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Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

Erasmus + project No. 585961-EPP-1-2017-1-AL-EPPKA2-CBHE-SP (2017 -2926/001 -001)

“GRaduates Advancement and Development of University capacities in Albania”

Event title:	Seminar on Professional Traineeship Development.
Event date:	11-13 December, 2018
Event Venue:	University of Tirana, Faculty of Faculty of Social Sciences
Event Address:	Bulevardi “Bajram Curri”, Tiranë, Room Number 011

MINUTES 7 - EVENT REPORT

Participants:

Agriculture University of Tirana	AUT-UBT
University of Tirana	UT
University of Arts, Tirana	UART
Polytechnic University of Tirana	PUT
University of Medicine Tirana	UMT
European University of Tirana	UET
POLIS University	U-POLIS
Catholic University "Our Lady of Good Counsel"	UNIZKM
Albanian University	AU
Alma Mater Studiorum Università di Bologna	UNIBO
University of Siena	UNISI
Universitat de Barcelona	UB
ISCTE - Instituto Universitariò de Lisboa	ISCTE-IUL
Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Tirana	CCIT
Consorzio Inter-Universitario AlmaLaurea	ALMALAUREA
Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth	MESY
Companies representatives	

First day

The first day of the meeting was opened by the Deputy University of Tirana Dr. Gentiana Kera. After thanking the participants for the engagement in this meeting, she emphasized the importance of the project in particular for the University of Tirana. She explained that UT was previously engaged in such a venture, but the joint commitment of the 9 universities shows a wider commitment, with very important information expectations. This information could best serve to undertake reforms not only from each university but could serve as an indication of further initiatives by government institutions in the context of Albanian HEI reforms in line with the demand of protesting students. In this way, the contribution of the project is considered an added value not only for the universities but for all the Albanian Higher Education.

Then the meeting continued with the greeting speech of Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Prof. Edmond Rapti, who further emphasized the importance of the project for his faculty. He also clarified that the engagement of his staff in this project will be reflected with very important results for further decision-making regarding study programs within his faculty.

The importance of the project as well as its brief presentation, focusing particularly on the benefits of the companies was presented by Mr. Edmond Dragoti, Project Coordinator for the University of Tirana. He emphasized the fact that project involvement in the company is a key factor that will affect the success of the project, but not only because this project can also be a guarantee that businesses provide human resources with the right professional skills in the future.

Then the speech was taken by the project coordinator Mrs. Aurora Hoxha, who invited businesses to become part of the platform by listing the benefits expected from the GRADUA project. Further, a short presentation of the platform, especially on the ease of use of the company, as well as the way of generating some reports for them, Dorel Manitiu, represented by Alma Laurea.

An important part of the meeting were also some presentations from business representatives invited by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry. First of all, Mrs. Rudina Murati, Marketing Director at Orion Construction Company, focused on the experiences of the company where she is employed, about the opportunities and challenges that students face in their professional practices. She stressed that offering these opportunities to students can be considered an investment not only for them, but also for the company itself, moreover referring to the qualification of employees required in the construction field.

On the other hand, she acknowledged that establishing links to enable professional practices to be implemented required commitment and time for the company's staff. So the company where she is employed was ready to support any alternative, platform that would allow less commitment and cost, and more quality and professionalism to provide human resources. Her company guaranteed its registration on the platform as soon as it is fully functional.

The second business representative, Mrs. Ornela Cela, Director of Human Resources at Alkos Group Company, focused on the expectations of companies from students who practice professional practices. She said that students are generally correct when they engage in a company, but the time of professional practice is not always enough to successfully complete this process. The same opinion shared other business representatives attending the meeting.

Further, the meeting was organized in the form of an open discussion, where participants were invited to participate in the panel. Under the moderator of the Project Coordinator, the issues raised for discussion focused mainly on:

- The opportunities that Albanian companies have to offer partnerships
- Whether companies are satisfied with the engagement of students and should the Albanian companies have the capacity to offer a symbolic or full payment to students during their engagement in companies that offer partnership. Whether companies are satisfied with the engagement of students and should the Albanian companies have the capacity to offer a symbolic or full payment to students during their engagement in companies that offer partnership.
- The opportunities companies have to employ internship students beyond practice time.
- On the ways companies use to notify students about the partnerships they offer.

Regarding the issues raised, local companies are satisfied with student engagement in professional practices, but emphasized that companies engage their staff by consuming time and costs for providing students in conducting professional practices. Generally, they emphasized that finding students for realization of professional practices is carried out by the forerunners who have performed the company's precautions, but this is done after some contacts from the company's staff. On the other hand, representatives of financial institutions pointed out that the time for organizing the internships is enough, but they see no payment opportunities as long as they estimate that the students are learning and not offering their work in order to get paid. Unlike this opinion, companies operating in the construction and trade market expressed their willingness to offer wages for students who have completed vocational training. Regarding the employment opportunities of students after conducting professional practices, the

representatives of companies admitted that this was a common practice for them even brought concrete examples of this fact.

The afternoon session focused on presenting the project implementation progress, announcement of planned activities for 2019, and launching of the first phase of preparation and submission of interim reporting documents.

Second day and Third day

The second day of the meeting started with presentations from career office representatives from each university on the engagement and role of these offices in the possibilities of establishing links between students and companies. They also presented concrete cases on how they provide such links, among which the career fairs arrangements are among the most common activities. Maintaining ongoing contacts with alumni students is another priority for these offices. Even some of the public universities have been set up by the alumni boards where their chairmen have been elected by important business representatives, former students of these universities.

Regardless of these individual concerns, the importance and benefits of project implementation were accepted by all university representatives, as through the platform it will be possible to create a complete database with a wide range of information from the 9 largest Albanian universities, the labor market where each of the 9 universities can be positioned.

Subsequently during the second session, as well as during the third day of the meeting, many issues were discussed about finding new opportunities for cooperation between universities and companies, such as:

- Is the university staff able to guide students by adapting to the needs of companies and student interests?
- Can the university career office contribute to hiring students / graduates?
- Are hosting companies places where students can learn "skills" that can give them the opportunity to find a job or improve their careers?

Academic staff from participating local universities acknowledged that it is willing to engage in student management, but this engagement may be temporary due to the large number of students in relation to the number of staff but also their engagements. On the other hand, it was accepted by them that this engagement would provide a guarantee for business in realizing professional practice. Different experience shared, representatives of European universities. They admitted that this practice is common

to them and has resulted very efficient for the students, suggesting some opportunities for organizing this engagement by the Albanian university staff.

Meanwhile, the career office role needs to be further intensified to make a greater contribution to student employment.

Also attending academic staff admitted that companies generally offer students the opportunity to "work handy" but not always so. It is often the case that students simply appear and do not really engage in any of the company's activities, with the justification of maintaining confidentiality of particular information in the field of finance and accounting.

However, the student experiences gained through professional practice should be considered as very important as they create the foundation for creating practical experiences and opportunities for employment for the development of a professional career in the future of our students. So involvement in this platform of students and companies can greatly facilitate the realization of successful professional practices for our students.