



Tempus project- 517200-1-2011-1-BE-TEMPUS-SMGR

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

Report on the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> January, 2013 in Pirot

The fourth meeting within the implementation of the TEMPUS ECBAC 517200 project called *Establishing and capacity building of the Southern Serbian Academy and the National Conference for Vocational Higher Education*, was held in Pirot, 16<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup> January, 2013. The host of the meeting was the [School of Higher Professional Education for Preschool Teachers](#) from Pirot. The meeting was attended by the representatives of Kaho Sint Lieven from Belgium (Andre Govaert and Geert De Lepeleer), IPP from Portugal (Mónica Vieira), Hochschule Aalen from Germany (Rebecca Crimmins), as well as [Schools of Higher Professional Education for Preschool Teachers in Kruševac](#) (Aleksandar Vasić and Ivan Tomić) and Pirot (Danijela Vidanović, Sanja Kovačević, Aleksandar Spasić, Mirjana Stanković-Đorđević), [College of Agriculture and Food Technology](#) from Prokuplje (Saša Petrović, Nikola Stolić, Ivica Stančić and Slavica Šuković), College of Textile from Leskovac (Đorđe Miltenović and Nebojša Ristić), [School of Higher Chemical Technology](#) from Kruševca (Dragan Nikolić, Zorana Milosavljević and Nebojša Arsić), [High Medical School of Professional Studies in Čuprija](#) (Ljiljana Milović, Tatjana Simović, Dragan Antić, Đorđe Stevanović, Milan Sretenović, Gordana Knežević, Svetlana Miljković and Mirjana Stamenković), [The School of Higher Technical Professional Education](#) from Niš (Dejan Blagojević, Aleksandra Boričić, Radomir Cekić and Danica Milošević), and [School of Higher Applied Professional Education](#) from Vranje (Damjan Stanojević, Gordana Bogdanović, Zoran Janić and Nenad Janjić), as well as the representative of the Health Center in Čuprija (Brankica Marić). The meeting was not attended neither by the representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science although they were sent an invitation as for the previous meetings, nor by the representatives of VLHORA, Belgium.

The meeting agenda was agreed during December, 2012 and finalized at the meeting in Čuprija, held on 13<sup>th</sup> December, 2012.

After the welcome speech of Mr. Geert De Lepeleer, the attendants were greeted by Mrs. Danijela Vidanović, the director of the [School of Higher Professional Education for Preschool Teachers](#). Afterwards, the meeting was addressed by Mr. Boban Nikolić, the member of the Municipality council, responsible for the area outside of the economy, who wished a lot of success in work and expressed a belief that this project would give long-term results which would make the system of higher education in Serbia more functional and efficient.

After the presentation of the hosts about their institution in which they presented in detail the mission, vision, SWOT analysis and the strategic goals as the tools for the quality policy, the report from the meeting held in Vranje on 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> September, 2012 was approved of unanimously.

Within the presentation of the conclusions reached during the meeting in Vranje related to the functioning of the student associations and parliaments, a number of similarities in the legal regulations, principles, defined missions and visions, as well as the similarity in student participation in the process of decision-making were determined. On the other hand, it was determined that the flaws and weaknesses of the system of higher education in Serbia present a great obstacle for student mobility and promotion of values of higher education through the activities of student associations in The Republic of Serbia.

As for the comparative analysis between the system of higher education in the Republic of Serbia and the ones in the partner countries, the emphasis was put both on the uniqueness of the role of higher education as a development promoter and the set of common elements which indicate that higher education in Serbia in terms of standards, functioning mechanisms as well as the dynamics, represents part of the unique European area of education. However, the problems which vocational education faces in Serbia on regular basis, such as failure of recognition, lack of national framework of qualifications, lack of the horizontal mobility between vocational and academic studies, no direct possibilities to access research and development funds financed by the Ministry, non-existence of integrated study programs, all represent a serious drawback.

After these presentations, the representatives of **KaHo Sint Lieven- Andre Govaert**, **IPP Porto-Mónica Vieira** and **Aalen- Rebecca Crimmins** presented the mechanisms of organization and management in the sector of human resources within their institutions. The attendants were especially interested in the policy of quality improvement of the teaching staff, procedures and conditions for their election, their previous work experience and work results in the economy as a condition for their employment, financial aspects as well as some measurable indicators of their work. Questions about the non-teaching staff related mainly to the issues of the employment procedure, employment period, contract forms, financial aspects, level of competencies as well as the procentual ratio-no. of students-no. of teachers- no. of non-teaching staff.

After a short break, the representatives of the [College of Textile](#) in Leskovac and the [School of Higher Chemical Technology](#) from Kruševac, presented to the meeting participants the *Procedures of conducting student self-evaluation of the pedagogical work of teachers*. Through the survey content and the procedures of data processing, result analysis at the level of the professional bodies and the procedures regarding the implementation of the corrective measures, the participants could come to the conclusion that this area has become one of the main moving mechanisms of the work quality of the higher education institutions, but certainly not the only one. The common conclusion is to create a unique survey / if possible on-line survey/, by approval of the unique rulebook and procedures as well as defining the common set of corrective measures.

The representatives from the school in Čuprija gave a presentation with the topic *The role of the information-communication connecting with the aim of improving the work quality in higher education*. On this occasion, the participants were informed about the capacities and availability of AMRES. AMRES represents one of the most significant resources of research and development and educational work and is the carrier of the information society development. This network provides

to the educational and research & development organizations access to the internet, information services and the connection with the national and international networks. It was concluded that with the adequate technical solutions and modifications over the AMRES network, it is possible to get a strong information resource which would improve our work regarding integrated functions within the defined areas.

After that, the work groups started with their work, which was to consider the frameworks for establishment of mechanisms for the management of human resources in the future Academy of vocational studies.

In the meantime, the directors of all the partner schools had a separate meeting with the project coordinator Mr. De Lepeleer in which they considered the current situation within the project implementation and the problems which are the outcome of the inaction of the Ministry of Education and Science in Serbia. Taking into consideration the current situation in the system of higher education and society, it was concluded that it is not realistic to expect that the Academy of vocational studies should be established and accredited in the scheduled time interval, so it would be necessary to undertake a set of activities which should mitigate these consequences. The importance of submitting the interim report on the implementation of the activities within the project was stressed and the participants were asked to take an active part in all the necessary activities which refer to the writing of this report. The first working day finished here.

**The second working day** started with the presentation of the results of the work groups and the continuation of the discussion on the reached conclusions.

After that, the representatives of the Kaho Sint Leiven, IPP Porto and Aalen presented the missions, visions, structure, activities and the work results of their departments for international cooperation. On the basis of the overview of their activities, staff competencies and some of the work results, all the participants agreed that it is necessary to form such a department within the Academy, which would have the aim to establish cooperation with similar higher education institutions, improve the work quality of the partner institutions, create conditions for better results, promote institutions, regions, and the entire country and thus contribute to the main mission of higher education, which is to create conditions for better and more human life.

The hosts prepared another thematic workshop with the aim to stress that *there is no room for archaisms in higher education since a modern higher education institution cannot be alienated from life.*

Such thematic workshops, as well as the presentations on the quality framework of our higher education institutions represent a good way of creating a platform for the unique quality policy, which is one of the main reasons for institutional cooperation.

By the same principle, used the previous day, the participants were divided in the work groups and they started to elaborate on the framework and the model for the international relations department at the level of the Academy.

Through the mission and the vision of the department, possible strategies for the development and its operation, clear expectations were given. It was concluded that these results represent a good

foundation for the establishment of this, according to many, very important department for the sustainability of this project.

The last part of the meeting was devoted to the details regarding the issue of evaluation of the results achieved so far and the further activities in the project. The special emphasis was put on the definition of the framework and functioning of the unique ICT service, as the main technical tool for integration in the target areas. Also, technical and administrative issues relevant for the overall project functioning were carefully discussed.

It was agreed that the next working meeting which would be dedicated to the issues of a unique ICT service should take place in Čuprija on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> March, 2013.

In the appendix, there is a short overview of the results of the work groups reached during the two working days of the meeting.

ECBAC 517200 project consortium

Pirot, January 2013

## APPENDIX

### HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

During the first day of the meeting, two work groups had a task to give their opinion on the personnel policy in Serbia at higher education institutions.

**The first work group** came to the conclusion that the personnel policy is in the first phase of development. The reason for this lies in the fact that the Bologna process is not fully applied in practice since our education system is not completely ready for all its aspects. That is why it is necessary to insist on the amendments to the Law of higher education and bring a rulebook about the minimal conditions for the election of teachers to the position as soon as possible while the most urgent demand is to define precisely the competencies of university and vocational professors and harmonize them with the work descriptions, which would imply the creation of unique surveys for that purpose. Of course, it is necessary to proceed with the quality control and work on its improvement, which can be achieved through the exchange of experiences of teaching and non-teaching staff within the Academy.

Since competencies of the teaching staff are not defined precisely, there is a need to unify the legal acts which refer to the rewarding and motivation of the staff. Having in mind that there is no lack in pedagogical and methodological knowledge, defining the new work methods does not represent a bigger problem, according to the opinion of the representatives of this work group.

This group believes that the follow up and promotion of employees' performance is in the second phase of development since there already exist regular reports and analysis of the teaching process and its quality. In order to make progress in this field, it is of great importance to have good cooperation with the workfield with the aim to exchange experiences in order to define the national framework of qualifications and monitor the career development of the graduate students. For that reason, it is necessary to create a unique ALUMNI data base for monitoring graduate students.

In order to improve the staff training in the future and move from the second phase to a higher phase of development, it is important to create annual plan for staff training where it is necessary that the management recognizes the employees' qualities and enables the training through different courses, seminars and conferences which follow the tendencies of economic growth. The next step would be to determine the adequate incentives for further professional staff development.

**The second group** estimated that the personnel policy at higher education institutions is in the second phase of development. The situation is such that the legal framework, standards and procedures for the quality improvement start to be focused on the growth of institutions. However, it is necessary to broaden the knowledge on the strategy of quality improvement, establish the tools for promotion and denomination, criteria for staff selection and training, which is possible to achieve through team work and cooperation with other higher education institutions and the future Academy. In order to make further progress, financial support from the state is needed, but it is also necessary to establish open and clear communication with it and define clear and precise procedures which to follow.

The problem lies in the fact that there is neither the criteria for evaluation of the level of responsibilities and competencies of the teaching staff, nor modernized job profiles. For that reason, it is important to define the criteria for evaluation and modernize the job profiles which would indicate clearly defined staff competencies.

Personnel administration and legal administration are focused on optimization of the employees' performance. However, there are still no individual written reports, interviews, or a system of agreements and procedures which is used to follow up and encourage the performance of the employees. That is why it is necessary for the higher education institution management to be educated to improve the employees' performance.

When it comes to the employees' training, there is already some support in the training area, the need for training is recognized at the institutional level, there is a plan of training and the efficient training offer, but the problem is in the fact that the need for training is not recognized at the personal level and that the training plan is not improved. For that reason, it is necessary to define the training plan which would follow the training needs, but also to identify personal needs for training with the aim to optimize personal competencies and strategic goals.

## **DEPARTMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION WITHIN THE ACADEMY**

**The first work group** defined the vision of the service for international cooperation in the following way: *Europe means equality in knowledge and education hence quality.* According to the opinion of this group, the service for international cooperation should enable all students and teachers to take part in international exchange, make information access and follow up of education flows available as well as enable recognition of knowledge, education and skills in the European framework. The strategic goals which have the priority imply the establishment of the national office for international cooperation within the Academy which would have 8 members and the language center, while in the future it would be good if the service could organize different types of trainings for teachers and students, apply for different international programs and make the recognition of similar study programs within the European framework much easier. Primarily, it would be good to establish regional cooperation with the students from the region, establish the legal framework and make the decision who could take part in cooperation, but also provide a fund for grants. Moreover, the service would be responsible for making the evaluation report for accreditation of the integrated study programs of the Academy, contribute to the internationalization and recognition of the Serbian higher education, and enable the access to national and international funds for international cooperation.

**The second work group** formulated the vision of the future service for international cooperation within the Academy in the following way: *We choose Europe to enforce our intellectual capacities to the benefit of our homeland.* The IR service should enable the mobility of all teachers and students, enable the participation in research and development projects, secure mutual respect and tolerance in cooperation, enable the cooperation at the regional level and offer the possibility of future improvement. IR service should prepare the evaluation report in English for the accreditation of the future integrated study programs according to the procedure, elect eight members who will be in its team, establish separate departments for different scientific fields, establish the language center, define the needs for special teacher and student trainings and apply for international programs within which the Academy can function (Leonardo Da Vinci). The capacities that already exist should be used in order to attract the students from the neighbouring countries for whom there is no language barrier, but also it is necessary to establish the legal framework as soon as possible and discuss the grant issue urgently.