

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The main aim of the Tempus programme is to support the modernisation of higher education in partner countries outside the European Union whilst taking into account that the higher education systems of the partner countries operate in different realities and are based on a variety of historical traditions. Some similarities can be found between the higher education systems in certain regions, but each country has its own features and ambitions.

Universities are places of knowledge production, and the economy and society are the users of this knowledge. Universities in general are therefore seen as playing an essential role in strengthening the economic competitiveness of a region. It is therefore important to promote the enhanced knowledge transfer between universities, the business world and society at large.

Investments in higher education have also a lasting positive effect on the employability of the population. Besides the development of human resources, a good tertiary education at the university locations results in an increased interest in investments by local as well as international companies and thus contributes to the securing and the development of business locations.



PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The main goal of the project **INTERFACE** is to guide and support the partner country universities in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Serbia in providing and developing necessary instruments and methodologies to strengthen knowledge transfer by different measures. The graduates' entrance into the labour market is facilitated through individual career counselling offers and enhanced partnerships with enterprises. Furthermore, based on these partnerships an institutionalised Lifelong Learning (LLL) system is set up and co-ordinated alumni activities lead to much closer relationships between universities and their alumni.

INTERFACE aims to achieve five specific objectives in the target countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Serbia.

- (1) Enhancing the employability of university graduates;
- (2) Ensuring LLL and on the job training for academics and the community at large;
- (3) Fostering transfer and multiplication of academic knowledge to society;
- (4) Combating brain drain; and
- (5) Setting up a continuous learning and quality improvement system for universities.

In order to realise these specific objectives, the necessary structures and capacities at the partner country universities are identified and developed through a self-assessment analysis and knowledge transfer. According to these results the so-called Interface Centres and tailor-made pilot projects at each partner country university are established in order to cover the three areas Lifelong Learning, career services and employability, and alumni activities.

PROJECT METHODOLOGY

Analytical analysis of higher education and society co-operation

In a self-assessment process the partner country universities review and analyse the current situation of links between higher education and society, while the EU universities collect good practice examples at their home institutions.

Development of tailor-made strategy papers

At each partner country university a strategy for the Interface Centre is developed on the basis of the assessment results and implemented in close co-operation with EU partners and representatives of the economy, public authorities as well as students, alumni, Diaspora networks and other relevant stakeholders.

Establishment of Interface Centres

One of the core activities is the setting up of the Interface Centres and the definition of their services and instruments (LLL programmes, career services and alumni activities). This is done by activity planning, financial forecasting, knowledge transfer through participation in study visits at EU partner universities, and regular reporting to the project consortium.

Pilot projects

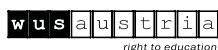
At each partner country university three pilot projects are implemented, each dealing with one of the three main topics - LLL, career counselling and alumni support. The pilot projects aim to establish and strengthen the collaboration with external project partners and networks of academic institutions, economy and society.

Dissemination of project results

Dissemination is achieved through printed and electronic promotion material, websites, events, open days, networking activities and conferences to ensure awareness raising and optimal acceptance and usage of the project results by the academic and professional community, by students and alumni, and by the society at large.

PROJECT CONSORTIUM

University of Graz, Austria
World University Service (WUS) Austria, Austria
WU (Vienna University of Economics and Business), Austria
New Bulgarian University, Bulgaria
University of Liverpool, United Kingdom
University of Novi Sad, Serbia
University of Nis, Serbia
University of Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina
University of Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina
University of Tirana, Albania
Polytechnic University of Tirana, Albania
University "St. Kliment Ohridski" Bitola, Macedonia
First Private University, Macedonia
Serbian Unity Congress, Serbia
Institute for Strategic Research and Education, Macedonia
AbsolventInnenverein MIG, Austria
Student Parliament of the University of Sarajevo, BiH
Student Union of the University of Mostar, BiH
European University Continuing Education Network, Belgium



PROJECT FACTS

Project Title: INTERFACE – Developing and Setting up Measures for Initiating, Enhancing and Sustaining Higher Education-Society Co-operation

Short Title: INTERFACE

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Contractor and Coordinator: University of Graz, Austria

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