

## THE ROLE OF ERASMUS+ IN THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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This article shows how, within the framework of the Erasmus + project, structural work is being done on the internationalization of higher education, as one of the objectives of the project. The aim of the project is to expand the cooperation of business universities in partner countries by changing the education paradigm in accordance with the requirements of the Bologna Process. Improvement of such cooperation will lead to a gradual increase in the effectiveness of the national development strategy, priority implementation, as well as changes in the situation in the field of entrepreneurship and employment of graduates. The starting point of the project is to study and determine the current professional structure necessary for modern employers in partner countries. This study will create an understanding of problem areas in legislation, education and business standards and will form part of the basis for their further correction. After determining the current experience of cooperation with business and universities, as well as the requirements of the business environment, the project is aimed at drawing up and implementing a new standard for establishing links between companies and universities, whether for launching innovative products or targeted future training of personnel or sharing experiences with young entrepreneurs. It is also expected that such a standard will also implement some practice-oriented training programs, tools and methods in a form suitable for implementation in the learning process.

**Key words:** educational process, higher education, new social environment, universities and business, education system education system.

The current economic situation in the world, as well as current social changes, create special requirements for education systems that can be managed. The widespread use of computer and information technologies has a significant impact on both the educational process and the specific perception of new data by each person. Leading EU countries in the field of educational services have considered this factor both in regulating their education system and in developing curricula a long time ago and have made significant progress on this path. Today, the quality of the modern education of the EU attracts thousands of students from all over the world. Progressive economic development of partner countries puts forward similar requirements for changing the educational environment. This was due to the reasons for strengthening international cooperation, and the similar evolution of the domestic

economic environment within the framework of development of a market economy. This requires in-depth study of the leading European educational systems and the further systematic integration of such experience into the specific educational culture of the European countries.

Al-Farabi Kazakh National University is the coordinator of the project Erasmus+ «Enhancement of higher education and corporate sectors integration in accordance with new social environment – ENINEDU» since October 2016. The participants of the project are two universities from the Republic of Kazakhstan – Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, L. Gumilyev Eurasian National University, three universities from Russia (Russian University of People’s Friendship, I. Turgenev Orel State University, Samara State University) and four European universities (University of Santiago de Compostela (Santiago de Compostela, Spain), University of Nice Sophia Antipolis (Nice, France), Athens University of Economics and business (Athens, Greece), University of Sopron (Sopron, Hungary).

The aim of the project is to promote best practices and know-how programs of cooperation between universities and business in universities of the EU and partner countries, share experiences between EU and partner countries, create competencies for employees working in cooperation with enterprises and promote entrepreneurship development, the implementation of which in the long term to increase human potential and entrepreneurial activity both in the EU countries and in partner countries, support closer ties and cooperation between countries and contribute the development of society.

Cooperation between universities of the EU and partner countries in the field of business cooperation with universities will ensure better understanding of the needs of society and business, and will provide universities with tools for their adjustment with great accuracy.

Current features of the development of the educational environment in Kazakhstan and Russia consist of combination of modern and traditional approaches to learning, which are typical for transition period in any industry. However, it has become evident in recent years that business development is much faster than the development of the education system.

The project assumes the involvement of the leading European universities. This will lead to a more confident and hasty transformation of students' education in accordance with international standards in order to support the strategic development of partner countries. Of course, in addition to the practical orientation of the education sector of partner countries, there are many other problems associated with the aforementioned transition period and requiring a deliberate solution. However, this aspect is especially stands out due to the growing signs of a growing gap between the expectations of employers and the competence of graduates, as well as due to the continuing difficulty of establishing links between enterprises and universities in partner countries.

On the one hand, the worsening economic conditions pushes the company to look for employees who can solve operational problems at the proper level immediately after hiring. In other words, the requirements for practical knowledge of graduates and their understanding of real business operations are growing rapidly. However, the current training system with more academic and heterogeneous approach to understanding the real needs of business does not meet the expectations of employers. This consistently leads to an unnecessary increase in the salaries of professionals with experience, stirring up inflation, increasing the costs of poaching experienced professionals in the industry, and setting limits on career ceilings of graduates and generally reducing opportunities for their employment. On

the other hand, many companies already understand the need for cooperation with universities. But the lack of a national level benchmark as to how this cooperation should be done in Kazakhstan or in other partner countries leads to huge disagreements in the work with the universities, the result of this is usually disappointment on both sides. Correction of the project problem will help to solve these problems through a chain reaction.

Being one of the largest leading universities in Russia, on the one hand PFUR has serious contacts with leading companies from different sectors of the economy, and on the other hand with a huge number of Russian and foreign universities. Current work with employers, including large European multinational companies such as OBI and Nestle, provides information not only as an official feedback about our graduates, but also about the overall situation with personnel in different sectors of the economy of Russia and Kazakhstan. Over the past few years, this information has become more unidirectional, which has made it possible to form an understanding of the need for this project as a scientific study of the problem of improving the cooperation between business and university. Together with that, participation in intercollegiate communications of the PFUR provided information on the specifics and diversity of methods of business cooperation between educational institutions that do not quite fit into the current development strategy of partner countries.

The idea of the project is taken from the experience of the partner university. People's Friendship University and KazNU had a long-standing cooperation with large international, Kazakh and Russian companies. ENU has experience of work both in local and European projects, as well as practice of cooperation with business universities in the field of education. Samara and Orel universities have experience of work and cooperation with employers in different regions within different economic conditions. Inter-university discussion of problems of practical training of graduates has long been held at various inter-university conferences in partner countries. However, in recent years the intensity of discussions has gradually increased due to changes of economic situation, as well as the continued development of market institutions in the economies of partner countries.

The European side is represented by a consortium of universities that have achieved high results in cooperation with employers, as well as the practical orientation of their programs at a high level. As reference samples, the universities of Spain and France were chosen, while the universities of Hungary and Greece are examples of practices of adaptation to national characteristics. Russia and Kazakhstan universities were selected from the standpoint of experience with the various levels of cooperation with business, as well as the use of application techniques, and their presence in the regions with different levels of economic development that will help the project at the preparation stage and at the stage of distribution.

For example, the strength of KazNU in the consortium is that it has a very close cooperation with employers, including regular events, such as "Career Day", "Job Fair", to attract employers, statistics collection, monitoring and analysis of labor markets, and so on. This experience of cooperation and participation of employers in the education process will bring additional value to the consortium through the creation of tools for career management. Participation of the ENU is advantageous due to its proximity to the Asia-Pacific region, acting as a bridge among European and Asian universities, and presents different approaches to integration of business practices in the management of the educational process. In addition, Samara and Orel universities operate in regions with sharply differing economic conditions and specializations, helping the project with localized practical application of basic methods

of cooperation of business university. PFUR has a wide network of links between universities both in partner countries and internationally and, therefore, has accumulated an extensive knowledge base on the application of the method of practical training on the basis of the project.

The need for participation of European universities is due to the exceptionally high level of development of the education sector as a whole and, in particular, the long-term application of various ideas of cooperation between business and universities. Universities in Europe work in a single educational space, which allows them to consistently share their experiences, thereby providing a synergistic effect. Deep and comprehensive study of the practice of cooperation in the field of business and universities European universities will enable educational institutions in the partner countries to make significant progress in ensuring that their education systems to modern European standards. In the future, this rapprochement will inevitably lead to an expansion of cooperation between European and partner companies.

The general and preliminary innovative part of this project is the goal of developing a standard of an integrated system of cooperation between business and universities in order to increase the attractiveness of the graduate as an employee and to contribute the disclosure of its potential. This approach is new for non-EU countries and, with the support of government regulators, will have a significant impact on the renewal of the educational environment of the consortium's countries.

Specific innovative elements will be the following results:

- Detailed study of contemporary business-HEI cooperation approaches of the consortium countries and the development on this basis of structural complex of methods aimed at drastic improvement of the interconnection of HEI and business in the society;
- The innovative system standard of applicable business-HEI cooperation practices and practical training methods. The first including a state-of-art versions of forming a mutually beneficial system of cooperation between business practices and HEI education process and methods of entrepreneurial activity support. Second involving classroom simulations, curricula flexibility, redesign of student entrepreneurship, practice placement, alumni mentorship and business involvement;
- Methodological handbook for HEI with recommendations for the implementation of this complex system into the existing educational process and curricula redesign;
- Interactive online web resource for intercollegiate operating experience developed complex and further development of the project;
- Web-based employment guidance system and counseling platform allowing to fill the gap in providing full package of career services for students and covering all relevant stakeholders and target groups;
- Handbook of course development technology with practical training embedded into academic education process;
- Guidelines of student entrepreneurship centers creation and redesign as a part of practice oriented training program inside curricula (and the redesign of centers themselves);
- Retrained lecturers acting as multipliers and drivers of the business-HEI cooperation system;

- Web based Alumni network standardized design both in terms of functionality and compatibility with project aims;
- Recommendations for Ministries of Education of partner countries with the aim of changing the legislation in order to aid a wider implementation of project findings and outcomes.