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Introduction

For some time, the researchers studying various aspects of social and economic development in the 19th and 20th century have been pointing at the crucial role of education, schooling system and high-education institutions in the processes of social and economic modernisation and political and social democratisation. These processes could not take place without the spread of literacy, professionalization and communication using written language and media; and neither without the formation of educated and business elites, which became an indispensable dynamic factor of social, economic and cultural changes. In particular in the countries and nations with only weak urban middle-class population and slow development of non-agrarian economy (small trades and industry), educational institutions and universities were one of the most important factors of social mobility and transformation, which paved the way for the emergence of urbanized middle-class population and modern social and economic flows. In the 19th century, a large part of higher-education and university students were schooled outside their home environment; until 1918 students in the Habsburg monarchy were mostly schooled at the university centres within the monarchy, whereas the students from the South-Eastern European countries attended also Western European universities. Afterwards, they all conveyed their knowledge and economic, social and political development views to the local and wider national environment. With gradual establishing of higher-education and university institutions in the environments and countries where they had not existed before, new scientific and university centres started to emerge in Central and South-Eastern Europe in the second half of the 19th century; they accelerated the formation of educated elites and encouraged their modernisation efforts.

This publication includes the contributions presented at the symposium “The Role of Education and Universities in Modernization and Europeanization Processes in Central and South-Eastern European Countries in the 19th and 20th Century” organised by the Institute of Contemporary History and the Austrian Science and Research Liaison Office in Ljubljana on 26 and 27 November 2009. The main purpose of the symposium was to present and compare the latest research on this subject and encourage discussions on how modernity was perceived,

understood and put into effect by the educated elites in the Central European and South Eastern European countries with in many aspects different, but also comparable social, cultural and national historical experiences. The diversity of approaches proposed by the authors of the papers clearly reveals the complexity of this subject, which could be studied from many various perspectives and in various manners.

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