-Call, which is a

CEDEFOP supported mailing list of European researchers. Two further, but unrelated, network activities led by CEDEFOP are the Research Reports ('RRs'), produced by large teams of European authors every two or three years, and the ReferNet (European network of reference and expertise), comprising documentalists and researchers from all EU countries. Finally, there are two activities in the field of human resource development: a European network of researchers - the EHRD Network, mainly built on EU project partnerships, and the annual European HRD conference, led by the University Forum of HRD in the UK.

To what extent are researchers from Central and Eastern European countries (CEEC) involved in these network activities? The following three figures can offer some insight.

[Figure 2](#)

Individual participants from CEEC in major activities (1995 to 2004)

This figure shows the involvement of researchers from CEEC in the various activities introduced before (figure 1). Their proportion of all European participants (blue columns) is below 10% across all activities with one exception: the percentage within ReferNet (national coordinators only) is just over 40, because this network is based on proportional representation - this an interesting indicator of the dimension of CEEC membership. The absolute number of CEEC participants in the network activities (white columns) is more varied. This partly depends on the size of the individual network community, but also on the type of activity. Several types may be distinguished:

- Networks and mailing lists are most suitable for involving new members - the relatively high number of about 50 CEEC members in the EHRD Network illustrates this point. ERO-Call has got a lower involvement (26) because this list is based on self-subscription.
- Also quite open for involvement are annual conferences - ECER (VETNET programme) has attracted 30 CEEC researchers so far (individuals who participated once or several times in the 10 year period); the corresponding number for the HRD conference is 20 CEEC researchers.
- EU projects have also been open for CEEC partners, their involvement has even been pursued as an active policy since the late 1990s - however, the number of CEEC researchers involved is fairly moderate (14 in the total sample of 58 projects).
- More selective are thematic activities like CEDRA and the CEDEFOP Research Reports, because these draw on special expertise - the numbers of CEEC researchers involved have been small (3 and 1 respectively).

[Figure 3](#)

Individual participants from CEEC in major activities (breakdown by country 1995 to 2005)

Researchers from 13 CEEC (including candidates for EU membership) have been involved in European activities. The top group is made up of Romania, Poland, Hungary, Estonia and the Czech Republic. These countries also include a few researchers who

have been involved in two or more activities in parallel (dark part of the bar). In most of these cases, the researchers are both EU project members and ECER participants. One researcher from Estonia is also a member of the VETNET Board. It should be added that participation in conferences or projects may in fact be a frequent activity: a CEEC researcher may have attended several annual ECER events or participated in several EU projects.

These combined or repeated activities are an indicator of a more intense involvement in European network activities. A relatively small number of representatives from several CEEC have already become key contacts for European collaboration. This development is worth noting, because it coincides with general trends in community formation and with the growing professionalism in European research.

[Figure 4](#)

Individual participants from CEEC in selected activities (1995 to 2005)

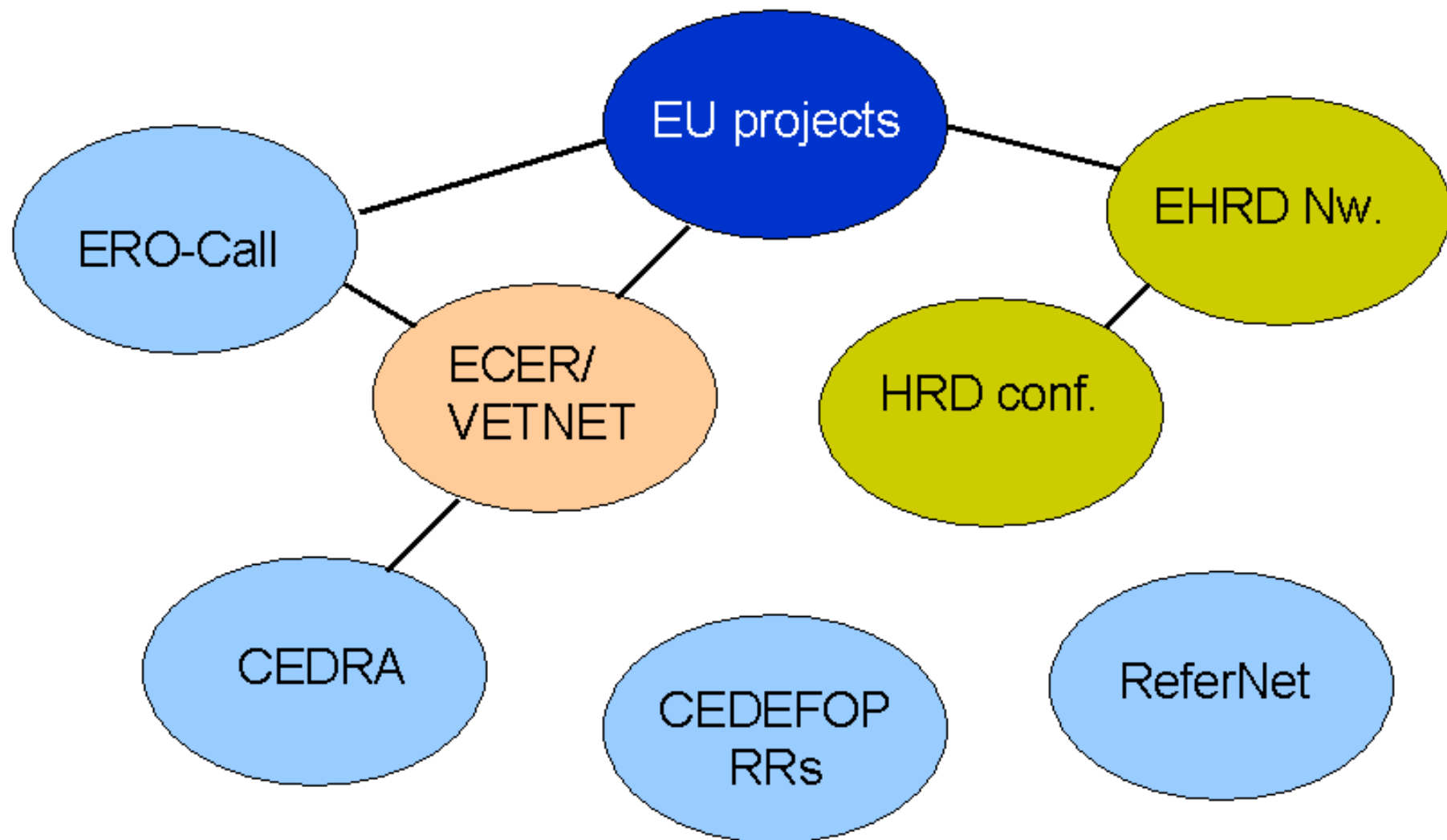
The three major activities in which CEEC researchers are involved are EU projects, ECER and the HRD conference. Most countries are represented in two or three of these. The comparison of national participation in ECER and the HRD conference is interesting: Among the top group, Rumania, Estonia and Hungary are represented at both conferences, even with parallel attendance by individual researchers (1 RO, 1 EE); Polish researchers are mostly at the HRD conference, while Czech and Lithuanian researchers can only be found at ECER. The numbers of national researchers are of course small, but the different distribution of conference attendance might reflect the relationship between VET and HRD research, or the focus of interest, in the countries concerned.

Conclusions

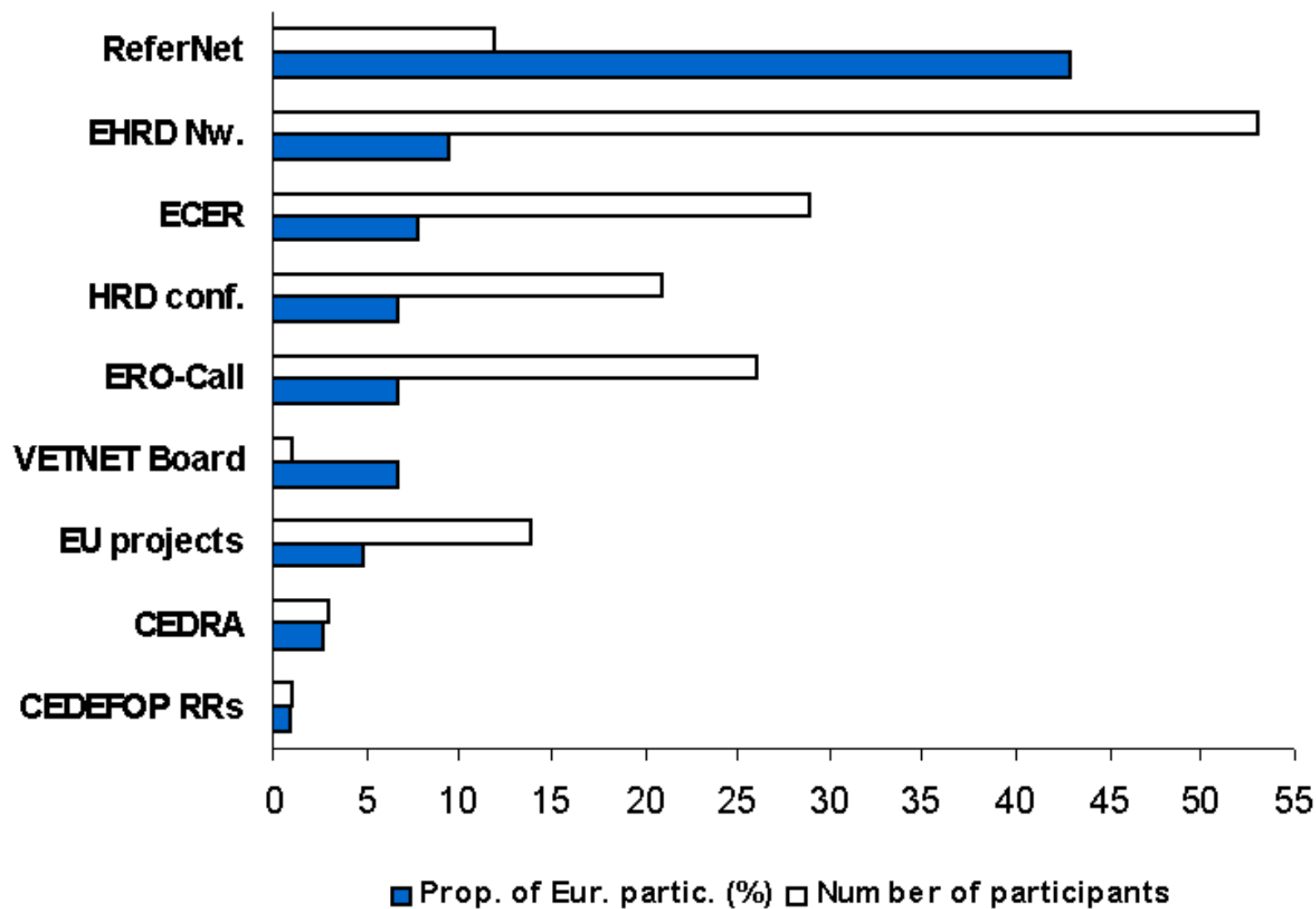
Altogether, CEEC researchers have been involved in European network activities to a remarkable degree, even if in modest overall quantity. The open questions is how to stimulate further involvement, especially of the least represented countries. (e.g. Bulgaria, Latvia and Slovakia). Several initiatives would be desirable:

- above all, to encourage CEEC researchers and their institutions to participate in EU projects - these are fundamental for collaboration, even if limited in capacity;
- also, to use broad networks like VETNET and associated mailing lists to address CEEC researchers, and
- to extend calls for participation in conferences - these events however presuppose financial funds, which are often unavailable for CEEC researchers without additional support;
- and last but not least to provide information on CEEC researchers and their activities - an important initiative has been taken by CEDEFOP, its ReferNet and CEDRA: to provide a European Research Overview on VET and HRD by presenting information on experts, projects and papers in a database and by reviewing outcomes of national research reports on all EU countries (see ERO home page in the European Training Village and the VET&HRD Base on the WIFO site).

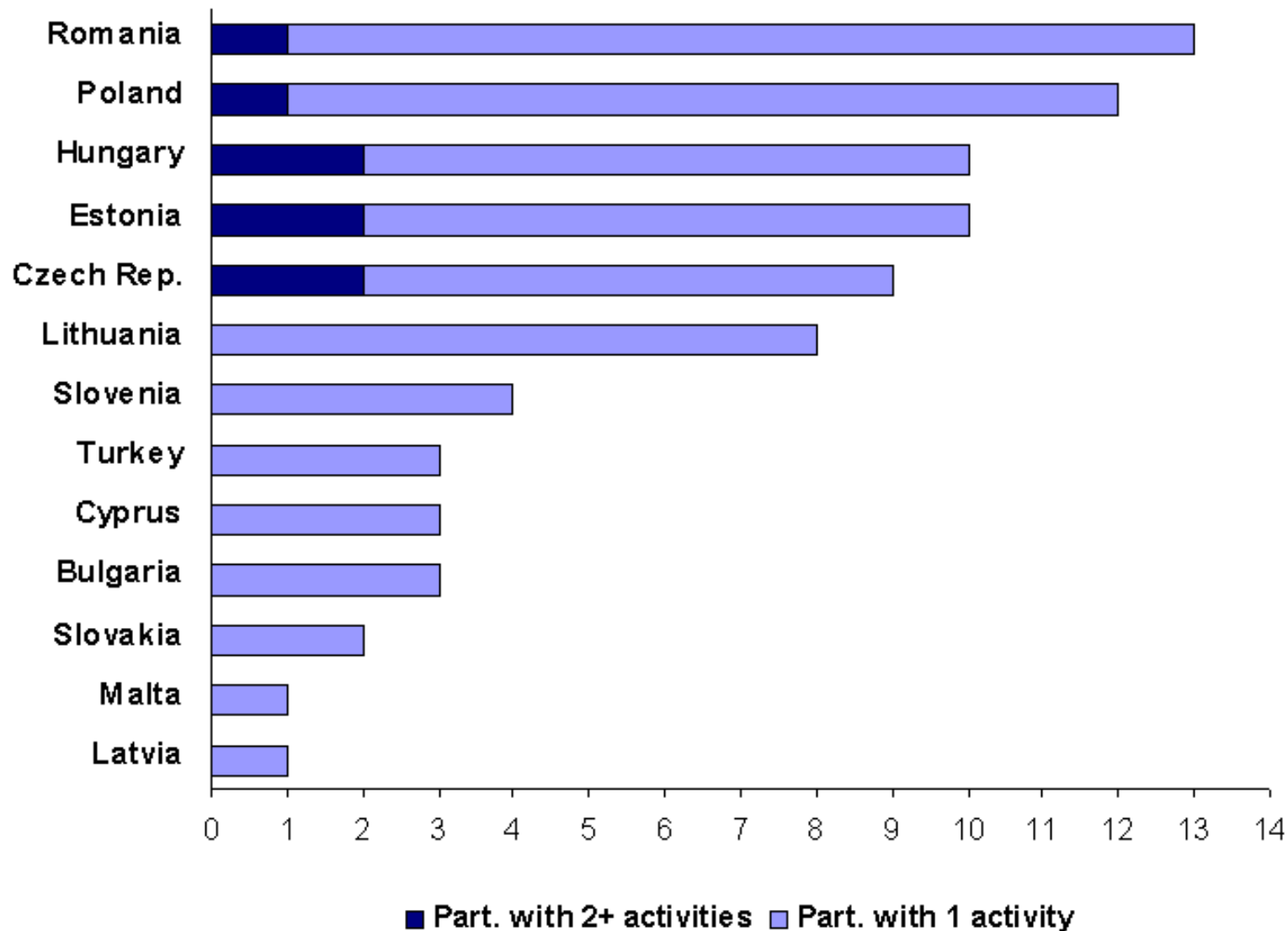
Network activities in European VET and HRD research



Individual participants from CEEC in major activities (1995 to 2004)



Individual participants from CEEC in major activities (breakdown by country 1995 to 2005)



Individual participants from CEEC in selected activities (1995 to 2005)

