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DIVERSITY AND INTERPLAY OF LLL ACTIONS FOR
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT:
INITIATIVES OF INSTITUTE OF EUROPE OF KAUNAS
UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY
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ABSTRACT

The goal of this paper is to discuss the problem how the great European endeavors - to bring life long learning technology for everybody and everywhere - could be converted into concrete practical actions. The complex wish of realising the strategic goals of the European Union Lisbon's agenda and the intentions of the European academic Bologna process as well as of improving the quality of human resources in the regions require innovative approach. Among the objectives of the presentation is the intention to demonstrate diversity of actions and interplay of them having been used by the Institute of Europe for attracting the participants of life long learning activities of the region. Usual passiveness of the inhabitants of regions aggravates the endeavors and therefore requires specific approach. Next objective of the paper is to present how the good practice experience realised by European Institute along EC Jean Monnet project's action, which have been utilised for supporting the main contemporary European idea - to employ life long learning activity for the strategic European development - towards Europe of Knowledge.

Introduction

The theme of LLL is still the object of discussions and scientific papers. Although it is made a lot of research, arranged plenty of conferences, published big amount of scientific papers, specialized publications studying various political, theoretical and methodical problems of LLL, currently this theme is still essentially important. The problems of LLL come newly and differently over and over again and with reference to this the new and big experience emerges. The problems of LLL will remain as actual questions not only in the near future but in the distance future as well and the actuality of them will not come down in general same as others fields of education.

The goal of this paper is to discuss the problem how the great European endeavors - to bring life long learning technology for everybody and everywhere - could be converted into concrete practical actions.

The complex wish of realising the strategic goals of the European Union Lisbon's agenda and the intentions of the European academic Bologna process as well

as of improving the quality of human resources in the regions require innovative approach.

I am analysing the economical and social phenomenon through the prism of Knowledge based Economy and Knowledge based Society. And consequently I would not like to think about it to the contrary. Therefore, primary objective of the paper is to present how the good practice experience realised by European Institute of KTU especially along EC Jean Monnet project's action, which have been utilised for supporting the main contemporary European ideas - deepening European integration and employing life long learning activity for the other strategic development - towards Europe of Knowledge. Among the objectives of the presentation is the intention to demonstrate diversity of actions and interplay of them having been used by the Institute for attracting the participants of life long learning activities of the region.

Beside the academic research, which is focused on expression and penetration of Knowledge based Economy and concentrated to the evolution, perspectives and new ways of formation of Knowledge based Society the Institute pursues the new ways and technologies constantly how to devote these results in right form for entire society. The fact which probably became almost the banal truth is being realized very well in Institute that it is not enough to "transfer" or "spread" information to persons or groups of them. The data, facts and information become to knowledge which can afford to act more effective and significant only when it is being realized by person and when it is a part of individual. We do not think that formal transfer of information to persons or their groups is sufficient and purposeful. We believe that it is only a part of real target. It is essentially important to transfer data, facts and information that it could become an integral part of person's knowledge.

Therefore the speech consists of two parts: In the beginning I want to present my attitude and approach to the process of LLL in general as well as to present my attitude to that way of learning and implements which are being applied to citizens of regions.

1. The concept of the Institute of Europe in LLL activities for regional development

LLL as the necessity and only chance. In the recent condition of the economical development LLL have already become as the only chance for the individuals acting there to maintain the competitiveness. Economy turns to knowledge based economy increasingly not leaving any space for individuals who do not realize it and think that their work's competitiveness is not their own business. However it is easy to say - as we are obligated to develop human socialization and act solidarily in Europe. Consequently we have to think how to help to reach that necessity - to be working competent - in minimal cost and minimal efforts of individual volition.

The solution of the problem becomes complicated because of the following circumstances:

- Individuals acting separately as well as individuals acting in organizations or covenantal institutions should accumulate knowledge and new facilities from global information sources;

- It is possible to accumulate and renew the knowledge only because of the facilities of Internet and new information as well as communication technologies;

- Knowledge and competence should be renewed constantly because it is getting old very fast;

- Lack of time is rising as well as amount of new knowledge and competence therefore all individuals acting in contemporary economy should aim for bigger efficiency of LLL;

- Not only individuals acting in contemporary economy and attending the LLL should be competitive. All society should be developed as well otherwise these initials could not be understood or tolerated well.

Although the economy development but is global it is acting in regions as well and it appears as the other aspect of the problem.

Specific influence of the regions for the process of LLL. Regions should become competitive in the field of quality of human resources at first. Concerning the EU Lisbon strategy which goal is towards knowledge based economy - the new concept of the region should appear through the influence of innovative human resources.

The new concept includes a lot of elements. Regions are and should be original and individual. These theses should be essentially important organizing the LLL in the regions. I presume that practical and furthermore scientific problem which we have to overcome is the adaptation of LLL for every region in order to gain its development.

At first, to my mind, all actors and inhabitants of the regions should realize how their region could become the competitive element of the economy and which advantages it could represent in the state economy - taking into account the mineral resources, good location for the logistic, good soil or interesting landscape and etc. The region should be attractive in its social and humanitarian advantages as well creating the good and comfortable atmosphere to live, work and spend its leisure time in that region. All these factors have and pragmatic aspect as well whereas its transformation from social and humanitarian to economical one.

With reference to mentioned above it could be declared that innovation of the region is particularly important in which the new technologies and actions of LLL play the main role. All region development actors should be or have to gain the special features of the region through the LLL; should become innovative, manage to think and act openly, critically and hardly as well as to be ready to risk.

The challenges of LLL for regions. It is very important to emphasize that the life in regions is different comparing with the life in capital or other bigger cities. Concerning to this I would like to denote the following features of LLL which are significant in the case of regions:

- Thematic motivation;
- Organisational resourcefulness;
- Variety of forms;
- Innovation in forming of groups;
- Attractiveness of training;
- The elimination of barriers for training;

The last aspect needs the wider explanation. Although many of inhabitants can realize the importance and necessity of LLL there are a lot of psychological obstacles (timidity, lack of self-confidence, hesitation, distrust of the factors of LLL as well competence) in order to integrate to that process of LLL.

Accordingly to this the actors have to overcome these challenges as well. The recipients of LLL have not only to improve their knowledge but also to gain the confidence and psychological support. The actors have not only to get and to realize the new knowledge but also recognize the new perspectives and advantages which are open to them as individuals, to their organization and to their country as well. The erudition of the actors of LLL should be developed constantly, because it encourages the individual to continue her/his studies. Consequently the organizers of LLL have to take it into account implementing the continuity of the instruments of the LLL. These my thoughts are based on the experience of the activity of Kaunas Third Age University.

Another one my remark regarding the process of LLL is that the regions should to define the special attitude to the individuals, that they should be encouraged to start training and developing itself by owns enthusiasm and to do it purposefully getting the necessary support. The process of the LLL should be pleasurable and freewill.

Factors making difficulties in the process of LLL, especially in the regions.
As a rule, regions do not have any clear vision of development or it is enforced and unacceptable. As a result the actors don't feel any reason to support this vision and do not want to participate in the process of LLL as an instrument of it realising.

The inhabitants of the regions are more conservative, shy and careful. It is a big challenge for them to admit that they need training. Usually they are afraid to start the process of training because of the lack of confident and other psychological barriers which should be overcome. Sometimes the inhabitants of the region afraid of the direct contact with the lecturer as well. Accordingly the lecturers for regions should be ready for it psychologically and emotionally.

The program of LLL should be prepared very carefully: it should be interesting, attractive, and not too much academic one. The cost of training and good as well as interesting lecturer are very important elements taking into account that people should feel free. The first bad impression can become as a big disadvantage for further process of LLL.

Various technical difficulties such as region can be very distant and it is being hard to reach, no e-learning implementations or they are not interactive – are common and often challenges of LLL in the regions.

2. The activities of Institute of Europe for benefit of University and regional community

The mission of the Institute of Europe and its Jean Monnet European Competence centre (JMCEC) is to promote the partnership of academic and non-academic community in the field of European Integration studies. The mission includes not only the stationary academic activity. Teachers, researchers and PhD students of Institute is propagating the main steps of European integration and studying important questions of EU as well as analyzing their reflection to the Lithuania and to Lithuanian people. The main goal of the Institute is to deliver the information as deep, clear and

interesting as understandable for ordinary people of villages as well as servants of local authorities. It is believed that the main element of these meetings should not be educational but LLL one. With reference to the experience we can declare that after that kind of meetings the lecturers are being welcome again. Consequently half formal and half informal training of these people appears and it is easier to deliver the information.

The themes of the above mentioned meetings are various, for example: looses and benefits; EU Constitutional Treaty; EU structural Funds (with some specific orientation); Lisbon strategy; Euro introduction; Membership in NATO and etc.

JMCEC is acting as a connective instrument involving the experts of European integration affairs in academic and non-academic segment as well as in local, regional and international level. Centre spreads the information about arrangements planned within the university and for the country's community.

JMCEC implements wide and versatile activity in order to touch different interests of citizens. For this purpose various arrangements have been used during the last years:

- master programme in European Integration;
- continues academic seminar: European Integration;
- awards for the best research products in European Integration;
- academic and practical conferences, seminars;
- Northern Dimension Network activity;
- open lectures in "Knowledge - based economy";
- days of the Ambassador;
- videoconferences in European Integration.

The information about the future arrangements of JMCEC is spreading and announcing widely all over the country through the mass media, official invitations, advertisements in websites of local and regional Universities, electronic and paper version newspapers, individually for every arrangement. Tight cooperation with governmental and nongovernmental institutions as well as with the institutions of European Commission allows the JMCEC to inform and to invite members of academic and non-academic community, delegates of business as well as civil servants.

JMCEC is acting widely arranging academic and practical conferences, seminars, celebrating the important days of the EU – involving to this activity university teachers, researchers and students of Kaunas universities and colleges. JMCEC is a partner of international research "Network on Enlargement and the Northern Dimension of EU" attending and organizing international conferences and meetings. However most of activities of JMCEC are directly focused to regional development through teaching and through the reflection and debates.

Continues academic seminar is devoted for analysis of actual Lithuanian community issues in the field of European integration, studying the cultural, political and economical future of the enlarged European Union (EU) as well as for studying the perspectives and experiences of the Lithuania's membership in EU. Seminar is working as a periodic coffee-club, introducing 9 meetings each academic year, once per month. Meetings are based on introductory lectures and moderated discussions involving several groups of interest:

- academicians: teachers and researchers, Ph.D and master students;
- practitioners: local, district and regional administration, businessmen;
- non-academic community - local and regional as well as students of Third age university.

The seminar is being organized as multifunctional activity for community at large in order to develop and to improve their knowledge in European integration studies through the discussions, debates and non-formal meetings. The main goal of the seminar is to attract people to get new knowledge, to have a discussion with academicians and practitioners as well as participating in the informal meetings in topical themes. Coffee-club style of debates make easier to involve different groups of participants. The second task of the seminar is not only to spread formal information for local and regional community members but to improve and consolidate their knowledge in the topic. Particularly great advantage from the debates appears for young researchers having the opportunity to present their works and to get the comments and further guidelines for their research. The second group of success in the seminars is consisted from senior people, as they are in the Third age university. Their handling together and regular attending the seminars with their own enthusiasm represents the big success of the seminars.

Quite big interest of the seminars to all groups of interest is based hopefully on the different outcomes, individually interesting to the participants. Among them could be mentioned some:

- Hot topics related to Lithuania's integration into EU are being presented and analyzed by professors, Ph.D and master students as well as, practitioners;
- About 150 listeners and participants from academic and not academic community, administration of the city, district and regional, businessmen and students of Third Age University have been taking part during the whole session. About 90 of them being regular participants received the certificates of JMECE, which had been delivered at the end of the academic year.
- The "Academic JMECE awards" have been introduced for the best research products in the field of European integration presented during the seminar and prepared as papers. The competition attracted about 30 participants each year and final papers of competitors have been evaluated by high level commission of academicians from the Universities of Kaunas. The winners have been granted by significant moneyed awards and certificates of JMECE. There are established 2 awards for teachers/researchers, 2 awards for Ph.D students and 2 for master students.

As the result of the academic competition for the "Academic JMECE awards" and the seminar presentations the annual academic issue is being compiled, edited and printed each year. Destination target of the annual academic issue is researchers, different level students, libraries and interested groups from local and regional sector.

Actual topics, title cooperation between academic and non-academic community as well as properly designed outcomes attracts practitioners to the seminars. Therefore participants of local and regional community form a regular base in interests groups. Participants of JMECE arrangements are being fixed in the confidential contact list of

JMECE members'. This base helps to spread actual information in paper and electronic form and to inform the interest group about the nearest events or changes of the schedule promptly and in time.

Open lectures in "Knowledge - based economy". During 2002/2006 academic years Jean Monnet European Centre of Excellence offered and offers the Jean Monnet module - Knowledge - based Economy" evaluated by 3 Euro study-credits. This module is being delivered every semester as open lectures for the students of Kaunas universities as well as local practitioners and servants. Therefore during the year 2002/2006 the Jean Monnet module attracted workers from local and district municipalities, students from Third age university, participants of the Kaunas Science and Technology Park and servants of Science departments from regional Universities of Lithuania.

The module covers globalization, technological development and economical changes and analyzes the concept of Knowledge based Economy, introducing:

- evolution of Knowledge concept;
 - the vision of knowledge based society;
 - the role of information and knowledge in the new economy;
 - the place of information technologies in economics and society;
 - the role and place of innovation and technology transfer;
 - development of human capital;
 - lifelong learning;
 - enhancement and development of entrepreneurship;
 - interests of Lithuania and EU in the changing world.
- Participants who attended majority of the lectures have got the graduation certificates of Jean Monnet European Centre of Excellence.

Days of the Ambassador are another type of arrangements of JMECE. It is a meeting of academic and non-academic community members, delegates of business as well as members of Kaunas Municipality with the Ambassador of foreign country. After the formal meeting under the specific topic disputes last about the mutual important and interesting items, actual problems with cup of tea and glass of wine. This helps to create an informal atmosphere for discussions. The JMECE during the year 2003/2006 arranged 12 meetings. Participants met the EU Ambassador - Head of Delegation of European Commission to Lithuania, the Ambassadors of Czech Republic, Finland, Hungary Republic, Kingdom of Spain, the United Kingdom, Austria, the Kingdom of Belgium and Republic of Latvia. The meetings attracted more 400 participants in total. The discussions let to exchange the views on mutually important problems, to encourage and develop the cooperation between the universities and the municipalities from Lithuania and foreign countries.

State and regional actualities - through videoconferences. Next to seminars, conferences and Ambassadors days JMECE is constantly following the hot topics of Lithuania and EU as well as actualities of the world. With reference to the actuality Centre regularly organize the moderated presentations with the debates which are directly being transmitted by computer network to distance learning centres established

in the regions of Lithuania. One can follow the presentations and discussions online or later by the Internet. Periodically organized videoconferences mostly respond to regional actualities. JMECE works together with a partner - Kaunas University of Technology Distance Learning Centre. Centre joins by computer network already 18 distant classes, distributed in the Lithuanian country-side. Debates from Kaunas studio are being transmitted interactively to the distant classes. During the year 2003-2006 there were organized 9 videoconferences – 3 per year. The topics covered the activity of European Parliament, future development of EU, analysis of the sub-sequences of free movement of persons for Lithuanian labour market and Lithuanian people, development of Lithuania atomic energy sector. With a big success and interest of participants have been organized three conferences on the EU support by Structural Funds and the conference about the process and possible consequences from the introduction of Euro. Essentially important conference with great interest of participants has been passed on precautionary provisions against the Birds Flu.

The Centre has been organising conferences as usual in the cooperation with the State Ministries, local and regional municipalities, different public institutions as well as Universities. Destination targets of the Centre's activities are the administrative staff, academic and non-academic community in country at large, especially servants from local municipalities.

Jean Monnet action at the Institute of Europe through the activity of JMECE extended the learning opportunities to various groups of interest. Citizens attending the Centre's activities are able to find their own individual learning pathways, suitable to their needs and interests at different stages of their lives. With reference to the above mentioned activity of JMECE it could be pointed out that Jean Monnet Programme in Institute of Europe has specific approach towards Lifelong Learning process. Main point of the Institute of Europe is to keep LLL integrated and holistic. Desired forms are different (seminars, conferences, debates and discussions as well as distance learning opportunities) and have to contain elements of learning together with elements of attraction as well as elements of enlightenment. Professionalism of arrangements is another important point.

Jean Monnet Programme is mentioned as an instrument of Lifelong Learning in the decision of the European Commission made in March 2004 which adopted a Communication "The new generation of Community Education and Training Programmes after 2006" ("the earlier Communication"), following up the February Communication on "policy challenges and budgetary means for the period 2007-2013". It indicated the Commission's intention to propose an integrated Lifelong Learning programme, incorporating the ensemble of existing internal education and training programmes where Jean Monnet Programme appears as one of instruments.

The general objective of the Integrated Programme is to continue through lifelong learning to the development of the Community as an advanced Knowledge society, with sustainable economic development, more and better jobs and greater social cohesion, while ensuring good protection of the environment for future generations. In particular, it aims to foster interchange, cooperation and mobility

between education and training systems within the Community so that they become a world quality reference.

Conclusions

1. LLL in the regional development is necessary and only possibility of the local people.
2. LLL for regional development is complex phenomenon, connected with policy and practise of regional development, level of human potential in the region and their disposition towards learning activities.
3. LLL recipients should feel after training not only improvement of their knowledge and skills but to get some psychological support and encouragements for future actions. New personal perspectives should be opened in line with the development of the region.
4. LLL in the regions should be based on the needs of the region, individualised, emotionally oriented towards every participant.
5. The activity of Institute of Europe of KTU with the Jean Monnet European Centre of Excellence extended the learning opportunities to various groups of interest in various regions of the country.

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