

FROM THE SCIENTIFIC SPHERE

Competitiveness in the EU: a main theme of two scientific events at the Faculty of Economics and Management of the Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra

One of the most successful scientific events having been traditionally organized by the Faculty of Economics and Management are the International Scientific Days. The central topic of the International Scientific Days 2006 "*Competitiveness in the EU - Challenge for the V4 Countries*" was stated in the spirit of the present effort of the European Union to strengthen the competitiveness within the various aspects of economic and social life. The conference was organized in the days 17–18th May, 2006, in co-operation with partner institutions from the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary.

The main goal of the conference was to bring together the latest experience in the fields connected with the competitiveness of agricultural and food processing complex of the V4 countries in the conditions of the EU. More than 300 participants from 7 countries (Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Germany) were provided with the opportunity to exchange the theoretical and practical knowledge and experience in the fields of competitiveness on the microeconomic and macroeconomic level, regional integration and global trends, education and informatics in the development of knowledge society and active citizenship.

The conference participants were divided into 6 scientific sections aimed at the substantial topic of the conference:

1. Competitiveness – Challenge for Businesses, National Economy and the EU
2. Business and Marketing
3. Global and Regional Integration in the EU
4. Management
5. Accounting and Finance
6. Humanization of Education at the Development of Human Resources

Within the central topic of the conference, a special attention was devoted to the issues of competitiveness of the V4 countries as new member states of

the European Union and evaluating their integration to the European economic structures. This way of evaluating the progress of the V4 countries within the European development processes as well as the idea of cooperation of the V4 experts in the field of research and education had been supported also by the International Visegrad Fund.

As an integral part of the "International Scientific Days 2006", the international workshop had been organized on the central topic "*The Education for Knowledge Economy and Active Citizenship Development*". Forty-six participants – representatives of partner institutions from 18 countries (Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Russia, Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Italy, Finland, Latvia, Ireland, Great Britain, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, Germany, Macedonia) took part in the workshop. The workshop provided an opportunity to exchange experience among the participants and to discover new challenges for the future collaborations in the area of research and education within the European space.

The main topics for discussion were based on the contemporary fields of interests:

- ECTS – dissemination of good practice, experiences and perspectives,
- Cooperation in Higher Education and Research,
- Creating the University Network for the future cooperation.

As a fundamental base for the future cooperation, the Memorandum of Understanding of the participating institutions had been signed.

Many countries are at different stages in the adoption of the provisions of the Bologna Process, e.g. two-stage education. The completion of this process will greatly facilitate the development of international degrees etc. But it will still be necessary to resolve many issues, e.g. the mutual recognition of credits, compatible administration procedures etc to facilitate effective implementation in practice of international degrees.

The tools include:

- Higher education institutions working together on the (BSc –) MSc –PhD programmes in the common fields leading to joint degrees.
- Two or more universities to collaborate to offer joint postgraduate study programmes to lead to the award of multiple awards (e.g. two diplomas from different countries)
- Internalisation of faculties
- Multi-channels of the transfer of knowledge including distance learning and e-learning
- Educational, Research and Development Network
- Communication
- “Cross-border” joint courses e.g. Hungary-Slovakia, Poland-Germany etc.,
- “Channels of knowledge” – recognising the need to “feed in” experiences and needs from the local and regional networks into teaching and disseminating the expertise from universities into local industry, businesses, civil society etc.
- Practical training in different countries (maybe only for 2–3 weeks, perhaps in collaboration with the Farmers’ Unions etc.)
- Research and development basic, applied and local development activities

Summarizing the ideas and intentions following from the workshop discussion, there are mutual interests and active participation in the partnership of the undersigned higher education institutions to develop a mutually shared (recognised) *quality assurance* system, to elaborate harmonised, knowledge based *curricular programs* with the ECTS implementation

to allow *easy mobility of students* among the partner institutions without the problem of *recognition of degrees and periods* of studies in the line of **joint degree** programmes. Partners are willing to make mutual efforts to strengthen the partners’ potential to provide the high level knowledge, with transparent, clear and easy forecasts for the possibilities of the students during the period of education and in the labour market place after graduation.

In the development of such programmes, the partners must keep the diversity in culture, tradition and the institutional autonomy, whilst trying to harmonise the essential knowledge at the outcome levels of each phase of the two-cycle system (recognised by the Diploma), with the additional special knowledge fields by higher educational institutions (recognised by the Diploma Supplement). Beside the academic, research and development activities, the partners are also seeking to strengthen the intercultural understanding and respect.

For the future cooperation, there is important to improve the communication among the consortia members for use of the already existing knowledge and to initiate activities to develop transferable knowledge through cooperation in the field of research and development. The processes of internationalisation and especially Europeanisation have to find their expression in the university research policy and education programs. The forming of consortia of the partner institutions will strengthen the competitive position of partner higher education institutions regionally, nationally and internationally as well.

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