

REPORT FROM STUDY VISIT FOR HIGHER EDUCATION REFORM EXPERTS, BRUSSELS, 2-3 OCTOBER 2012

The aim of the higher education reform experts study visit in Brussels was to provide us background information, policy updates, examples of best practice within case studies in the field of university business cooperation. Our host was Vrije University, Institute for European Studies, with contribution of University libre de Bruxelles. The speakers and presenters were professors, higher education experts, technology transfer professionals, business start up experts and career guidance officers. All of us had opportunities to develop discussion, examine new ideas and get very useful and practical advices from our presenters. At the first day of study visit we were presented by general examples of business-university cooperation better said path from idea to initial business plan. Also, very useful for us was presented experience how to convince talented people to be involved in cooperation with business sector. Our host stressed the importance of creation such kind of society environment or culture where it becomes acceptable to the research community that new interesting ideas have to be supported. We got knowledge how university – business relationships was fitted in the university priorities of education and research and how university responded to the political and regional priorities of creating societal and economic value. Respected research budget in amount of 75 million gives Vrije University good possibility to realize very ambitious and successful research projects (private sector 23,5%, Flemish governmental support for fundamental research 13%, own research means 18%, project funded by governments 4,5%). The fact which impressed me is that the total amount of their so called “own means” is given by government based on their new number of PhD candidates, number of publications, research projects or practically said on their quality performances.

Very interesting and productive was presentation about VUB Career Center, which was established in October last year. Taking into account the current difficult financial circumstances for higher education it was decided that a VUB Career Center would have to be joint venture with a private partner with expertise in the field of human resources. Information related to this issue was specifically interesting for us bearing in mind that we were in opening procedure of the first Career Center at the University of Montenegro as one of the results of the TEMPUS project concerning development of the concept of Life Long Learning. Efficient search and selection of a suitable private partner and the key functions that VUB Career Center would have to offer to its stakeholders were presented at very clear and practical way.

All participants had opportunity to visit ICAB Business and Technology Incubator which is located in modern, fully renovated building. ICAB as a technology incubator provides logistic, operational and strategic services that companies need at every stage of their development. To start ups ICAB offers adapted support paths.

Presentation related to introduction of entrepreneurship was also very interesting for us taking into account that introduction of entrepreneurship is strategic goal defined by Strategy of Development and Financing of Higher Education 2011-2020. Structure of existing modules from this field, way of teaching, methods of their popularization are of essential importance for us from Montenegro. Bearing in mind that we are at the initial phase of introduction entrepreneurship at almost all study programmes we would be very honored to host experts from Vrije University in Montenegro in order to help us in our efforts to realize this very important task, adapted to our circumstances, at the best possible way.

Also, I was impressed by presentation concerning public private partnership and experience of Vrije University. I find out that ten years experience in this field could be useful for us, so we are very interested in hosting expert from Vrije University in Montenegro. Transfer of Vrije University experience of this partnership in sense of advantages, obstacles, problems, will be assuredly of great contribution to our further activities in developing public private partnership, taking into account that we are at the very beginning stage of such kind of cooperation with private sector .

Generally speaking this study visit was organized perfectly. We enjoyed hospitality of our very kind host who were at our disposal at every moment and gave us feeling of full respect.

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