UNU-MERIT’s presence at the 6th GLOBELICS International Conference;  
Mexico City, 22-24 September, 2008

Mirroring previous experiences in Rio de Janeiro, Beijing, Pretoria, Kerala and Saratov, a strong contingent of UNU-MERIT researchers contributed to the successful activities of the 6th Annual Conference held by the Global Network for the Economics of Learning, Innovation, and Competence Building Systems (GLOBELICS) in Mexico City. GLOBELICS is quickly becoming an attractive forum for Meriters to share their work and interact with the more ample community of scholars interested in innovation, learning, technical change and other related topics in developed and developing countries.

This year’s GLOBELICS conference ran for over three days and was attended by about 550 researchers, students, policy makers and businessmen from all over the world. It took place in the context of the Week for Science, Technology and Innovation in Mexico, thereby assisting local efforts to raise awareness on the relevance and potential contribution of STI activities to underpin socioeconomic development in countries like Mexico.

Researchers Ionara da Costa and Micheline Goedhuys and PhD researchers, Asel Doranova, Branca Urem, Ekin Keskin, Ezequiel Taczir, Fernando Santiago and Francisco Aguayo presented their research results at the conference. The papers addressed a broad range of topics in the agenda of innovation and related studies including: knowledge and productivity performance in developing countries; firms’ strategies, capacity building and technology transfer in the context of international efforts to fight climate change and for the protection of the environment; selection environments and innovation regimes; foreign direct investment and innovation performance in developing countries; innovation response capacity development in agriculture and livestock activities; linkages development or the management of human resources for innovation in developing countries. Geographical coverage was also diverse with evidence arising from Europe, China, Ethiopia, Argentina and Mexico among other countries. UNU-MERIT researchers equally performed as discussants of the work carried out by researchers from elsewhere in the world, thereby contributing to the debate and expected subsequent improvement of the papers presented at the conference. Further details are available through the conference website: http://globelics_conference2008.xoc.uam.mx/index-2.html.

Noteworthy was the participation of Prof. Luc Soete, Director of UNU-MERIT, during several plenary sessions held at the Conference. Moreover, he challenged participants with some rather critical remarks during the closing ceremony. In his view, open questions for future developments of GLOBELICS include fine tuning or perhaps, the further expansion of its already broad research agenda. Pending issues would include strengthening research on environmental sustainability in light of current food and energy crises and climate change. Would it be possible for research carried out by GLOBELICS to gain relevance and more actively inform policy making in developing countries? Particularly so for those with an increasingly prominent role at the international level: Brazil, China, India, South Africa and Mexico. Geographical enlargement of the network and inclusion of more researchers from Africa and the
French speaking world would also deserve some efforts in the future. It is expected that the forthcoming 7th Annual Conference in Dakar, Senegal could start paving the way in such directions. UNU-MERIT would be instrumental as co-organizer of the conference.

This year’s GLOBELICS conference coincided with the first Europe-Latin America Conference on Science and Innovation Policy, convened by the PRIME network, in which UNU-MERIT researchers did also participate as joint sessions were held by both Conferences. In the more specific context of PRIME, PhD researcher Fernando Santiago presented a paper on ethical implications of clinical trials in developing countries with some evidence from Mexico.

Quoting prof. B-Å Lundvall: “See you in next Globálucs!”