

countries can take advantage of their strong position to the disadvantage of small countries.

The conference confirmed the influence of historical awareness on the formation of national, regional, and micro-regional identity. The historical dimension influences the way Czechs and Bavarians see one another and their cross-border cooperation, which is a reflection of more than just the 20th-century past. Often other historical events from much earlier periods appear as illustrative of the contacts between Czechs and Germans as neighbours, examples such as the inter-linking network of medieval trade routes and numerous religious connections. The further back in time these historical events are (however much they may have had a clearly negative effect on the relationship at the time, e.g. the Hussite movement), the less a source of conflict in the co-existence of the two countries they represent, and the more potential there is to inscribe them with positive content. Building neighbourly relations on the basis of these historical references to harmonious links represents a great challenge for how Czechs and German perceive one another. It is one of the paths toward closer understanding and toward fulfilling the goals of friendly and active neighbourly relations.

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**Information on the Volume – *Central European Parliaments: The First Decade of Democratic Experience and Future Prospects*, edited by Zdenka Mansfeldová, David M. Olson, and Petra Rakušanová. Prague 2004: Institute of Sociology AS CR**

Edited volume entitled *Central European Parliaments: The First Decade of Democratic Experience and Future Prospects* is an edited volume of conference proceedings containing papers from an international workshop held in Prague in November 2003. The workshop of

the same title brought together researchers from eight Central and Eastern European countries, and from Germany, Canada and the United States, who specialise in parliamentary studies dealing with Central and Eastern Europe. Its main aim was to summarise and assess the decade of parliamentary research conducted by the Institute of Sociology, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, and by other scientific institutions in Central and Eastern European countries, and to define research priorities for the next decade in view of EU enlargement and the changing parliamentary agenda. Participants proposed a future research agenda that would go beyond the isolated form of research on national parliaments and their actors, which dominated the past decade of research, by launching international cooperative investigations during the next decade and assessing priorities in parliamentary research for the coming years. Based on current trends in the Czech parliament and on existing research, attention was primarily paid to the role of the parliaments of new EU member states in the context of changes in the parliamentary agenda, the role of individual parliaments in general, and the possible links between national parliaments and the European Parliament.

The papers in the volume of proceedings have been substantially re-worked by the authors in cooperation with the editors, and the content consequently goes beyond the scope of presentations made at the workshop. The volume is divided into four sections. The first section, *The Parliamentary Research Agenda*, presents current findings in empirical research studies on parliaments and parliamentarians in Central Europe and Germany. Bernhard Wessels presents the results of a longitudinal comparative study of German members of the parliament and German members of the European Parliament. Zdenka Mansfeldová concentrates on a description and analysis of the institutional framework and policy relations between the Czech Parliament and the government.