



Tempus



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Establishing and capacity building of the Southern Serbian Academy and the National Conference for Vocational Higher Education (ECBAC)

REPORT ON THE 12th ECBAC TEMPUS CONSORTIUM MEETING HELD IN ĆUPRIJA (FEBRUARY, 2015)

Twelfth meeting of the ECBAC Tempus project consortium was held on 25th and 26th February, 2015 in Ćuprija, at the High Medical School of Professional Studies. The meeting was attended by the European partners from Ku Leuven University in Belgium (Andre Govaert and Geert De Lepeleer), University in Alen in Germany (Nichola Adams) and IPP Porto University in Portugal (Monica Vieira).

Partners from Serbia who attended the meeting are the following: the School of Higher Professional Education for Preschool Teachers in Kruševac (Zoran Vasić, Aleksandar Vasić and Ivan Tomić), School of Higher Professional Education for Preschool Teachers in Pirot (Sanja Kovačević, Danijela Vidanović, Emilija Popović and Zorana Simić), College of Agriculture and Food Technology in Prokuplje (Nikola Stolić and Ivica Stančić), College of Textile in Leskovac (Nebojša Ristić, Đorđe Miltenović and Miodrag Đorđević), the School of Higher Chemical Technology in Kruševac (Mladen Nikolić), High Medical School of Professional Studies in Ćuprija (Milan Sretenović, Antić Dragan, Tatjana Simović, Gordana Knežević and Nikola Krstić), The School of Higher Technical Professional Education in Niš (Dejan Blagojević, Dušan Stefanović, Irina Cenić, Danica Milošević and Jelena Petković), the School of Higher Applied Professional Education in Vranje (Damjan Stanojević, Slobodan Stefanović and Mlađan Micić), the Business Technical College of Vocational Studies in Užice (Ljubica Diković) and the Railway College of Vocational Studies in Belgrade (Dragica Jovanović). The representatives of the Ministry of Education, the National Tempus office, the Regional chamber of Economy in Niš, Health Center in Ćuprija, as well as the representatives of the school in Subotica did not attend the meeting.

After a short welcome speech of PhD. Tatjana Simović who is the director of the College in Ćuprija, the project coordinator Mr. Geert De Lepeleer officially opened the meeting.

PhD professor Mr. Andre Govaert pointed out to the minor changes in the order of the agenda items, where some items had to be postponed for the second day of the meeting. After that, the last meeting report from Pirot was unanimously approved of.

The presentation on the legal framework of the ACAS was given by Mrs. Jelena Petković who is the school secretary at the College in Niš. Upon this occasion, the meeting participants were reminded of the importance of the cooperation agreement which was developed during the last consortium meeting in Pirot. According to this agreement, each of the eight colleges will have one representative in the Council of the Academy and two of its representatives in the Senate of the Academy. The persons in charge have already been delegated by each college institution. For the time being, the Senate and the Council of the Academy still do not have their student members but they are going to be appointed by the Student Parliament of the Academy in the period to come. Although initially it was planned to elect the President of the Academy, it has been decided in the meantime to establish the Board of Directors as a body that would represent the Academy. Later on, when the Academy is established as a legal entity, the conditions would be made for the President of the Academy to be elected.

Right now, the idea is to organize the first meetings of the Senate and the Council of the Academy as soon as possible and take further steps in installation of the ACAS. Mrs. Petković informed the meeting participants that the proposal for the founding act of the Academy which is normally issued by the Government as well as the proposal for the Statute of the Academy have been sent by the consortium members to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development but unfortunately so far we have not received a response from them. In the meantime, we have prepared the book on the *Summative analysis of the state on the colleges of vocational studies* which can be used as a set of measurable indicators for monitoring the quality of the future Academy.

Also, it has been stated that a lot of effort has been made by all the project partners to install the Academy and set it in motion. Mr. Dejan Blagojević who is a member of the expert team of the Ministry of education for defining the national framework of qualifications and Mrs. Aleksandra Boričić, a member of the HERE team have also had numerous meetings with the representatives of the Ministry, trying to persuade them to provide us greater support in the process of establishing the Academy. Also, there have been many roundtables organized with different stakeholders and more of them are planned in the future. Mrs. Petković informed the participants that on 6th March 2015, there will be a special conference in Belgrade organized by the Ministry of Education where one of the topics would be establishing the Academy of applied studies. This would be a chance for us to present the results of our work and draw attention to our project and the actual need to finally institutionalize the Academy.

Then the project coordinator, Mr. Geert De Lepeleer elaborated on the financial and administrative management on the project and the purchase of the project equipment. After a local meeting of the *Commission for the purchase of equipment* formed among the representatives of the eleven colleges, the project coordinator was sent a report and a unified specification for the equipment that is required by the 11 partners. The list has been approved by the project coordinator and no objections have been found to the given proposal. The next necessary step then would be to organize a unique tender for the purchase of equipment. However, before that a legal precondition must be satisfied that each college receives the adequate amount of financial resources from the Tempus grant to the Tempus account in order to be able to start the procedure. According to the Serbian Law, the tendering procedure can be initiated only when it is determined that there are enough financial means available for purchasing the equipment.

The project coordinator then explained that for the time being it would not be possible to make another transfer of finances which would be used for the purchase of equipment. The next transfer of money can be expected only when it is determined that the first installment of the Tempus grant has been actually spent and properly justified. When it is determined that the 60% of the total Tempus grant has been already spent and properly justified, then the second installment of 30% of the Tempus grant can follow. That is why it is very important for all the project partners to prepare all the additional supporting documents required by the accounting office in KU Leuven in Belgium and justify their costs. Once it has been done, each college will be pre-financed the needed amount of money to purchase the equipment.

After the clarifications concerning the equipment, the meeting participants received information from Mr. Andre Govaert about the organization of the study visits. It has been decided that there would be three study visits. The first study visit in Gent and the second study visit in Aalen are going to be organized in the same time period, that is from 23rd to 27th March 2015. Eleven students and eleven staff members(directors) are invited to participate in the study visit in Gent, while eleven students plus one staff member are invited to visit Aalen. The third study visit for eleven students plus one staff member will take place in Porto from 6th to 10th April 2015. In total, 22 persons will participate in the first study visit, 12 persons will participate in the study visit to Aalen and 12 persons will participate in the study visit to Porto. The lists of students who are going to participate in the said study visits have already been sent to the EU partners. It is now necessary that each of the 11 colleges selects one of its representatives who will take part in the training in Gent. The first idea was that 11 directors should take part in this particular study visit since the partners from Belgium planned to organize the visit to the Flemish Conference VLHORA

and the VHLIR organization which is in charge of the external quality control and the accreditation process, which would be nice for the directors to hear and see, but then it was decided that other members of the teaching staff could replace directors if they are not willing to go or if they have too many obligations.

Also, it would be necessary to choose two representatives at the level of the Academy, one who is going to accompany the students to Aalen and one who is going to accompany the students to Porto.

Next was the presentation of Mrs. Sanja Kovačević from the College in Pirot who gave a short overview of the most important activities implemented by the four services within the Academy. She reminded the project participants that a special software has been developed for the purposes of the ICT service and the student service. This software has already been tested by the College in Niš and is soon going to be installed at other colleges as well. It provides much faster exchange of data and information among members of the ACAS and is particularly important for the segment of the quality assurance and control. Then, Mrs. Kovačević said that the team members of the International office have been following the calls for new Erasmus+ projects with great interest and trying to establish contacts with higher education institutions abroad in order to sign first bilateral agreements. The current problem is that our study programmes have not been harmonized with those in the European Union and this a precondition for organizing any of the student mobility programmes in the future. The fact that the Academy has not yet been institutionalized has also affected the work of the IRO service. If the Academy had been established, we would now be more visible to other higher education institutions abroad and we would be able to establish contacts, sign agreements, make contracts much more easily and start with the student and teacher mobility. In the end of the presentation, once again it has been stated that the team for Quality assurance has done great work in developing the three questionnaires and two rulebooks which are of great significance for the functioning of the future Academy.

The project coordinators then commented on the student fair in Čuprija. The first student fair in Čuprija according to their opinion has been successfully organized. This fair has been a good start and it has set a good model for the other student fairs which should take place in Užice on 20th March, in Niš in the end of April(with the meeting days on 27th and 28th) and in Belgrade on 27th-28th May 2015. The idea behind the student fair is to connect the students of the final year with the potential employers, that is to make stronger ties among students and the market field. On the fair in Čuprija, the stakeholders from medical institutions/companies were present, which was a great chance for students to make contacts with the labor market. Also, the ECBAC Tempus project was promoted, the activities on the project have been disseminated and the Academy members presented the results of their work employing the promotional material which was especially designed for this occasion. Posters, leaflets and role-ups of the ECBAC Tempus project were presented as well as the book on *Coparative analysis of different aspects of higher education in Serbia and the EU* and the *Summative analysis of the State on the Colleges of Vocational studies in Serbia*. The idea is to organize a similar stand of the Academy for other student fairs which are to follow, where the Academy would be promoted as well as its member colleges which could also prepare promotional materials for their institutions. The conclusion is that student fairs should become our regular practice and hopefully in ten years' time they would become bigger, more serious and attract even more stakeholders.

Then, the professor Ljubica Diković from the Business Technical College of Vocational Studies and the professor Dragica Jovanović from the Railway College of Vocational Studies in Belgrade gave a presentation on the Center for Career Development in professional studies. The colleges in Užice, Belgrade and Subotica have prepared a very detailed model of the Center for career development which implies a great number of activities that would require a lot of time and a lot of financial resources in order to be implemented. Since the project is nearly ending, it has been decided that a long list of activities should be cut down and reduced to a realistic measure. The main aim of the center would be to prepare students for entering the work field and provide help in job search which would be achieved through creating student profiles, creating databases for students and employers, analyzing the needs of employers, detecting companies that offer

internship programmes and opportunities for student practice but also offering long-life learning programmes, etc. The idea is then to establish an on-line center for career development where the students of the final year of studies would have a chance to get in touch with possible employers and search job offers. Also, the idea is to organize seminars and courses which would help students gain some of the soft skills they are lacking. The conclusion is that only the most important activities should be selected from the very extensive action plan and their implementation should be started immediately so that some of the first results of the Center for Career development could be presented if not during the student fair in Užice then certainly during the student fair in Belgrade.

Subotica, Užice and Belgrade have also prepared basic provisions of the rulebook which would regulate the work of the Center for Career Development.

The last presentation for the first day of the meeting was the presentation of Mr. Andre Govaert who informed the meeting participants about the New European Guidelines for Quality Management and Accreditation, providing a thoroughful insight into the trends in these areas, which were very useful to hear and remember.

The second day of the meeting was devoted mainly to the inspection of the project documentation which was carried out by the project coordinator Mr. Geert De Lepeleer and the financial secretary Mrs. Sanja Kovačević and the elaboration on the further project activities which were presented to partners by Mr. Andre Govaert. Each individual college institution had a separate meeting with Mr. Geert De Lepeleer concerning finances, while the second day session was running parallel.

It has been stated that a long term marketing and business plan could be developed only when the Academy is established. Also, it has been stressed that the Council and the Senate of the Academy should have their constitutive meetings as soon as possible in Niš, Vranje, Leskovac or Prokuplje during a local meeting session. This opportunity should be used as well to bring the representatives of the Student Parliaments of each of the eight colleges together in order to install the Student Parliament of the Academy.

Professor Dejan Blagojević, director of the College in Niš used the opportunity to present the promo material that has been prepared for the student fairs. ECBAC Tempus project poster, leaflets and the role-up have been presented during the fair in Čuprija as well as the two books about the project. Moreover, Mr. Blagojević presented the 1st issue of the project e-newsletter. The first issue contains articles on the project goals, a short overview of the project, the last meeting report conclusions, the achieved results of the centralized services of the Academy, the text on the future Center for Career Development, a short description of the new Erasmus+ programmes and a short summary of the book on the *Comparative analysis of different aspects of higher education in Serbia and the EU*. Mr. Blagojević invited all the local partners to give their contribution to the 2nd issue of the newsletter. It has been stated that the mailing list has not yet been made. That is why the suggestion was given that all the partners should collect as many contacts as possible with the stakeholders and forward them to the College in Niš so that a unique mailing list could be formed. The first issue was prepared in English, but the suggestion was given to prepare next issues in the Serbian language since then it would be possible to reach a much wider local audience.

At the end of the meeting, within the segment on the internal quality control on the project, the participants were shown the results of the previous evaluation for the consortium meeting held in Pirot and they were asked to complete a new questionnaire for the meeting in Čuprija.

In the end it was concluded that there are only two more consortium meetings to be organized until the end of the project. The first one will be held in Niš on 27th-28th April together with the student fair and the regional dissemination conference and the second one will take place in Belgrade on 27th -28th May together with the last student fair and the national dissemination conference.

The ECBAC project partners are to do the following as agreed during the meeting:

1. to make further steps to install ACAS
2. to organize the first meetings of the Senate and Council of the Academy and submit the reports from these meetings

3. to install the Student Parliament of the Academy as soon as possible
4. to organize roundtable meetings with the stakeholders
5. to further develop the marketing and sustainability plan within the WP7
6. to organize student fairs in Užice, Niš and Belgrade
7. to organize study visits to Gent, Aalen and Porto
8. to organize dissemination conferences in Niš and Belgrade
9. to prepare the model for the Center for Career Development
10. to further develop the central services and implement their activities
11. to organize the purchase of equipment
12. to develop a long term strategic plan
13. to prepare more promotional material for the future activities

28th February, 2015

Minutes taken by
project secretary
Danica Milošević