

## **JOINT STUDY PROGRAMS – NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM.**

Internationalisation of economy and labour-market, political rulings of European Union (e.g. Lisbon strategy) and Bologna process have had the aim to consolidate European higher education space that could enforce European institutions of higher education to solve two significant questions determining future of graduates: how to internationalise their studies, to implement them in high quality and educate graduates with such learning outcomes that could enable young people to be competitive in the international labour-market and perform in the multicultural environment. To solve these questions, in February 2006 the College of Social Sciences involved in the arrangement of the project application “Development and Implementation of Joint Study Program in International Business Management“ under the framework of Erasmus Curriculum Development program. The application was approved in August 2006 and received financial support by European Commission. It has been one of the first Joint study program projects in Lithuania so far, thus it might become a good example for other institutions of higher education.

The main feature of Joint Degree program is that it is being developed and delivered by a few higher education institutions from different countries which on the whole coordinate the content of the program, requirements for the exams, studying methods and quality assurance system. Teachers’ and students’ mobility is one of the necessary elements for such program. After completion the Joint study program students receive Joint Degree, that is, their diplomas are acknowledged by all partner institutions.

Due to the project initiated by the College of Social Sciences, Joint Degree program in International Business Management will give possibility to students to receive significant 3-year academic and cultural experience while studying in four foreign higher education institutions. Moreover, Joint Degree program will join to the implementation of the aims formulated during Bologna process, that is, smooth mobility of teachers and students, high level employability of graduates from colleges and universities and successful integration into international labor market, study and science quality, implementation of European study background into countries-newcomers’ study process, and attractiveness and competitiveness of European higher education field. Partner institutions from 6 European countries will participate in the development and implementation of Joint study program in International Business Management, that is College of Social Sciences (Lithuania), Rezeknes Augskola (Latvia), College of Computer Science (Poland), Braganca Polytechnic Institute (Portugal), Cumbernauld College (Scotland, United Kingdom), and Pitesti University (Romania).

Duration of the project of Joint study program is 3 years: development of the program will take 2 years and 1 year will be taken for its implementation. The project will start on 1st October, 2006. Five partner meetings will take place in different partner institutions: in College of Social Sciences, Lithuania (in November 2006), Cumbernauld College, Scotland, UK (in March 2007), Braganca Polytechnic Institute, Portugal (in October 2007), Pitesti University, Romania (in June 2008), and Rezeknes Augskola, Latvia (in May 2009).

According to the application, competencies of international business manager will be investigated, inquiring employers in the partner countries, and analysis of the data will be made at the beginning of the project; legal issues related to the Joint Degree diplomas’ delivery will be discussed and have been coordinated; curriculum of the study program will have been arranged; study methods and common admission procedure and criteria will have been decided;

students' and teachers' mobility will have been planned; assessment and examination structure will have been arranged.

Moreover, significant attention will be paid to the quality assurance of the study program during the project. Methods and principles for quality assurance of Joint Degree study program in International Business Management will have been arranged and approved. The pilot group selected from the students from partner institutions will be tested. At the end of one study year of this group an external evaluation of the study program will be done. Independent experts will define weaknesses and deficiencies of the program. The results of evaluation will be used for final development of the study program. Moreover, students' advices will be taken under consideration to improve the development of the program.

The last stages of the project time will be devoted to the arrangement of human and material resources that are necessary for implementation of the Joint study degree in International Business Management. Moreover, preparation for multi-institutional contract will start, study material will be printed, and virtual material will be designed. Special website for the program will have been designed that will serve to contain all information about the development and implementation processes of this Joint Degree program. For better dissemination of the project, brochures and representation material will have been printed. Media will be provided with the information as well.

The first admission for the International Business Management study program with Joint Degree is going to start in June 2008. Diplomas of four partner institutions – College of Social Sciences (Lithuania), College of Computer Science (Poland), Braganca Polytechnic Institute (Portugal), and Cumbernauld College (Scotland, UK) – will be delivered to the students at the completion of Joint Degree International Business Management study program. The implementation of the program is particularly significant for non-university higher education institutions that train professionals for vocational activity and seeking for their more successful integration into international European labor market.

Projektų vadovė Donata Juškytė  
Socialinių mokslų kolegija,  
Projektų vadybos centras